

Romans 16:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

Analysis

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them— Parakalō de hymas, adelphoi, skopein tous tas dichostasias kai ta skandala para tēn didachēn hēn hymēis emathete poiountas, kai ekklinete ap' autōn (παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, σκοπεῖν τοὺς τὰς διχοστασίας καὶ τὰ σκάνδαλα παρὰ τὴν διδαχὴν ἦν ὑμεῖς ἐμάθετε ποιοῦντας, καὶ ἐκκλίνετε ἀπ' αὐτῶν). Skopein (σκοπέω, watch/mark) means observe carefully, identify. Dichostasias (διχοστασία, divisions) are factional splits. Skandala (σκάνδαλον, offenses/snares) are stumbling blocks causing spiritual ruin. Para tēn didachēn (παρὰ τὴν διδαχὴν, contrary to the teaching) identifies the criterion: apostolic doctrine. Ekklinete (ἐκκλίνω, avoid/turn away) is strong—don't engage, debate, or tolerate. This isn't disputable matters (ch. 14) but false teaching threatening the gospel.

Historical Context

Paul repeatedly warned against false teachers: Judaizers requiring circumcision (Galatians 1:6-9, 'let him be accursed'), antinomians promoting license (Romans 6:1-2), proto-Gnostics denying resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-19), ascetics forbidding marriage/food (1 Timothy 4:1-5). The early church faced constant doctrinal threats. Paul's command to 'avoid them' (ekklinete) seems harsh but protects the flock—false teaching spreads like gangrene (2 Timothy 2:17). Church discipline for doctrinal error was normative: Hymenaeus and Alexander delivered

to Satan (1 Timothy 1:20), factious persons rejected after two warnings (Titus 3:10).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish between disputable matters (ch. 14, allow diversity) and doctrinal deviations (v. 17, avoid them)?
2. What does it mean to 'mark' (skopein) those causing divisions—how do you identify false teaching without becoming heresy hunters?
3. When is it faithful to 'avoid' (ekklinete) divisive teachers versus engage them—where's the line between discernment and sectarianism?

Interlinear Text

Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀδελφοί σκοπεῖν τοὺς τὰς
I beseech **Now** **you** **brethren** **mark** G3588 G3588
G3870 G1161 G5209 G80 G4648

διχοστασίας καὶ τὰ σκάνδαλα παρὰ τὴν διδαχὴν
divisions **and** G3588 **offences** **contrary** G3588 **to the doctrine**
G1370 G2532 G4625 G3844 G1322

ἥν ύμεῖς ἐμάθετε ποιοῦντας καὶ ἐκκλίνατε ἀπ'
which **ye** **have learned** **them which cause** **and** **avoid** **them**
G3739 G5210 G3129 G4160 G2532 G1578 G575

αὐτῶν.

G846

Additional Cross-References

Jude 1:19 (Parallel theme): These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 (Parallel theme): Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Colossians 2:8 (Parallel theme): Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

2 Timothy 3:5 (Parallel theme): Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Galatians 2:4 (Parallel theme): And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

Titus 3:10 (Parallel theme): A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;

1 Timothy 1:3 (Parallel theme): As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

Matthew 18:7 (Parallel theme): Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Philippians 3:17 (Parallel theme): Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

1 Corinthians 3:3 (Parallel theme): For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?