

Road Trip Devotions - Romans 16:17-20

by Preston Lambrecht, Office Manager

“And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people’s faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people. But everyone knows that you are obedient to the Lord. This makes me very happy. I want you to be wise in doing right and to stay innocent of any wrong. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.” (Romans 16:17-20; NLT)

When I was young, roughly 5-7 years old, I can remember people in our small town asking my parents what church they went to and they would answer, “First Christian Church.” Some people would smile and say that’s nice, just to make some polite conversation. When others would respond to the same question with Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, etc. People would automatically put them into a category without regard to their actions, love for others, or anything else. They just assumed that since they attended a certain church that they were different. It meant nothing to me at the time because I was so young, but as I grew older I found myself lumping people into categories and stereotyping them into religious groups. It wasn’t until I had been on a missions trip to an Indian reservation that I began to really dig deeper into who God was and what being a “Christian” meant.

I started to read the Bible and pray daily, trying to understand God’s love for me and his plan for my life. While doing these things I discovered something else as well. In the Bible Paul doesn’t refer to the First Baptist Church of Corinth or the Church of the Holy Cross located in Ephesus! Churches were the Church! In the passage above we find Paul talking about smooth talkers and their ability to deceive us and cause division. It makes me wonder about the first guy who was upset at the church because they wanted to use an instrument during worship. He didn’t, so he moved down the Road and started his own church.

The more we study the more we know, and the easier it is for us to discern truth from personal interpretation. The basic principals of Christianity can be found in most denominations. There is one God, he took earthly form and was crucified for our sins, the only way to heaven is through his forgiveness and grace. If we unite on the principals that are essential to salvation, and accept that there are other things we cannot understand or answer with a direct yes or no, then we can be the CHURCH and not the churches!