

Wise as to What is Good

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[0 : 00] If you'd open your Bibles to Romans chapter 16, the passage that Pastor Colin has asked to be read before he preaches is Romans 16 and verses 17 to 20.

And I'll be reading out of the ESV. 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 naive.

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. Well, we are back in Romans.

[1 : 17] After a rather lengthy, unexpected hiatus. And so I want to say I thank the Lord for the good that he has done in our family. November 6th, I ruptured my Achilles.

And one month later to the day, we learned of the diagnosis of Piper. And yet even through those trials that the Lord has brought, he has been working good in our family. He's been working to his glory.

And we praise him for that. We thank you for all the ways in which you've loved our family. You've supported our family. You've prayed for us. We've received many cards, phone calls, hospital visits, physical visits, unexpected blessings, meals.

Thank you so much for how you have loved our family. How you've prayed for us and cared for us. The Lord has been answering your prayers. We give thanks to him for that. We thank him for all of you. So we are returning to Romans.

And if you remember a couple months back, we started this short three-part miniseries of sorts in Romans. Now on the surface, this miniseries might feel a little bit strange.

[2 : 25] Like we're just bouncing around in Romans. First we were in Romans 12. And then we were in Romans 15. And now this morning we're in Romans 16.

Why are we in all of these places? Maybe you remember something of a common thread. Maybe you remember something of the theme. Each of these passages begins with an appeal.

With an appeal from the author of Romans who is Paul. Romans 12 verse 1. I appeal to you therefore, brothers. Romans 15 verse 30.

I appeal to you brothers. And then here again. Romans 16 verse 17. I appeal to you brothers. So Paul is doing this urging.

And it's not just to anybody. It's to brothers and sisters in Christ. First to the Roman Christians. But now also to us. And what are the specific appeals that Paul is making?

[3 : 30] Kids, maybe we remember just a little bit of those hand motions that we learned together a couple months ago. You remember in Romans 12 we learned that we're to be devoted to God.

That we're to serve Him. And so we have our hands out in service to Him as a living sacrifice. And then in Romans 15. Kids, we learned that we're to pray for one another.

And God's appeal to us to pray. And so we can put our hands together in prayer. And then today we're learning that we're to be on guard. And we're to have our hearts and our minds guarded from all that is false.

So those are the three appeals that God has given to us. And so here in Romans 16. We can think of this appeal in a very simple way. In a two-fold way.

There's an encouragement. And there's also an exhortation. There's an encouragement. And there's also an exhortation. So the exhortation is what God has called us to now.

[4 : 33] It's what God has called us to do today. And the encouragement is what God has promised to do soon. So there's the exhortation today.

And there's the encouragement for what God will soon do. So let's see first the exhortation. Let's see what God has called us to do. And we see that in verses 17 through 19.

Let me read just those verses again. 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 naive.

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.

[5 : 34] So this is a rather lengthy exhortation that God gives to us through Paul. So we can break that exhortation down even into just three commands that we see here in this text.

The first is to watch out. And the second is to avoid. And the third is both be wise and be innocent. So first, Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, calls us to watch out.

We are to have our spiritual eyes peeled. We're to be on high alert. Paul actually uses this same word here for watch out in another one of his letters.

In Philippians 3.17. And he uses it there in Philippians with a positive reference in mind. Here's something good that we should be watching out for.

Paul says, Brothers, join in imitating me. And, here it is, Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

[6 : 38] Keep your eyes on them. Watch out. Watch them. Look to them. Be attentive to how they live. And then imitate them. The same word used here now in Romans 16.

But instead of watching for something good, We're to watch for something evil. Watch out for. We're to be on the lookout for those who cause divisions.

And those who create obstacles that are contrary to the doctrine that we've been taught. This is like when Jesus said in Mark 8.15, Watch out.

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. So if you're going to be aware of something, if you're going to be cautious, you need to be wary.

You need to be on guard against possible danger. It's along these same lines that Jesus says in Luke 11.35, Therefore, be careful.

[7 : 41] And now he's speaking in reference to ourselves. Be careful, lest the light in you be darkness. Same word there. Be careful. Watch out.

Watch out. This was the job in biblical times of the watchman who would be posted on the walls of the city. And they were there looking out.

So they were there looking at times for good news, perhaps a messenger coming with news of victory in battle. But they were also watching out for the possibility of the enemy approaching, of the enemy coming to attack the city.

So they couldn't be lazy on the job. The protection of the city depended on those watchmen. Now in the Old Testament, God rebukes the leaders of Israel for failing to lead the nation.

And to illustrate this, he says in Isaiah 56 that these leaders are like watchmen. But instead of standing at the ready, instead of being prepared to see the enemies, those who might hurt the people, he says they love to sleep.

[8 : 54] And they leave the people unguarded and susceptible to being attacked. And then right on the heels of this illustration, God gives another. Another illustration in Isaiah 56 to describe these inept, ungodly leaders.

He calls them shepherds. Now kids, think about a shepherd. What's a shepherd supposed to do? If a watchman is supposed to protect the people in the city, the shepherd is also supposed to protect sheep.

Aren't they? That's the job of a shepherd. They're supposed to guard the sheep. A bad shepherd would leave the sheep vulnerable to being attacked by predators.

And that's what the leaders of Israel were like. So God says in Isaiah 56, 11, But they are shepherds who have no understanding. They have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all.

So leaders who fail to watch over those that they are leading. They are like shepherds who fail to watch over their sheep. That same imagery now from Isaiah 56 in the Old Testament.

[10:06] We also find it in the New Testament. Paul again, in the book of Acts, he's been living and ministering in Ephesus. He's been there for a number of years, and now he is sharing a farewell address to the leaders in the church, to the elders.

So keep your place in Romans 16 if you can, and turn over with me to Acts chapter 20. Acts chapter 20. So here we find the author of Romans, Paul, who's been in Ephesus, preaching and teaching and giving counsel, and he's been giving help to this young church and to their elders, to their pastors.

Now listen to the words that he says, speaking of them also as shepherds. Beginning in verse 28. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

Therefore, be alert. So Paul here, he's drawing on the same language from Isaiah 56 of shepherding, and he's using the same watchfulness language as well.

[11:38] Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock. Therefore, be alert. I think there's pretty direct application here, and also in Romans 16 for Pastor John and I as pastors, as shepherds.

We too are to be watchful. We're to be caring for your souls, guarding you against those who would seek to lead you astray. Now, this is a high calling because of who God says that you are.

You who are in Christ, you are the church of God. You are his prized possession. You have been bought with his precious blood. You're not just a group of friendly people that happen to get together on a Sunday morning just to be together because you like it.

You're the church of God. And so there's a high calling to guard and protect the church of God. In fact, the chief shepherd himself, he protected.

He laid down his life in order to ransom you, in order to redeem you, in order to make you his own. He shed his blood on the cross. Didn't he say himself, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep?

[12:59] So the undershepherds have a great responsibility. The undershepherds have a solemn charge given to guard those entrusted to them.

And how are the undershepherds supposed to do that? How are they supposed to carry out that responsibility to guard? Well, Paul answers that question in Acts chapter 20. And he gives himself as the example to them.

So we're applying Philippians 3:17 right here in Acts 20. We're looking to Paul and we're seeking to understand him and imitate him. We're seeking to keep our eyes on him.

So what do we see when we look at him? How did he guard the Ephesian church? Well, look at how he begins his farewell address. In the middle of verse 18. You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.

So we see here, Paul made it his aim to serve the Lord. We're going to see soon the aim of false teachers and who they serve. But here we see Paul serve the Lord.

[14:18] And we see kind of three qualifiers. With humility. With tears. With trials. Paul was humble. Paul was selfless.

Paul was not in it for his own gain. He was in it to serve the Lord. And he did it with tears. He was moved in his heart for those that he was shepherding.

He loved them deeply. He wanted their good. And so he would weep even over them. In fact, he even says that. He says it back in verse 31.

Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. So his heart was stirred for them.

So there's a mark of those who truly serve the Lord. They do it with tears. And also with trials, Paul says. They endure trials for the sake of God's people.

[15:17] That's what Paul did. Think of the suffering that Paul endured. He says in 2 Timothy 2 beginning in verse 8, Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal.

But the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

So we even see something of Paul's humility there, don't we? He doesn't say, Remember me and how great I am. Remember how winsomely I preached the word to you. Honor me now.

He says, Remember Jesus Christ. And he says, I suffer. I suffer on your account. I suffer for you. So there's a willingness to suffer for others.

Paul lived among the Ephesians not for his own selfish gain, not for selfish ambition, not for financial gain. He wasn't setting out to live a comfortable life. And so trying to do that through the Ephesians, he served the Lord with tears and with trials.

[16:32] So the first thing that we see here is that Paul guarded, not by putting himself first, but by serving. He guarded the flock by serving the Lord.

But we can see even more of how he guarded the church. We can see even a more precise way that he guarded the church in verse 20. Paul says in Acts 20, 20, I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So how did he guard the flock? He preached the word of God to them. He taught them what God had to say. He preached to them. Not his words, but God's word.

That makes sense. Those who are serving the Lord are going to give the Lord's word. Those who are serving themselves are going to give their own words.

The one who serves himself preaches what he wants to say. What he likes. What he thinks.

Perhaps what he could use to manipulate others.

[17:49] He's self-consumed. But Paul isn't concerned with exalting himself. Paul is concerned with exalting the Lord. So much so that he is ready here in Acts 20 to leave Ephesus and to go to Jerusalem knowing, because God had revealed it to him, that imprisonment and affliction awaited him there.

But he said, I'm ready to go. I'm ready to go. And why was he so ready? Look at verse 24. I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself if only I may finish my course in the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

So there's his aim. With all humility, he's going to serve the Lord. Not himself. And how did he carry that out in Ephesus? How will he then carry that out in Jerusalem?

By testifying to the gospel of the grace of God. By proclaiming the word. By holding it forth to the lost. By holding it forth to Christians and encouraging them from it.

Exhorting them. He says in verse 27, I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. And with those words, he leads them into what he said in verse 28.

[19:18] Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock. Paul did that. He paid attention to himself and to all the flock.

In the most practical way that he did it. Humbly serving the Lord by preaching the word of God to the people day and night with tears, through trials.

And now Paul is exhorting the Ephesian elders to do the same. Watch over the flock that God has entrusted to you. And so there's application for Pastor John and I.

We are to be watching over the flock. But when we read Romans 16, Paul is not making his words exclusively to elders. He's not saying, shepherds, pay careful attention.

Shepherds, watch out. Shepherds are included in his words. But he says, watch out, brothers. He's speaking to all of us, shepherds and sheep. We all are to be watchful.

[20:22] For what? Why this hyper-vigilance? Why are we called to be on high alert? Well, turn back now to Romans 16. And look again at verse 17.

What are we wary of? What are we on guard against? He says in verse 17, those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught.

Very real enemies. Those opposing God. Those opposing His people. And they are doing what? They are causing these divisions. They are creating these obstacles.

So what we really have here is a lack of unity and a lack of truth. A lack of unity, we see that in the divisions and in the obstacles.

But we also see a lack of truth in that what's creating those divisions, what's creating those obstacles, is what is doctrine that is contrary to what we've been taught.

[21 : 25] Unity and truth. John Calvin said, men are distracted from the unity of the truth when the truth of God is destroyed by doctrines of human invention.

So that's what false teachers do. That's what false teaching does. It distracts us from the unity around the truth of God. And it creates divisions.

And it creates obstacles that we stumble over. So we work for unity. Yes, but we do that by maintaining sound doctrine.

Paul doesn't say here, make sure you just stay united. Just be one and it'll all work out. He doesn't say that.

He says that we're to guard against division first by guarding against false doctrine. In the same way that if we were feeling sick and we were constantly running a fever, we wouldn't just keep popping the ibuprofen and thinking, this will sustain me for the next 20 years.

[22 : 34] No, we would think, I need to figure out what's causing this fever. There must be some underlying problem that's going on. I need to get to the root of the matter. Our goal isn't to just fight the fever.

Our goal is to fight whatever's causing the fever. In the same way, we are to guard against false teaching that would then cause division in the church.

We can see why division would come about. Because as verse 18 says, 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 naive. Do you see the contrast? Do you see the difference between the false teachers presented here in Romans 16 and the example of Paul given to us in Acts 20?

Who did Paul serve? The Lord Christ. Who do the false teachers serve? Themselves. They serve their own appetites. They're trying to satisfy their own desires.

[23 : 43] So they are self-seeking. They are self-exalting. They want the praise of men. They're self-serving. Listen to Paul's words from Philippians 3 again, but one verse later than the one we've already heard.

Verse 18. For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears. There's his tears again. They walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly. And they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things. So we're given a mark here of false teachers.

They're in it for themselves. Not for those that they're leading and not for those that they are teaching. They're in it for their own selfish gain. They want all that this world has to offer and they will gain it at the expense of God's people.

They want the platform for personal gain. So shepherds and sheep alike, we are all to be watchful for such people.

[24 : 46] We're to be on the lookout. And when we spot them, what does Paul say next in verse 17? Very simple. Avoid them. Avoid them.

Which means don't even entertain what it is that they are saying. Now simple enough in theory. Watch out for someone who's against God. Watch out for someone who promotes lies and hates the truth.

It almost goes without saying, yeah, right, we should avoid them. Yes. But here's the challenge. They present themselves as worthy of being listened to.

They present themselves as having something that we desperately need. They present themselves as having answers to questions that we're asking, as having solutions to problems that we are encountering or perhaps even problems that we hadn't thought we had encountered but they're telling us that we have.

It's like a salesman coming to your door saying, here's something you need. And you think, I didn't realize that I needed it. And then he convinces you quickly you need it and you need to give me a thousand dollars to fix the problem.

[25 : 52] And so we think, I probably do. Someone came to our door recently saying, you should have your foundation inspected. And I thought, I don't want to know what you have to say because you're going to tell me that I need to spend tens of thousands of dollars to fix a problem.

I don't know if I can trust that it's actually true. So too with false teachers. They woo us. They can deceive us. So avoiding in theory is easy.

But in reality, in the everyday experience of life, it's much harder. People who present themselves as teachers. People who present themselves as experts.

As having a position of authority. Or maybe I should say it this way. People who would convince us that we need to listen to them. That they have something to say that we must hear.

And perhaps they even couch it in Christian sounding language. That's much harder to detect. That is much harder to avoid. Now we might be tempted to think, aren't false teachers kind of a thing of the past?

[27 : 03] Maybe we are only thinking of charismatic speakers on TV who are behind glass pulpits and they're asking you for money. And maybe you're thinking, I don't watch that.

I know to stay away from that. In fact, I don't even know if those programs are still on anymore. Maybe they're not. Maybe they're not as prevalent as they once were. But does that mean then that just false teaching is fading away?

Of course not. Remember when Jesus, His disciples came to Him and asked Him in Mark 13, what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

And what did Jesus say? See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in My name, saying, I am the Christ. And they will lead many astray.

Or how about 1 John 2, verse 18. Children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come.

[28 : 04] So the testimony of Scripture is that people who would lead us astray are actively at work now and they will continue to be at work until Jesus returns.

The false teaching may come to us in ways that change. The medium may change. But don't think that false teaching is fading away. Now, more than ever in human history, we can have contact with false teachers and false teaching.

Perhaps somebody who's been duped by a false teacher. Maybe even more dangerous to us is the person who in all earnestness and sincerity is seeking to say something that they think is good and right and true and it's not.

And we have easy access to those people at the swipe of a finger, at the scroll on our phones, we are inundated through social media, through just the internet in general, with blogs and articles and websites and podcasts and all kinds of mediums with people promoting all kinds of ways to think and to live.

On social media, there's a term for these kinds of people. Influencers. I mean, think about the term itself for just a minute. Influencers. We're not even trying to mask what we're doing.

[29 : 28] We are trying to influence. That is what people are doing. Self-proclaimed swears of our hearts and minds. Unashamedly saying, listen to me, I have the wisdom, I have the knowledge, I have the know-how that you need to hear.

Now, of course, some of what we encounter is good and helpful and encouraging our growth and grace, but so much of it absolutely isn't. Social media is filled with people who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that we've been taught.

So don't be fooled. We don't live in a time where false teaching is fading away. We don't live in a time when false teachers are perhaps on our TVs and we're watching and eagerly listening to them. Perhaps we don't live in a day and age, even like Paul, where false teachers were kind of traveling teachers going around and some teachers were good and some were bad and we don't have teachers just kind of wandering into our church.

But now, more than ever, people claiming to be Christians who you've never met, who you know very little about, who know nothing about you, they have easy, unhindered access to our hearts and our minds.

[30 : 46] And by smooth talk, and flattery, they deceive the hearts of the naive. So the public square in Paul's day was a very physical place.

And we have a sense in which the public square is still physical. Those of us who are going to work, interacting with our neighbors, we are hearing things, we're talking to people that we must be careful of what we believe.

But so much so, the public square has just kind of moved from a physical place to a virtual place where thoughts and ideas are still being shared in convincing fashion.

So watch out. It's a word for us. Don't be deceived. Don't be lulled to sleep. Satan continues to scheme. And the world continues to operate under his influence, seeking to woo us away from the

truth and to believe all kinds of lies.

It is, as Colossians 2 says, man-made philosophy. It is empty deceit. And it's that that seeks to capture us with just the swipe of a finger.

[31 : 55] Over and over again in the Bible, this warning to be watchful is given. And you know any time that there is repetition in the Bible, it means that God is grabbing our attention.

He's helping us to see this is valuable for us to consider. We need to not forget. It needs to be before our eyes so over and over again we are told to be watchful.

Like when Jesus was speaking to the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26, 41, watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Or how about 1 Corinthians 16, 13, Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

1 Thessalonians 5, 6, So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 1 Peter 1, 13, Therefore preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[33 : 09] 2 John, verse 8, Watch yourselves so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. So what is your posture this morning?

Are you like a watchman who is posted on the wall, on high alert, ready to see even the slightest movement on the horizon? Or have you been lulled to sleep, sleeping on duty, believing that you're safe, you're secure?

Any kind of talk of false teaching, that's not applicable to me. Thinking that false teachers, oh, they're easy and obvious to spot. If we think that way, Satan has us right where he wants us.

That is deception at its finest. Like a frog in a pot of water that is slowly boiling. And all we're thinking is, I sure do like a nice, warm, relaxing bath.

So we're to be on guard. We're to watch out. We're to avoid. And then lastly, we're to be wise and be innocent. Verse 19, So first here, we see in this verse something that we should be striving for.

[34 : 38] We should be making it our aim that our obedience would be known to all. What wonderful words of encouragement that Paul is giving to the Roman church. Your obedience is known.

We want our reputation to be, these people obey Christ. They submit their lives to him. They humbly keep his commandments. They do what he tells them to do.

Your obedience is known to all. And as we live that way, this is a source of joy for our fellow Christians. We're called to stir one another up to love and good works in Hebrews chapter 10.

Well, that's a concrete way to do it. By our obedience, we are encouraging our brothers and sisters to also live in obedience. We see each other's obedience and it motivates us.

It moves us. Yes, continue. Keep the faith. Continue walking in sweet fellowship with Christ. I see my brothers doing it. I see my sisters doing it. And it moves me also, just as it did Paul.

[35 : 40] He's overflowing with joy, rejoicing at their obedience. But then he shares a concern. Paul doesn't want them, in their earnest desire to obey Christ, to then accept and submit themselves to anything and everything that claims to be Christian.

He doesn't want them, out of their desire to obey, they hear somebody say, I have a Christian teaching for you, and they think, okay, I need to do what this person says. They are innocent in one way.

They are innocent in that they are characterized by their obedience. They are innocent in that they are characterized by a lack of sin. But they are also not innocent, or not to be innocent, in another way.

Naive. Accepting anything that comes along and just opening up their minds and believing it. So just because teaching may come and call itself Christian, we shouldn't be mindlessly, uncritically receiving it.

So Paul wants to be sure that they are exercising discernment. To be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil, that is just the long way of saying, be discerning.

[37 : 00] Tell the difference between good and evil. Tell the difference between truth and lies. Paul is concerned that the Romans and us not fall prey to false teaching.

It's why he's giving this warning. Be innocent, but not naive. Innocent and obedient, yes, but innocent and naive, no.

This is what makes false teaching so deceptive. It may have an appearance of godliness, but deny its power. It may have an appearance of godliness, but be a facade.

It's why Satan appears as an angel of light. Satan doesn't come right out and say, hey, I'm against God, and I think you should be too. Let me give you a convincing case to be against God.

That's not his strategy. That would not be a very effective strategy. So he disguises himself, and so do people who serve him. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11, beginning in verse 13, for such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

[38 : 15] And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

So we can't hear something. And that thing says, I am Christian, and just think, okay, this must be good. The lies of the enemy are deceptive.

They are well concealed. They may seem reasonable. They may seem good. They may seem right. Isn't that exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden with Eve?

Satan comes to Eve, and he doesn't just come out and say, let's be against God together. Peter, he's persuasive. He's encouraging her in the worst way.

He says, you will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good from evil.

[39 : 15] That sounds nice. That sounds reasonable. That sounds perhaps good and right. So Eve believed the lie. She looked at the tree, and she saw that it was good for food.

She looked at the tree. She saw that it was a delight to the eyes. She saw that the tree was to be desired to make one wise. I should eat from that tree.

I should take the fruit. God's holding out on me. And so she took and ate. The hearts of the naive are deceived. So how do we combat false teaching?

How do we guard our hearts so that we are not deceived? We do it, Paul says, by being discerning. We know truth from error, good from evil.

And that always requires what? Knowing our Bibles. God the Son, in praying to God the Father, said, your word is truth.

[40 : 14] And then what's the very next thing that he says? Sanctify them in the truth. Make them holy. Make them more righteous in the truth.

And so we are to be sanctified in the truth. We are to know what our Bibles say. We're to live by what our Bibles say. We can't be discerning if we aren't in the word. We can't know doctrine that is contrary to what we've been taught if we do not know what sound doctrine is.

You've probably heard something of this illustration before, but all good illustrations are perhaps worth hearing again. But counterfeit money. Bank tellers don't spend all of their time looking at all of the counterfeit money that comes their way.

Because it's always changing. It's always evolving. They're always getting better at it. So bank tellers don't spend time saying, you know, that feels like counterfeit. Yep, that feels and that looks. I can see they've changed that.

That's bad too. What do they do? They're trained using real money. It's unchanging. It's always the same. It's still just as real as it was. And they learn what is true by examining the real money.

[41 : 25] So too for us as Christians. And we spend our time knowing the truth and we can identify. We can spot. We can avoid the error that comes to us. So you're talking to a co-worker.

You're reading an article. You've come across a YouTube reel. A Facebook reel. And you think, what they're saying? That doesn't sound like what my Bible says.

Where is that in my Bible? Or that interpretation, I haven't heard that before. Is there somewhere else in the scriptures that teaches that plainly? Or is this something new that they've said? So we saturate ourselves in the Word.

We know our Bibles well and we will be all the more discerning. As we meditate on the wisdom of God, we will be made wise. Wise as to what is good and therefore innocent as to what is evil.

So let's be on guard. That's what God calls us to do now. To be watchful. To avoid. To be wise and be innocent. What God calls us to now. That's the exhortation.

[42 : 30] Now here's the encouragement. What God promises to do soon. And it's in verse 20. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Practicing discernment is labor intensive work.

Hebrews 5.14 talks about the mature as those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

So discernment requires training. And we understand training is hard work. Discernment is not just this one time training either. It's not just this infrequent thing that we have to kind of keep up with or yeah I need to do that every once in a while or I'll be out of practice.

Discernment is a constant practice. There's never a time that we're to let our guard down when it comes to the hard work of identifying good from evil. Truth from error.

[43 : 35] It's an all the time reality. So don't think of it as like putting on goggles to go swimming. You don't wear goggles all the time. Think of it as putting on your glasses when you wake up in the morning.

If you have poor vision you need those glasses. You know when you don't have them. You feel it when you don't have them. I hope we would feel it if we were wearing goggles all the time. But we should feel when we're not wearing our glasses.

And so think of it as exercising discernment. Wearing your glasses. You take off your glasses you can't see. You stop exercising discernment you will be deceived.

So Hebrews 5 says the mature are those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice. Now that might sound tiring to us.

Like the watchman who is posted up on the wall and he never gets a break. He never has a fellow watchman who comes and gives him a break from the shift.

[44 : 33] He's just on shift all the time 24-7. Well that's what God has called us to do. So here's the encouragement that we need.

What God has promised to do soon. To crush Satan under our feet. That great deceiver that Satan is who is scheming against us. Who wants us to believe error.

Who wants us to live in disobedience. He will soon be crushed under our feet. There is a coming day when we will not need to discern anymore.

It will be entirely unnecessary. Because Christ will return. Riding a white horse just as Revelation 19 says he will be called faithful and true.

and in righteousness he will judge. So what comfort we have when we remember all that is false. All the lies that we have to fight so hard to not believe.

[45 : 36] All that would lead us away from obedience to Christ. All that would threaten the purity of the church. One day all of that will be no more. and we will no longer have to constantly practice discernment.

The God of peace will bring us true and lasting peace. The Prince of Peace has come. The Prince of Peace will come again and he will bring that rest for us.

And so in that way the new heavens and the new earth they will be even better than the Garden of Eden. We won't have to be watching out for the serpent as Adam and Eve needed to in the Garden. We won't have to avoid him as he comes slithering up in the new heavens and the new earth because he will be crushed under our feet by our Savior just as it was promised all the way back in the Garden of Eden.

When God came to Adam and Eve after they had sinned God spoke to Satan and said I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

[46 : 51] This verse has like a special place for me now having ruptured my Achilles bruising of the heel is not a fun experience. Jesus endured the bruising of the heel at the cross but getting your heel bruised as hard as it is for us to envision perhaps dying upon the cross that is not the same as getting your head crushed.

The bruising of the heel Satan thought I've dealt the death blow and he was wrong. Christ rose from the dead and he's coming back again and what will he do on that day? He's not going to come and bruise Satan's heel.

He's not going to rupture Satan's Achilles. He is going to crush Satan's head. And why is he going and why is it that we can then say he's crushed under our feet?

Well, if Christ is coming to do the crushing why is it that he's crushed under our feet? Because Christ as he reigns in victory will also have us to reign in victory with him.

Just as Revelation 22 says no longer will there be anything accursed but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the new heavens and newer and his servants will worship him.

[48 : 04] They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads and night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun for the Lord God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever.

And when will this glorious reality come to pass? In God's time and what does God say to us in Revelation in Romans 16? Soon. Soon he will crush Satan under our feet.

Have we not experienced a foretaste of that already? In our salvation we know Satan is no longer reigning and ruling in power. Christ has defeated him and he will bring the death blow one day and we look forward to that day.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father what hope you do give to us in your word. What comfort and encouragement we receive as we look to that future day when Christ will return in glory and he will bring all evil to an end.

All sin and death will be no more. And all that would lead us astray all that we have to fight so hard now to not believe to not go towards us.

[49 : 19] We will never have to worry about that again when that day comes. We pray Father that you will keep us until that day that you will preserve us that you will give us grace and strength to fight temptation to believe the truth to be in the truth and to find the truth to be our joy and our delight.

Heavenly Father we pray even this morning that you would open the eyes of the blind that those who are deceived and living under the reign of sin and Satan and believing his lies we pray that you would open their eyes to see the truth of your word that there is life found in Jesus Christ and in him alone.

We pray that you would bring them to salvation and so they might repent and believe. We pray that we would go from here serving you loving you living according to your ways and walking in the truth.

We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.