

16:17 Avoid People Who Create Dissension

The Sources of Division.

Chrysostom: Division is the subversion of the church. Turning things upside down like this is the devil's weapon. As long as the body is united he has no way of getting in, but harm comes from division. And where does division come from? From doctrines which are contrary to the teaching of the apostles. Homilies on Romans 32.2

Augustine: Paul is here discussing the same people he wrote about to Timothy 3 and to Titus. 4 See also Philippians [3:19]. Augustine on Romans 84.5

16:18 Deceiving the Simpleminded

Coating Poison with Honey.

Cyril of Jerusalem: The heretics do this by coating over their poison pills of godless doctrines with the honey of the name of Christ. The Catechetical Lectures 4.2.7

Flattering Words.

Jerome: Flattery is always insidious, deceitful and bland. And a flatterer is well defined by philosophers as a bland enemy. Truth is harsh, bitter, stern, unpleasant and offensive to those who are reprovved. Against the Pelagians 1.26.8

Chrysostom: It seems that Paul is talking here about the Jewish leaders.... Their words sound wonderful, but they are deceptive. However, they do not fool everyone but only the hearts of the simple-minded. Homilies on Romans 32.9

16:19 Be Wise and Guileless

Be Guileless As to What Is Evil.

Origen: This is similar to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians when he said: "Be babes in evil, but in your thinking be mature." 11 The Lord also said much the same thing: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." 12 Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.13

The Hearts of the Innocent.

Clement of Alexandria: The apostle admits that he rejoices because of the hearts of the innocent, and [in this verse] he gives a kind of definition of being as a child. Christ the Educator 1.5.14

16:20 *God Will Soon Crush Satan*

God Will Soon Crush Satan Under Your Feet.

Origen: It seems to me that "Satan" here refers to any spirit which is opposed to God. For in our language, Satan means "adversary."

But just as the apostle teaches that if they behave and demonstrate that they are the kind of people he says they are, then he promises that Satan will soon be crushed under their feet by the God of peace, so the same God of peace will stir up Satan in the hearts of those who do not keep his peace with a pure heart and a clean conscience. Thus whoever neglects the blessing of peace will suffer the bitter pangs of the adversaries until he remembers the sweetness of the peace which he has rejected. Therefore we are edified by both of these things, for God is said to stir up Satan against those who neglect him and to subdue him for the benefit of those who dedicate themselves to him, giving them the palm of victory over their vanquished foe and pouring out on them the rewards of victory. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.¹⁷