

Romans #36 - Real Ministry: Problems

Well, it kind of feels like the last day of high school where you say goodbye to an old friend. We're in the last sermon in the book of Romans, we've had 435 verses of Romans. We've gone through line by line, word by word. During this time we baptized 329 new Christians, which is incredible and if you want to celebrate that, that's fine. We've sent out around 200 daily devotions. I've talked for 150 hours. If you include men it's 200, if you include those morning, it'll be about 1,000 and this will be the 36th sermon in the book of Romans, amen. Congratulations. You've made it to the end. We're at the grand finale. We've saved the best for last and we're going to jump right in in just a moment. So if you've got a Bible go to Romans chapter 16, last chapter of this great book of the Bible, and let me set up the big concept, biblically that we're going to look out specifically here at the end of Romans. And that is that there is God who is good. There is Satan, a created being who is bad. This sets the stage for a conflict between God and Satan, between good and evil. And the way that it works is that God creates. And then everything that God creates, Satan seeks to counterfeit. We hit this in the winter war series a time ago. In addition, everything that God seeks to build, Satan seeks to break. He's always opposed an anti. And God works through vision, unity, people, divine beings, aligning together and serving to build God's vision. Satan and the demonic realm works through division. Division literally means two visions and this conflict, this battle, it started in heaven. God is perfect. He makes angels in his great goodness. He creates a perfect environment. He gives a vision to build his kingdom. Satan rises up, decides that he is going to counterfeit God's kingdom with the world. That he's going to break everything that God is building, that he's going to bring division to oppose God's vision. So there's a war in heaven. A third of the angels aligned with Satan became demons were cast down to the earth. They continued this pattern and precedent. We see in Genesis chapter three, Adam and Eve, our first parents they're given governance of the earth. Satan shows up, says, I want to counterfeit what God is creating. I want to break what God is building. I want to bring division to God's vision. We aligned with him, sin enters into the world. So then God comes on a rescue mission. Here comes Jesus from heaven to earth. He won his war, we lost our war. So he comes to do battle or us. Satan tries to recruit the Lord Jesus to join him. He tempts him to participate in division and breaking and counterfeiting and Satan resists him. Excuse me, Jesus rather resists Satan,. Not giving up the fight, this battle continues. Satan seeks to recruit one of Jesus' own disciples for the war and he picks off. He aligns with Judas Iscariot. All of this just shows every time God is working, Satan is working against it. As God is advancing, Satan is opposing. As God is creating, Satan is counterfeiting. As God is building, Satan is breaking. This was true in heaven, which was a perfect environment. This was true in Eden, which at the time was a perfect environment. This means that this battle is going to come to your family. It's going to come to your business. It's going to come to our church and our ministry and our relationships. And when it comes, we shouldn't be shocked. This is just the way the world works until Jesus ultimately sentences Satan and evil doers to hell forever. When it happens, what do we do? How do we respond? And that's where He concludes in Romans chapter 16. And He's going to tell us about three kinds of people. It's going to tell us about evil people, foolish people and wise people. And let's start with evil people right here in Romans 16, verses 17 through 18 and 20. He says, I appeal to you. So He's warning, He's exhorting. He's loving. He's encouraging brothers. He's speaking to Christians in

the church to watch out for those who cause divisions. Again, vision is two visions. Division is two visions. And create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught. If you've been taught the Bible, there is a time that you're going to need to obey it and remember it. Avoid them, the evil people for such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but by their own appetites, by smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the hearts of the naive. The naive are the foolish people. And then the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. He says behind all of this conflict and division is ultimately spiritual warfare and it is Satan who's at work. So we're going to talk about evil people, foolish people, wise people. There's a whole chapter in a book I wrote called Spirit-Filled Jesus a few years ago on this and I'll summarize it. Some of you, this will not be new. Some of you are new so it's brand new for you. and we're glad to have you. Evil people live by demonic power. Foolish people live by the flesh. Wise people live by the spirit. Evil people are like wolves. Foolish people are like sheep. Wise people are like shepherds. Ultimately, evil people are negative. It's always who or what they're against. Foolish people are neutral and wise people are positive. They're for the Lord in the things of the Lord. And what he's starting with is a warning against evil people who cause problems, create divisions and create obstacles. Let me tell you some things about evil people and you're going to need to be discerning. One of the dumbest things we tell people, especially when kids are little is treat everybody the same, treat everybody the same. No, no, no, because people are different. We treat people according to their character. They determine how we treat them or how they behave. If you're evil, we treat you different than if you're wise. And so He gives us these categories so that we would not be naive, that's what He says. Evil people tell you some things about them. They are intentionally dangerous and cause pain and harm. Foolish people it's accidental. They didn't think about it. Foolish people, oh, I didn't know that. You know, if I spent all your money, you would be broke or when I borrowed your car and, you know, ran it into a wall. I didn't know that that would affect your life. I wasn't thinking about it. Foolish people are not malicious. They're just sort of absent-minded. Evil people are very calculated. They're very intentional. They're very malicious. When they cause pain and harm, it was focused, it was planned. It was premeditated and it was purposeful. And in addition, what He's talking about here is some people who are evil and they create obstacles and cause divisions and they do so with some sort of religious self-righteous intent. Sometimes evil people can be the most religious. Blaise Pascal says it this way, he's a philosopher. He says, men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction. Sometimes the most religious people are the most malicious people. Sometimes the most religious people are the most dangerous people. And they think that they're doing it for God. Or they think that they are justified. The people who opposed Jesus the most were the most religious. The ones who harassed him, the ones who hounded him, the ones who harmed him, we're doing so in the name of God, going against God. And that's the religious deception of evil people. What underlies sometimes evil people's actions and motives is there's unforgiveness or there is a hurt that is unhealed. So there's bitterness or there's brokenness. If you hold any unforgiveness or bitterness, you are literally poisoning your own soul. It is a dangerous thing to hold any bitterness. If there's unforgiveness, resentment or bitter jealousy towards someone, you are now becoming a very unhealthy person in the worst version of yourself. The result is you're going to do evil toward others because you have allowed evil into your soul. And sometimes people are

not only unforgiving they're unhealed. There's a brokenness, a trauma, a hurt, something painful or problematic in their past that they have not healed up from or gotten help for. And these people can have triggers and all of a sudden something happens. Someone says something and all of a sudden they're very emotional and they're responding instantaneously and they're doing evil. Evil was done to them and they do evil. Trauma happened to them and they traumatized. Someone tormented them so they torment others. Someone broke them and now they're breaking others. And sometimes we can look at evil people and we can see that they've been through a lot. Their life has been hard, but at the same time that doesn't excuse their behavior. Now they will use it sometimes to excuse their behavior, but ultimately they need to forgive and they need to heal so that then they can be healthy and bring life instead of death and evil. Oftentimes those who are evil, they're driven by unhealthy fear and anger. They're afraid that something is going to happen and so they're constantly on alert and or they're angry. Their emotional life is primarily dominated by anger. Now, if you don't understand this, these are the twin emotions that drive the internet. Everything right now in social media, media and platforms, it's fear and anger. You're in danger, get upset. And what happens is when you respond instantaneously out of fear, anger, that's usually not the right response. How many of you got angry said or did something and then a little while later, the holy spirit showed up and you realized that was wrong, I'm sorry. If you're married, this is what we call marriage, okay. You've got to take a little time and invite God to be involved and you can't just get angry or emotional or fearful. Those emotions, if not well, guarded, don't guide you into God's will. In addition, these people who are evil, oftentimes their quote unquote ministry is taking up an offense for another. It's like, well, what happened to you? Well, nothing happened to me, but I heard that something happened to them and it triggered something that happened to me, or it reminds me of something that I experienced therefore, I am taking up their offense. Taking up offense is not a ministry, it's a misery. It's not helping, it's harming. It's busy body. It's meddling. And if you're not part of the solution and you involve yourself, you are part of the problem. All you're doing is multiplying the pain, not relieving any of it. And there are people that they make it their ministry to look for hurt people, offended people, angry people, jaded people, negative people, and then take up offense for them and the result is evil. The result is great evil. Sometimes even in the name of God. Well, God told me to do, God called me. God spoke to me. And I would say, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits 'cause not all the spirits come from God. You may have gotten a word, but it may have been a word from the enemy to break, not a word from God to build. What happens as well, He tells us that evil people, they're relationally cunning. If you listen to his language, it's insightful. He says smooth talk and flattery, they deceive. What he's talking about is these people know how to work you relationally. If you're scared, they're going to exacerbate your fears and then say that only they can protect you and keep you safe. If you are a person who is lonely, they're going to put an arm around you and say, I love you, you can depend on me and I've actually got a group and we're here for you. If you are a person who's very proud, they're going to flatter you, tell you how amazing and great you are and how right you are and how wrong everyone else is. If you're a person who is very insecure, they're going to as well flatter you so that you trust them and you're dependent upon them for your image. All of that to say, they know how to relationally manipulate. It's like a marionette with the strings. They know how to play you. And they'll say things like, I love you. I

care about you, I'm trying to help you. I've been praying for you. And they'll wrap it all in the guise of religious deception, that's what he's saying. Evil people as well, a couple more things. They create obstacles and cause divisions. That's what Paul says. Creating an obstacle means it makes it more difficult for people to come to Christ or come to church. They get a lot of things in the way. If you've ever tried to drive somewhere and obstacles were in the way, the whole point of the obstacles was to redirect you into another path. If you're trying to get to Christ, you're trying to get to church. They're trying to redirect you somewhere else. They create obstacles. And then if you do make it to Christ in the church, they create divisions, us versus them. Are you with us or you with them? Rather than having one vision, they have division. This leads to factious behavior. This leads to conflict and drama and trial and struggle and relational strife. And then lastly, these people not beyond help, but they're beyond your help. Evil people are not beyond help, but they're beyond your help. Some of you have this hero, savior, rescuer mentality. You wake up every day, you put your cap on and you're going to go save people. The truth is you can't save anyone. In addition, some people don't want to be saved. All they want is to cause you pain and harm. And so what happens with evil people is sometimes we think that if we just minister to them, if we love them, if we walk with them, we will change them. And the truth is only God can change people. These people are not beyond our help, but they're not beyond God's help, but they are beyond our help, that's my big idea. What they need is professional help. With evil people, you have professional relationships. You need to go to a treatment center. You need to go to rehab. You need a probation officer. We need to call the police. If you want to talk to me, call my attorney, professional relationships. With people who are foolish, we need to have pastoral relationships, some boundaries, some guidelines and guardrails. With people who are wise, we can have personal relationships. We can bring them into our life and we can trust them with access and information. The man who writes this, his name is Paul. But before his name was changed, what was his name? Saul, okay, evil, foolish, wise, which was he? Very evil. He hated Christ and Christians. He murdered early church leaders like Stephen. He harassed and arrested people. He was a jihadist. He was a terrorist. He was a terrorist. He was a problem. And Christians probably talked to him and prayed for him and wished him well, but nothing changed him. Until literally the story of his life is that Jesus came down from heaven. Literally knocked him off his high horse. Said, you're not in charge I am. We have a problem and you are the problem. There are times that there's nothing you can do. God just needs to show up and He needs to fix their problem. And what happens then is he meets with some early church leaders, James, who is Jesus, brother half-brother and Peter who's the leader of the disciples. People who are evil, they need God to show up and they need professional help from people who can help them. Therapists, doctors, truant officers, whatever the case may be. This is the story of the apostle Paul. Had God not shown up in his life he would still have been an evil man. And what happens is this with evil people, there's a little line that I've used for years. And that is if you engage, you will enrage. There's a man named Gavin de Becker. He trains a lot of soldiers and military leaders and secret service. And what he says with evil people is if you engage you will enrage. And so what you give them is nothing. No access, no time, no information, no money, no energy. We use this line. We don't negotiate with terrorists. This is the spiritual equivalent of a terrorist. There's no meeting in the middle. There's no reasoning. There's no compromising. They, when you lose, that is the game that they play.

And so what Paul says here, he says, as number one, watch out for them. Now, every one is evil to the core were made the image and likeness of God with a conscience. But there are some people who are evil and you need to watch out for them and be discerning. In addition, what he says is when you find one, avoid them. This is move, if they live in your condo complex, move. If you're living with them and you're dating and you shouldn't be living with them or dating them. You need to pack up and go. If this is extended family, you're going to need to change your cell phone number. Blocks certain people on social media or on your email or text. Now, as soon as I say that, avoid them. I know some of you are going to immediately go toward compassion and empathy and evil people will use that against you to weaponize the Bible and harm you. They'll come to you and say, well, I thought Christians are supposed to be loving. We are to those who are foolish and wise, but we need to avoid those who are evil. And some of you have been told verses by evil people to weaponize the Bible, to explore you. Things like, well, hey, you're a Christian. You're supposed to love me. Forgive me and reconcile with me. No love you, yes. Forgive you, yes. Reconcile with you, no. 'Cause forgiveness, trust and relationship are three different things. Forgiveness is free, trust is earned. And relationship is something that you get to decide. I'll give you an example. Let's say you're a parent. You've got extended family. You've got little kids. You want a date night. So you'd take the kids over to your extended family's house. And they're going to watch the kids for the night. You pick up the kids at the end of the day. The kids are spooked. Looks like they'd been in a Scooby-Doo episode. They're just not doing good. So what happened there? Like man, they were yelling at each other. It was a very tense environment. They were very mean to us. It was loud. We didn't like it there. It was scary. Can you forgive them for putting your children in that environment? Yes or no? Yes, you need to. Should you trust them and keep dropping your kids off? No. On behalf of your kids, no. If we went in the back right now and asked your kids and they would all vote, please don't drop me off there again because you can't trust them. Now, do you want to have a close relationship with them? Do you want to do the holidays with them? Do you want to go on vacation with them? Do you want to celebrate your birthday with them? You get to decide, but you don't have to. And sometimes the two things that make dealing with evil people, the most difficult, number one, they weaponize the Bible to use verses against us to benefit them and exploited and harm us. Number two, the most difficult evil people to deal with, our relatives. Because sometimes we let family get away with things that we would never let other people get away with. Just because they have the same last name doesn't mean that they get to operate by a different set of rules. And what he's talking about here is watch out. If people are evil, avoid them, avoid them. Now Jesus had a relationship with someone like this. One of his 12 disciples was Judas Iscariot. Evil, foolish wise, which was Judas, evil. For three years he's pretending to be a disciple of Jesus, but he's actually a counterfeit. He's pretending to build the kingdom of God, but he's actually plotting to break it. He pretends that he shares God's vision, but he is there creating division. For three years he's stealing from Jesus. At the end, he betrays him with a kiss. Satan occupies him, fills him. He's not just demon possessed, but Satan possessed. And then we see his entire covert plan become overt. He's got religious and political leaders that he has brought together to destroy Jesus Christ. He's evil. And Jesus has a closure conversation with him. And the conversation is between Jesus and Judas. What Jesus doesn't say is let's go to counseling together. I'm sure we can work this out. What Jesus doesn't say is we need a

mediator so that we can negotiate the difference. What Jesus doesn't say is I think you have a good heart. What Jesus says is you go do what you're going to do. And I'm going to go do what I'm going to do. You go do what's wrong, I'll go do what's right. You go do what's evil, I'll do what's good. At this point, we part company, we separate ways I'm going to avoid you. They never speak again. The relationship is over. This is the conversation to never have another conversation. Who in your life is evil? Is there any area in your life that you are evil? And what he's wanting us to do is to be discerning. I'll just tell you friends, this is a dangerous world. It's so dangerous that none of you is going to make it through our life. We're all going to end in the grave. And what we do is we say stupid things. Like I believe everybody's a good person. Or they have a good heart. No they don't. Do you have you watched the news? Do you have the internet? Is there a lock on the door of your home? You're in Arizona. You have a door with a lock, with a gun, with a dog, with a wife, with a dog and another gun. I mean, this is Arizona. We don't believe that everybody is safe and good. And so we're discerning. And if you don't have these instincts, you need to nurture them before your children come. Otherwise you're naive it will put them in harms way. In addition to evil people, he talks about foolish people. And he says this in Romans 16, 18 and 19 for such persons, evil people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites by smooth talk and flattery. They deceive the hearts of the naive. The naive or the foolish people. They're too trusting, they're too vulnerable. They're too gullible. For your obedience is known to all so that I rejoice over you. But I want you be wise is saying, you're not wise, but I want you to become wise as to what is good and innocent to what is evil. What he does right here, he says there are wise people and evil people in the middle are the foolish people, they're naive. What he's saying is I don't want you to hang out with and become like the evil people. I want you to listen to and learn from the wise people. And what happens is evil people operate by demonic power, foolish people operate by sinful flesh, wise people operate by the power of the holy spirit. He told us this repeatedly in Romans but I'll give you one verse in Romans 5:5 for those who live according to the flesh, foolish people, set their minds on the things of the flesh, foolishness. But those who live according to the spirit, wise people, set their minds on the things of the spirit, wisdom, wisdom. So let's talk about foolishness. Let's just be honest, we're all foolish at some point, right? We just be honest. At some point in your life, you're going to see her do something. Somebody's going to come and say, what caused that? You're like, I don't know, that was just dumb. Now, I don't have a reason. I don't have, Grace and I had an excuse or we had a conversation this way. Now this will shock you. I said something stupid I shouldn't have said. Never happened before, never happened again. But one of those one time events in my life and Grace sweetly about an hour later, she's like, what'd you say that to me? I was like, I have no, that was just stupid. I'm sorry, that was wrong. I don't have a good reason. I don't, that was just foolishness. We all make foolish decisions. We all say foolish things at some point. In addition, even if you're wise in one area, it doesn't mean you're wise in every area. So you can be really good with your money and really bad with your relationships. You can be really good with your relationships and forget how to count your money. And so the point is that we're all foolish in some ways and on some days, but foolishness is this foolish people are not necessarily less intelligent or educated. They're just less obedient. So you can go to university and get knowledge, but not wisdom. You can know a lot, but to have wisdom, you need to do that which is right. So foolish people they're not necessarily unintelligent or

uninformed or uneducated. They're just defiant and rebellious and disobedient. In addition, foolish people, they make excuses instead of plans. Life's always got a lot of problems and you have two options, make a plan to fix it or make an excuse to cover it. Well, foolish people will do. They'll make excuses, not plans. Something happens and you ask them, okay, what happened? Well, they've got a really good case. Well, here's what happened. Here's why it happened. I've got a great reason. I've got an excuse for that. Okay, that's true, maybe even accurate, but there's still a problem that needs to be solved. And rather than waiting your energy on making an excuse, you should be investing your energy to make a plan. Today, we call this America. There's problems nobody seems to have plans, but we have excuses. And usually the excuse is we blame somebody else, but that still doesn't fix the problem. In addition with foolish people, they don't understand the delayed gratification or what the Bible calls reaping and sowing. The Bible says has this principle of you sow and then later you reap and behind that is what we would call delayed gratification. So if you want to buy a car, you should crazy idea. I mean, just hold your seat, save for it, it's was throwing it out there. And then buy it when you crazy have the money. See, we don't do this. Instead, we just take out a credit card and we go into debt and we don't read the fine print because foolish people never do. And the 21.4% interest rate is the same as mafia hard money. It's terrible. And what happens is this is why have you noticed, even when you go to the store, all of the impulse buys are right near the cash register. Those are all tests for foolish people. I need the Doritos and a monster energy drink and a new cell phone and just ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. Well, that's because you're foolish. And what else happens in our country without this understanding of reaping and sowing, people just are spending and overextending and then voting for socialists to send \$1,400 checks to make up the difference, which is what foolish people do. Okay, that's what happens? Oh, I didn't have the money. I spent it all vote for you, you take it from them, you give it to me. And they're foolish enough to think that this can continue indefinitely. And it can because what happens is foolish people don't deal with reality, they want reality to change for them. Reality is coming whether you like it or not, this could be your health, your finances, your relationships or heaven and hell reality is coming. And it's not going to adjust for you. You need to adjust for it. And through the principle of sowing and reaping, if you want to have health tomorrow, make good health decisions today. If you want to retire tomorrow, start saving today. If you want to be able to serve God tomorrow, start studying God's word today. It's an investment. In addition, what happens is with foolish people, they're irresponsible and they create a lot of drama and urgency and crisis in their life and they, "Help, help." They just send out the SOS call and then they're waiting for overly responsible people to show up and save them. Okay single ladies, write this down. You're like, I'm going to save him. No, you're not. You're going to marry a little boy and you're going to be his mother. And that's cute until you have children. And then you need a man and instead you've got a boy and you need a husband and instead you've got a son. And so what happens is irresponsible people. They just wait and they create crisis and they wait for overly responsible people to show up and to save them. In addition, foolish people can be naive. That's what he says, he uses the word naive. What that means is they're gullible. They're an easy mark. These are people that then get sucked into unhealthy or even dangerous relationships. I asked a girl recently, I was like, why are you dating that guy? She's like, I don't know. That's not a great answer. She's like, well, he just kept showing up. That's a stalker. Okay, like that's a stalker. You can't just be naive and

gullible. You need to be discerning and wise. And what happens for foolish people sometimes they are in harms way before they even see it coming. Now here's why foolish people are always popular because they're fun. They don't think of cause and effect. Like, do you want to go to Vegas? Yeah. I want to get a neck tattoo. Oh sure. They just, they're all, the answer's always yes. They're super fun. These are the people that you call when you want to go to Vegas, not when you want to go to Bible study. These are those friends. What happens with foolish people, they're super fun. They're the life of the party. They're leading the conga line. They're pouring the margaritas. It's their good time. And sometimes they even think that they're leaders, they're not. They're entertainers, because people have fun with them, but they don't respect them. And so for some of these people, it's like their life is a circus and they're like, I'm so popular. Well like a clown. Ta-ta-ta-at-ta, I want to see what the clown does, but nobody respects the clown. And nobody seeks wise counsel from the clown. And some people, they were the class clown and they never graduate into wisdom. In addition, when it comes to foolish people, and I know right now, I can just see your face as somebody like he's picking on me. No, I'm not. I am teaching the Bible. The holy spirit is picking on you. He's picking on you. Okay, so. And what happens for foolish people? They don't make a change until it becomes so painful that they have to, this is what we call rock bottom. And so what happens with foolish people sometimes we're like, I can't let them hit rock bottom. Sometimes they need to, if you've ever jumped in a pool, it's not till you get to the bottom that you can push yourself back up. Sometimes the bottom is a good thing. You need some sure footing to change your direction. And sometimes we do this, even with our children, we're like, well, I don't want them to flunk third grade. Well, maybe they need to. So that later on, they don't get fired from their job for not showing up and lose their mortgage in their marriage. That sometimes we need to learn lessons along the way. And those are painful lessons, but they prevent for us more painful lessons. Regarding foolish people. I would say this too. He's talking about evil people, foolish people, wise people. If you're a foolish person and you don't move toward wisdom, eventually what happens is this, you move toward evil. Just like there's gravity in our world there's gravity in the spirit realm. Everything is always going south unless you have a plan to do otherwise. If you're a foolish person, eventually you're going to become evil. If you're living in the flesh, eventually you'll be open to the demonic. But ultimately, unless you invite the holy spirit to lift you up this world and the temptations that it brings, tear you down. And I'm just telling you sometimes foolish people wrongly believe, yeah, I'm a little foolish. My life's not what it should be, but it's not as bad as it could be. I've kind of found a place in the middle where I've kinda got one world, one foot rather than the world of God and one foot into the world of Satan. And I have a little fun, but I do love God. And I'm kind of playing both parts. And the truth is that's foolishness and it's deception. And eventually you're going to have both feet literally going south toward hell, because that's the way that it works. Now, when it comes to foolish people, foolish people are the sheep. Foolish people are neutral. It depends on who they're listening to, whether they go positive or negative. Foolish people live by the power of the flesh and foolish people, you need to have pastoral relationships with them. Professional relationships with evil people, personal relationships with wise people, Pastoral relationships with foolish people. Meaning if we're going to meet, you need to schedule a meeting. If I tell you to do something, you need to do that. If I tell you to read this book of the Bible or to go apologize to this person or go get your annual

checkup, you need to do those things. These are pastoral relationships. So looking at Jesus' disciples, which of his disciples, we looked at the one who was evil, who was the one who foolish, Peter. Okay, I love Peter because he always says things that he shouldn't. So we're brothers, when we get to heaven, we'll be like, oh. So what Peter does, he say every once in a while, he just says something impulsive and wrong and dumb. He's foolish. Like on one occasion, he calls Jesus Lord and then bosses him around. Jesus is like back to the first point where I'm the Lord. There's another time where Peter gets very impetuous and he cuts a dudes ear off. If you're a pastor that's clearly wrong, right? Like in the foyer, you know, if one of our pastors is arguing with somebody, they pull out a buck knife and they ear them, you're like, I don't feel like that's right because it's not. Okay, and that's a little emotional impetuous and what I would say is well that's also a bad shot. Nobody ever went for the ear. Nobody's like, I'm going to cut his ear off. No you're going for the head, you're just a bad shot. So Jesus has to go Mr. Potato, head on this poor guy, pick up his ear, stick it back on and heal him. He looks at Peter He's like, no, that was bad. That was foolish. So Peter's a guy who's foolish, but Jesus doesn't give up up on him, instead He pastors him. The most foolish day of Peter's life. They're going to crucify Jesus. They come to Peter, a young gal does, do you know Jesus? I don't know him, never met him, don't know anything about them, completely denies him. Foolish, short term. Doesn't think through the consequences or the implications, but then Jesus rises from the dead meets with Peter, looks at him in the eye and Jesus doesn't give up on Peter because he knows he's not evil, he's foolish. He's not filled with Satan. He's just filled with falling. We can get the foolishness out and we can get the spirit in. Yeah, some, three times. Do you love me? Because three times he said he didn't know him. And then he says, Peter, here's the deal, feed my sheep. What He's saying is don't be foolish anymore, be wise. Don't just think about yourself, think about others and start acting like a shepherd and take care of the sheep. It's time to stop acting like one of the foolish shape. In addition, there are wise people. So evil people, foolish people, wise people. "For your obedience," Romans 16:19 through 23," is known to all so that I rejoice over you but I want you to be wise. God wants his people to pursue wisdom as to what is good and innocent and what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Satan is the source of evil, God is the source of wisdom. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Whatever you've done, Jesus died, Jesus rose, Jesus forgives, Jesus blesses, Jesus helps. If you belong to Jesus, he's not done with you. And then He's going to name some wise people. Timothy, my fellow worker greets you so do Lucius. And Jason and Sosipater my kinsmen, I Tertius who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius who is host me in the whole church greets you. Erastus the city treasurer and our brother Quartus, greet you." Wise people, wise people, no one is wise in every area. Couple of things about wisdom. Wisdom is not necessarily education or intelligence, it's humility and teachability. So it doesn't matter whether or not you went to university. It matters whether or not you're filled with the holy spirit and living in obedience is going to talk about obedience here as well. And again, our culture values intelligence, but not wisdom. And sometimes the most intelligent and the most educated people are the most evil. Intelligence and education does not correlate with godliness and wisdom. Sometimes people who are brilliant are the most dangerous. What happens with people who are wise they're self-motivated to mature. With an evil person, they don't want to change, they don't want to learn. With a foolish person, you got to track them down. You hear that they're not

doing well. So you call them, they don't call you. You schedule a meeting, you show up, they don't. So you're chasing them. With a wise person, they raise their hand. They come to you, they're like, I'm not doing good. I need help. You know, marriage is a mess. Finances are not good. Health is not great. My walk with God is very shaky and unsteady. I'm raising my hand, I'd like some help. They self identify. They take responsibility for their own wellbeing. They also embrace reality. If you tell them, okay, here's where you're at. They actually agree with you. Foolish people will argue with you. You're not doing good. I'm doing great. No, you're not, no you're not. You don't have pants on. You're not doing great. You're not doing great, you're not having a great day. Your wife moved and you didn't. Your marriage is not doing great, I called her. Right, and what happens is with a wise person, you tell them you're not doing great. They're like, okay, thank you for telling me. Because see, sometimes you don't know if somebody is wise or foolish until you have a conflict or a disagreement. It's where proverb says rebuke a wise man and he will thank you. Rebuke a fool and he will despise you. Sometimes people appear wise until you have a disagreement or conflict. And their response is such that all of a sudden, you're like, that's a foolish response, that's not a wise response. In addition, when it comes to wise people, they have empathy and an awareness of their decision-making and how it involves others. An evil person they're intentionally maliciously harming you. A foolish person hurts you, but they didn't mean to. Right? Do you know how that made me feel? No, actually, I wasn't even thinking about you, sorry. I forgot that there's other people on earth. That's foolishness. wisdom's looking at how do my decisions affect you? How do my choices implicate you? If you're a parent, you're making decisions, like what does this do to my kids? It's considering them. It's empathy and compassion and consideration for them. In addition, what happens with wise people they're responsible and they follow up on tasks. If the doctor says, you need to change your diet, guess what they do. They change their diet. If their accountant says you can't continue to spend like this, they change their spending. If their counselor says, you can't treat your spouse like that, they stop treating their spouse like that. They make adjustments in life to make improvements in life. In addition, they will own it, they will apologize, they'll repent. That was my fault, I'm sorry. No, excuse, that was me. What foolish people do? They blame shift and they shoot the messenger. Okay, you know, this was wrong. Well, hey, hey, hey, I don't like the way you said that. And let me tell you what they did. Let me shoot you and blame them. A wise person says that was my fault, Jesus died for me. So I'll just own it, I'm sorry. In addition wise, people, you can have healthy conflict and grow the relationship. You can come and say, hey, I want to talk to you about this. This was a problem or a pain. You know, this hurt. This didn't make any sense I don't understand this. And it actually builds the relationship. With foolish people, they will avoid those decisions or those conversations at all costs. With evil people, you won't even talk to them because they're just going to and shoot you. Now, when it comes to wise people, again, evil people are wolves, foolish people are sheep, wise people are shepherds. Evil people live by the demonic. Foolish people live by the flesh, wise people live by the spirit. Evil people are negative who are what they're against. Foolish people are neutral, easily influenced, a bit naive wise people are positive therefore the Lord and the things of the Lord. With evil people, you have a professional relationship with foolish people you have a pastoral relationship trying to help pull them up. With wise people you have a personal relationship. You can trust them and do life with them and be close to them. You give nothing to

an evil person, no time, no energy, no money, no access. He says, avoid them. With wise people you don't avoid them you invite them. You're saying, if I'm foolish, I want to bring the wise people in. And I want to keep the evil people out so that the wise people can pull me up toward wisdom. And I don't want the evil people to pull me down toward evil. So the Bible says that bad company corrupts good character. Here's the point. Show me your friends I'll show you your future. Show me your friends I'll show you your future. And so what he does here, he names wise people. He just tells us who they are. It's really important for you to look at your life and just ask who are the wise people in my life. We would call these wise counsel. What Paul is saying is he's saying avoid the evil people and invite the wise people. And he's going to tell us who they are. You need to identify in your life, who are the wise people. I'm going to listen to them not them. I'm going to do life with them not them. I'm going to be like them not like them. He names first and foremost, a guy named Timothy. Timothy is listed first. The Bible teaches singular headship, plural leadership. So there's always a singular head or leader. And then plural leaders. This is a leadership team that Paul is sending to the city of Rome and the church in the city of Rome. The singular head is Timothy. It's his right hand, man. Now, Paul, there's no indication that he was married or had children. Either he was single his whole life or he was widow. Or when he became a believer, his wife divorced him. We don't know, but either way, he's single, no indication of a wife or children. Timothy's a guy we know about his mom and his grandma. Paul's coming through town preaches. They leave Paul stone left for dead. Somehow in that Timothy gets saved. Paul comes back through town and then he picks up Timothy like a spiritual son. We know nothing about Timothy's father. So now it seems like you've got a fatherless son and a sunless father, spiritually. Paul picks up Timothy in a father, son relationship. He depends on him. He trusts him. Timothy appears in five of the New Testament books that Paul pens. The last book that Paul pens, before he is put to death is second Timothy. It's a letter to Timothy. What he's saying is this is my best guy. If he shows up, listen to him. And then he goes on to talk about Lucius. Who's probably the same guy mentioned in Acts 13, three. He's a preacher and a Bible guy. And what you're going to see here as different spiritual gifts and different people who contribute different things. So the ministry team, he's the Bible guy. I think Paul's saying like, you got a question. You need somebody to teach. He's your guy. And then he talks about Jason. Jason was a guy that met Paul in Acts 17. Paul's coming through town. He started so riot and he starts a riot. Jason gets involved, puts the riot down. He's the crisis management guy. That's who he is like, if there's a problem, call Jason, he's your guy. If he can handle a riot, he can handle whatever. In addition, Salsa Powder, he joined Paul when Paul was going and Acts 20 through a town called Berea, and there was a betrayal and assassination attempt to kill Paul. And this man stayed loyal and faithful. He's endured hardship as a good soldier. The point is this, there's a line in the Old Testament, from a non-Christian that says a putting on his uniform should not boast like one who's taking it off. The point is this everybody's tough on bootcamp. You show me somebody who went to war and came back. That's somebody who's battle tested. What He's saying is this man is battle-tested. He's been to war with me, we can depend on him. In addition, he talks about Tertius, who's writing the book of Romans. So we're reading the book of Romans. Sometimes when a book of the Bible is written, the author writes it down. Other times they speak and there's the equivalent of a stenographer like you would find in a legal case and they're writing down what is being spoken.

This is what happens with Jeremiah. And it's happening here with Paul. Paul is speaking, Tertius is writing. And I believe what he is saying is this guy's the brains. And he's totally dependable. How much does Paul trust this guy? The holy spirit is all right, Paul, you're going to write a book of the Bible. Now pick somebody to write it down. You better nail that. You better get a guy who's not like I disagree. You better get the right guy. That's this guy, he's the brain. He's dependable. He's faithful. And then there's Gaius. So for vision there's provision. And so Gaius has a big house, largest state, probably a business leader, very affluent and successful. And what Paul says is we're all staying in the ministry leadership team at his biggest state. And he is bankrolling. And he funding all of the ministry. Some of you, God gave wealth and influence to fund the kingdom of God. And then he talks about Erastus who is a well-known and respected governmental leader. My son sent me the archeological findings on this. They were digging in the ancient city of Corinth and they found a monument with an inscription to this man, as the city, treasury is a well-known political leader and he's highly respected. He would be like the executive pastor or the CFO. So they would be asking, okay, Paul, you want us to fund your missionary, work through Rome to Spain? How do we know that your affairs are tidy and buttoned up? He's like, I got harassed us on the team. He runs a whole city. Everybody respects him. He can handle a ministry. Some of you, God has given business experience to that can translate into kingdom investment. And what's interesting is archeology has always helped the Bible. When the Bible says that there was a person or a place, eventually we dig it up and we find that it's all true. And that's the case with Erastus. And then he mentions lastly, number eight, another member of this leadership team named Quartus and Tertius means third, Quartus means fourth. They may be brothers and they're likely slaves. Because in that day, tragically in the Roman empire, they wouldn't give names to slaves. They would give numbers like we would give prisoners. So he says, there's number three and number four. And what this shows is that all levels of society or in leadership in Paul's ministry. He just went from a respected governmental official and also an affluent business leader to two slaves. The point is this leadership in the church is predicated upon character, not race, not income, not social status, not education, wisdom, wisdom. And it doesn't matter where you begin. With the spirit of God you can end as a significant leader in the kingdom of God. So he's dealt with here, evil people, foolish people, wise people. And he's saying, here are the wise people. Hey, foolish people listened to them and follow them. And when it comes to the evil people avoid them. So there's three kinds of people, six kinds of relationships. I'll hit these briefly, a wise person and a foolish person. That's like a parental relationship. You're irresponsible I'm responsible. You make problems, I cause solutions. You create drama and I clean up the mess. A wise and an evil person is a distant relationship. Paul says, watch out for them, have nothing to do with them. Two foolish people as a codependent relationship. If you would like to study that further, watch a movie called Dumb and Dumber. Okay, that's number three. Number four, a foolish and an evil person is an abusive relationship. He talks about the naive who are taken captive by those who have deception that serve their own appetites and work through smooth talk and flattery. What he's saying is, hey, foolish, people watch out for the evil people. The evil people are going to use and abuse you. They're going to take and you will give. They will win and you will lose. And so what you need to know is that there are people that prey upon the foolish. In addition two evil people is a dangerous relationship. In the Old Testament, it is Janice and John Bryce, who

opposed Moses. It is Sanballat and Tobiah who opposed Nehemiah. In the days of Paul, it is Hymenaeus and Alexander, who opposed him. Oftentimes two evil people come together like a double barreled gun. And if you get in front of them, you're in harms way. And oftentimes these people don't even know each other. And the question is, that's so crazy. They didn't even know each other. How did they find one another? They didn't know one another, but their demons did and made the introduction. In addition two wise, people have a healthy relationship. They love each other. They do life together. You can trust one another. This would be the example of Paul and Timothy healthy, loving relationship. Here's my question. Is there anyone in your life who is evil? What is the holy spirit telling you you need to do? Is there anyone in your life who is foolish? What is the holy spirit telling you to do? Is there anyone in your life who is wise? What is the holy spirit telling you to do? He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Is there any area of your life that is evil? Anything going on in your life, that's dark and shameful. It's evil. What is the holy spirit saying to you? Is there any area of your life that is foolish? Decisions, changes need to happen, What's the holy Spirit's saying to you? And lastly, is there any area of your life that there is wisdom? And from that you could do ministry to love and serve and to help others. And what is the holy spirit saying to you? I love you. Thank you for letting me teach Romans we'll deal with the final section in just a moment. I'll bring the band up and we're going to spend some time in worship. After spending almost a year together in the book of the Bible that is among the most significant in the history of the world, it's amazing how he concludes. He goes up to God and he closes with this. This is how the great book of Romans ends. Romans 16, 25 to 27. Start with God, stay with God, finish with God. Now to him who is able to strengthen you. How many of you right now today, you're feeling a little weak, a little wary. You feel like you're having a hard time persevering through the season that you are in. Right now, as we come to worship and prayer and spending time in God's presence and inviting the wisdom of the holy spirit down to us, God wants to strengthen you so you can live by his strength. In addition, according to the gospel, to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ. And what He's saying is the gospel means good news. There's a God who made you. There's a God who knows you. There's a God who loves you. There is a God who took you, even if you were evil, even if you were foolish and He is pulling you up toward wisdom, and he is sending the spirit of wisdom down to you. Jesus has died so that you can be forgiven. Jesus has risen so you can live a new life. God is not done with you. God has not abandoned you. God is not overwhelmed by you. God is not overcome by you. God is there for you. God is there to help you. God is there to forgive you. God is there to befriend you and God is there to change you, amen. He says, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept for long ages, but has now been disclosed through the prophetic writings in vain, known to all nations. What he's saying is now we have the word of God. In a world that is filled with foolishness this is where we go to find wisdom. In a world that is corrupted by evil this is where we go to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. If you want to get a word from God, I have good news for you. All you need to do is open the word of God. This is the only perfect thing on planet earth. This is the source of all truth. This is revelation from God, and this is transformation for your soul. And he goes on to talk about according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ, amen. And amen means that's true, I agree with that. Saying the Bible is true. Jesus is Lord. Sin is forgiven.

Death is conquered. The spirit of God is poured out. The church of Jesus Christ is marching forward. My worst days are behind me. My best days are before me because God who knows and rules all loves me, adopts me, saves me, changes me, blesses me and gives me the same power that Jesus lived by, the power of the holy spirit. I love you. Thanks for letting me teach you a great book of God's word. Let's spend some time honoring God together.