

# Welcome To

Malvern Bible Chapel



# Beware of Wolves

## Part of the Romans Series (part 3)

Romans 16:17-27

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# Beware of Wolves

## Romans 16:17-27 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. <sup>18</sup> For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

<sup>19</sup> For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. <sup>20</sup> And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

# Beware of Wolves

## Romans 16:17-27 (NKJV) (cont.)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.

<sup>22</sup> I, Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, greet you in the Lord.

<sup>23</sup> Gaius, my host and *the host* of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city [*Corinth*], greets you, and Quartus, a brother. <sup>24</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

# Beware of Wolves

## Romans 16:17-27 (NKJV)

### Final Blessing:

<sup>25</sup> Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began <sup>26</sup> but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— <sup>27</sup> to God, alone wise, *be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.*

# Beware of Wolves

## Introduction:

After a break last week with Colin & Maureen Crow here, today we will finish this final chapter with a three-part lesson:

1. **Warning:** to exhort the believers to be on their guard at Rome (**Rom. 16:17-20**), for savage wolves will seek to destroy to church (cf. **Acts 20:29**; **Matt. 7:15**);
2. **Greeting:** to send greetings from the believers with Paul at Corinth (**Rom. 16:21-24**); and finally
3. **Blessing:** to offer a benediction that praises the majesty of God (**Rom. 16:25-27**). What a wonderful climax to our study of Romans!

# Beware of Wolves

## Body of Lesson:

### A. Warning (v. 17-20)

Satan is the great enemy of:

1. **Individual Christians** (temptation) (**James 1:13**) (God tests us to bring out the best in us while Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us.);
2. **Families** (believe lies, deception) (**John 8:44**); and
3. **Local churches** (division and destruction) (**2 Thess. 2:9-11**). He does this in the local church by what Paul elsewhere calls “savage wolves” (**Acts 20:29**).



# Beware of Wolves

## A. Warning (v. 17-20) (cont.)

What are the wolves he is talking about and how can we recognize them? Paul urges the believers (not just the leaders) to note (scope out) those who cause division (dissent) and offenses (hindrances or set traps) to the doctrine that they have been taught, and to avoid them.

Today we can say that an offense is any doctrine or practice that Scripture does not support.

# Beware of Wolves

## A. Warning (v. 17-20) (cont.)

Those wolves that stealthfully enter into a local church to cause division do not serve Christ, but their teaching and activities in the church benefit them personally (“serve their own belly”, appetite).

That may result in money, power, prestige, control or sympathy. They may have mastered church vocabulary and perfected the demeanor of a mature believer. Their smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

# Beware of Wolves

## A. Warning (v. 17-20) (cont.)

Paul warned the elders at Ephesus, after spending 3 years with the church, to watch out for savage wolves that would come in after him, seeking to destroy the flock (cf. [Jn. 10:10](#)). Others would rise up from their midst and attempt to deceive and divide the flock. Strong leadership is needed to be alert, to confront, and to discipline or separate from those causing dissention ([Acts 20:28-31](#)), and to warn against Satan's lies. One of his most devastating lies concerns acceptance of a practice that is even legal, but which goes against the truth of God's Word.

# Beware of Wolves

## A. Warning (v. 17-20) (cont.)

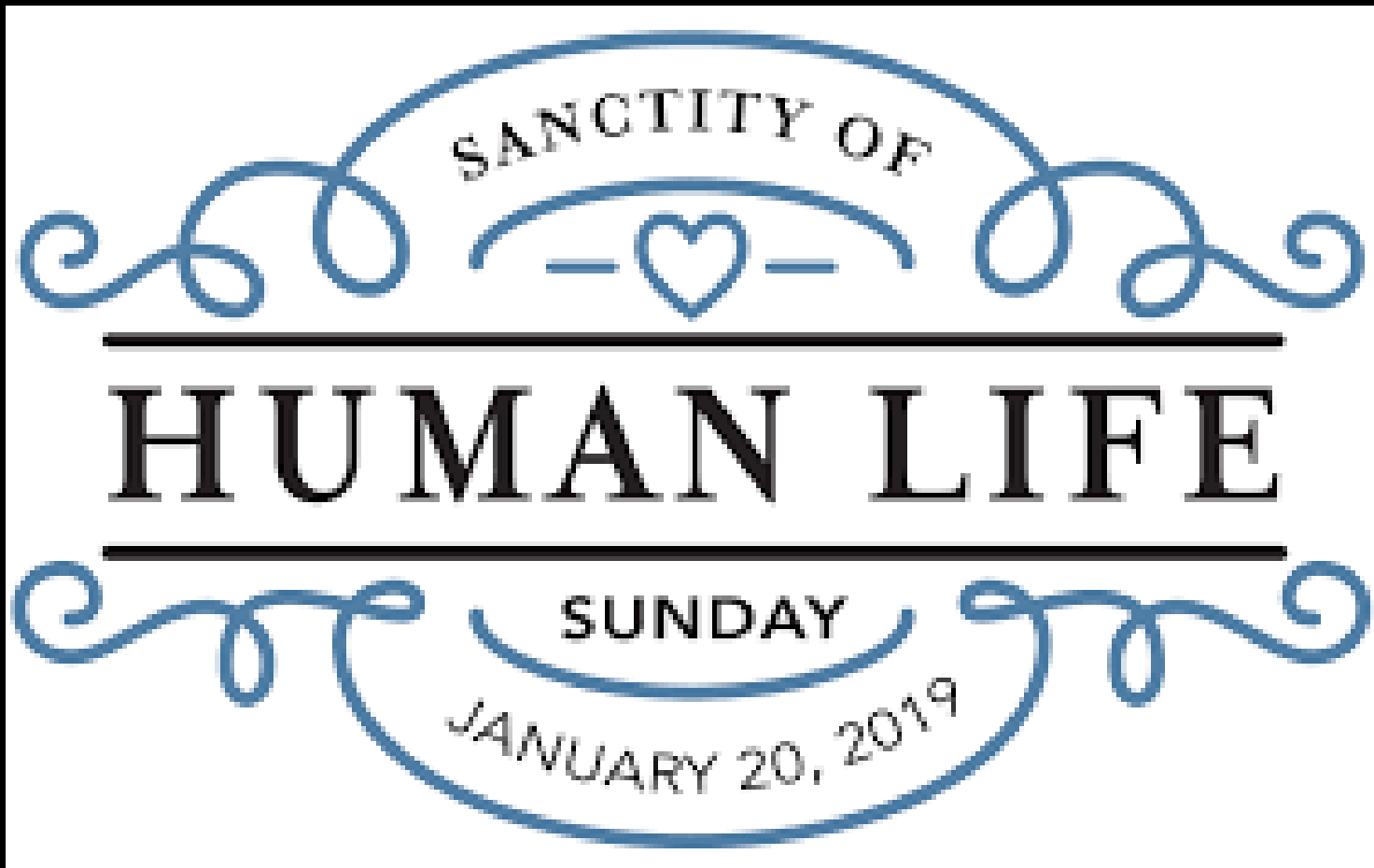
It is fitting that today is also *Sanctity of Human Life Sunday*

50 million abortions have been performed in the United States since 1973, when the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision made the procedure legal.

If we honored each baby aborted since 1973 with a moment of silence, we would be silent for over 100 years! (source: Human Coalition)

Worldwide, abortion was the leading cause of death in 2018 with 41 million babies killed. That is more than heart disease and stroke combined! (source: WHO, checked by Snopes)

# Beware of Wolves



# Beware of Wolves

## A. Warning (v. 17-20) (cont.)

Obedience to the revealed Word of God should characterize a congregation. Paul commends the believers at Rome for this because they have this reputation, even though he has yet to visit them. He urges them to continue to be wise in what is good (know your Bibles), and to be simple (naïve, ignorant) about what is evil.

Don't make a study of, or dabble in, what Scripture condemns (like the occult, witchcraft, illegal use of drugs, same sex relationships, etc.), but which the world deems "harmless fun" or culturally acceptable. Soon the God of Peace will trample under your foot Satan, the Father of lies ([Jn. 8:44](#)), who is at the root of all that is divisive or disobedient to the truth!

# Beware of Wolves

## B. Greeting (v. 21-24)

After greeting a list of 27 people in Rome that he anticipated seeing (16:1-16), and after affirming them for their internal strength while giving them that previous warning (16:17-20), Paul now gives opportunity for some of his top aides and closest associates to send their greetings (16:21-24).

We sometimes forget that Paul was not just a man of doctrine, but he was also a people person. Now as he prepares to close out his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey while in Corinth, we find him (as we always do) surrounded by those who helped him and were a vital part of his entourage.

# Beware of Wolves

## B. Greeting (v. 21-24) (cont.)

- **Timothy.** Paul first met Timothy on his 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey while visiting the towns of Lystra and Derbe (**Acts 16:1-2**), about 100 miles from his own hometown of Tarsus. He was so impressed by Timothy that he asked him to join the missionary group. Now many years later he has become one of Paul's most trusted friends and associates.
- **Lucius.** He was probably one of the "prophets and teachers" in the church at Antioch when the Holy Spirit set apart Paul and Barnabas for missionary service (**Acts 13:1**).



# Beware of Wolves

## B. Greeting (v. 21-24) (cont.)

- **Jason.** Paul first met Jason in Thessalonica, where he witnessed the man's bravery firsthand (**Acts 17:5-9**).
- **Sosipater (or Sopater).** He joined the group when Paul ministered at Berea (**Acts 20:4**). He called them kinsmen for they were no doubt Jews.
- **Tertius.** Paul dictated the letter to his scribe (amanuensis) who was likely a freed slave ("Number 3"). A scribe would prepare a draft, which would be edited by Paul, and then put into final form by the scribe in his best handwriting. Paul would add his own personal greeting at the end (**1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 3:17; Philem. 19**).

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## B. Greeting (v. 21-24) (cont.)

I love the personal note of slave “Number 3” asking Paul for permission to add his greeting as well! He identified with Paul when he wrote of emancipated slaves receiving adoption papers from their Creator (see **Rom. 8:15**).

And so he writes (v.22), “I, [*the freed slave*] Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, greet you in the Lord.”

(and now going out of order, the greeting of another slave)

- **Quartus.** No doubt also a freed slave “Number 4” (perhaps in the household of Gaius). He must have brimmed with joy when Paul calls him “brother”!

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## B. Greeting (v. 21-24) (cont.)

- **Gaius (Gaius Titus Justus Stephanas?).** During his three months in Greece (**Acts 20:2-3**), Paul most likely used Corinth as his base of operations. His host is Gaius, a wealthy convert who Paul personally baptized (**1 Cor. 1:14**). As Priscilla and Aquila did in Rome (**16:3-5**), Gaius allows his home to be a local church for the Christians in Corinth who met for worship, instruction, and fellowship.
- **Erastus.** He also was probably a freed slave (and changed his name from just being a number to become “beloved”). He evidently was respected and wealthy, and was the Corinth “city treasurer”.

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## B. Greeting (v. 21-24) (cont.)

I appreciate the fact that Paul was not a “lone ranger” missionary. He needed to have people around him, and when he didn’t he was greatly disturbed.

But he did this not just for his own personal needs, but for the preparation of the next generation of disciples who lived and worked with Paul, just as Jesus always had his disciples with him, to carry on the work when he was gone.

Verse 24 is not always found here. Sometimes in other manuscripts it is relocated to v.27. It is most likely a later addition, but this short benediction is in keeping with Paul’s spontaneous style.

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## C. Blessing (v.25-27)

Now in the closing verses of this letter, Paul sets aside his logical arguments like you would expect to hear in a court of law, he pushes doctrine and weighty theological questions to the background, he turns his heart away from practical matters and even people, and gives his full attention to the glory of God.

These three verses form one long sentence, much like his opening line (**Rom. 1:1-7**). It is Paul's final blessing to the readers, and us. Notice as well how many of the themes of Romans are also reflected in the one sentence.

# Beware of Wolves

## C. Blessing (v.25-27)

<sup>25</sup> Now to Him who is able to establish [Rom. 1:11-12] you according to my gospel [Rom. 1:1,9; 15:16-19] and the preaching of Jesus Christ [Rom.10:14-15], according to the revelation of the mystery [Rom. 11:25] kept secret since the world began <sup>26</sup> but now made manifest [Rom. 10:20], and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith [Rom. 1:5; 15:18]— <sup>27</sup> to God, alone wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

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## Application:

- 1. Warning:** Do I have such a high view of Scriptures that I can detect spiritual wolves?
- 2. Greeting:** Do I have such a high view of Christians that I can love them no matter what?
- 3. Blessing:** Do I have such a high view of God that I can bless and glorify Him at all times?