

## INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to the book of Romans 16. We've come to the last chapter. Some of you have lived to the end of this series on Romans, and I've been preaching the last couple of years. Today and the next Sunday, I'll finish this series. Today we're going to be talking about the power of positive encouraging.

Many of you are familiar with Norman Vincent Peale's book, *The Power of Positive Living*. It's a good book. It won't get you to heaven, but it will really help you approach life with the right kind of aspect. Dr. Vance Havner, one of my spiritual heroes, was asked one time to compare the writings of Norman Vincent Peale with the writings of the Apostle Paul. And apparently he didn't like Dr. Peale too much, because this was his classic reply. He said, "I find Peale to be appalling, but I find Paul to be appealing."

Today we want to appeal to the Apostle Paul and learn some things. Now, can I say again that the book of Romans was his magnum opus, his greatest work; what the Sistine Chapel was to Michelangelo, what the Mona Lisa was to da Vinci, what the Ninth Symphony was to Beethoven, the book of Romans is to the Apostle Paul? He goes higher and deeper than any other of his writings. As I told you last Sunday, we came to the end of the letter, and what chapter 16 is, is a postscript. He's just talking about some of his friends, sharing a few little thoughts here.

Can I remind you that every word of the Bible is inspired? We can learn so much from the Apostle Paul and about the Christian life in just reading these personal comments. It's like when my daughters were growing up, they liked to read my high school annual. But they didn't care too much about all the pictures and the class photos and everything. They liked to read all the comments my friends wrote about me. They learned a lot more about my high school experience by reading those personal comments than they did about looking what was in the book. We can learn so much about the church, about the Christian life, by reading these personal comments.

Now, in verses 1-20, we're going to learn, first of all, about how to treat our Christian family, our friends and then we're going to learn how to deal with our foes.

### I. HOW TO CHERISH YOUR SPIRITUAL FAMILY

The first thing I want to talk to you about is how to cherish your spiritual family. Now, cherish is the word that I use to describe all the feelings I have hiding here inside for all the believers in Christ. And the Apostle Paul also had this kind of love and compassion for the Christians there at Rome. He makes all these personal remarks.

How do you cherish your spiritual family? Two ways. First of all, you need to learn to

#### 1) Share positive affirmations about them

Share positive comments about them. I call it the power of positive encouraging or positive compliments. That's what Paul does in verses 1-15. I want you to meet some of Paul's friends.

## Paul’s friends: 27 names, 21 positive descriptions

Today just keep your Bible open and we’re going to walk through this text, so we’ll be reading it as we come to it. Let’s meet his friends as he gives them positive affirmation. Beginning in verse 1, I commend to you our sister, Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

One thing you’re going to notice is there are a lot of people on this list who are women, who are females. If you know anything about the Jewish or even the Roman culture of this time, you’ll remember that females were, by and large, sublimated and subordinated. In the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see for the first time women receiving a place of prominence and a place of service, and Phoebe is just one of those. He said, “She’s a servant.” Now, many historians believe she was a Christian businesswoman. She was traveling to Rome, and she was literally physically carrying this letter, this epistle to the Romans, because Paul said, “Receive her like you would receive me.”

Let’s read on in verse three. Meet a Christian couple who were friends of Paul. “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow servants in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.” Then he says in verse five. “Greet also the church that meets in their house.” We know about Aquila and Priscilla, because we’re introduced to them elsewhere in the book of Acts, Acts 18. Paul met this couple in the city of Corinth. They were Jews. They were run out of Rome because of anti-Semitic persecution, so they met Paul in Corinth. They were tentmakers—Paul was a tentmaker. And so they’re sort of working their trade together. In the process, Paul developed a friendship. He says, “Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies, Jesus is the Messiah.” So Aquila and Priscilla became Christians. They became such close friends of Paul, they followed him to Ephesus, where Paul stayed for three years teaching and preaching.

A young, dynamic preacher, named Apollos, came into the church at Ephesus. He was fiery and golden-throated. Only problem was, Acts 18 says, “He didn’t have the full Gospel.” He only preached the Gospel of John the Baptist, which means there is one who is to come. After he preached one night, the Bible says Aquila and Priscilla invited Apollos over to their home. I know what she was doing. She was saying, “Preacher boy, come over to my house, I’ll feed you supper.” All of you have done that, bless God, you’re doing exactly what God wants you to do. The Bible says they instructed Apollos on the full gospel. So Apollos became a great preacher for Christ and went back to Corinth. And Paul writes later, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” This Christian couple was the one behind the scenes responsible for the effectiveness of Apollos and others and even the Apostle Paul.

I thank God throughout the years there are these unnamed—and so many times unnoticed—Christian couples who support, appreciate and affirm those who are serving Christ. It says in verse five, they had a church that met in their house. Now, you’ve got to understand, there were no church buildings in existence for the first 300 years of the Christian faith. Sometimes I wish I could be a first century Christian, just so I wouldn’t have to deal with building programs, amen? They met in homes, in small groups like our Sunday School classes. That’s our small group

experience. Then they would gather together, thousands of them, in large public venues for praise, for preaching and for evangelism. So they had a church or like a Sunday School class meeting in their house. Look at verse five. Keep reading.

"Greet my dear friend, Epenetus." The only thing we know about him was he was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Verse six, "Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you." There's another Christian woman. Verse seven, "Greet Andronicus and Junias." Now, some of the manuscripts say Junia, which would make her feminine. It may be another Christian couple. We do know he says, "My relatives who have been in prison with me." They were jailbirds like the Apostle Paul. "They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was."

By the way, Paul never says, "I am a Christian." He always says, "I am in Christ." Isn't that a beautiful phrase? I am in Christ. "They were in Christ before I was," and I'm sure like most good relatives, they were praying for the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. By the way, he says they are outstanding among the apostles. You may question about that. Because in the New Testament, there are twelve Apostles, capital 'A.' Only twelve, because Revelation says the names of the twelve Apostles will be on the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem. But there are many apostles, small 'a,' because the word "Apostelein" means to send forth. Anybody who is like a missionary, sent forth, is a small 'a' apostle.

Let's keep reading. In verse eight, he mentions a quartet of men. Because of the structure of the language, we believe them to be single men who lived together and served Christ. "Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord." Isn't it good you can say that about a Christian brother, I love him in the Lord. "Greet Urbanus." His name means city fellow. We call him city slicker. "Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys—and here's the fourth—Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ." How would you like for somebody to put that on your tombstone? "Here lies so-and-so, tested and approved in Christ."

Then we find in the middle part of verse 10 some other people. "Greet those who belong to [notice this phrase] the household of Aristobulus." That doesn't mean Aristobulus. It means his household. You say, what does that mean? Wealthy people had servants and slaves and employees, and anybody who related to that wealthy person was called in the household. We know Aristobulus was the great grandson of Herod the Great. He was probably dead by now, but his household, the slaves, servants and employees; some of them were part of the church.

"Greet Herodion, my relative." Verse 11, "Greet those in the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord." We know who Narcissus is, not from the Bible, but from secular history. We know that this Narcissus was a prominent Roman citizen, who was like the Chief of State of the Emperor Claudius, like his right-hand man. Narcissus became very wealthy, because you see, to see the emperor, you had to go through Narcissus, and you had to grease his palm, had to give him a bribe before you could see the emperor. So he became fabulously wealthy. Only thing is, a new regime came in. Nero became the emperor. And Nero said to Narcissus, "Either you commit suicide or I'll do it for you." Narcissus decided to choose his own way of death, and he committed suicide, but what was left were all his servants and his employees, and many of them were in the church.

Look at verse 12. "Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa." How many of you named your daughters Tryphena and Tryphosa? Those are great names. "Those women who work hard in the Lord." Now, the structure of their names indicates they were two sisters, perhaps twin sisters. I love what their names mean. Tryphosa means "delicate." Tryphena means "dainty." And Paul is actually doing a little word play right here. He says, you tell Delicate and Dainty that I am so glad they're working up a sweat serving the Lord. It's not typical for someone who's so delicate and dainty to work up a sweat, but they are. Look also, he says, "Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard for the Lord."

Are you learning something? There is a beautiful variety of the body of Christ. There's couples, single people, slaves, free men, women, men, the beautiful variety in the body of Christ. Then verse 13, greet Rufus; by the way, Rufus means "red," that was probably his nickname, "Red," chosen in the Lord. Then he says, "And his mother who has been a mother to me, too. It's true of every servant of the Lord. I know I have lots of women in this church and other churches I've served who mothered me, embraced me, treated me like a son. I need that, and the Apostle Paul had that, and he needed it. We know who Rufus is, because do you remember when Jesus was carrying the cross to Calvary on the day he was crucified, the Bible says he was so physically exhausted, he was so wounded from the loss of blood and body fluids, that he did not have the physical strength to carry the cross. The Roman soldiers enlisted a man by the name of Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross of the Lord. Mark, who's writing to the audience basically in Rome in his gospel says Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. What do you think might have gone through the mind of Simon when he takes the cross of a man and he looks into his eyes and he sees the eyes of Jesus just about to give his life for the ransom of sins of the whole world. I'm sure that Simon became a Christian and influenced his wife, who was like a mother to Paul, and influenced his two sons, Rufus here and Alexander who was in Ephesus and also helped out Paul.

In verse 14, he mentions ten individuals. We don't know much about any of them, except one. "Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them. Greet Philologus, [meaning "lover of the word"] Julia. Nereus and his sister and Olympas and all the saints with them." Look at the word Nereus. We don't know about him from the Bible, but here again we studied secular history. In the year 95 A.D. in the city of Rome, it was illegal to be a Christian, but there was the mayor of Rome, a very prominent citizen, Claudius Flavius, and his wife, Domitillia, who became Christians. But because it was discovered the mayor of Rome and his wife were Christians, it was a tremendous scandal. He was executed for being a Christian, because they thought Christianity was just for slaves and poor people. Here's the mayor of Rome giving his heart to Christ and his wife, Domitillia. He was killed, she was exiled, and history tells us their servant, who was also killed, was a man named Nereus. Could it be? Many believe this is the guy that led the mayor of Rome and his wife to Christ.

That's the lesson we learn as we meet his friends. We need to be sharing positive affirmations about our friends, our spiritual family. Can I just ask you this? How often do you make a point to say good things about those who are in the body of Christ? Not only speaking to them, "I appreciate you, I love you." How often do you say good things about others to someone else?

Because that's what Paul's doing. He's saying, I'm going to say this good thing to all those who are in the church there. It's a good thing for all of us to do, the power of positive encouraging.

So the first thing is to share positive affirmations. There's another thing you can do to show how you cherish your spiritual family, and it is to

## 2) Show personal affection

Would you please look at verse 16? Romans 16:16. "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings." We've looked at verse 16 of Romans. By the way that same command appears not once, not twice, not three times, not four times, but *five times* in the epistles we are told to greet one another with a holy kiss. We explain it away. We gloss over it. We've substituted the holy handshake. Because have you ever heard anybody say, "Well, that was the common custom in the day to greet each other with kisses. And today in our culture, we just don't do that. We greet each other with handshakes." So we just said, "Oh, okay."

Folks, that's not the truth. I've done a lot of research into the customs and into the scriptures. You know what I found? Ready for this? It *was* not the cultural custom of the day to greet people with a kiss. It was not part of the Hellenistic Greek culture. They were influenced by stoicism, any sharing of affections or feelings. The truth is, in Rome and in Greece, they seldom even would touch a stranger or a newcomer. If it were someone they knew, they certainly wouldn't hug and kiss them. You've seen enough of those Romans movies, haven't you? When they did when they greeted someone, they would say, "Greetings," and grab forearms like that. The custom of handshaking is an ancient custom that a man would put out his hand to show that he's not holding a dagger. And the other person would take his hand to show that I'm not holding a dagger either, and basically it was a sign that says, "I'm not going to slit your throat." That's where it came from.

What am I trying to say to you? You study the culture of the Bible days in which this was written, and that's what you have to do to understand the Bible, study the culture in which it was written. And it was not the common custom to hug or much less kiss someone. The only place it was ever done was in the immediate family. Obviously. Mothers did it to children, children did it to parents, husbands did it to wives, parents did it to children, and grandchildren did it to grandparents. It was a show of family intimacy. This is what Paul's trying to say. If you catch this, you've learned something today, on this Sunday. Paul is saying within the church, we don't treat each other like strangers or newcomers; we don't treat each other like the way people do out there in the world. We are a family, and we show affection to each other in the church just like a family would show affection to each other.

So I've got news for you today. Are you ready for this? You can write it down, ladies and gentlemen:

### **You MAY kiss the bride!**

I'm giving you permission, because the Bible gives you permission to kiss the bride. You say, what bride are you talking about? The Bride of Christ, which is the church. Now, what he's

saying is this. "In the church, we ought to love each other with such intimacy and affection that when we come together, it's okay to hug and it's okay to kiss." I mean, they don't do that at the Rotary Club or the Garden Club too much, but in the church of the Lord Jesus, he said it's not only good to do, he said, "I'm telling you to do it, to greet one another." Emphasis on holy.

When I meet some people in this church, it is the most natural and the most supernatural thing for me to do to put my arms around that person, and sometimes, mostly women over the age of 70, I will plant a kiss on their cheek. Why? Because I love them. I love them in the Lord. And I'm expressing affection to them. One thing I like about Green Acres Baptist Church is, praise God, this is a hugging church. And there ought to be a place, and it ought to be the church where people who are lonely and need intimacy and affection can come and receive a non-threatening hug. I know some of you don't like that. Why? I know why. Even in your biological family growing up, you didn't show much affection. You weren't hugged and you didn't show many hugs. It's real hard for you to come into the church and do that. This is what I'm saying. We never force that on anybody. You never just hug somebody that doesn't want to be hugged. You only do that to those willing to give and receive that kind of physical affection in the Lord. I often thought we ought to ask our ushers to treat people like in a restaurant. You walk in the back door and the usher says, "Will that be hugging or non-hugging? Kissing or non-kissing?" Somebody says, "While you're doing it, say, 'Perfume or non-perfume?'" Some people aren't into that and that's okay, but those that are ready to do that and want to, need to do that, let's do it.

Can I give you a little thumbnail sketch of church history and tell how this idea of showing affection has been defiled through the centuries? First of all, in the early church that Paul is writing to here, this was an intimate group of Christians who loved each other, knew each other by name, they hugged and kissed each other; that's how they greeted one another, because they were persecuted. But as the years went past, persecution waned, prosperity increased, and you remember after Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. And folks, as I said before, they did not Christianize paganism, they paganized Christianity. And we can study it in history.

What happened? They stopped kissing each other in affection and it became a formal kiss on the forehead that was given after the communion service. Later, it became nothing but a kiss on the hand, and then after a few years, there was no kiss at all. Instead, they would kiss an object like a cross or like the communion cup. Or they would kiss a vestment or some relic or icon.

Even in the time that we call the Dark Ages when the Bible was chained to the pulpit in the dead language that even the priest could read, but most of them didn't. The separation of intimacy became even deeper. They built an iron rail in the front of the people and said, "You can't cross that rail, because beyond that rail only those professional Christians, the priests, can operate. And you sit out there and you watch what we do." And suddenly, church during the Dark Ages and the Renaissance became nothing but a spectator event where you came and you sat and you watched what the professional Christians did. And can I just say to you folks that is a *tremendous* corruption of the church that Jesus intended.

Jesus never intended the church to be a spectator event. You're not spectators; you're participants in worship. We're brothers and sisters together. There's no separation between you and me. We believe in the priesthood of all believers. The sad fact is, you come and you sit, and unless you turn your head around, you probably don't even know who's on the pew behind you or the pew behind them. You want to find out who is in the church, come sit in choir like these people do. They watch you the whole service. The sad thing is, we've lost that spirit of intimacy. Paul is saying it needs to be recovered.

Paul Tournier writes, who is a Christian psychologist, “The most devastating malady of our day is loneliness. There is no human condition so acute and so universal. Up and down the pews of every church are lonely people who have a desperate need to be loved and to show love in return.”

I recently read a book entitled, *Crowded Pews, Lonely People* written by Harriet Jacobson. She writes,

“Why does a person go to church? There are many reasons. It may simply make him feel good, nicely religious and respectable, or he may be trying to fill up an emptiness that he feels, a longing to find meaning in life. Or he may simply looking for profitable, professional or business contacts -- that's why some people come to church -- but if he is an authentic Christian, he's probably looking for Bible teaching and preaching, and he wants to worship God. But it is safe to say that whatever other motives brought him to church, down underneath consciously or unconsciously, he came to be with people, to be part of a group, to find fellowship with other human beings, to make friends. Seated in his pew that may be full, he is surrounded by people. But as he leaves the church, no matter how the sermon or music may have impressed him, he leaves with a definite feeling of either having been made warm by a touch with his fellow worshipers or having been among many but somehow alone.”

Isn't it amazing that sometimes people can go to a worship service and are here with several thousand people, but they're still alone? That will never happen in a church where we are doing what the Bible says, and we're quick to show affection.

## II. HOW TO COPE WITH SPIRITUAL FOES

Now, we turn the tables completely, because we have been talking about cherishing your spiritual family. Let's turn now, beginning in verse 17, let's talk about this, “How to cope with spiritual foes.” Would you read verses 17-20 with me? “I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.” Now, can I just say in every church, in Rome, in Corinth, in Green Acres Baptist Church, in every church in Tyler and Smith County, you're going to find objectionable, obstreperous, knuckleheads, difficult people who cause problems in the church, and this verse tells us what to do with them. “Keep away from them,” verse 17 says, “for such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naïve people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, [that's in Rome]

so I am full of joy over you, but I want you to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil.”

If you just want to write this down, because we’re going to come to it in a minute, that was a description of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. “I want you to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil.” Look at verse 20, an amazing promise that some people just boom! Read through when they are finishing the book. “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”

The second thing I’m talking about today is how to cope with spiritual foes.

### **1) Identify and avoid disruptive people**

That’s what Paul says. They’re always there, folks. There are always people who want to argue with you, want to complain about this, complain about that, nit-pick about this, and the Bible says, “Don’t kick them out of your church.” It says, “Don’t be mean to them; just don’t fellowship with them.” They are the ones that you *don’t* give that hug and that kiss of greeting to. Look at Titus 3:9. By the way, Titus is a church operations manual. Paul writes, “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.”

Let me just ask you. Have you ever known people that that’s all they want to do in your Sunday School class or prayer group, they want to split theological hairs? They want to argue about these little points of doctrine, trying to get you mad. The Bible says just don’t do it. It is unprofitable, it is useless. Then keep reading. Here it is. This is the word of God. “Warn a divisive person once.” Okay, let’s do that. If you’re a divisive person, we’re warning you one time. Okay, that’s once. Then it says, “And then warn him a second time.” There’s your second warning, okay? There it is. “After that, have nothing to do with them.”

Ray Steadman was the pastor of Peninsula Bible Church in San Francisco for many years. This is what he writes about this passage, please listen:

“Some people for the sake of their point of view would destroy the unity of your church. How do you deal with them? Avoid them. We must keep our eye on them and turn away from them. In other words, we don’t listen to them. We’re never obligated to hear a person out, when what they’re saying is not consistent with Christian speech.

If they are tearing down the church, tearing down the pastor, tearing down the deacons or leaders or Sunday School teachers or any believer, we should not listen. Because even out of a misguided sense of courtesy, our listening to them would make it seem that we agree, while what we’re doing is giving them another chance to vent their verbal poison.”

What do you do if somebody comes up to you and wants to say terrible disruptive things about somebody in the church? You say, “Whoa, hold it right there! Jesus said in Matthew 18, ‘If you’ve got something against somebody, you go right to that person. You don’t bring it to me, and you go right to that person and you talk to that person. Listen, I’ll even help set up a meeting

between you and that person.” Most of the time, they say, “No thanks.” That’s what the Bible says. You identify and you avoid them.

Then, number two, let’s talk about the devil. I want to spend the next few minutes of this message just shaming the devil. Let’s just shame him, all right? Because we must

## 2) Understand and claim victory over Satan

Look at verse 20. “The God of peace will soon crush Satan.” Notice he doesn’t say “under my feet, God’s feet, Jesus’ feet.” He says, “Under your feet.” The word “crush,” what does it mean? It means to abolish, it means to render harmless. The word “shortly” doesn’t mean it’s going to happen soon in the future. It’s a word that means it’s going to happen instantaneously, it will happen with great rapidity. Now I’m here to tell you, that even though you think Satan is a terrible adversary, and he’s pretty bad, we already have won victory over him. He’s already been destroyed. I want to show you from the word of God how he was destroyed.

### a. Satan’s destruction was predicted from the very beginning.

Now, do you remember Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? What made it paradise? It was paradise. Why? Because “They were wise about good --look at verse 19-- and they were innocent about evil.” They didn’t even *know* evil existed. Every experience of their lives was good. Well, Satan in the form of a serpent came to Eve and said, “Eve, God said that you can’t eat of that tree, because when you eat of that tree you’ll know --listen-- good *and* evil and you’ll be like God.”

Well, you know what happened. Eve ate and Adam ate, and you know what happened? Suddenly they were no longer innocent about evil. They knew what evil was.

Do you remember what the first thing that happened when their eyes were opened, it says they realized they were naked, and they were what? Ashamed. That tells us the essence of sin is self-consciousness. Think about it. I don’t think Adam looked at Eve and said, “Eve, you’re naked.” I think Adam said, “Oh, I’m naked.” I think Eve said, “I’m naked.” They had the sense of self-consciousness.

By the way, folks, it is still true today that the essence of sin is self-centeredness, self-consciousness. Up until that point, they were God-centered. They were God-conscious. But sin makes us self-conscious. Sometimes the more self-conscious you are, the more self-centered you are. God comes into the garden and says, “You guys have blown it. You’ve messed up paradise.” And they messed it up for all of us, too.

And then in Genesis 3:14-15, God pronounces a curse upon Satan. And this passage is the background to what we’re talking about, crushing Satan under your feet. Let’s read it. God says in 3:14, “So the Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals. You will crawl on your belly and you’ll eat dust all the days of your life, and I will put enmity [animosity, hatred] between you, snake, and the woman and between your offspring, Satan [and there are children of the devil today] and hers,’” her

offspring. Notice this. "He." You can just write the word Jesus. "He will crush your head." Not only he, Jesus, but also all who are in Jesus will crush your head, and you, Satan, "you will strike his heel."

Genesis 3:14-15 is the first appearance of the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the Bible. It is the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible. It was predicted, number one

## **2) Satan's destruction was accomplished at the cross**

That's when Satan literally was defeated. Now, let's fast-forward thousands of years. There is one who is born of a woman, seed of a woman, his name is Jesus. Why do you think the Bible takes such particular pains to point out that Jesus was the son of man? He was the seed of woman, born of woman. It's because it's the fulfillment of Genesis 3:14-15. Here's Jesus. He's 33 years old. Satan decides he's going to kill him. He's going to try to put him to death. In fact, the Bible says that it was Satan, remember, who entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. I'm sure while Jesus was being scourged, Satan was saying, "Yes!" It was like a snake. "I'm going to get him, I'm going to kill him." When they drove the nails through his feet, Satan like a snake said, "Yeah, I'm going to inflict a fatal bite on the Son of God." And then when they took that spear and drove it up through his side, "Yes!" And when Jesus lifted up his head and said, "It is finished," and he died, I'm sure Satan said, "Yes! I have bitten his heel and I've killed him; he's dead." But Jesus wasn't saying it is finished. What he was saying was, "Satan, *you* are finished," because we know that the death of Jesus is not the end. We know that three days later, Jesus came forth alive forevermore, and he conquered death, which was the domain the devil.

What was Jesus was doing when he died on the cross? Here was that serpent, Satan, striking at Jesus, and Jesus took his heel and crushed the head of the serpent. You say, "Wait a minute, is Satan dead?" No, but he's defeated. His power, his authority has been rendered harmless, even today. Now, I want to show you the final chapter, because

## **3) Satan's destruction will be completed in the future**

Now, we're going to read the book of Revelation. Let me remind you that New Year's Eve, right here from 10:00 p.m. to midnight, in our "Celebrate 2000" service, I'm going to teach the whole book of Revelation. We're going to pray in the year 2000. You be here, and we'll fill in the gaps. I want to fast-forward what's going to happen to the devil ultimately. Look at the text. "And I saw an angel," not any special angel, just an ordinary angel, "coming down out of heaven having the key to the abyss, holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon." You say, "Who's the dragon?" That's a symbol. "That ancient serpent," that's a symbol. Who is the devil." Folks, the devil is not symbolic. That's who he is. The dragon and the serpent is the symbol. "The devil, --keep reading-- and Satan, --he's real-- and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time." I'll explain that New Year's Eve. "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown." And this is going to be his ultimate destination. "They will be tormented day and night forever."

Why did God create hell? According to Jesus in Matthew 25, hell was created for the devil and his angels.

Now, the devil is still around today. His influence is still powerful, but he's a defeated foe. You say, "Well now pastor, when is it going to happen that Satan is under our feet and we're crushing him?" It's happening right now, if you know who you are in Christ. Right now, he is under the feet of Jesus, and if you're in Jesus, everything that's under the feet of Jesus is under your feet. Right now, listen to me, if you, like it says in verse 19, will be wise about good, innocent about evil, obedient to the Lord, right now, you can participate in the process of crushing, which means rendering harmless, abolishing the authority of Satan in your life right now.

Jack Taylor in his book, *Victory over the Devil*, writes:

"Satan's defeat did not remove him from the picture. He's still very much with us. His past defeat assures our present domination of him. Satan is vanquished, but not vanished. He is present, but he's not prevailing. He is active, but he is not able to overcome us."

Folks, sure, the battle is going on, but I'm here to tell you, we've already won the victory. Jesus has already won the victory. You don't have to fight *for* victory. You fight *from* victory. When I was in seminary, I used to play chess with this guy who was a chess master. He worked at the airport where I worked. We would carry on some of these chess games that would last for months, because I would work outside, he worked in the office, and we had a chessboard set up. We had a little indicator to say whose turn it was. Sometimes two or three days would go by before we would even make a move, but we kept an ongoing chess game. He was so smart. I was just a beginner. I remember one particular game, I made the fourth move, 1-2-3-4, moved my knight up into a little position, and he said, "Uh-huh, I got you now." I said, "You don't have me yet. That's just my fourth move." He said, "I know how the rest of the game is going to pan out, and I promise you, I have already won it." He was one of those guys who could play so many moves in advance. He knew when I made a certain move, fourth move, it was over. I hate people like that, don't you? But I kept playing, and sure enough months later, guess what happened? He beat me. He said, "I told you four months ago, I'd already won the game."

That's the truth about the devil today. He's still out there, there's still a struggle going on, still temptation, you still have got to resist the devil, but I'm here to tell you, at the cross of Jesus, the final move was made and he is a defeated foe.

Martin Luther, when he wrote that great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," the third stanza says, "There's the prince of darkness grim, but we tremble not at him. His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him." And that word, my friend, is the word Jesus. Are you trying to fight the devil on your own? Don't! But in the name of Jesus, you can smile as you stomp on Satan.

## OUTLINE

### I. HOW TO CHERISH YOUR SPIRITUAL FAMILY

#### 1. Share positive affirmation about them (1-15)

Paul's friends: 27 names; 21 descriptions

#### 2. Show personal affection to them

You MAY kiss the bride!

### II. HOW TO COPE WITH SPIRITUAL FOES

#### 1. Identify and avoid disruptive people (17-19)

But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. *Titus 3:9-10*

#### 2. Understand and claim victory over Satan (20)

Satan's destruction:

##### a. was predicted from the beginning

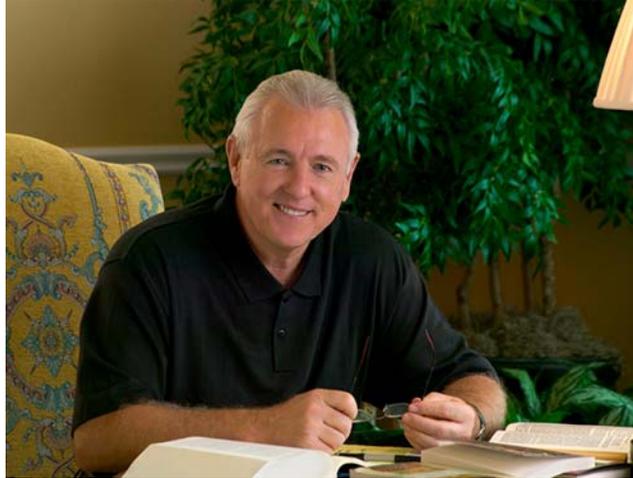
So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." *Genesis 3:14-15*

##### b. was accomplished at the cross

He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. *1 John 3:8*

##### c. will be completed in the future

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time...And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. *Revelation 20:1-3, 10*



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes