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Devotion for January 28th, 2022

"Watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them."

- Romans 16:17

A number of years ago I received a phone call from an acquaintance who was working for a publishing house that was marketing a new translation of the Bible. "You're going to love this translation, Pastor Loughran," the man said. "It's free of all that theological jargon." I paused for a moment and then said something like this, "You realize that's impossible, don't you?"

You see, the word theology means words about God. If you were to remove all the words about God from the Bible, you'd have nothing.

"Oops!" My friend had forgotten for a moment whom he was talking to. That's because at the time it was fashionable to attack "churchy" words like liturgy or collect or theology and replace them with seemingly more relevant modern ones rather than to teach the meaning of the tried and true. It was an era when contemporary relevance was the key phrase. So while he got a "no" from me, his spiel about relevance no doubt hit home with lots of others.

I've brought all of this up because our Romans verse has perhaps the most targeted word from the relevance era, "doctrine." Now interestingly, Biblically speaking, doctrine is a body of teaching. In fact, the word for doctrine appears over 50 times in the Bible both positively and negatively.

There is God's doctrine that Paul writes about here as well as the doctrine of men that would constitute the divisions and obstacles that concern him. For the Apostle Paul as for his Lord Jesus, there is a body of God's doctrine and that

sound doctrine leads to a God-pleasing life. Like theology, words about God, doctrine, the Bible's teaching about Him and His ways in Christ Jesus, can't be dispensed with.

At Grace we are always hard at work to teach sound doctrine, God's doctrine as it is found in the Bible. We do this in our classrooms, chapel talks, church services, Bible studies and Sunday School classes. Those of us who teach are steeped in the Scripture and by that word we are led straight to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. That's whom we believe in and that is who we seek to hand over to the next generation of believers here.

"Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith - to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen." ([Romans 16:25-27](#))

*God's blessings,
Rev. Kevin Loughran, Senior Pastor
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