

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY FORTY-TWO

Boars in God's Vineyard

Romans 16:17–20

At times, faithful shepherds must stand alone on their principles, even at the risk of being misunderstood, and press on without the need to defend themselves publicly. They must do right though others may choose to do wrong. You see, there have always been wolves in sheep's clothing. There have always been boars who ravage God's vineyard.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE know the damage they cause. They sniff, burrow, and dig into the soil with their strong snouts, looking for underground prey like insects and earthworms to eat. They feast on the ripening grapes and trample the fragile root system. No wonder farmers use tall fences, noise devices, and even guard dogs—whatever it takes—to keep wild boars away!

The more precious something is, the more it needs guarding.

Throughout the history of the church, pastors and leaders have built fences, issued stern instructions, and planted warning signs to keep wild boars from nosing their way into God's vineyard.

Sometimes these wild boars hide under the cloak of religion—like the Pharisees. They accused Jesus of getting “His power from Satan” (Matthew 12:24), tried to discredit Him publicly (22:15–17), plotted to kill Him (12:14), and succeeded (26:3–4). Jesus experienced firsthand the vicious attacks of these menaces. He likened them to wolves, and posted His own warning sign in His Sermon on the Mount:

“Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves.” (Matthew 7:15)



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Paul also warned the Ephesian elders to fence up!

I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following. Watch out! (Acts 20:29–31)

In his closing words to the Roman believers, Paul issued a similar warning, which we'll examine in this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study. Let's heed his stern instructions, keep the fences up, and watch for the warning signs so we can keep such wild boars out of God's vineyard.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

*Joyful is the person who finds wisdom. . . .
Wisdom is more precious than rubies. (Proverbs 3:13, 15)*

Ask God to grant you wisdom as you study the timeless truths in Romans—truths that provide guidance for your feet, diligence to your hands, and strength for your heart to follow the All-Wise One.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul knew about ravaging God's vineyard because, before his conversion, he was a wild boar. He burst into believers' homes, dragging Christ-followers to prison ([Acts 8:3](#); [9:1–2](#)). But Christ stopped him, saved him, and made him a planter in God's vineyard instead of an uprooter ([1 Corinthians 3:6](#)).

He posted warning signs against the boars who spied on the Galatian believers' liberty (Galatians 2:4–5). He erected a tall fence against the false apostles in his letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). He even told Timothy to beware the disrupters: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. . . . Be careful of him, for he fought against everything we said" (2 Timothy 4:14–15).

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No church on the planet is spared the boars' menace. The apostle John confronted one named Diotrefes—the church bully who rejected John's authority and spread malicious gossip (3 *John* 1:9–10). Paul warned that boars in God's vineyard are characteristic of the last days, and he told Timothy to “stay away from people like that” (2 Timothy 3:5).

Does an experience or a story come to mind when you think about a boar in God's vineyard? Why was Paul's admonition against such people so firm?



Observation: Wild Boars in the Roman Congregation

Take the first step of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, observation, by reading thoughtfully and repetitively *Romans 16:17–20*.¹

The Trouble Brewing—Romans 16:17

First, note what was happening in the Roman congregation. Paul used the same verb for “urge” in Romans 16:17 that he used in 12:1 and 15:30.

I urge you, brothers and sisters . . . to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice.
(Romans 12:1 NASB)

I urge you, brothers and sisters . . . to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. (15:30 NASB)

I urge you, brothers and sisters, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances. (16:17 NASB)

According to *Romans 16:17*, to whom was he writing? What did he urge them to do? On whom did he tell them to keep their eye? What was wrong with all these “dissensions and hindrances” (16:17 NASB)?

*Notice what's wrong with all of these—hindrances and dissensions.
They don't square with scriptural truth, either in precept or in principle.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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The Reason It Was Happening—Romans 16:18

Paul took off his gloves and called it as it was. Look at [Romans 16:18](#) carefully. The word *for* explains the previous verse. What two reasons did he give for these dissensions and hindrances?

The Way It Was to Be Handled—Romans 16:17–20

What verb did Paul use in [Romans 16:17](#) to tell the Roman believers to be on the lookout? What evidence do you find in [16:19](#) of the believers' practice? Why then did Paul give the warnings? How were they to personally handle the problem of boars in the church?

What great promise and blessing in [16:20](#) did he use to conclude his instructions?

The Romans weren't tolerating those who were causing dissensions, and Paul didn't want them to start. So, he says, "I commend you." However, while rejoicing over them, don't miss the end of verse 19. Here he is again, like a father, "I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil."

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Beware of Those Who Ravage the Church

The troublemakers in the Roman church were causing “dissensions” and “hindrances,” living contrary to the teaching which they learned (Romans 16:17 NASB). Look up the Greek terms *dichostasia*, “dissensions,” and *skandalon*, “hindrances,” at billmounce.com. How would you explain these terms? What danger do people who cause dissensions and hinderances pose to the body of Christ?

The original Greek term dichostasia denotes divisiveness, polarization. Whoever is involved in dissensions brings strife, disturbs peace, and sows discord among the brothers and sisters of the organization or the church. The skandala would be those agents of disunity who blocked the free-flowing work of the Spirit. They delight in sounding believable but desire to undermine and dilute the effectiveness of a ministry. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In [Romans 16:18](#), Paul explained that those who cause dissensions and hindrances are self-serving and deceptive. Read [16:18](#) in the NET, MSG, and J. B. Phillips translations. How does this verse warn believers today?

Paul encouraged the believers in Rome “to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil” (16:19 NASB). Reread [16:19–20](#) in the J. B. Phillips and MSG translations and consult your Bible-study resources. Explain these phrases in your own words.

Let's say it again. “I want to see you experts in good and not even beginners in evil.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Handling Conflict in the Church

The opening account of Scripture warns us against a boar-type deceiver—the serpent who caused dissension between Adam and Eve and who hindered their faith in God (*Genesis 2:16–17; 3*). The apostle Paul picked up the same theme in *2 Corinthians 11:1–14*, instructing the Corinthian believers to erect a fence against Satan, who was using his age-old strategy of deception with these false apostles. What can we learn from Satan's deception?

That's how predators get children to get into their cars so they can kidnap them. By smooth and flattering speech. That's how cults get their way when they want to bend your mind to their way of thinking. It's never rude and illogical but smooth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, who were church leaders, give specific advice on how to deal with divisive people and false teachers. Compare *Romans 16:17–20; 1 Timothy 1:18–21; 5:20; and Titus 3:10–11*. How do all these passages teach faithful shepherds the importance of *observation*, *confrontation*, and *separation*—watching out for, confronting, and separating yourself from the wild boars in God's vineyard? Even if we're not in leadership, what should be our action plan?

Stay on the alert. Confront it when you have to. Finally, separate. This is a self-serving individual who will do harm to the ministry. Once that person is addressed and you try your best to handle him or her, often it's best to separate from that person. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Watch Out! Beware of the Wild Boars!

Apply *Romans 16:17–20* by living out its truths. One of Paul's timeless biblical principles is that deceivers target the naïve—individuals who are uninformed, undiscerning, and overly trusting.

To guard against the deceptive wild boars in this information age, Pastor Chuck Swindoll provides three questions:

1. “Is this teaching in agreement with Scripture?”
2. “Does this person glorify the Lord Jesus Christ?”
3. “Will the outcome promote godliness or deepen my walk with Christ?”

Which of these questions do you find most relevant to what you have experienced? What other questions might help you filter the teaching you've received?

Will I be a better believer, a better Christian because I accept this? Will I become one who promotes harmony and peace? Will I live my life more in keeping with the teachings of Christ? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Think of some practical ways you can build a fence against those who distort God's truths. Write them below. Conclude with a prayer for wisdom and thanksgiving to God, who will soon crush Satan under our feet!

Remember, the more precious something is, the more it needs guarding. *Nothing is more precious than your relationship with God!* So, to protect your heart, remember Paul's counsel. “Watch out for people who cause divisions” (Romans 16:17). “Stay away from them” (16:17). “Be wise in doing right . . . stay innocent of any wrong” (16:19). Wise words to live by.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great power and solid truths. Thank You for sound teaching that has helped me guard these truths entrusted to me. Help me be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. Thank You for all the faithful shepherds who have warned me against the wild boars in Your vineyard. Encourage and strengthen them. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2008, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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