Ro 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Caution to take heed of those practices - destructive to Christian love.

The God of Peace not the (God of War)He is the God of War but not to be against you but for you.

Ex 15:3 The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

1Sa 16:16 Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me.

18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.

19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep.

20 And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.

21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.

22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

23 And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

All of a sudden, he interrupts his greeting and issues a severe warning.

The abrupt interruption *is not an afterthought*; it is the final exhortation needed for a strong church—an exhortation against an event that is bound to happen: the seeping in of divisive people. A divisive person is a person who...

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| •  grumbles  •  complains  •  criticizes  •  murmurs  •  gossips  •  causes strife | •  is argumentative  •  acts out of pride, ambition, or selfishness  •  is unloving  •  teaches a different doctrine |

The most effective way for Satan to get a foothold into a strong church is to quietly move a contentious person into some teaching or leadership position where he can influence immature believers.

Paul knew this, so he left the warning until the end of his letter. It is a warning that must be heeded by a strong church if it is to keep its witness for the Lord.

There are three reasons why a contentious -divisive person must be marked and avoided.

1. A divisive person causes division and lays stumbling blocks in the way of growth.
2. A divisive person acts "contrary to the doctrine which [believers] have learned." He causes "divisions and offenses."

⇒  The word "division" (*dichostasias*) means standing apart, being separate, causing a split.

Ro 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

⇒  The word "offenses" (*skandala*) means laying a stumbling block in someone's way or causing someone to fall.

a.  The divisive person acts "contrary to the doctrine which [believers] have learned." The doctrine of God and of Christ;

Ro 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

1 John 3:23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment

*Genuine believers* trust Jesus God's Son. They have accepted Christ as their Lord and Saviour, giving all they are and have to Him; and they do love one another, having committed their lives to carry the doctrine of Christ to the world.

This is not true with a divisive person. He acts *contrary* to the teaching of God and of Christ. He opposes...

•  the Lordship of Christ.

•  the doctrine of Christ.

•  the love of believers.

•  the mission of reaching the world with the gospel: the glorious news of life in Christ, life that is both abundant and eternal.

b.  Avoid them because of the terrible devastation that a divisive person can do to the strength of a church.

The word "avoid" (*ekklinete*) means to shun, to turn away from, to keep away from, to remove oneself from. Get away from them and have absolutely nothing to do with them.

c.  "Mark" the divisive person. The word "mark" (*skopein*) means to keep one's eye on, to look at, to observe, to focus upon, to contemplate, to scrutinize.

It is the divisive person himself who is to be *avoided and turned* away from, not just his sin. We are not to have anything to do with a divisive person...

•  for we give the appearance of approving what he is doing.

•  for we run the risk of being influenced and stumbling over what he says and does.

 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Matthew 18:7

And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea Mark 9:42

But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth Luke 11:17

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment 1 Cor. 1:10

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? 1 Cor. 3:3

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God [1 Cor. 10:31-32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+10%3A31-32)

Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed

2 Co 6:3

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27)

2.  A divisive person does not serve Christ, but his own desires. The word "belly" (*koilia*) means the stomach and its physical appetites. A divisive person is gripped by...

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| •  selfish desires  •  base ambition  •  personal urges | •  physical appetites  •  wanting his own way  •  getting what he wants |

Scripture clearly says that divisive persons do not serve Christ. They call themselves *Christians*, but their Lord is not Christ. They are not committed to His honor and glory and mission, but to themselves—to getting and doing what they want. The divisive person is still given over to the things of this carnal, sensual, and secular world.

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things Phil. 3:18-19

3.  A divisive person uses talk and flattering words to deceive. He uses smooth, persuasive, and plausible words to lead people to take sides with him. He talks and acts godly, and he shows interest and concern for those whom he wants to convince. But Scripture says: the motive of the divisive person is to deceive. He wants others...

•  to think as he thinks.

•  to believe as he believes.

•  to walk as he walks.

•  to live as he lives.

•  to follow as he follows.

•  to talk as he talks.

The result of his divisiveness is tragic: he deceives the simple, that is, the unsuspecting, the innocent, the immature, the carnal, the new-born believers.

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake Titus 1:10-11).

having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth

2 Tim. 3:5-7

1. ([16:19-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+16%3A19-20)) **Strong Church,**: mark what is good, and untainted with evil. A strong church, such as the church in Romans, must constantly be marking and focusing upon *what is good and untainted with evil*. If a strong church fails to know and do good, it will be penetrated by evil (divisiveness) and it will become a weak church. Therefore, a strong church must always, with the utmost diligence, be looking for what is good and untainted with evil. Three reasons are given for this charge.

1.  A strong church such as the Roman church is obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the very reason for its strength: the church has been obedient to the Lord, doing exactly as He commands. The believers have been...

a.  Living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ Titus 2:12-13).

b.  Ministering to the needs of people even as He ministered.

 Mt 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

c.  Witnessing to all far and wide, fulfilling His mission.

 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" ([Matthew 28:19-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+28%3A19-20)).

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" ([Mark 16:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mk+16%3A15)).

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" ([Acts 1:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A8)).

 The result of such obedience is a strong testimony that is spread among all men. People know where to go when they need help: they know where the obedient believers are who are truly following the Lord.

2.  A strong church must be wise to know what is good. Its people must grow more and more in *goodness*—in knowing what is good and what is evil. Believers must be *wise*...

•  to *search* for what is good and untainted with evil.

•  to *know* what is good and untainted with evil.

The word "simple" (*akeraios*) means unmixed, unadulterated, pure, innocent, without any mixture of evil. The idea is that the believers of a strong church must constantly mark, focus, and concentrate upon what is good in order to keep the bad out of its fellowship. The way to keep evil out of a church is to focus upon the good. The way to demonstrate spiritual wisdom is to concentrate upon the good; then evil will be recognized for what it is, and it will be rejected.

A strong church must not only avoid evil (Romans 16:17); it must not allow evil to penetrate its fellowship. It must not allow a divisive person to stir up the "simple" (unsuspecting and innocent) believers of the church. A church must be wise: it must mark and focus upon what is good and untainted with evil. It must be wise enough to spot evil and to stop its penetration into the fellowship.

1. God will soon give victory over Satan. The meaning of "soon" does not mean shortly, but *quickly* or *swiftly*. The idea *is not* that God is coming soon to destroy Satan, but when God acts to deliver His people from evil and divisiveness, Satan will be quickly defeated.

Satan’s work against God's consecrated people (a strong church) will last only for a moment. The "God of Peace" will restore peace swiftly and quickly to the fellowship of a strong people.

The defeat of Satan and divisive persons is conditional.

A strong church must obey the word:

Ro 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

1. Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.
2. focus upon what is good and untainted with evil.

Ro 16:19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

God will bless a church that is obedient and concentrating upon Christ and His mission

God is going to bruise Satan under our feet

God is going to bruise Satan under the *believers' feet*.

It is the *feet of the believers* that God uses to bruise Satan.

When genuine believers of a strong church do what God says, then God will act to deliver His people from evil and divisiveness.

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19).

And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you Romans 16:20

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it 1 Cor. 10:13

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you James 4:7

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world 1 John 4:4

 God wants to use your feet to bruise the devil

Jos 10:24 And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

25 And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

Ro 1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

Ro 1:12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Ro 1:15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Ro 16:25 ¶ Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

Ro 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Isa 52:7 ¶ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Na 1:15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

Eph 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Pr 27:7 ¶ The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. {loatheth: Heb. treadeth under foot }

Eze 25:6 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; {hands: Heb. hand} {feet: Heb. foot} {heart: Heb. soul }

Jos 1:3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

Jos 5:15 And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

Jos 6:4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

Ac 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Ac 6:5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

Jos 14:9 And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God.