

Living Free From Deception Romans 16:17-20

We need to steer clear from those who deceive Romans 16:17-19

"Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them." (Romans 16:17)

- **Deceivers divide, divide from deceivers**

"...keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances...and turn away from them..." (Romans 16:17)

The unity crowd emphasizes the preciousness of personal relationships and tend to neglect an emphasis on truth.

The purity crowd emphasizes the preciousness of truth and tend to neglect the nurture of personal relationships.

- **What deceivers look like**

"For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting." (Romans 16:18)

Their motivation

"For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites..."

Their manner

"...and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting."

God gives us victory over the ultimate Deceiver Romans 16:20

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." (Romans 16:20)

- **Satan has been decisively defeated at the cross**

"...having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." (Colossians 2:14-15)

- **Satan is being defeated now**

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." (Ephesians 6:12-13)

- **Satan will finally be defeated forever**

"For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." (1 Corinthians 15:25)

Digging Deeper

“Beware of false teachers.” How many times does this warning come up in the early church? Paul is continually reminding the churches through his letters to steer clear of those who want to deceive. It was a theme in Jesus’ teachings as well. Back in the Old Testament days they called them false prophets, and there were many. Do false teachers exist still today? Are they on your radar? Should we even care? Look through a couple of these passages and see the warnings given.

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” (Matt. 7:15)
“As he taught, Jesus said, ‘Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.’” (Mark 12:38-40)

Here are just a handful of Scriptures warning against false teachers:

Jeremiah 20:6; Amos 2:4; Isaiah 9:15,16; 3:12; 1 Kings 13:18; 22:22; 2 Chronicles 33:9; Micah 3:5; Matthew 24:10; Mark 22:23; Acts 20:25-31; Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:7-8; Colossians 2:8,18-19; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; 1 Timothy 4:1-8,16; 1 Timothy 5:3-10; 1 Timothy 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 2:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:9-16; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Peter 3:14-18; 1 John 1:18-27; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 John 7-11; Jude 3-19

This is by no means a comprehensive list. Many others warnings exist in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Hopefully this has shown that, not only is it not wrong to confront and speak out against false teachers, but because of the spiritual devastation they cause, it is our obligation to Christ and the brethren to do so. Paul says, *“I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears”* (Acts 20:29-31).

LifeGroup Discussion:

Who are some of the false teachers you’ve seen? Do they match Paul’s description of being “smooth and flattering?” How is it possible to go overboard in being aware of false teachers? What examples have you seen of this? Do you find that you have been more in the “doctrinal unity” or “relational unity” camp in your Christian life?

Talk through some of these clarifications and how we need a good balance of truth and wisdom.

- **Clarification #1:** Watch out for those who cause divisions: **It is possible to go overboard with this.** We don’t really live in this reality, especially here in America. Come back to a biblical balance. You can become so obsessed with doctrinal error that you lose the ability to rejoice in doctrinal truth.
- **Clarification #2:** Don’t miss the obvious. **There is such a thing as a body of doctrine that if you move away that you should be forsaken by other Christians.** Names for that body of teaching: Romans 6:17 (becoming obedient to the standard of teaching) 2 Timothy 1:16 (follow pattern of sound words, guard the good deposit trusted to you) Acts 20:27 (I did not shrink back from telling you the whole counsel of God). If you leave or stray from this body of teaching, we should be avoiding. Hard part: every opinion about every verse in the Bible should not go into that, we will all end up in a little corner with our own little beliefs if we strain at minute details
- **Clarification #3:** Avoid them. **Be sure when you read that, that you don’t over-interpret this.** Leave room for Romans 12 (bless those who curse you), don’t abandon them, how to love the enemy has to balance. What does avoiding them look like? He means that if there is a professing believer and you’ve confronted them and talked with them and they keep going, you must stop hanging out with them as if nothing is wrong.

Next Steps:

Get a better foundation of knowing the truth as a follower of Jesus. Two upcoming opportunities at Calvary this fall are:

- Join in a new discipleship course called “Following Jesus.” The orientation meeting on September 10 at 7:00 pm in Room D-1. Learn what’s to come at calvarylife.org/discipleship
- Or come to the Alpha Course which explores life’s big questions and the basics of the Christian faith starting Wednesday, October 1 at 6:00 pm in the Worship Center Lobby. Learn more at calvarylife.org/alpha