

(17) I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them! For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.

(19) For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

(21) Timothy, my fellow-worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and your brother Quartus, greet you.

(25) Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my Gospel and preaching of Jesus Christ --- according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring out the obedience of faith --- to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Think on these things:

- 1) Who are we to watch out for and keep away from --- in church?

People who cause divisions and create obstacles to sound doctrine (v.17).

- 2) Skim these verses for teachings on people who are divisive: 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:14-16, 23-26; 3:1-5; 4:2-5; Titus 3:9-11. Which verse says divisive people,
 - a. Will seek preachers who teach what they want to hear instead of God's truth? **2 Tim 4**
 - b. Should be warned about quarrelling, while we should know our Bible? **2 Tim 2:14-16**
 - c. Are conceited, with an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels? **1 Timothy 6**
 - d. Will multiply in "the last days" with no genuine Christian power & faith? **2 Tim 3**
 - e. Should be opposed gently in hope they will come to their senses? **2 Tim 2:23-26**
 - f. Should be warned once, twice, and then totally avoided as "self-condemned"? **Titus 3**
 - g. What does James 4:1-2 tell us is the cause of divisiveness? **Our hidden inner passions (drives)**
- 3) V.18 parallels 1 Timothy 3:6-9. How are these "wolves in sheep's clothing" described? **They are driven by their appetites, using flattery and smooth talk to deceive naïve people. This description indicates predatory and manipulative behavior; their goal is to take or get what another has for their own reasons. Using smooth speech, they deceive biblically-ignorant and simple people to get what they are after and to accomplish something they set out to do.**

- 4) There's lots of bad in this world of ours. How familiar should we be with evil activity (v.19)? What do you consider to be some bad things in human living? What phrasing did Jesus use for this idea in Matthew 10:16? Do you think being "innocent" about evil is the same as "naïve"? Explain. What should Christians be specialists in (v.19, Ephesians 2:10)?

V.19 begins with being 'wise' about what is good, so 'innocent' about what is evil (author's opinion) means being inexperienced in evil-doing. It's not that we don't know what is evil, but that we are not behaving that way. Many people are self-serving; everything said, done or thought is about ME (#1). We lie, cheat, steal, and deceive to get what we think we want. Jesus said something similar to followers: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Ephesians says we should be known for 'good works' that God prepared for us to do.

- 5) Let's focus on the "Gospel." Paul wants the Romans to be established, or firmly grounded, in their understanding of the Gospel. The concern here is that some people preach "another" Gospel (Galatians 1:6-9)! Write the "gist" --- key truth --- of these verses to understand the Biblical Gospel (God's "good news").

John 3:16 **God loved our world so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to bring eternal life.**

1 Timothy 1:15 **Jesus came into the world specifically to save sinners.**

Romans 3:23; 6:23 **Every human is a sinner, and the penalty for sinning is eternal death.**

Romans 5:8 **While people were unbelieving and still sinning, Christ died for them.**

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 **Christ died for our sins and then rose alive from the dead to witnesses.**

Acts 16:30-31 **To be saved, people must 'believe' in Jesus Christ (the salvation teaching).**

Ephesians 2:8-9 **Being saved has nothing to do with our efforts; it is by God's grace alone!**

Romans 3:22 **The righteousness of God (not our own) is available to all who believe in Jesus. (Theology: We exchange our 'eternal death' with Jesus and receive His perfect righteousness.)**

Romans 10:9-10 **Deliverance requires: 1) we confess Jesus as Lord; and 2) we believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead. With these, we are 'justified' and 'saved.'**

John 14:6 **Only Jesus brings us salvation in the Father. He is the ONLY way, truth and life.**

Romans 1:16 **God uses the "Gospel" message to save people. We are not ashamed of it.**

- 6) How does verse 20 make you feel? **The phrase, "The God of Peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" is the focus of this question. We know the end from the beginning: God wins, and Satan loses! There's comfort in knowing we are on the winning side.**

People and situations I want to pray for this week: