

Why I Teach the Word of God

Introduction

Our Bible study group met on November 7, 2024, two days after Mr. Trump was reelected as president. Although I did not vote for president, as briefly explained below and more thoroughly in my study **Governing Authority**, I was deeply saddened and disturbed by the results of the election. My response to the results of the election were not because I disagreed with God's sovereign will, but that so many fellow brethren and others who claimed to be Christians supported a man of Mr. Trump's character. The prevailing opinion among conservative and evangelical Christians is that Mr. Trump is a man of God and is being used by God to champion Christian causes. For me, I see him as the type of person who the Apostle Paul warned against in Titus 1:15-16.

I took the opportunity, therefore, to teach on the passages of Romans 13:1-7, I Peter 2:13-17, and Romans 9:14-24 that evening. Based on these passages and others, I fully believe and teach that God places all governing leaders in office (whether they are elected or not), and that He uses them according to His eternal purpose (whether for honorable use or dishonorable use). It is for these reasons that I chose not to vote for president.

Following our discussion on the passages in Romans and I Peter, in which we seemed to be in agreement, I attempted to explain how I planned to apply them to the incoming presidency. I commented on the overtly sinful character of Mr. Trump, assuming that it was obvious to the other members of the group. I had misjudged, however, because one member (who had been a consistent participant for about six years) was seriously offended by my description. I had said that, through his own words and actions, Mr. Trump revealed himself to be "exceedingly arrogant, immoral, hateful, revengeful, and blasphemous" (e.g., he compares himself to God or Jesus, and falsely claims to be doing things in the name of God), and that "his public life is the complete opposite of every aspect of the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23). I also made the point that, regardless of Mr. Trump's character, I would subject myself to his authority in obedience to God. It was a contentious moment that I had not expected. I said what I believed needed to be said because it related to our walk as believers, but I had no intention of dividing the group.

In response to a subsequent comment during our group discussion, I said that we are responsible for our choice if we choose to vote for a candidate—this did not go over well, either. I explained that the only vote recorded in Scripture was when Roman Governor Pontius Pilate asked the people of Israel if they wanted him to release Jesus or the convicted criminal and murderer Barabbas—they wanted Barabbas released and demanded the crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27:19-23; Luke 23:13-25). During the observance of Pentecost and afterward, the Apostle Peter accused the people of Israel of killing the Holy and Righteous One (their Messiah). Peter, through inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), held them responsible even though His death was part of God's predetermined plan and that it was carried out by the Roman government (Acts 2:22-23; 3:14-15; 4:27-28). I added that I did not vote for president so that I would not be responsible for the actions of either candidate—this, too, was not received well because it went against the commonly held belief that it is our responsibility as citizens to vote.

Should I have brought politics into our Bible study discussion? I believe so because so many of our churches were actively supporting Mr. Trump, with some claiming that God had sent him not only to

help Christians but to fulfill prophecies concerning the kingdom of Christ. These false claims compelled me to discuss the election in the context of Scripture. I had not said anything political or about Mr. Trump before the election, truly hoping that the others understood his true character.

A few days later, the offended person sent me a text in which he said he often struggles with my teaching because it often differs from his church experience, that I have walked away from all churches, and have not stressed Christian unity as a priority. He did not mention the incident that occurred during our Bible study, but that incident triggered his text. I needed to get my thoughts on paper regarding his concerns. In the following points I will try to explain why I am a Bible teacher. This is a supplement to my 1995 article **Testimony of Grace** on our website.

Why Do We Study the Bible?

Among other things, we should study the Bible to:

- Learn why we need to be saved, how to be saved, and what God provides for us through salvation (Romans 3:9-12, 21-26; 5:6-11; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7). *There was no gospel (good news) of salvation in Matthew through early Acts; the gospel was about who Christ was and the imminence of Israel's promised kingdom (Mark 1:1, 7-11; Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17; Luke 4:43-44). The people were to believe the gospel of the kingdom and repent and be baptized for the remission of sins to be saved (Matthew 3:5-6; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).*
- Learn the all-importance of the word of God and that it is inspired by God (Ephesians 6:10-17; Hebrews 4:12; Jeremiah 23:29; Isaiah 40:8; II Timothy 3:16-17; I Thessalonians 2:13; II Peter 1:20-21).
- Learn who God is and how He has dealt with mankind over the ages (Romans 1:18-32; 3:9-26; 6:14; 9:14-24; 11:33-36; Ephesians 3:1-12).
- Learn who Christ is and what He accomplished for us at the cross (John 1:1-5; Romans 3:21-26; 4:25; 5:6-11, 18; Ephesians 1:18-23; 2:1-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 2:8-15).
- Remind us to continually seek the things of God through His word (Colossians 3:1-4; Philippians 3:7-11; 4:8-9; Psalm 25:4-5).
- Diligently work for God, accurately handling the word of truth—to distinguish which of God's commands apply to whom (II Timothy 2:15; 4:1-4; Galatians 3:10-14; Philippians 1:9-11). *For example, are we under the Law of Moses or under grace, are we to obey and teach the gospel of the kingdom or the gospel of the grace of God, and is God dealing with us in accordance with prophecy or the mystery?*
- Learn, understand, and apply the word of God (Ephesians 1:15-23; Colossians 1:9-12; Philippians 1:8-11).
- Learn how to walk worthy of our salvation by God through Christ (Ephesians 4:1-6; Colossians 1:9-12; Philippians 1:27-30; I Thessalonians 2:9-12; II Thessalonians 1:11-12). *Commands to walk worthy of our salvation in Christ are only found in Paul's letters.*
- Know that we need to lay aside the old sinful self and put on the new self in Christ (Ephesians 4:17-24; Romans 6:11-14).
- Help us know, walk in, and teach the truth of God (Psalm 25:4-5; 40:9-10; 86:11; II Corinthians 4:1-2; Ephesians 4:14-16; II Timothy 2:24-26).

- Distinguish between the traditions of man (in the name of God) and the truth of God's word (Colossians 2:8, 16-23; I Timothy 4:1-10; II Timothy 3:13-17; 4:1-4; Titus 1:15-16).
- Be of the same mind in the truth of God's word and preserve the unity of the Spirit (Romans 15:5-7; Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16; Philippians 1:27-30; 2:1-2). *Commands for us to be of the same mind are only found in Paul's letters. There are no recorded instances in Matthew through John where Jesus told His disciples to be as one or of the same mind. In Jesus' prayer to God, He prayed that His disciples would be as one in the truth just as the Son and the Father are one (John 17:13-24); we see an example of this in Acts 1:12-14.*

In a nutshell, we need to study the Bible to learn what God has done for us through Christ and what He expects of us as His children.

Why We Do Not Attend a Church Here

- I diligently try to teach what the Bible says, even if it is contrary to traditional Christian doctrine (which it often is). Most of my written studies include the following question in one form or another at least once: "But what does Scripture say?"
- We do not attend a church here because we are not aware of any churches in western Colorado that teach the revelation of the mystery and the gospel of the grace of God. Nearly all teaching centers on the earthly ministry of Jesus, the gospel of the kingdom, prophecy, and the Old Testament. Instead, we consider our Bible study as a church (Romans 16:3-5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:1-2). *Have you heard of the mystery or been taught the gospel of the grace of God in the churches you have attended?*
- I cannot participate with another church for the sake of Christian unity and fellowship if doing so forces me to set aside or hold within myself what I know is the truth (Psalm 40:9-10; II Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-4). I have found that the truth divides because it is often rejected by fellow brethren. After several difficult experiences, I was made unwelcome in one church that I was a member of and had attended for several years. Later, Linda and I were made unwelcome in a church we had both been members of and in which we had originally met and years later were married. In neither case did I or we simply walk away from them—we were driven away because of our stand for the truth of God's word.
- I am not the only person who teaches the revelation of the mystery and the gospel of the grace of God. There are independent organizations, churches, and Bible study groups scattered around the country and the world that teach these truths. However, we are a minority among believers. Like denominations and other independent churches, there are differences, including some very important differences, in doctrine and application among the gospel of grace-centered groups and teachers.
- I attended two independent churches where the pastors understood and taught according to the mystery.
 - One was in Thornton, Colorado, for about two years starting in 1976 when I temporarily lived in Golden. The pastor became my mentor and friend. I stopped going in 1978 because it became too difficult to commute from Ft. Collins every week due to my college class load (I had moved back to Ft. Collins in 1977 to complete my education at CSU). However, I stayed in touch with the pastor and wrote daily devotional articles for his monthly publication *Amazing Grace* through the 1980s and into the 1990s. He had about twenty pastors and

Bible teachers from around the country who each supplied three articles each month based on assigned subjects and verses (the pastor selected enough of them to fill the month). At that time, about 14,000 copies were mailed free of charge to people in the U.S. and around the world who specifically requested to be on the distribution list.

- The other church was in Laramie, Wyoming, where we moved to in 1982. We did not attend too often because it was not set up for infants and little children (I gave the message one Sunday morning service at the invitation of the pastor). However, the pastor (who also led small churches in two nearby towns) supported my effort to start a Bible study group with several couples from the church that met on a weekday evening, usually at our house. He never suggested what I should teach and never asked what I taught. That study continued from about 1986 until shortly before we left for Grand Junction in 1990.
- Other Bible Studies
 - I had joined a Bible study group in Ft. Collins in 1978 with my parents that was already studying in accordance with the mystery. I soon became a co-leader with two other men, teaching about half of the lessons. Linda joined me in 1981 prior to our marriage. We continued with that group until about 1986, commuting from Laramie weekly starting in 1982; we attended only occasionally after our twins were born in 1986 (that is when we started the study in Laramie).
 - We started a new Bible study shortly after moving to Grand Junction in 1990, which continued into 2025.
- Bible Camps and Conferences
 - For many years we attended a summer family Bible camp at various locations in the Colorado mountains whose organizer brought in pastors from across the country who taught in accordance with the mystery. Unfortunately, much of the teaching for the teenagers and adults, on subjects that were at the complete discretion of each pastor, was about Bible knowledge and not our walk (too little application). I occasionally did some teaching, usually focusing on various aspects of our walk. Linda found a couple of the camps that allowed us to use their facilities for a week (we used one location near Montrose for many years).
 - I taught at a Bible conference (Columbine Grace Conference) organized by a friend of mine from Salida. We met six times at a church or other facility in Gunnison (founded by Linda) or Salida that we could use for a Saturday afternoon. Attendees were from the Grand Junction, Salida, and Cañon City areas.

The Apostle Paul—His Authority and Message

Common (but incorrect) teaching in our Christian churches:

- The church of today is a continuation of the church that began at Pentecost. We are to pattern ourselves after that early church. *That church consisted of believing Jews and Jewish proselytes only, and its message was about Israel's prophetic kingdom with Peter as the leader (Matthew 16:13-19). The church of today—the body of Christ—began with Paul in accordance with the revelation of the mystery and consists of believing Jews and Gentiles without distinction (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:32; Colossians 1:18; I Corinthians 12:12-13, 27). Paul addressed church organization in I Timothy 3:1-13 and I Timothy 5:17-22.*

- We are to be disciples of Jesus and obey His teachings and commands, which are found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The letters of James, Peter, and John are to be obeyed, also. *We are not called disciples (followers) in Paul's letters—we are in Christ and He is in us. God's direct instructions to His children in this dispensation of grace are found in Paul's letters.*
- We are to obey the so-called *Great Commission* (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:6-8). *We are not supposed to and cannot obey the Great Commission because it applied to the fulfillment of Israel's prophetic promises and required obedience to the Law of Moses (Matthew 23:1-3; 28:19-20). Instead, we are ambassadors for Christ and represent Him in all things we do—God has committed to us the word of reconciliation, regarding God reconciling us to Himself through the redemptive work of Christ (II Corinthians 5:16-21; Colossians 3:17, 23).*
- Paul continued the teaching of Jesus and the other apostles—he preached the same message. When his letters are taught, it is usually to try to support or explain the gospel accounts. *Paul taught an entirely new message—the gospel of the grace of God according to the revelation of the mystery (based on what Christ accomplished for us at the cross)—that differed from the message taught by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the twelve apostles. The gospel accounts can be used to help us understand the gospel of grace better when we compare the two messages, as well as understand truths that apply to all believers regardless of dispensation.*
- Paul is just another apostle, and should have been the one to replace Judas. However, his apostleship is minimized. *Paul (who was a Pharisee named Saul) did not qualify to replace Judas (Acts 1:15-26), and was soon trying to destroy “the Way”—the followers of Jesus (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 22:3-5; 26:9-11; Galatians 1:13-14). He was chosen by God and Christ to be the apostle of the Gentiles to reveal the mystery that had been kept secret by God since before the foundation of the earth.*

Some personal experiences regarding Paul's apostleship and message:

- A pastor told the congregation of a church of which I was a member to be wary of Paul's letters because he was an arrogant man. *The perceived arrogance was based on Paul saying that he was the apostle of the Gentiles, referred to his message as “my gospel” (Romans 16:25-27; II Timothy 2:8-9), and exhorted believers to follow him as he followed Christ. These are all truths instead of arrogant statements. Paul was actually an example of humility (e.g., I Corinthians 9:19-23; 15:9-10).*
- I regularly shared the gospel of grace with a Christian girlfriend who I had first become friends with in early grade school (our parents were close friends). When we were about 20, we became close and we both expected that we would marry. She was attending Wheaton College (a Christian school in Illinois) at that time and began to push back on what I was sharing from the Bible. She informed me that what I believed and taught was addressed as a cult in her Bible class on cults. She believed her teacher (and college) instead of what I was showing her from the Bible and soon after we ended our relationship (amicably). During that time, I had visited her at her home in Wisconsin a few times over summer and holiday breaks. I loved her parents dearly and had several spiritual discussions with her father, who was an elder in their church. He was very attentive to what I was saying and I was able to answer his questions with Scripture. One day during what turned out to be my last visit, however, he took me aside and said that he did not want to talk about it anymore. The reason, he said, was that he was afraid that I was right (he

said this in a humble and apologetic manner). I concluded that he was not willing to give up his traditional understanding or his position in his church over matters of the truth of God's word.

- We met a couple, who were part of a Christian ministry, during our ferry ride from Washington to Alaska in 2023 to deliver a vehicle to our daughter. We saw them carrying or reading their Bibles and introduced ourselves. We had several discussions with them as a couple and individually and learned that their ministry, sponsored through a church or denomination, was based on the book of Mark. The woman asked Linda about our Bible study, who replied that we base our studies on the gospel of grace as revealed through Paul and his letters. She asked Linda to elaborate because she did not know what that meant, and she did not understand Linda's answer. We gave them our website card but we have not heard from them.

Paul's authority:

- Paul was, and is, the apostle of the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16; Romans 11:13; 15:14-16; Colossians 1:25-27; I Timothy 2:7).
- Paul was chosen as an apostle by God and our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:15-16; Galatians 1:1, 15-17; I Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1-2; I Timothy 1:1-2; Titus 1:1-3).

Paul's message:

- Paul explained the mystery, which had been kept secret in God since before the world began until He revealed it through Christ to Paul (Romans 16:25-27; I Corinthians 2:6-8; Ephesians 3:1-12).
- Paul taught the gospel of the grace of God, which is part of the revelation of the mystery (Acts 20:24; Ephesians 3:1-3).
- The first thing that Paul preached to nonbelievers was the gospel of salvation (that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised from the dead), which is the basis of the gospel of grace (I Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 3:21-26; 5:6-11).

The source of Paul's message:

- Paul did not learn his message from the other apostles but received it through revelations directly from our risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-17; II Corinthians 12:1-7; Romans 16:25; I Corinthians 11:23-26; Ephesians 3:1-12). *Paul was the last person to receive any revelations directly from Christ. The book of Revelation provides the revelation of Jesus Christ to John via the angel of God concerning fulfillment of God's prophetic plan for Israel and the nations (Revelation 1:1-2).*

Paul is our example:

- Paul exhorted believers to follow his example as he followed Christ (I Corinthians 11:1; I Timothy 1:15-16; I Corinthians 4:15-17; Philippians 4:9; II Thessalonians 3:7-9). *Paul did not expect anyone to follow him personally—he never referred to those who believed his message as disciples. Instead, we are members of the body of Christ and His ambassadors—we are in Him and He is in us (I Corinthians 12:12-13, 27; II Corinthians 5:20; Romans 8:1, 9-11; Ephesians 2:4-7; Colossians 1:25-27).*

My Motivation

- When I first started to understand the mystery in 1974, about ten years after I was saved by the grace of God when I believed that Christ died for my sins, I realized that I had not heard anything about it in the churches I had attended even though it is discussed throughout Paul's letters. This inspired me to read and study the Bible more than ever before. I soon wanted to teach others about the differences between what is traditionally taught in our churches and what the Bible actually says.
- The more I studied and taught Scripture, the more I realized that I and many of the Christians I knew did not know or heed the many exhortations regarding our walk as believers. I felt that many of us were not much different than people who were not saved (e.g., through lying, cheating, crude talking, hateful speech and actions, arrogance, drunkenness, immorality, law breaking, etc.). This inspired me to learn what Scripture says about our walk, endeavor to walk accordingly, and teach others about our walk.
- I am deeply saddened and get frustrated when people teach or say things, in the name of God, that I know are not true or are otherwise a misuse of Scripture. We have many warnings in Scripture about false teaching (e.g., Jeremiah 14:13-14; 23:25-32; Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1-3; II Corinthians 11:12-15; Colossians 2:8, 16-23; I Timothy 4:1-3; II Timothy 4:1-4). Depending on the circumstances, I usually hold my tongue, and use what is said to prepare lessons and Bible study articles (e.g., I often point out things that are taught or believed by fellow brethren that are contrary to Scripture). Sometimes, however, I am compelled to address a false statement right away because it is particularly dishonoring to God and His word and is being believed by those who hear it.
- My desire and effort are to teach the word of God truthfully and in its proper context. I try to provide sufficient scriptural support for my conclusions and what I believe to be true. My hope is to get others to study and to think about what the Bible says to strengthen their own lives so that they may walk worthy of their salvation.

Dick Johnson
January 2025
gospelofgracenotes.org