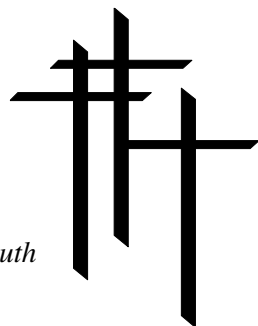


Timely Messenger



*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*

Volume 69 No. 2

Spring 2009

Our “Grace Commission” is found in the writings of Paul, God’s apostle for this present age. Our commission consists of two parts which correspond with God’s two desires for all men: that they may “be saved” and “come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). In our last issue we looked at our commission as ambassadors for Christ, to preach the gospel of God’s grace that men might be saved (2 Cor. 5:14-21). We continue now looking at the second aspect of our commission, our ministry:

TO MAKE ALL MEN SEE

by Gregg Bing

God’s desire is that all men “come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). The word *knowledge* is from the Greek word, *epignosis*. It con-

sists of the Greek word *gnosis* which is the basic word for “knowledge” with an added Greek preposition, *epi*, which means “above or upon.” Putting these two pieces together we get the idea of “upon knowledge,” “further knowledge,” or “full knowledge.” God desires all men to come to a full knowledge of the truth, but what does “full knowledge” mean?

The Greek word *epignosis* is found 20 times in the New Testament, 15 of these in the writings of the Apostle Paul. This shows that the idea of “full knowledge” is closely related to Paul’s ministry. Of these 15 occurrences, 12 of them are found in Paul’s prison epistles, the letters which detail the truth of the mystery that was committed to Paul. If we are to come to a full knowledge of the truth, we must understand that God’s purpose for our lives today was entrusted to the Apostle Paul and

is found only in his writings.

Most Christians look at Paul's epistles much the same as they would look at any other New Testament writer (i.e. Peter, John, Jude, etc). They assume that the Old Testament is for Israel, and the New Testament is for the Church of this age. Some emphasize the earthly teachings of Jesus above all other Scriptures. They assume that Jesus' actual words are more important, or more inspired, than the rest. This is the reason for the popularity of red-letter editions of the Bible.

What many people fail to realize is the nature of Jesus' earthly ministry. In Romans 15:8 we read:

“Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers.”

Jesus' ministry, including His miracles and His teaching, was confined to the circumcision, meaning the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). His purpose was to “confirm the promises” made to the fathers of that nation, men such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David. God promised and prophesied special

blessings for the nation of Israel including their land and a coming kingdom. When Jesus began His public ministry, the message He proclaimed was in line with these promises: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matt. 4:17). Though He was Israel's promised Messiah, they refused to receive Him as their King and delivered Him to the Romans to be crucified.

The book of Acts, contrary to what many believe, is a continuation of the prophesied kingdom program for Israel. The Holy Spirit was sent, in fulfillment of prophecy, to offer the kingdom to the nation of Israel through the ministry of the twelve apostles. Once again, the people of Israel rejected their King and closed their ears to the truth. At the close of the book of Acts, Israel was set aside and their prophesied kingdom was postponed. The time had come for a new revelation from God.

While Jesus' commission to the twelve apostles, commonly called the “Great Commission,” contained the last words He spoke on earth, they were not the last words Jesus would ever speak. In Acts 9 we read of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus who would later become known as the Apostle

Paul. The risen, ascended Lord Jesus Christ called him and gave him a distinct ministry and apostleship to go to the Gentiles. At the close of the book of Acts, from a prison house in Rome, Paul was used of God to pronounce a final blindness upon Israel and to declare that God's salvation had been sent to the Gentiles. Paul then wrote several letters (the prison epistles) detailing a new purpose of God, a revelation of new truth, further knowledge from God. The book of Ephesians, chapter 3, explains the distinct nature of this truth in detail.

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow

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Gregg Bing — Editor

Sent **free** to anyone upon request. If you live in the Fort Worth area, we invite you to worship with us.

Sunday Services:

10:00 AM	Sunday School
11:00 AM	Morning Worship
6:00 PM	Evening Worship

Mid-Week Services:

Tues.	10:00 AM	Ladies Class
Wed.	7:00 PM	Bible Study

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If so, please notify Grace Bible Church. Be sure to include your name, your old address, and your new address. This will help us keep our mailing list current and reduce the cost of postage.

*Thanks for your help
in this matter!*

(Continued from page 3)

heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 3:1-9)

Paul was given a **distinct apostleship** from that of the Twelve (vs. 1). Though he did have a ministry to the Jews during the book of Acts, Paul’s special commission from God was to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul was entrusted with a **distinct stewardship** (vs. 2). Just as Moses was God’s spokesman to Israel for the dispensation of the law, so God gave Paul the responsibility of revealing and administering the new dispensation of the grace of God.

God revealed to Paul a **distinct message** (vs. 3-5); a truth Paul described as a mystery (or a secret). The word *mystery* has a different connotation that what we give it today. It simply means something that is veiled or hidden until it is revealed. The truth of this mystery was not made known to men of previous ages. It was “hidden in God” (vs. 9) until He chose to make it known to Paul. Paul described this mystery as “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (vs. 8). The word *unsearchable* literally means “untraceable or untrackable.” No footprints or traces of this truth can be found in other Scriptures: not in the Old Testament, not in Jesus’ earthly teachings, not even in the teaching of the apostles during the book of Acts. There is no mention of this truth until we come to the writings of Paul.

This “mystery of Christ” revealed further knowledge about the eternal purpose of God which He ordained and accomplished through the Lord Jesus (Eph. 3:11). The mystery was given to Paul by revelation and was then made known to God’s other holy apostles and prophets (i.e. Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, etc.) through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's message centered on God's purpose for a new, **distinct body** of believers: the Church, the Body of Christ (vs. 6). This Body is not a man-made organization or denomination but a living organism consisting of all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior. In this Body, Gentiles are joined "together with" the Jews in a new and unique way. They have become heirs together; they have become one body together; and they have become partakers together of God's promises in Christ. It's not that the Jews are saved first and the Gentiles are blessed along with them. This was the situation under God's prophesied plan and purpose for Israel (Deut. 32:43). In the Body of Christ, all distinction between Jew and Gentile is done away with (Eph. 2:11-22). In the Church today, "there is neither Greek (Gentile) nor Jew," but "Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:11).

Paul received a **distinct commission** from God (vs. 7-9). This message of grace was entrusted to Paul and he was given a twofold commission: (1) to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" and (2) to "make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery." Paul's initial

ministry focused on preaching to the Gentiles, but when the mystery of Christ was fully revealed, Paul's ministry broadened to make all men see this truth.

The truth of the mystery was given to Paul to "fulfill the Word of God" (Col. 1:25). The word *fulfill* means "to fill up or complete." This confuses some people since some of the Hebrew-Christian epistles were written later than Paul's letters, particularly the writings of John. However, the issues dealt with in these Hebrew epistles were all the subject of Old Testament prophecy. For example, while the Revelation does add new details about the tribulation period, the second coming of Christ, and the Messianic kingdom, all of these events were prophesied in the Old Testament, the four gospels, and even the book of Acts. The mystery given to Paul revealed truth about Christ and God's purpose for His Church, the Body of Christ, which is not spoken of anywhere else.

In the closing verses of Ephesians, Paul asks the saints to pray for his ministry. Paul's request demonstrates the importance of his commission to make all men see the truth of the mystery.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, ... and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Eph. 6:18-20)

There is no doubt this was Paul’s commission, but is it ours as well? In his final letter to Timothy, Paul told him:

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” (2 Tim. 1:13-14)

Paul directs Timothy to hold fast and to keep the “sound words” which he had heard from Paul. The “sound words” Timothy had heard, clearly refer to the mystery revealed to Paul, or he would not have emphasized the words “from me.” Timothy was to hold fast to these truths, to hold them firmly and never be moved away from them. Timothy was to keep or guard the truth of the mystery,

realizing that this message would be attacked. Paul’s revelation of the mystery may have been the reason why “all those in Asia” turned away from him (2 Tim. 1:15).

Paul refers to these sound words as “that good (beautiful) thing which was committed to you.” God initially gave this commission to Paul who then passed it on to Timothy to carry on after Paul’s death. In the very next chapter, Paul instructs Timothy to pass this same commission on to others.

“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim. 2:1-2)

This is how Paul’s commission to “make all men see” the truth of the mystery has become our commission today as well.

While most believers acknowledge our commission to preach the gospel of God’s grace that men may be saved, they don’t understand the mystery entrusted to Paul and don’t recognize it as part of our commission. Why is the truth of the mystery so important? Why is

making this truth known to all men a part of our commission? The answer is given in the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians. In verses 24-27 Paul speaks of his stewardship from God to make known the truth of the mystery to His saints. Paul emphasizes that the mystery focuses on Christ: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Paul then declares:

"Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col. 1:28)

Paul preached Christ, but he preached Christ according to the revelation of the mystery (Rom. 16:25). Paul's preaching was more than just the simple gospel message; it consisted of "warning and teaching every man in **all** wisdom" (the truth of the mystery) that every man might be presented "perfect in Christ Jesus." The word *perfect* means complete or mature. God desires every believer to grow and mature spiritually in the Lord. This spiritual maturity requires that believers come to a "full knowledge of the truth," which includes knowing and understanding the truth of the

mystery committed to Paul. God's plan and purpose for the Church, the Body of Christ, during this present dispensation of God's grace is found only in the writings of the Apostle Paul. We are not to worship Paul or magnify him in any way, but we are to recognize the distinct ministry, apostleship, and message committed to him by our risen Savior, and we are to pursue our commission "to make all men see" this truth.

Paul's Final Charge

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

— 2 Timothy 4:2-5



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL June 8-12, 2009

- 9:00 to Noon each day (earlier start time than last year).
- Ages 3-14 (There will be no nursery provided).
- Bible study, singing, crafts, skits, games, snacks.

Gather your gear, lace up your hiking boots, and join us on a journey through the amazing Amazon rainforest. While we're there, we'll also explore the 7 C's of history:

**Creation — Corruption — Catastrophe
Confusion — Christ — Cross — Consummation**

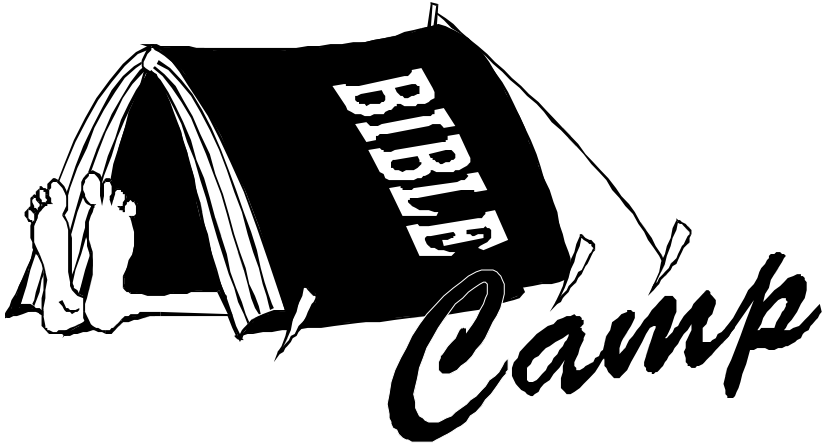


Speaking the Truth in Love

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Family



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The Transformed Life

- Camp Arrowhead — near Glenrose, Texas.
- Classes and activities for all ages (preschool to adult).
- Children under age 9 must stay with a parent or guardian.
- Cost is \$75.00 per person with max of \$200 per family.
- No one is turned away for lack of the fee!
- Call or write us for registration forms or information.
- Registration forms are also available online at:
www.gracebiblechurch-fw.com
- Registration deadline is Sunday, June 21, 2009.

Bring your family and join us!

EXALTED IN HIM

By Dennis Blankenship

Called to be a member
In the body of His Son,
Perfected and exalted
When His final work is done.

What a wondrous calling
For a rebel such as me,
Lost in this world's darkness,
Till the light I came to see.

The Jew has earthly glory,
The Gentile shares that, too,
But God has a higher calling
Reserved for me and you.

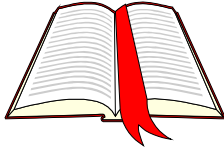
We'll reign with Him most glorious
For Heaven is our place,
Ruling over angels,
All matter, time, and space.

Co-heirs with the Master,
Secure and spirit-led,
Raised to sit with Him on high,
Our glorious, risen Head.

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22-23)

If you would like a **free** copy of the book, *Poems Inspired by God and Portions from His Word*, by Dennis Blankenship, you can contact him at: 891 Brighton-Bunker Hill Rd., Brighton, IL 62012.

BIBLE STUDY BOOKS



The following Bible study materials are available free of charge for your personal use or for use in teaching a Bible class.

by Charles Wages

- Written for Our Learning
- Stepping Stones to Truth
- Past Pentecost to Paul
- Points to Ponder
- The Ages
- Saved by Grace
- Ministry of the Church
- The Perfect Will of God
- Once in a Lifetime
- Fellowship in Christ
- Hidden in God
- Thoughts on Vision
- Spiritual Fitness
- What Saith the Scripture
(Set of 6 Diff. Tracts)

by Mrs. Charles Wages

- Seasons
- Spiritual Thoughts for Young Minds
- A Man Named Paul
- Studies for Women

by R.B. Shiflet

- Informal Study: Philippians
- Informal Study: Ephesians
- Personal Meditations on Paul's Post-Acts Ministry
- Giving Under Grace
- Ultradispensationalism
- The Lord's Supper

by Ike T. Sidebottom

- The Book of Acts
- Through the Bible Dispensationally
- Prophetic Gleanings
- Saved, Settled and Sure
- Fellowship of the Mystery

by Gregg Bing

- Keys to the Word : Understanding the Bible
- Unless the Lord Builds the House
- A Good Conscience
- That I May Know Him
- Making Good Choices
- For God So Loved the World
- It is Finished!
- Conformed to the Image of His Son
- The End of the World
- Assurance : Can We Know that We are Saved?

by John D. LaVier

- Yokefellows : Paul and His Companions
- Sure Words of Prophecy
- The Lord has Spoken
- Why is Heaven Silent?

Study to shew
thyself approved
unto God, a workman
that needeth not to
be ashamed, rightly
dividing the Word
of truth.
2 Timothy 2:15