

ROMANS: RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH FROM START TO FINISH

XI. Paul's Edifying Concluding Remarks, Romans 15:14-16:27

E. God's Call To Vigilance In The War Over His Truth (Romans 16:17-20)

I. Introduction

- A. After showing how God's righteousness is applied by faith from start to finish (cf. Romans 1:16-17) in Romans 1:18-15:13, the Apostle Paul gave his longest concluding remarks in any of his epistles in Scripture in Romans 15:14-16:27, remarks that apply God's righteousness in the godly believer in various practical ways.
- B. One result of God's righteousness applied to the believer is that it requires him to be vigilant in the spiritual war over God's truth. We view Romans 16:17-20 that addresses this issue for our insight and application:

II. God's Call To Vigilance In The War Over His Truth, Romans 16:17-20.

- A. Before closing his epistle to the believers in Rome, Paul expressed his concern that his Christian readers be vigilant about a timeless spiritual war that exists over God's Biblical truth, Romans 16:17:
 - 1. This epistle was written about the time when Paul in Acts 20:3 faced the threat of physical violence from Judaizers who "sought to lead his converts away from liberty in the gospel" by urging them to submit to the rules of the Mosaic Law to be justified, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 437.
 - 2. Paul thus gave the warning to "watch out for spiritual enemies" of God's truth, *Ibid.*, p. 501.
 - 3. This is a timeless war, for about ten years later, Paul in 2 Timothy 4:3-5 predicted that the time would come when people in churches would no longer endure sound teaching but turn to teachers who taught vain things, and some years after that, Jude urged believers to contend earnestly for the true Christian faith that was once-for-all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3 NIV). (*Ibid.*, p. 436, 749, 918)
- B. Thus, in Romans 16:17-18, Paul warned about the activities of the false teachers and how to respond to them:
 - 1. He "urged" his readers to "watch out" for those who caused divisions and put "snares" (*skandala*) in their way contrary to the teaching they had learned [from the apostles], Romans 16:17a NIV; *Ibid.*, p. 501.
 - 2. In watching out for false teachers, and identifying them, Paul's readers were to "keep on turning away" (present imperative of *ekklinete*) from them, Romans 16:17b; *Ibid.*; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 575.
 - 3. Paul's reason for such a rejection of these false teachers was that they did not serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own (literal) "bellies," that is, they were selfish gluttons bent on eating well off of the hospitality of unsuspecting believers who would host them for meals in their homes, Romans 16:18a; *Ibid.*
 - 4. Such false teachers could be identified in part by their use of smooth talk and flattery to deceive the minds of "innocent, unsuspecting" (*akakon*) or naïve people, Romans 16:18b; *Ibid.*
- C. Paul assured his readers that he did not consider *them* to be naïve, for their obedience to the truth that they had been taught was known to all believers, causing Paul to rejoice, Romans 16:19a. However, he wanted them to be wise about what was good and "unmixed, simple, pure" (*akeraious*) about what was evil, Romans 16:19b; *Ibid.* This New Testament Greek word *akeraious* "was used of wine that was not diluted and of metal that was not weakened in any way," so Paul's readers were to be uncompromisingly devoted to God's truth! (*Ibid.*)
- D. The apostle then added that the God of peace would soon crush Satan under their feet, an allusion to Genesis 3:15 where the seed of the woman with his heel would crush the head of the serpent that Satan used to tempt Eve, indicating that the false teachers in the context were actually under Satan's influence, Romans 16:20a; *Ibid.* [See also 2 Timothy 2:24-26 and Matthew 16:21-23 where even people in churches can be taken captive through their worldly lusts or viewpoints to be influenced by Satan to oppose true teachers of God's Word!]
- E. Paul ended this warning about false teachers by calling for the unmerited favor, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be with his readers, Romans 16:20b.

Lesson: A timeless, severe war occurs in the spiritual realm for believers where Satan influences either unsaved or ungodly Christians to oppose Bible truth out of lusts, people who use smooth talk and flattery to deceive the naïve to reject the truth in favor of error. In response, God calls believers to keep on turning away from such false teachers and to stick uncompromisingly to Bible truth, waiting on God to crush Satan's opposition under their feet.

Application: (1) May we not be naïve in thinking that all is well in a church where the truth is taught but realize that Satan targets such churches to be negatively impacted by false teachers to oppose the truth. (2) Thus, may we watch out for such false teachers, may we keep turning from them when we identify them and may we stick uncompromisingly to Biblical truth, trusting God to crush Satan's opposition to the truth under us.