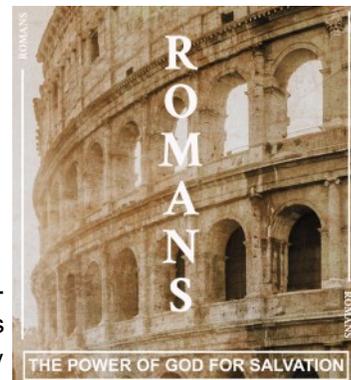


Pastor Jake Magee

March 22, 2026

Romans



Don't Be Fooled
Romans 16:17-20

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. – Romans 16

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... ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" - Matthew 7

Don't Be Fooled By...

1. Spiritual Branding

"For such people do not serve our Lord Christ..." - Vs. 18

2. Successful Leaders

"...who cause divisions and create obstacles..." - Vs. 17

3. Smooth Talking

"...by smooth talk and flattery they deceive..." - Vs. 18

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" – 1 John 4:1

Small Group Discussion Guide
Don't Be Fooled
Romans 16:17-20

Getting Started

What's the most recent scam you were (or almost were) tricked by?

Digging Deeper (Read Romans 16:17–20 together.)

1. In verse 18, we are warned not to be spiritually naïve.

- What does “naïve” mean?

- What specifically does Paul tell us not to be naïve about?

- Share a time when you may have been spiritually naïve.

2. In verse 20, who is ultimately behind false teachers and false teaching?

- What event is Paul alluding to?

- How does that event serve as a pattern for all false teaching that follows?

- What does this passage suggest we should be doing right now?

3. Verse 18 describes people who appear to be “servants of Christ,” but are not.

- Why is outward Christian identity (labels, language, affiliation) not enough to prove someone is trustworthy?

- How does Jesus' warning in Matthew 7:15 (wolves in sheep's clothing) deepen this idea?

- In the sermon, it was said that the most dangerous teaching often originates from inside the church. Discuss that idea.

4. Verse 17 warns not against division itself, but division that is contrary to sound doctrine.

- A good leader will cause divisions and create obstacles, and powerful leaders will do this with passion, persuasiveness, and tangible results. Explain.
- We are naive when we think that a leader's passion, persuasiveness, and effectiveness is the evidence their cause is right. How do people make this mistake in churches?
- How do passages like Matthew 24:24 and Matthew 7:22–23 challenge that assumption?

5. Verse 18 says deception often comes through “smooth talk and flattery.”

- How can polished, compelling communication hide a departure from the truth?
- Read Galatians 1:6–9 and 2 Corinthians 11:3–6. What do these passages add to Paul's warning?
- Pastor Jake referenced a movement often called “progressive Christianity.” Do some research on what this movement is, where it is found, and what it tries to present as the gospel.
- Are there other teachings or movements today that you think might fit Paul's warning?

Making It Real

Read Romans 16:17–23.

- What clues does this passage give for how to grow in wisdom and avoid deception? What other Scriptures come to mind that help us grow in discernment?
- What would it look like this week to evaluate what you're listening to (books, podcasts, voices) through the lens of the true gospel?

Resources:

The Book of Romans (read and reread!)
blueletterbible.org
biblehub.com
preceptaustin.org