

1. Paul closes his letter to the Romans by appealing to the Christians at Rome to watch out for certain people. These people were causing division in the Church and creating obstacles. These obstacles were not just simply divisive, but were teachings that were in contradiction to what Jesus and the Apostles had taught them in the Word of God.
2. Paul gives a strong warning and a command regarding these false teachers: Avoid them!
3. Paul warns that these false teachers that Paul refers to in Romans will come under the guise of Christian teaching. But in their hearts, they are ravenous wolves. He says that we can identify them by their fruits. Even though at first, they seem harmless, the fruit, or result, of their teaching, will lead people away from the true Gospel and into eternal destruction.
4. Paul warns that these people he is saying to avoid are people that do not serve the Lord Christ. The reason he says that is that these are people who claim to be Christian teachers. Many of these people will not just falsely claim they are Christians when they are not, but as Paul just mentioned they are teaching things which contradict the Word of God. They do not serve Jesus, even though they claim to, but instead serve their own sinful desires.
5. However, the people Paul is warning about are popular and can be very hard to identify. They are smooth talkers, he warns, and deceive many people. The people they deceive are naïve, Paul says, about the false teachings that these people are spreading and how dangerous they are to them.
6. Paul says that the obedience of the Roman people he is writing to is known to everyone that and he rejoices over them because of their obedience. But even though they are very obedient to God, he still needs to warn them about these dangerous false teachers. Being obedient to Christ does not always protect us against false teaching.
7. God wants us to be wise to what is good and innocent to what is evil. Although Paul says he wants us to be innocent to what is evil, he does not mean that we should not have knowledge of what is evil so that we can protect ourselves and others, but that we should not have any experience of the effects of believing and interacting with these false teachers. As he says, true Christians must avoid them.
8. Most often when we think of peace, we do not think of violence done for the sake of peace. But in the case of these false teachers, they represent Satan, and the only way that the God of peace will deal with these false teachers is to crush them under our feet. Paul prays that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will keep His people away from these false teachers.
9. Earlier, Paul sent his love and affection to the people of Rome. Here at the end of his letter Paul sends the love and affection of the people with him to those in Rome. Notably, Paul allows the brother who recorded his words on the scroll, Tertius, to inscribe his own greeting. The scribe who wrote down the words for the writer of a letter in their society was called an "amanuensis".
10. Paul closes the letter with a doxology, a praise to God and a blessing to the reader of this letter. God is able to strengthen us through the Gospel that Paul communicated in this letter and also in the preaching of Jesus Christ. This strengthening happens through the revelation of something that was not known before but is now revealed in Jesus Christ. This "mystery" was kept secret by God for a very long time, even though it was hinted at in the Old Testament writings.
11. The mystery of the Gospel has now been revealed by the New Testament prophets, including Paul and this letter to the Romans, and has been made known to the entire world. This revealing of the Gospel has happened to cause the obedience of faith. Paul talks about this obedience of faith at both the beginning and the end of this letter. Faith itself is both an obedience in itself and also obedience is a result of faith. As we learned in this letter, God is both the cause of faith and the cause of His people's obedience.
12. Paul's final dedication is not to the people of Rome or to the people who follow Jesus, but to God Himself, who is the source of the only true wisdom and deserves all glory forever and ever. His ultimate glory comes through the work of His Son Jesus Christ who is Himself God. Amen.

Application

1. Do not put the book of Romans away and move on to other things. This book has so many essential teachings for the Christian faith that we should continue to regularly review it and learn from the teachings of Christ through the Apostle Paul.
2. Let your study of Romans cause in you, through the work of Christ in your hearts, the obedience of faith.
3. Take the warnings given by God at the end of this book seriously and be ready to learn how we can identify false teachers and avoid them.

Scriptures

Romans 16:17-27

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

²¹ Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. 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. ²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Matthew 7:15-20

[Jesus said,] ¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.