

Paul's Protective Heart
Romans 16:17-20
Pastor John Miller

"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." Romans 16:17-20

It's interesting in verse 16 that Paul instructed the believers in Rome to greet each other with a holy kiss. Today it would be a holy hug, a holy handshake, or if you want you could kiss one another, but in our culture and time that's not really the greeting that we would use. It's interesting in light of our text tonight, because not all who come into the church should be welcomed with a holy kiss. The text we have to look at tonight is not what you would call a nice or friendly text. It's a loving text, but at the surface it's a text that would not be popular in our culture today. It really runs counter to the philosophy of the world in which we live today. We need to face it head-on. If we're going to be thinking Biblically, as believers, we need to have our minds controlled by and thinking consistent with the Word of God. The Bible says be not conformed to this world but be transformed. How? By the renewing of your minds. How are our minds renewed? By the Word of God. We need to make sure that we're not thinking like the world but with a Biblical world view.

Not all who come into the church should be welcomed with a holy kiss. Not everyone was working with Paul to spread the truth of the gospel. Some, for selfish reasons, were dividing the church and teaching false doctrine. Who were these false teachers that Paul is warning us about here in verses 17-18? Paul is actually in the midst of these greetings, commendations, and hellos. He stops for a minute before he wraps up this book of Romans and actually warns them about false teachers. By the way, I've titled this message tonight: Paul's Protective Heart. Paul's loving heart turned into Paul's protective heart. He wanted to protect them against false teachers and those who would cause division and others to stumble.

We can't speak dogmatically about who exactly these false teachers were. Paul doesn't say. He simply describes them as, "... them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." He tells us that there are people who are going to come and bring doctrines that are contrary to that which you've learned and are going to cause divisions. Some feel that they were what is called the Libertines—a people who had great liberty. They felt that they were under grace, and it doesn't matter how you live. They were living licentious and perverted lives saying, "It's okay. God loves us. We're under God's grace, and we can live however we want." There are a lot of people that still believe that today. Because of the grace of God, they believe that it's a license to live a licentious and sinful life.

On the other side of the coin were the legalists. They were always following Paul around causing him problems. They said that we're under laws, rules, regulations, and restrictions that were not in the Scriptures. They had all these "do not's" listed in their rules. Don't do this, don't do that, don't touch that, don't handle that, don't eat that, don't drink that, don't go here, don't go there—all the things that a "good Christian" is not supposed to do. They were legalistic. It's fine to have standards and guidelines, but we shouldn't take things that are unbiblical or unscriptural and foster them on other people making them standards by which you accept others in fellowship or whether you determine others are "Christian" or believers. We need to be careful that our view is Biblical and balanced. We need to have liberty, but we shouldn't have license. We have to stand in the liberty where Christ has made us free, but He hasn't made us free to sin. He set us free not to sin and not to be living in bondage.

Donald Grey Barnhouse said, "The situation against which Paul is warning these believers is not so much the introduction of doctrines that would deny the essentials of Christian truth as practices which would result in true believers being split into various factions." It may not necessarily be heretical doctrine but teachings that are maybe extra-biblical or unbiblical. What it did was cause people to split into groups, to splinter off. We're all familiar with churches that split, and they split again and split again. You have the first church, then the second church, the third, and the only true church of the straight gate of the narrow way—a we're holier than you club kind of a thing. We have churches on every corner that think they have an exclusive corner on the things of God, and they cause division. Jude tells us, in his short little one-chapter epistle (verses 3-4), that we should earnestly contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. So, there is a time to be contending for the faith, but we shouldn't be contentious. There are those that try to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness and some that even deny our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Before we even look at these verses, I want to give some big general principles and things that are important to understand. First of all, I want to point out that there are such things as false teaching and false teachers. You say, "Well, Pastor John, that's quite elementary. Why would you even say such a thing?" It's because, believe it or not, with our prevalent postmodern world view today (I'll explain what I mean by that), even in the church we have begun to adopt this idea that it's not nice or right, or who do you think you are to say that you're right and they're wrong or what someone else believes is not true and what you believe is true and Scriptural? What makes you think that you have an edge on truth? What right do you have? Sometimes this is not even the world speaking. It's believers, or at least "professing" believers, speaking, "What right do you have to say that Christianity is the only way, that Jesus is the only way to heaven, and that other religions are false and Christianity is true? That's not only unloving, it's unkind and divisive." The mentality that there is no absolute truth, everyone's view has to be accepted as equally valid, and we need to be tolerant of one another, is pretty much the prevailing view of our culture today. It has also crept into the church.

When you read your Bible or when you study the Word of God, over and over and over again, both Old and New Testaments, you find warnings about false prophets, false teachers, and people spreading lies and not speaking in the name of the Lord. There is the false and the true,

and there is the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Today, the dominant world view is what's called postmodernism. There was a book written many years ago by Fritz Ridenour. It has been updated and modernized but is still a great book to read. It's called *So What's the Difference?* I highly recommend the book. Basically what Ridenour does is take Christianity and all other world views and religions and compares them showing how they differ from Biblical Christianity—what's the difference. In the updated version of his book, Ridenour talks about the basic principles of postmodernism. He points out what they include. First, none of us thinks independently without bias. We have all been molded by our own culture to think in certain ways. In other words, no one exists who has not been influenced by the culture and thus bias, so we can't say that there is any one view that is absolutely true. It's influenced by the culture, and as culture changes, views change. That's pretty much what we see today. We see truth changing because we believe that truth is relative and changes with our culture. We've seen it creep into every sphere of our modern world.

The second principle of postmodernism is you cannot judge or pronounce wrong the thoughts, ideas, or actions of another culture or person because his or her idea of reality is different from yours. In other words, you can't say that's wrong and this is right, or that's right or that's wrong. Just because someone has a different view than you have, you can't say one is right and one is wrong.

The third principle of postmodernism is each person's reality is in his or her own mind. You create your own reality. You construct your own reality—whatever is real to you is your reality. I would love to have had this view when I was in school taking math tests. The math teacher said (which they normally did), "John, you got most of your answers wrong." I would have been able to say, "Well, they're right to me. As far as I'm concerned I got 100 percent, and who are you to tell me that my answers are wrong? Your answers are right to you and my answers are right to me." We create our own reality.

Fourthly, in postmodernism, none of us can prove anything. They actually like to use that concept of you can't prove anything, whether we use science, history, or any other set of facts. This is one of the reasons why we even see an abandonment of history today. "The holocaust didn't really happen. It's all fake," and "We can't really prove anything. We can't really know anything is certain." In essence, postmodernism goes beyond modernism, which claims that all moral and ethical truth are relative. Postmodernism says there is no absolute truth anywhere. Postmodernists believe that all truth is always changing whether it is spiritual, moral, and political—even scientific truth is suspect. Postmodernists believe all truth is manufactured, a product of the culture in which we live and the language we use. We are all just products of our culture, cogs in a social machine.

This view is not just the world's view, but it's becoming the church's view. So many times in the church today, especially in those that have abandoned the truth of God's Word—they don't hold to an inerrant, infallible Word of God; the Word of God is not all true, not inerrant or infallible. They then start to drift with the culture around them. Today we have a new definition of tolerance that has spread. It's promoted by the idea that we should be accepting of all views as

equally valid. The traditional view of tolerance was that you may disagree with someone but would allow them to hold their differing view considering it wrong and maybe they needed to change yet you were tolerant of them and their view. Today, tolerance is redefined as all views are equally right, equally valid, and no one has a corner on truth; all values are equal, all lifestyles are equal, and all truth claims are equal. You can see how this could affect Christianity and why, as we stand on truth, we believe in truth. We believe in absolute truth. We believe that God's Word is true. We believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but by Him. That corresponds with reality. As Christians, we must maintain a Christian world view or a Biblical world view, that absolute truth does exist, is found in the Bible, God's Word, and that Jesus Christ is truth who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." That is a very, very unpopular position to take in our culture today.

The second thing I want to say (and we need to get moving along here), I want to point out that it is the pastor's or shepherd's responsibility, the spiritual leader's job, to watch for and warn the flock of false teachers. Again, even in the church today this is becoming less popular, yet it's in the Scriptures. If you're teaching the Bible, going through the Bible, you're going to find warnings of this nature in the Scriptures. If the church is the flock of God, and pastors (which is latin for shepherds or under shepherds) are to protect the flock, then it's part of their responsibility not only to teach the positive doctrines, which we've done through the book of Romans, but also to warn against the dangerous doctrines that are being promulgated in the world today and in our culture around us. Jesus Himself said, "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing. Outwardly, they appear to be sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." A pastor who does not warn the flock of the wolves is a hireling. Pastors are to protect God's flock from error and seek to establish them in the truth of God's Word.

In this text we are going to find Paul making a three-fold pleas. I want you to notice them. The first plea or warning that he gives is for vigilance (verse 17). Paul says, "Now I beseech you, brethren," I beg you brethren. Paul is on his knees begging the believers, the brethren, "...mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." I want you to notice the first thing that we are supposed to do. We are to "mark them." What does that mean? It means we don't kill them, we don't crucify them, and we don't persecute them. In the middle ages they had witch hunts where they would go out and look for people they considered heretics and would burn them at the stake. Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those which persecute you." We are not supposed to go out and persecute them, but he does say "mark them," which means keep your eye on them. That's literally what that phrase means—just watch them; keep your eye on them. We actually get our word "scope" from this phrase as in telescope or microscope. We get our word "bishop" as well, which means to oversee. By the way, the word "bishop" is a synonym for pastor or elder. The bishop, the pastor, the elder, the overseer are different terms conveying different aspects to the job of the pastor or minister, one being to keep an eye out ever vigilant for those who would bring false doctrine and cause division. Scope them out. Keep your eye upon them.

In Acts 20:28, when Paul met with the elders, the pastors, or the bishops of the church in

Ephesus, he said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God," which, by the way, is where we get our concept of pastor, "...which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. 32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." When Paul met with these elders on the beach at Ephesus (which, by the way, is my favorite place to have Bible study—on the beach. I like to have Bible study, and I'd like to have it on the beach. That's kind of cool.) I remember one time I was doing devotions for a Christian surf school. They asked me to come do "devos." We had "devos" on the beach. When we were praying, I had one eye open on the waves and was like, "Let's get this prayer over so we can ride a few waves when this is over." So, I can picture these elders there in Ephesus on the beach praying, and maybe one of them had an eye open looking for the surf, checking out the waves as they were praying.

Paul says, "Look, I want you to do two things. First, watch and secondly warn." That's the pastor's job. He is to be a watcher and a warner. I promise you, it happens to me all the time, whenever I point out false teachers, and it depends upon how specific I get on whether I name names, somebody always gets upset with me. "Pastor John, that's not nice. I like that person. As a matter of fact, I just sent them a bunch of money. I watch them on tv." They just can't seem to understand the idea that we need to think Biblically. We need to be discerning. Again, it's not a witch hunt, and we don't go with a critical, fault-finding censorious judgmental attitude of we're better than they are. Jesus said, "Judge not lest you be judged." He's not talking about that, Matthew 7. It's talking about protecting the flock from wolves. If you are a good shepherd you are going to protect your sheep from being eaten by wolves. What would you think of a shepherd that just let a wolf come and pick out a lamb, whatever one he wanted, just don't touch me, Mr. Wolf, go ahead and have Mr. Lamb—a shepherd that wouldn't fight to protect the sheep? Really, the most loving thing that Paul could do (you move from Paul's loving heart to Paul's protective heart) was to warn them to keep an eye on them. I believe the congregation, you as members of this church, needs to keep an eye out for those that would cause division and doctrines contrary to that which you've learned (I'll talk more about that in just a moment).

In Ezekiel 3:17 God said, "...I have made thee a watchman..." in those days they would have people who would sit on the wall and watch for the enemy. The watchman had to stay awake and stay vigilant. The watchman had to keep his eyes open. What would you think of a watchman sleeping on his watch? Or a watchman that couldn't see? The watchman needed to be vigilant and watch.

Paul said to the elders at Ephesus, "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," not only to share the doctrines but warn you about the false doctrines. What are they watching for? In verse 17, watching for "...them which cause divisions and offences." I'll try not to tarry on that, but divisions are those who

divide churches into factions that are loyal to themselves. In other words, they come into the church, get a following, and start putting down the leadership, the things about the church, and start drawing people away from the church to themselves. They basically pull the church into divisions and factions. They are divisive.

There are also those who cause “offences” (verse 17). They not only divide the church, factions, but also cause “offences.” That’s the classic word skandalon where we get our word “scandal.” It was used of a trap, and they would use this to trap birds. The fowler or bird catcher would use this little trap to catch birds, but the concept is that of stumbling someone. They add things to the Bible that cause people to stumble—things that aren’t Biblical or Scriptural. They add it to the Scriptures causing people to be offended and to stumble. I think of the pharisees as an example of those who were legalists. Jesus Himself said that they put heavy burdens upon the people that they cannot bear. There are those today who put burdens upon people that they cannot bear.

Notice verse 17. These things are “...contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.” In the context, what doctrines is Paul referring to? Well, I believe it’s all doctrine that Paul taught, apostolic truth or apostolic doctrine contained in the New Testament, but I think it would be awful fitting to view this as the doctrines laid out in the book of Romans. In context, I believe, that it’s in the book of Romans. What are the basic doctrines in the book of Romans? First, man is a sinner under the condemnation and judgment of God. Again, not a popular view, but it’s taught in the Bible and clearly laid out in the book of Romans. In the first section of Romans is man’s condemnation. Do you know that you can’t really even see the need for the gospel without seeing that man is sinful and needs a Saviour? We have a lot of preaching today that focuses on the good news and the love of God, which is wonderful, but what good is that if man is not a sinner and doesn’t need salvation? If man is not going to hell apart from God’s saving redemptive grace, then why do I need a Saviour? I can just become a good person or go to church, believe in God, or reform the way I live. The truth is that we are lost without Christ, and we need a Saviour. We need to be saved.

When you are witnessing and sharing the gospel, you need to make sure that people understand, “Look, it’s not just try Jesus, He’ll make you a better musician or better businessman or help you to sell more cars on your used car lot or He’ll make your marriage more wonderful, and He’ll give you joy and peace and make you happy.” If you don’t accept Jesus you’re going to hell. You’re going to die in your sins, and you will go to hell for all eternity. It’s a message like that that cause people to want to punch you out! “Don’t tell me that. The audacity that you would tell me that I’m a sinner, and that I’m going to hell!” Again, that’s what the Bible teaches. Either we think Biblically and face reality or to undermine that is to undermine the very gospel message. Before the good news you’ve got to have bad news. The bad news is that we are all sinners, and we are lost. The good news is that God loved us and sent His Son to die for us; and we can repent, believe in Jesus, be saved, have everlasting life, and He can save us from hell. The doctrine of Romans is that man is a sinner.

How is man saved? By faith. The Bible teaches very clearly, and very clearly in the book of

Romans, that we're saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ—it's grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone. The doctrine of justification by faith cannot be watered down, cannot be weakened, and cannot be changed. God declares us righteous based on our faith alone in Christ alone by the grace of God alone. We don't work with God to save us—He does the saving. We just receive that work that He has done on the cross for us. Anybody that teaches doctrines contrary to that is preaching a false gospel.

Secondly, I want you to notice the plea for separation. This is not enough just to mark them, but now he tells us to avoid them. Notice at the end of verse 17 he says, "... and avoid them. 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." The first thing we're supposed to do is avoid them. Don't debate with them. Don't have Bible study with them. Don't hang out with them. Don't listen to them. Don't watch them. Don't read their books. Don't listen to them on the radio. Avoid them. In 1 Timothy 6:3-5, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness," Paul says this, "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness," or that godliness is a way to get rich, "from such withdraw thyself." These are peddlers of corrupt doctrine.

Why should we keep away from them or avoid them? Notice in your Bible, two reasons (verse 18), their motivation, "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly..." how's that for a graphic word picture? They're serving their own belly. What does that mean? It means that they're doing it for their own gain, for their own desires, and for their own profit. They are not doing it for the glory of God. They're not in ministry for the kingdom of God. They're in it for their own selfish gains. They are serving their own belly, or some translations have their own sinful appetites—self-indulgence, self-gratification, money, power, and many times sexual immorality.

As I read in 1 Timothy 6:5, supposing that godliness is a way to get rich, there are a lot of health and wealth preachers today. They are prevalent on the television today—if you have enough faith God wants you to be rich. If you have enough faith God wants you to be perfectly healthy. It's called the health and wealth gospel or prosperity doctrine. If you're a Christian, a King's kid, you ought to drive a nice car—King's kids drive nice cars. If you have enough faith you're going to drive a Rolls-Royce or Maserati or whatever it might be. You'll be wearing a Rolex watch if you're really spiritual. They just do that for their own selfish gain.

Notice what it says in verse 18, "... and by good words and fair speeches..." this is another reason that you should avoid them. Notice they come with flattery. That phrase "good words and fair speeches" means smooth talk and flattery. They're great orators. They're exciting to listen to. They are captivating and exciting, but their doctrine is off. It's false—aberrant. So many times they come with smooth, flattering speeches telling the people what they want to hear—itching their ears. It's so common and so prevalent today. Notice what they do, "...

deceive the hearts of the simple,” or naive or the unsuspecting. One of the hardest things for me to watch is a young believer or even someone who has been a Christian for a long time, the undiscerning, follow the false teaching or false doctrine and be led astray. They won’t submit to admonition or instruction. They don’t want to give heed to God’s Word. They just want what feels good, what appeals to them, what tickles their ear, what they like, what’s palatable, what’s good. A lot of times, with some false preachers, it’s not what they say—it’s what they don’t say. You have to listen very carefully. As you listen to them and say, “Well, what’s wrong with that? Wow, that sounds okay to me. Wow, that sounds pretty good.” Notice what they don’t say. Notice they don’t talk about sin, repentance, or holy living. Now, these aren’t things that you do to be saved, but these are things that you do because you are saved. Those are things that make us uncomfortable. We don’t like those things.

Lastly, I want you to notice (verses 19-20) Paul’s plea for discernment. Paul says, “For your obedience is come abroad...,” there are those that can be deceived by fair speeches and good words, and their hearts can be deceived, but he’s writing to the Romans saying, “For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf...,” in other words, you Romans are strong in the Word. You haven’t been led astray. Paul is saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It’s better to warn the people about false doctrine than to stay silent, have them go into it, and then try to bring them out. He’s actually saying to the Romans that this doctrine hasn’t gotten a hold of you yet, and I’m glad. He says, “...but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” In other words, stay focused on the truth. Stay focused on sound doctrine. Stay focused. Keep your mind meditating on that which is good, and be simple or unmixed with false doctrine concerning that which is evil. You don’t need to know every detail about every cult, every aberrant doctrine, and every false teaching that comes along. You can’t keep abreast of those things, but what you can do is specialize in the truth. The way to do that is to immerse yourself in the Bible, the Word of God—know the truth and the truth will set you free. Know the truth and the minute an error comes along you’re going to know it’s wrong.

I was talking with a sister from our church last Sunday. She said someone knocked on her door and wanted to have a Bible study with them. They had all these crazy ideas that were aberrant and weird, and they were having Bible studies and talking to them. I warned her not to listen to or follow that, not to let them come into her home, and not to sit down and study the Bible with them. The Bible says not only to mark them but to avoid them. We need to be simple about what is evil but wise about that which is good. We need to be thinking Biblically, know the truth, and be grounded in sound doctrine—wise in that which is good and simple in that concerning evil.

I want you to notice (verse 20) that Paul closes with another benediction. He can’t seem to wrap up this letter, and after he does that (we still have next week) he goes for another seven verses. Notice he says, “And the God of peace...,” a blessed title for God, “...shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Then he wishes them, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” Here again is a simple benediction, a pronouncement of blessing.

There are three surprises in verse 20 that I want to point out. First, that the God of peace should crush anyone. What an interesting concept—"the God of peace shall bruise..." or crush "...Satan under your feet." The second surprise in verse 20 is that the crushing of satan should be under our feet. God would use you and me to crush the devil. Do you want to know how He does that? He does that by saving you by His grace, by sanctifying you by His Spirit, and then as you walk in the truth of God's Word, you are crushing satan under your feet. It has a past, present, and future tense just like salvation. We've been saved, we're being saved, and we will be saved. Your testimony, your life, and when you walk in the truth, one of the things that satan does not want you to know and to live is the truth of God's Word. He wants to keep Christians ignorant of God's Word. If he can keep you ignorant of God's Word then he can keep you defeated as a Christian. When you talk about the armour of God in Ephesians 6, you have what holds it all together—the belt of truth. If you take off the belt of truth, everything falls apart.

When I was in Florida a few weeks ago, I was preaching without a belt. I got on the airplane, took off, and I went to this conference. I'm preaching, and I couldn't move. I had to stand behind the pulpit and hold my pants up the whole time I was talking. It would've been dangerous for me to step away from the pulpit, so on my next session, I had to borrow a belt from somebody, "Can I borrow a belt? I think my pants are going to fall off," not a good idea. It holds everything together. If you lose truth everything falls apart. So as we live the truth and walk the truth, satan is being bruised under our feet.

The third surprise is that the crushing is going to happen soon. Notice what he says in verse 20. He says, "...the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Do you know that word "shortly" has two meanings. The first means "quickly" or "with rapidity." It will happen quickly and swiftly. The other meaning is that it will happen soon in chronology or time-wise. When it happens, it'll happen swiftly; and when it happens, it happens soon. You say, "Well, which of the two is it?" I think it's both. As they walked in the truth, God brought victory over satan in their lives crushing satan under their feet. Do you know that when you just read the Bible and put it into practice you're defeating the devil in your life? It happened at the time that they were living.

I want to wrap this up by giving you three words that summarize how we should respond to false teachings and those that cause divisions contrary to the doctrines which we've learned. The first word is observation—keep your eyes open. Let me put it in real crude simple terms, don't be a dodo bird. Open your eyes. I have no idea what a dodo bird is but don't be one, okay? I meet more gullible Christians. They believe everyone, everything, every book, every ministry, "Oh, it's just hunky-dory. It's just wonderful." Again, I understand. I don't want to be divisive. I don't want to be mean. I want to get along. I have great liberty. I can hang out with Christians that are weird and don't think like me. I accept my brothers that do different things than I. I love them in the Lord. I'm ecumenical in that sense. I don't want to build walls, I want to build bridges. On the other hand, we must earnestly contend for the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints.

In the postmodern world that we live in today, the church is in danger of losing the truth of the

gospel. We have to stand for truth. I don't care what happens on the Oprah show. I don't care what goes on in our culture, but we see it right now happening so heavily politically. You can't say anything is wrong or bad. You can't be against anything. Everything has to be open and free and, "Let's love one another, hold hands, and sing Kumbaya." There are dangers. If you're a parent and your kids are playing in the front yard, don't you keep an eye on them? My wife was so vigilant when our kids were toddlers in the front yard. I was always getting in trouble. "John, you're supposed to be watching them," as they're going down the middle of the street in their big wheels. They're going to get run over because Dad's just distracted by other things. You keep a vigilant eye out. You watch the kids. You make sure that no one comes in to harm them. They're protected in your yard. We need to, "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Observation. If someone speaks is what they're saying Scripture—not just from the Scripture, is it Scriptural?

Do you know there is a difference from something being from the Scripture and being Scriptural? Do you know that cults quote the Bible? Do you know the devil quotes the Bible? Satan quotes Scripture, and the devil believes in God. He comes as an angel of light. When he knocks on your door, he doesn't have horns and a pitchfork saying, "Hey, I'm the devil. I came to kill, steal, and destroy. Do you want to follow me?" When your doorbell rings, that person doesn't say, "Hey we're from the local cult group. We're not really Christians, we want you to believe we are, but we're not really Christians. We're a cult, but we're going to damn your soul to hell. Would you like to join us?" No. "We're Christians. Oh yeah, we believe in Jesus. Oh yeah, we believe that we're saved by grace." They use the same terminology—Christianese. They've got it down, "... by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." You've got to be careful.

The second word is confrontation. Not only myself and the other pastors in this church, but if you, as members of this church, see somebody causing division, spreading doctrine that is contrary to the Word of God of that which you've learned then you need to confront them—lovingly confront them. We don't like that. We don't like confrontation, but we need to confront this.

The third word is separation—observation, confrontation, separation. There is a time and a place where spiritual leadership tells somebody in the church, "You're not welcome here. You can't come here and spread your false doctrine and your lies dividing the body of Christ." There is a time to protect the sheep. There is a time to separate from them. So, we need to be observing with our eyes open. We need to confront false doctrine, and there are times when we need to separate ourselves from them. Don't let the world press you into its mold. Be loving but uncompromising. Speak the truth in love. Truth without love is brutality—love without truth is hypocrisy. We need both. Let's pray.