–Save This Page as a PDF–

A Final Warning
16: 17-27

A final warning DIG: How do false teachers create divisions within the church? What are some of the teachings that are dividing the Church today? How do you work for balance between the desire for unity and the desire to maintain truth? How does the book end?

REFLECT: What kind of a heart do you have? How can a thankful heart make your life more peaceful? What have you learned through the book of Romans that has been particularly helpful to you? How will you begin, or continue, to practice these truths in your life?

Be wise concerning good, but innocent concerning evil, and as harmless as doves.



Paul could not resist giving a final warning about wolves in sheep's clothing (see the commentary on **Jude, to see link click Ah – Godless People Have Secretly Slipped In Among You**). Godly **love does not rejoice in unrighteousness (First Corinthians 13:6 NASB).** It is the nature of **love** to warn against harm to those whom it **loves**. And the greatest harm against believers is that which undermines **God's** truth in which they live. **Love** is ready to forgive all wrongs, but it does not condone or ignore evil, especially in the Church. **Paul**, therefore, found it

necessary to give us a caution into **his** greetings of **love**.

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions by either **looking down upon** or **judging (14:3),** or by opposing the sound doctrine set forth by **Paul** in this book. **And put snares alongside the teaching in which you have been trained – keep away from them (16:17).**

The mature believer is to **watch out for those who cause divisions**. **Paul** is not talking about what today is often referred to as a "witch hunt," an effort to find fault without any substance. Nor is **he** talking about legalistic and often mean-spirited and unloving "litmus tests" for an orthodoxy that is even more rigid than Scripture. The right response of believers to false teachers is not debate or dialogue. We are to **keep away from them**, to reject what they teach and to protect fellow believers, especially new converts and the immature, from being deceived, confused and misled. **Yeshua Himself** repeatedly warned the apostles against false teachers and **prophets**. In the Sermon on the Mount, **He** said: **Beware of the false prophets! They come to you wearing sheep's clothing, but underneath they are hungry wolves! You will recognize them by their fruit. Can people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles (Matthew 7:15-16)?**

Paul gives us two reasons for **turning away** from false teachers: **For men like these are not serving our Lord the Messiah but their own belly; by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the innocent (16:18).** No matter how seemingly sincere and caring false teachers may appear to be, they are never genuinely concerned for the cause of **Messiah** or for **His** Church. They are driven by self-interest and self-gratification – sometimes for fame, sometimes for power, but always for financial gain, and frequently for all those reasons. **These men are filthy spots at your festive gatherings meant to foster love; they share your meals without a qualm, while caring only for themselves. They are waterless clouds carried along by the winds; trees without fruit even in autumn, and doubly dead because they have been uprooted; savage sea-waves heaving forth their shameful deeds like foam; wandering stars for whom the blackest darkness has been reserved forever (Jude 12-13).**[408]

But, in spite of **his** warnings, **the apostle** affirmed **his** confidence in them: **For everyone has heard about your obedience; therefore, I rejoice over you.** The best protection against falsehood is **obeying** to **God's** Word, just as the best protection against sin is holding on to **His** righteousness. Yet, knowing that even the

most faithful believers can fall prey to Satan's traps, **Paul** added: **However, I want you to be wise concerning good, but innocent concerning evil,** and **as harmless as doves** (**Matthew 10:16). Paul** assures faithful believers that they can look forward to the day when their spiritual warfare will be over. **And God, the source of shalom, will soon crush the Adversary under your feet** (see the commentary on **Genesis Be – He Will Crush Your Head, and You Will Strike His Heel**)**.**

Now **Paul** gives a second short benediction (see **15:33** for the first one). **The grace of our Lord Yeshua be with you (16:19-20).** It's as if **Paul** is saying, "I know, that even with **your** faithful **obedience, you** will need **ADONAI's** continuing grace to direct and strengthen you. You need **His grace** to recognize false teachers. You need **His grace** to give you comfort and patience when you are attacked by the devil, while he is still in power over the world.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise and Thanks for **Your** grace which always goes with **Your** children! How wonderful that no matter where in this world your child goes- **You** go with him and so does your grace. **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you," (Hebrews 13:5b-c).** Praise **You** for how greatly **You love** all **Your** children. Praise that that all who **love You** are in **Messiah**. It is like being in an airplane – can't get to a far-away destination without knowing about the plane, nor can we get to heaven without knowing about **Yeshua**. We have to enter the plane and be "In the plane" to go to a far-away destination. Praise you dear **Father** for putting all who **love You "In Messiah!"***

*What riches you give to all who are **"In Messiah." He chose us in the Messiah before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love . . . In Him we have redemption through His blood – the removal of trespasses – in keeping with the richness of His grace . . . He is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of His possession – to His glorious praise! . . . After you heard the message of truth – the Good News of your salvation – and when you put your trust in Him, you were sealed with the promised Ruach Ha'Kodesh . . . And He raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua . . . In Him the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple for the Lord. In Him, you also are being built together into God's dwelling place in the Ruach (Ephesians 1:4, 7, 14, 13** and **2:6, 21-22).** In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Then **Paul** sends greetings to the church in Rome on behalf of **his** companions in ministry, presumably men known by some of the believers in that city. **Timothy, my fellow-worker** and protege**, sends greetings to you, and so does Lucius,** most likely **the apostle** used another form of **Luke**, who wrote the Gospel that bears **his** name, and was a frequent traveling companion of **Paul (Acts 16:11** and **21:1-8). Paul** refers to **Jason and Sosipater** as **my relatives,** or fellow **Jews (16:21).** One of the first converts in Thessalonica was named **Jason** and apparently hosted **Paul** in his home for a short while before the believers there sent **Paul** and **Silas** to **Berea** for **their** safety **(Acts 17:5-10)**. We learn from **Acts 20:4-6** that a man from **Berea** named **Sopater** (a shortened form of **Sosipater**) was among the companions of **Paul** who met him at Troas after he left Ephesus. **Sopater** doubtless was among the **Jews** in **Berea** who **were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the Word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things** [that **Paul** was teaching] **were so,** and was among the **many of them** [who] **believed (Acts 17:10-12 NASB).**

I, Tertius, Paul's secretary, **the one writing down this letter, greet you in the Lord (16:22).** Just as Phoebe had the great privilege of delivering the book of Romans, **Tertius** had the great privilege of writing it for **Paul**.

My host Gaius, in whose home the whole congregation meets, greets you. Because the book of **Romans** was written in Corinth, this **Gaius** almost certainly was among the many believers who came to faith as a result of **Paul's** ministry there, and was one of the two men in that church whom **Paul** had immersed personally **(First Corinthians 1:14)**. **He** is generally thought to be **Titius Justus, a God-fearer whose house was next door to the synagogue (Acts 18:7),** and whose full name would have been **Gaius Titius Justus. Erastus** was **the city treasurer** of Corinth and therefore a man of prominence and high political office. **Quartus** was the last of **Paul's** companions on whose behalf **he** sent **greetings**. **He** is identified only as **the brother,** which means that **he** was **a brother** in **Messiah (16:23).**[409]

Verse 24 is not found in the earliest Greek manuscripts of the book of **Romans**. That is understandable, because the final three verses below form a longer, more explicit benediction, to which **verse 24** adds nothing and seems a bit out of place. But the sentiment is fully consistent with the rest of **Paul's** gracious epilogue: **The grace of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah be with you all.**

The book of **Romans** ends with a beautiful doxology, praising **God** for what **He** has done through **His Son Yeshua Messiah**. Doxologies are found throughout Scripture. Sometimes a writer is overwhelmed with gratitude that he breaks into inspired praise to **ADONAI** for **His** goodness and grace. That is especially evident in **the Psalms**, the hymnbook of ancient **Isra'el**. The 150 psalms are divided into five sections, generally referred to as books. Although praises to **YHVH** are found throughout **the Psalms**, each of the five books ends with a special doxology. The B'rit Chadashah is full of doxologies. At the birth of **Yeshua**, **the angel** and **a vast army from heaven** were **praising God,** singing: **In the highest heaven, glory to God (Luke 2:13-14)!** When **Messiah** made **His** triumphal entry into Jerusalem, **the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest (Luke 19:37-38)!**

There is a remarkable relationship between these last several verses of **Romans** and the first eleven. In **16:25 Paul** speaks of **God, who can strengthen you**, and in **1:11 he** tells **his** readers that **he longs to see them, so that he might share with them some spiritual gift that would make them stronger.** In **16:25 he** speaks of **my Good News,** and in **1:1** of **the Good News of God.** In **16:2 Paul** speaks of **the secret truth which is the proclamation of Yeshua the Messiah, kept hidden in silence for ages and ages,** and in **1:2** of **the Good News which He promised in advance.** In **16:25 he** speaks of **the proclamation of Yeshua Messiah,** and in **1:3 concerning His Son.** In **16:26 Paul** speaks of **the Good News being manifested through prophetic writings,** and in **1:2 he** speaks of **the Good News being** seen **in advance through His prophets.** In **16:26 Paul** speaks of **the Good News communicated to all the Gentiles to promote in them trust-grounded obedience,** and in **1:5** of **promoting trust-grounded obedience among all the Gentiles.**

Now to God, who can strengthen you, according to my Good News (see **As – Paul's Gospel**)**.** The unbeliever has no certainty about **YHVH** or **His** Word or the way of salvation. The majority of mankind does not even have an interest in finding the true **God**. They are perfectly satisfied with the religion they have inherited or been exposed to, or else have no concern about life after death at all. Even those who attempt to find **the LORD** on their own, searching and discernment are **always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (Second Timothy 3:7 NASB).** But through **the Good News, ADONAI can**

strengthen the minds and hearts of believers in the truth, to settle us, to ground us, and make us firm in **Him (16:25a)**. No one but a believer can be certain about **YHVH**, certain about **His** truth, certain about **His** standards of righteousness, certain of **His love** and care, or certain about being with **Him** throughout all eternity (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**).

The **Gospel** that **strengthens** us **and proclaims Yeshua Messiah** is also **in harmony with the revelation of the mystery** (Greek: *musterion*, meaning *some spiritual truth that was once hidden but now is revealed*) **which** has been **kept hidden in silence for ages and ages (16:25b).** In **First Corinthians, Paul** uses the term in a general sense, speaking of the apostles and **prophets** in the B'rit Chadashah, such as **himself**, **Apollos**, and **Peter** as **trustees of God's secret truths (First Corinthians 4:1).** That is, they were bringing new revelation **hidden** from past **ages (Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:25-26).**

But the mystery that is **manifested now** had been predicted **through** veiled **prophetic writings, in keeping with the command of God the Eternal, and communicated to all the Gentiles to promote in them trust-grounded obedience (16:26).** Through **Isaiah**, **ADONAI** promised that **My Righteous Servant** will **make many righteous; it is for their sins that He suffers (Isaiah 53:11). Jeremiah** foretold: **Here, the days are coming," says ADONAI, "when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah . . . I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people (Jeremiah 31:31** and **33).** Through **Ezeki'el, Ha'Shem** said: **And I will give them unity of heart. "I will put a new spirit among you." I will remove from their bodies the hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh (Ezeki'el 11:19).**

The Jews had always believed that such prophecies only applied to **them**, as **the chosen people of God.** As **Peter** explains: **The prophets, who prophesied about this gift of deliverance that was meant for you, pondered and inquired diligently about it. They were trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of the Messiah in them was referring in predicting the Messiah's sufferings and the glorious things to follow (First Peter 1:10-11).** Even to **God's** inspired **prophets** in Dispensation of the Torah (see the commentary on **Exodus Da – The Dispensation of the Torah**), the full meaning of their prophecies was **a mystery**. This is called "progressive revelation," slowly revealing **God's** plan.

As a result, when **Ha'Shem** first made **His** covenant with **Abraham**, the father of **His chosen people Isra'el, He** alluded to **His** offering of grace to the whole world. **He** told **Abraham, "And by you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3b).** When **YHVH** made the covenant with **His people** through **Moshe** at Mount Sinai, **He** said: **And you will be a kingdom of cohanim for me, a nation set apart.' These are the words you are to speak to the people of Isra'el" (Exodus 19:6).** In other words, it was **God's** plan all along that **Isra'el**, as a nation, was to be **a priest**, a mediator of **God**, for the rest of the **Gentile** world.

Through **Isaiah**, **ADONAI** told **Isra'el** that **He** not only had called **her** in righteousness, but that **He** had also **made her** as **a covenant for the people, to be a light for the Gentile nations (Isaiah 42:6, 49:22, 54:3, 60:5, 62:2, 66:19).** Speaking of the future **Messiah, God** predicted: **I will also make You a light to the Gentile nations, so My salvation can spread to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6),** a passage that **Paul** and **Barnabas** quoted before a crowd of both **Jews** and **Gentiles** in Pisidian Antioch **(Acts 13:46-47)**.

That is the truth **Paul** emphasizes in the book of **Romans**. **YHVH** made **known the riches of his glory to those who are the objects of his mercy . . . not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hoshea, "Those who were not My people I will call My people; her who was not loved I will call loved" (9:23-25). For the passage quoted says that everyone who rests his trust on him will not be humiliated. That means that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – ADONAI is the same for everyone (10:11-12).** Therefore, **Paul** crowns this marvelous letter with praise **to the only wise God, the God** of **the Jews** and **the Gentiles**, **the God** of all creation. It was **through Yeshua the Messiah** that **YHVH** revealed not only **His** grace but also **His** great wisdom. And so, to **Him be the glory forever and ever! Amen (16:27).**[410]