

Grace Full and Evil Free Romans 16:19-20a

There are some who become concerned with the teaching of grace because it seems to negate the necessity for doing good things. But the great Puritan Thomas Brooks said: *“The more grace thrives in the soul, the more sin dies in the soul.”* That is eternally true. In our text Paul compliments the church at Rome and then issues a caution to the church.

I. A Compliment Extended --- *“your obedience is come abroad to all”* (v.19).

When we hear the word obedience we usually think of something we “do” when told. Most Christians see obedience as *doing* what Christians are supposed to *do*. But the obedience Paul refers to in this text is *“the obedience of faith”* (Romans 16:26). In other words, the Roman Christians were known for *“obeying the gospel of faith in Christ.”* They steadfastly refused to be convinced by others that righteousness comes by their obedience to any law, and remained committed to faith in Christ’s goodness. The Bible says God takes vengeance on those *“that obey not the gospel”* (II Thess. 1:8).

II. A Concern Expressed --- *“but yet. . .”* (v.19)

“I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil” (v. 19). It is almost as if Paul is saying, *“Don’t let your strong faith be a license to sin.”*

(A). Wise regarding good --- recognize that there are some things that are beneficial for you to avoid, and some things beneficial for you to do. Paul said to Timothy: *“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which believe in God might be careful to maintain good works. **These things are good and profitable unto men**”* (Titus 3:8). Do right for your sake!

(B). Simple regarding evil --- this word simple is the same word as “evil” in the original, with simply an “a” (negative preposition) in front of it. So literally Paul is say, *“be without evil regarding evil”* (some translations “innocent”). In other words, don’t be a participant in those things that God defines as evil. If something is contrary to the nature of God (good), it is evil. In fact, one of the best descriptions of Christ is *“He is holy, harmless (without evil)”* (Heb. 7:26).

III. A Covenant Exalted --- *“the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet”* (v.20).

There seemed to be people in the church at Rome who were causing division over the doctrine of justification by faith. Paul is simply saying, “Don’t be discouraged!” There are some who view this as an eschatological statement (the end times). They say that when Christ returns (and in the preterist case “returned”) Satan is crushed. But I see this statement more as a general promise to every believer regarding any trouble that you might face in this life. God has covenanted to destroy Satan for you.

(A). God does the crushing . . . this promise takes us back to the first (Gen. 3:15).

(B). God does the crushing under *your* feet . . . you are the one who gains victory.

“Set a strong guard about thy outward senses. These are Satan’s landing-place, especially the eye and the ear” **William Gurnall**