

1.) The command to separate from deceivers (Romans 16:17-19).

i) The action: Watch out for and avoid divisive false teachers (Romans 16:17).

¹⁷ Now I urge [PAI] you, brothers and sisters,

to watch out for [PAN] those who create/creating [PAP] 1.) divisions 2.) [S] and obstacles [contrary to the teaching [doctrine] that you learned [AAI, ἐμάθετε, educated]].

[P] [and] Avoid [PAM] them,

ii) Reason 1: They are slaves to their own appetites not the Lord (Romans 16:18).

1.) [G] ¹⁸ because such people [H] do not serve [PAI, δουλεύουσιν, slave] our Lord Christ [H] but their own appetites.

They deceive [PAI] the hearts [τὰς καρδίας, minds] of the unsuspecting [with 1.) smooth talk 2.) [S] and flattering words].

iii) Reason 2: Unlike them, you are obedient, so exercise discernment (Romans 16:19).

2.) [G] ¹⁹ [For] The report of your obedience [ὕπακοη] has reached [AMI] everyone.

[I] Therefore a.) I rejoice [PAI] [over you],

b.) [Adv] but I want [PAI] you to be [PAN]

a.) wise [σοφούς] [about what is good [ἀγαθόν]],

b.) [Adv] and yet innocent [ἀκεραίους] [about what is evil [κακόν]].

2.) The desires which enable the command (Romans 16:20).

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

[G] ²⁰ [Now] The God of peace [εἰρήνης] will soon crush [FAI] Satan [under your feet].

ii) The prayer: May the grace of the Lord be with you (Romans 16:20b).

The grace [ἡ χάρις] of our Lord Jesus [be with you].

3.) The community that embodies the command (Romans 16:21-23).

i) Greetings of a co-labourer who stands with Paul (Romans 16:21a).

1.) ²¹ Timothy, my co-worker,

ii) Greetings from fellow countrymen who stand with Paul (Romans 16:21a).

2.) [S] and 1.) Lucius,

b.) [S] [and] Jason,

3.) [S] and Sosipater, my fellow countrymen, greet [PMI] you.

iii) Greetings from the scribe who stands with Paul (Romans 16:22).

3.) ²² I, Tertius, who wrote [AAP] this letter, greet [PMI] you [in the Lord].

iv) Greetings from a whole church who stands with Paul (Romans 16:23a).

4.) ²³ Gaius, who is 1.) host to me 2.) [S] and to the whole church, greets [PMI] you.

v) Greetings from men of renown who stand with Paul (Romans 16:23b).

5.) 1.) Erastus, the city treasurer,

2.) [S] and our brother Quartus greet [PMI] you.

This is how I parse Greek verbs:

- I use a three-letter combination in square brackets (e.g. [PMI] for Present, Middle, Indicative) after a verb, which I underline.
 1. First letter indicates the tense. Tense deals both with time and kind of action.
 2. Second letter indicates the voice. The relation of the subject or agent to the action.
 3. Third letter indicates the mood, participle, or infinitive.
- Tense:
 - P: present, continuous or linear action.
 - I: imperfect, continuous action in the past.
 - F: future, both progressive and punctiliar action.
 - A: aorist, expresses punctiliar action that has happened.
 - R: perfect, represents an action that is complete but has an ongoing resultant state of being.
- Voice:
 - A: active, reflects the subject that performs the action.
 - M: middle, the agent participates in the results of the action.
 - P: passive, subject is being acted upon by someone or something else.
- Mood/participle/infinitive:
 - I: indicative, reality, that which is actually occurring.
 - S: subjunctive, likely to occur.
 - M: imperative, a command that is possible.
 - P: participle, participles are verbal adjectives that behave like a verb and an adjective..
 - N: infinitive, verbal nouns that use the preposition "to", and they can also be used with "ing".

This is how I indicate the function of conjunctions:

- I put a letter in square brackets before a clause to indicate a logical relationship.
 - [S] - SERIES, Each proposition makes an independent contribution to the whole (and, moreover, furthermore).
 - [P] - PROGRESSION, Each proposition is a further step toward a climax (then, and, moreover, furthermore).
 - [A] - ALTERNATIVE, Each proposition expresses an opposite possibility arising from a situation (or, but while...).
 - [W] [Ed] - WAY-END (ACTION-MANNER), Statement of an action and one which tells more explicitly what is involved in carrying out this action (in that, by).
 - [I] [I] - COMPARISON, Statement that clarifies an action or idea by showing what it is like (even as, as...so).
 - [-] [+] - NEGATIVE-POSITIVE, The relationship between two alternatives in which one is denied so the other is enforced, implicit in contrasting statements (not...but).
 - [Gn] [Sp] - GENERAL-SPECIFIC, Statement of a whole and one or more statements which set forth parts of the whole.
 - [Ft] [In] - FACT-INTERPRETATION, Statement and clarifying statement; does not set forth a distinguishable part of the preceding whole.
 - [G] - GROUND, Statement followed by the argument or reason on which it stands; supporting proposition follows the supported proposition (for, since, because).
 - [I]] - INFERENCE, Supporting statement followed by the conclusion drawn from it; supporting proposition precedes the supported proposition (therefore, wherefore, consequently).
 - [C] [E] - CAUSE-EFFECT (ACTION-RESULT), One action and another action which results from the first as an automatic consequence (that, so that, with the result that).
 - [C?] [E] - CONDITIONAL, Like cause-effect except existence of the cause is only potential (if...then, if, except...).
 - [M] [Ed] - MEANS-END (ACTION-PURPOSE), One action and another that is intended as the goal or purpose of the first (in order that, that, lest, to the end that).
 - [T] - TEMPORAL, Proposition and the occasion when it occurs (when, after, before).
 - [L] - LOCATIVE, Proposition and the place where it can be true (where, wherever).
 - [Adv] - ADVERSATIVE, Main clause that stands despite a contrary statement (although, yet, but, nevertheless).
 - [Q] [A] - QUESTION-ANSWER, Statement of question and answer to that question (question mark ?).
 - [S] [R] - SITUATION-RESPONSE, The relationship between a situation in one clause and a response in another.
 - [B] [L] - BILATERAL, A proposition which supports propositions in both directions, rarely used.

This is how I indicate prepositions:

- I put the phrase in square brackets.
- I indicate the preposition by **highlighting it in Orange**.

This is how I use colour highlighting:

- **Orange**: structure indicator, conjunctions, and prepositions.
- **Yellow**: verbs, Greek, and Scripture reference.
- **Green**: keywords.
- **Red**: repeated words.
- **Pink**: imperatives.
- **Blue**: main idea.

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: Romans 16:17-23

1. How has the author organised this passage? a) *An outline*, b) *Tools*, c) *The emphasis*.

- a) 1.) The command to separate from deceivers (Romans 16:17-19).
 - 2.) The desires which enable the command (Romans 16:20).
 - 3.) The community that embodies the command (Romans 16:21-23).
- b) Romans 16:17-23 is discourse. I paid attention to the command of urgent avoidance in Romans 16:17. The grounding conjunctions, in Romans 16:18 gives the reason for avoidance, and in Romans 16:19 gives the reason for vigilance. The repeated greetings in Romans 16:21-23 form a series of a concrete, positive contrast to the abstract threat of the deceivers. I noted the repetition of Lord in Romans 16:18, 20, and 22, anchoring the entire section in Christ's authority.
- c) The Lord's obedient people are commanded to separate from deceivers, grounded in His victory, and embodied by His faithful community.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? a) *Literary*, b) *Historical*, c) *Cultural*, d) *Biblical*.

- a) Paul places this sharp warning between Romans 16:1-16, a list of beloved saints, and Romans 16:25-27, a soaring doxology. This matters because, in contrast to the divisive false teachers, the Lord's obedient people are commanded to cling to truth and community.
- b) Jews had been expelled under Claudius and recently returned to a church of Greeks. False teachers likely exploited these divisions calling Jewish believers back to the Mosaic Law. This matters because the command to separate from false teachers and teaching is a call to true obedience.
- c) In Rome, itinerant speakers survived by flattery. They told you what you wanted to hear so you would feed them, serving their own appetites. This matters because you cannot serve two masters. You cannot follow Christ's voice and the deceiver's flattery. You must discern the difference.
- d) Romans 16:20 alludes to Genesis 3:15. In Genesis 3:15, God promises that the woman's offspring will crush the serpent's head. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under their feet. This matters because the command to separate is grounded in His victory.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

The Lord's victory demands you separate from deceivers and stand with the saints.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

This passage connects to the gospel through Paul's allusion to Genesis 3:15. The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet. This is the outworking of the ancient promise. At the cross, the woman's offspring crushed the Serpent's head. Christ took the venom. He bore the accusation. He defeated the enemy. But a final crushing awaits. Paul prays for grace until that day. The gospel victory functions as ground for the command. Allegiance to the Victor requires separation from His enemies.

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

Because Christ crushed the Serpent, separate from deceivers and embrace His people.

6. What applications will you make? a) *To believers*, b) *To unbelievers*.

- a) Separate is not a suggestion. It is a command. Cut out the cancer. Is there a relationship, a habit, or an influence you have tolerated because it seems harmless? This text calls you to be innocent about evil. Not curious, not informed, not nuanced. Innocent. Identify areas where you have negotiated a truce with the Serpent's voice, and cut the negotiation.
- b) You cannot obey this command. You cannot separate from the Deceiver because you belong to him. You need rescue. Romans 16:20 is an invitation. The God of peace crushed the Serpent at the cross. Christ took the venom meant for you. He bore the accusation that belongs to you. He defeated the enemy who holds you captive. Come, all you who are deceived, enslaved, and be set free. Today, head the call. Separate from the Deceiver. Embrace Christ's people. It begins with repentance and faith. Turn from the voices that have lied to you. Turn to the One who speaks only truth. When you do, you are no longer a servant of the Serpent. You are a son or daughter of the Victor. Grace is on offer. Come to the cross.

7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) *Sermon outline*, b) *Sermon title*.

- b) The Serpent, the saints, and the second coming
- a) 1) Discern the Serpent's whisper (Romans 16:17-19)
 - 2) Expect the Conqueror's victory (Romans 16:20)
 - 3) Hold the Saints' hands (Romans 16:21-23)

On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:

1. How has the author organised this passage?

- a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
- b) Tools: Identify the text type, and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
- c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?

- a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
- b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
- c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
- d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

What part of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) is in view? Every part of the Bible, every passage of Scripture, in some way relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What parts of the passage connect to the gospel? The connection must be legitimate and textually driven.

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

6. What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.

The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).

7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:

- o 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- o 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- o 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- o 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- o 4) must be found in the text.
- o 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- o 6) should flow from 5).
- o 7) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5).

Pray

Read Romans 16:17-23

¹⁷ Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those creating divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them, ¹⁸ because such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words. ¹⁹ For the report of your obedience has reached everyone. Therefore I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise about what is good, and yet innocent about what is evil.

²⁰ Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

²¹ Timothy, my co-worker, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow countrymen, greet you. ²² I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. ²³ Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus greet you.

Introduction

Romans 16:17 urges brothers and sisters, to watch out for those creating divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them. ●

Ⓜ Walking near the beach a few years ago, a boomslang slithered across our path. Thomas was with me. The snake wasn't big. Maybe 50 centimetres. But the little blighter was fast. And small doesn't mean harmless. I heard David Attenborough say the venom in the little ones is as dangerous as the big ones.

Ⓞ So I did what any South African father would do. I didn't scream. I didn't try to reason with it. I didn't try to tame it. I put myself between that slippery, green, silent death and my son. I kept my eyes on it. I watched out for it. And as soon as it was safe, the literal moment the serpent crossed the road, I grabbed Thomas, and we turned tail and ran. We didn't walk. We ran. We avoided it. ● ● ●

In Romans 16:17-23, Paul does something strikingly similar. He puts himself between the church and a serpent. He says, *Watch out*. And then, *Avoid them*.

Ⓚ But he neither leaves us standing frozen, nor running in fear. Paul gives us a rock to anchor our feet upon. And tells of a crushing victory that will be ours. The God of peace will soon crush Satan.

Here is the burden of this text. Because Christ crushed the Serpent, separate from deceivers and embrace His people. Separation is not a suggestion. It is a command. And it is your only safety. ●

This unfolds in three movements. First, Discern the Serpent's whisper. Second, Expect the Conqueror's victory. And third, Hold the Saints' hands. ●

Do you know the sound of the Serpent's whisper? Or have you gotten used to the hiss? Paul begins with the whisper. Let's listen. ●

1) Discern the Serpent's whisper (Romans 16:17-19)

👉¹⁷ Now I urge you, brothers and sisters. Watch out. Those are not my words. They are the apostle's. Paul writes, Watch out for those creating divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. This is not a suggestion to the overly cautious. It is a command for all the faithful. We are to mark those that create divisions. We are to avoid those that put up gospel obstacles. Don't entertain them. Don't debate with them. Avoid them.

📖 Consider where Paul places this sharp command. Our text sits wedged between a long list of beloved saints, that we looked at last week. And a soaring doxology of glory, which we will look at next week. The contrast is intentional. On one side, you see the beauty of the united community of believers. Sisters and brothers who labour in the Lord. On the other side, you hear the eternal weight of God's wisdom. And right in the middle, there is a warning about a serpent creating division. This matters because the command to avoid is not a call to preserve gospel unity. We separate from those who create divisions so we can cling to loving community. ●

👉 Why such urgency? Paul gives the first reason in **Romans 16:18**.¹⁸ **because** such people do not serve our **Lord Christ** but their own appetites. They are slaves. Not to the Lord, but to their belly. In ancient Rome, travelling orators survived by flattery. They would tell a wealthy patron whatever his itching ears wanted to hear, and in return, they ate at their table. Their smooth talk was a transaction. Their flattering words were currency for their own appetites.

📖 Men do not serve two masters. You cannot follow the clear voice of Christ and the seductive whisper of a deceiver. You must discern the difference between the two. Is the voice you are listening to calling you to take up the cross for gospel unity? Or are they inflaming sin by creating divisions?

📖 Then Paul gives the second reason in **Romans 16:19**.¹⁹ **For** the report of your obedience has reached everyone. He rejoices over them. But he immediately pivots. I want you to be wise about what is good, and yet innocent about what is evil. 🙏 Innocent. Not sophisticated. Not nuanced about evil and darkness. Innocent. ●

Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome. They had only recently returned to a church that was now Gentile. False teachers exploited these ethnic and cultural divisions. They called people back to the Mosaic Law as a badge of true spirituality. But Paul says true obedience is not found in returning to shadows. True obedience is found in separating from those who are divisive.

Ⓞ This matters. This is about our public theological unity. The serpent hisses to isolate sheep from the flock. And then he eats them. And so, as an act of corporate obedience we must separate from false teachers. ●

Ⓞ Older folk, parents, and kids will remember Kaa, the python from The Jungle Book. When prey wanders near, the serpent's eyes begin to spin. They are not angry eyes. They are calm. Hypnotic. Welcoming. Snakes do not roar like lions. They whisper, *Trussssst me*. And their prey goes limp. Stops resisting. Mindlessly obeys.

□ Paul is warning the church. The false teachers Paul worries about aren't on the outside. They walk among us. And they won't come to us with obvious heresy. They come with a subtler attack. They whisper, *Trussssst me...* as they undermine establish truth. They sound so wise. But their fruit isn't clarity. Their fruit is division. As they gather men and woman to themselves against the cause of the gospel. ●

This is the command to separate from deceivers. And this is how Paul builds his argument. The command is to separate from deceivers.

K How can we stand with confidence? Separate with clarity? We know the end of the Serpent. And that is where Paul turns next. We separate from the whispers because we expect the Conqueror's victory. ●

2) Expect the Conqueror's victory (Romans 16:20)

Ⓞ Now Romans 16:20. And here the tone shifts from warning to wonder. Paul has commanded us to watch out and avoid. But he does not leave us in a defensive crouch. He gives us the ground beneath our feet. But victory is not in our grip. The victory lies beneath our feet.

K As Paul writes, ²⁰ Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Hear the title. The God of peace. ● Not the God of anxiety. Not the God of panic. The God of peace. And yet this God of peace is about to do something violent. He will crush. The word means to shatter. To break into pieces. The God of peace makes war on the Serpent so that His people might have peace.

K This is no new thought. Romans 16:20 reaches back to the garden. Genesis 3:15. The ancient promise. The seed of the woman will crush the Serpent's head. What God promised in the shadows of Eden, Paul announces as certain here in Rome. The Serpent will not have the final word. The Deceiver will not slither through the church forever. The God of peace will crush Satan.

K And notice where this crushing takes place. **Under** your feet. Not just Christ's feet. Yours. You will not be spectators of this victory. You will be participants. You will stand on the neck of the enemy. This matters. The command to separate is not a desperate retreat. It is a confident advance. We avoid deceivers because we know who wins. We do not run from the Serpent in terror. We walk away in triumph. ● And mark this, we do not need to strike the Serpent ourselves. The command is to avoid. The promise is that He will crush. We leave the Serpent to God, while we walk in the light.

K And then Paul prays. **The grace** of our **Lord Jesus** *be with* you. ● Grace. ● Favour. ● Aid. ● The sustaining power of Christ. Between the promise of crushing and the day it happens, you will need grace. You cannot watch out on your own strength. You cannot avoid deceivers by sheer willpower. You need the grace of the Lord Jesus. And He gives it to you. ● Freely. ● Daily. ● Sufficiently. ● This is encouragement for the weary saint. You are not asked to fight the Serpent in your own power. You stand in grace until He finishes the fight. ●

6 Can you imagine the dialogue as Paul writes these words? Paul writes, The God of peace will soon crush Satan. And then he hesitates. *Lord, what if it is two thousand years? Can I really write soon?* And the Lord replies with that calm, eternal voice. *If you give the impression that it is not soon, you will do far more damage. They must live ready. Say soon. For me, it is soon. And for them it will be sudden.* ● This is not a chronological miscalculation. This is pastoral urgency. The church in every age must live with its bags packed. The victory is imminent because the Victor has already won. ●

K This is the desire that enables the command. The promise of crushing and the provision of sovereign grace. The Lord's victory demands you separate from deceivers.

So, how do we stand? ● Not alone. ● Never alone. ● Paul turns next from the victory under our feet to the brothers at our side. We expect the Conqueror's victory. As we hold the saints' hands. ●

3) **Hold the Saints' hands** (Romans 16:21-23)

K Paul turns from the serpent under our feet to the saints at our side. **Romans 16:21-23**. A list of names. Easy to skip. Easy to treat as a postscript. But this list is not filler. It is the embodiment of the command. The Lord's victory demands you separate from deceivers. Yes. And it demands you stand with the saints. These names prove we do not stand alone.

K ²¹ Timothy, my co-worker. The trusted son in the faith. He stands with Paul. Then Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow countrymen, greet you. Fellow countrymen. Jews who have not abandoned their heritage but have found its fulfilment in Christ. They stand with Paul. And then the scribe. The man holding the pen. ²² I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. Even the secretary is in the fight. He stands with Paul.

K ²³ Gaius sends greetings. Host to Paul and to the whole church. His home was open. His table was full. The church gathered under his roof. He stands with Paul. And then Erastus, the city treasurer. A man of influence. A man with keys to the public purse. Yet he is not ashamed of the gospel. He stands with Paul. And Quartus. Simply called our brother. No title. No rank. Just a brother. And he stands with Paul.

K Do you see the picture? A co-worker. Countrymen. A scribe. A host. A treasurer. A brother. Jews and Gentiles. Prominent and obscure. The only thing they share is the Lord who saved them and the apostle who leads them. Paul is not a lone ranger. He is surrounded. And so are you. ●

6 Think of a South African rugby scrum. The forwards lock arms. Shoulder to shoulder. Heads together. The opposition pushes hard. But the Bokke do not move alone. They move as a unit. We are not individuals fighting private battles against the Serpent. We are a scrum. Locked in. Standing firm against the the darkness together. ●

K The community embodies the command. The Lord's victory demands you separate from deceivers. And it demands you stand with the saints. ●

And how is such a community formed? ●

Connect to the gospel

Paul has shown us the Serpent's whisper, the Conqueror's victory, and the saints' hands. ● But why is this victory certain? 6 Only because of what happened on a hill outside Jerusalem.

This passage connects to the gospel through Paul's allusion to **Genesis 3:15**. ● The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. This is not new. It is the outworking of the ancient promise. In Eden, God spoke. The seed of the woman will crush your head. For ages the Serpent raged. ☹ Then came the cross. ●

I put myself between the snake and my son. ● But in the end, I could only run. ☹ I could not crush. ● But on the cross, the Son put Himself between the Serpent and His people. ☹ And He did not run. He took the fangs. He absorbed the venom meant for you. ☹ See the Son hanging in darkness. The weight of sin upon Him. The venom coursing through His veins. ● ● ● 6 He did not flinch. He did not turn back. K When He breathed His last, the Serpent's doom was sealed. The head was crushed. The enemy defeated. The resurrection proves it. He is risen. He reigns.

☹ Yet a final crushing awaits. The Serpent's head is crushed, but a dying snake still strikes. His doom is sure. ⚔ His venom is real. So, until God places him fully under your feet, you watch. And you avoid. You do not toy with what Christ died to destroy. ● K The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Not because you are strong. Because Christ is victorious. And you are in Him. His triumph is yours.

This is why Paul prays for grace. Between the cross and the final crushing, we need sustaining power. ● He gives it freely. ● Daily. ● Sufficiently. ●

☹ Now hear the weight of this. ● If the Serpent's head is crushed, why linger near his mouth? ● If the King has conquered, why entertain His conquered foe? ● To abide with the Deceiver is not sophistication. It is treason. ● K The command to separate is a declaration of allegiance to the Victor. ☹ You cannot walk in resurrection light and hold hands with garden darkness. ●

K Because Christ crushed the Serpent, separate from deceivers and embrace His people. ● ● ●

Now, what does this look like in your life? ●

Application for believers

Because Christ crushed the Serpent, separate from deceivers and embrace His people. ●

○ Separation is not a suggestion. It is a command. And this command is not given to you alone. It is given to us together. We are a body. We are a scrum.

□ Avoid the divisive teacher. ● Now, let me be clear. A brother who struggles with doubt isn't a divisive teacher. A sister who weeps in the night. The divisive teacher is a whisper campaign that undermines the gospel intending to create division amongst the brethren. We avoid divisive teachers so we can hold on to these saints tighter.

Ⓚ That day on the beach, I didn't debate the snake. I kept my eyes on it, and as soon as it was safe, we ran. We avoided it. This is the Christian life in miniature. Not running in defeat. Running in triumph because He has won.

Ⓚ And notice how you run. You don't run alone. Look around this room. This is our scrum team. Opposition pushes hard. The serpent hisses. But we will not be moved. We lock arms. Shoulder to shoulder. Like Timothy, Tertius, Gaius, and Quartus. We scrum standing firm against the darkness together.

Application for unbelievers

Because Christ crushed the Serpent, separate from deceivers and embrace His people. ●

Ⓜ Maybe you're on the cusp of faith. But haven't yet pledged allegiance to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. You need to know, you cannot obey this command. Not yet. You can't separate from the Deceiver because you still belong to him. His venom runs through your veins. You need an antidote. You need a Victor.

Ⓚ **Romans 16:20** is an invitation to you today. The God of peace crushed the Serpent at the cross. Christ took the venom meant for you. He bore the accusation that belongs to you. He defeated the enemy who holds you captive. Come, all you who are deceived and enslaved. Be set free.

Today, heed the call. Separate from the Deceiver. Embrace Christ's people. It begins with repentance and faith. Turn from the voices that have lied to you. Turn to the One who speaks only truth. ● When you do, you are no longer a servant of the Serpent. You are a son of the Victor. Grace is on offer. ● ● ●

Conclusion

K That day on the beach, with Thomas beside me... I didn't debate the snake. I didn't tame it. I put myself between that death and my son. I kept my eyes on it. And as soon as it was safe, we ran. We avoided it. ●

K This is the Christian life. In miniature. Because Christ crushed the Serpent, separate from deceivers and embrace His people. This is not a strategy for the especially devout. It is the only safe path for every blood-bought saint. ●

∂ Discern the whisper. Watch out. Avoid them. Do not entertain the voice that sounds like reason but smells like rebellion.

K Expect the victory. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. You do not fight for victory. You stand in it.

K Hold the saints' hands. You are not alone. You are locked in a scrum, pushing back the darkness together.

⓪ Avoid the divisive teacher. Be innocent about evil. Not curious. Not nuanced. Innocent. ●

⓪ And if you belong to the Deceiver hear this. The Victor offers you grace. Come to the cross. ● ● ●

K Church, we know how the story ends. The Serpent's head is crushed. The saints stand in victory. And the God of peace reigns forever.

Amen. ● ● ●

Close in prayer

Benediction

Romans 16:25-27, ²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen [us] according to [the] gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles – ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ – to him be the glory for ever!
Amen.

Homiletic indicators

- **F** - Fear
 - **Body:** Narrow eyes, still shoulders, lift your chin slightly (exposed posture).
 - **Voice:** Breathier, higher pitch, quick shallow breaths. Speak into the back of the throat.
 - **Pacing:** Slow but with micro-tremors. Let words come out like they're being pulled.
 - **Delivery note:** Don't shout fear. Whisper it. Tension is louder than volume.
- **A** - Anger
 - **Body:** Jaw forward, stable feet (no shifting weight), sharp hand strikes (karate chop motion).
 - **Voice:** Hard attack on consonants. Drop pitch slightly, but increase volume on key syllables. Staccato.
 - **Pacing:** Fast to medium. No wasted space between words until the punch.
 - **Delivery note:** Controlled anger is more frightening than unleashed rage. Let the temperature rise, then hold.
- **H** - Happiness
 - **Body:** Relax shoulders, soften the brow. Open palms, wider stance.
 - **Voice:** Rise in melody at the end of phrases. Bright, forward resonance (smile while speaking).
 - **Pacing:** Natural to quick. Allow an "Aha!" breath—a visible inhale before the insight.
 - **Delivery note:** Joy is contagious only if you allow yourself to smile mid-sentence. Don't save it for the punchline.
- **S** - Sadness
 - **Body:** Heavy eyelids, slight forward slump, hands still or clasped low.
 - **Voice:** Lower volume, monotone descent (each phrase ends lower than it started). Use mostly single-syllable words.
 - **Pacing:** Slow. Insert silence between clauses, not just after periods.
 - **Delivery note:** Let silence become the sound of grief. If you rush sadness, you betray it.
- **D** - Disgust
 - **Body:** Wrinkle nose, pull back your head, sharp turning away from the pulpit.
 - **Voice:** Nasal, sharp, with a "negation cadence" (rising then falling sharply on the sin's name). Hard glottal stops.
 - **Pacing:** Abrupt. Start a sentence normally, then cut it off with a hard stop.
 - **Delivery note:** Name the sin like it tastes bad. "Greed" (spit the word). Then pause. Then continue clean.
- **6** - Surprise
 - **Body:** Eyebrows up, slight backward step or open-mouth inhale.
 - **Voice:** Bright, high onset. Use a sudden upward interval (a leap in pitch on the unexpected word).
 - **Pacing:** Normal to very fast on the reveal, then a hard reset.
 - **Delivery note:** Surprise only works if the preceding delivery didn't telegraph it. Keep your body neutral before the turn.
- **●** - Pause
 - **What it does:** Allows the last sentence to land, convict, or heal.
 - **Length:** 1 second (colon), 2 seconds (period), 3+ seconds (after a weighty statement or call to worship).
 - **Body:** Stop moving. Hold eye contact. Do not smile or nod. Let the silence be uncomfortable.
 - **Delivery note:** A pause feels longer to you than to them. Trust it. Hold one more beat than you think is comfortable.