

4. **Robert B. Thieme, Jr.**, pastor-teacher of Berachah Church at 2815 Sage Road, Houston, Texas 77056:
 - a. Robert B. Thieme, Jr., (1918–2009), was pastor of Berachah Church from 1950–2003 and remains a significant voice of Christianity throughout the world. His diligent, expository teaching is based on the original languages of Scripture in light of the historical context in which the Bible was written. His innovative systems of vocabulary, illustrations, and biblical categories clearly communicate the infallible truths of God's Word. Pastor Thieme recorded more than eleven thousand hours of sermons and published more than one hundred books.
 - b. Pastor Thieme graduated from the University of Arizona (Phi Beta Kappa) and Dallas Theological Seminary (summa cum laude). His seminary studies were interrupted by World War II military service during which he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel as a staff officer in the United States Army Air Corps.
 - c. After completion of his graduate work in 1950, he became pastor of Berachah Church in Houston, Texas. His extensive training in Greek, Hebrew, theology, history, and textual criticism provided the foundation for his demanding professional life of studying and teaching the Word of God. R. B. Thieme, Jr., retired from the pulpit of Berachah Church after fifty-three years of faithful service.
 - d. Pastor Thieme's audio & video recordings, his books and publications, his visuals, and diagrams may be ordered from R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, PO BOX 460829, Houston, TX 77056-8829.
www.rbthieme.org
5. **Joe Griffin**, pastor-teacher at Grace Doctrine Church at 1821 South River Road, St. Charles, Missouri 63303.
 - a. I began the study of Pastor Thieme's sermons by means of audio tape in 1971 in Alabama and moved, with my wife, Jo Henra, and three children, Shane, Shannon, and Shaefer, to Houston, Texas, in 1977 in order to attend his sermons, face-to-face, for his teaching schedule of seven hours per week including twice on Sundays.
 - b. I completed my response to Pastor Thieme's Doctrinal Questionnaire in 1984 which, when approved, qualified me to be ordained as pastor by Pastor Thieme and the church's Board of Deacons which occurred in 1987.

- c. My theology and preparations were formed by my intensive study of Pastor Thieme's sermons, electronic contrivances, and publications which I have maintained during my 40-year ministry at Grace Doctrine Church since January 1985.
- d. So far, I have taught exegetically 1,029 hours of *The Letter of James* and, including the current review of chapter 5, which, so far, has included eight years of teaching all five of its chapters plus the expanded translation. Included in the five chapters are 108 verses within which all 55 imperative moods are cited in the *Letter's* expanded translations [EXT].
- e. My sermon preparation is based on the system I learned from Pastor Thieme, primarily based on exegesis of the Hebrew and Koine Greek manuscripts of the original languages of Scripture in the Old and New Testaments.
- f. I have what I think is an interesting correlation between the exegesis of Scripture and the profession of journalism, specifically its standards which regulate the reporting of events.
- g. The journalist's job is to research a story by gathering the facts available and interviewing those individuals who have knowledge of those involved and/or possess pertinent details.
- h. The journalist must interview those with knowledge about the issue and piece together all the facts pertinent to it. This process eventually enables the journalist to write an article which presents all the essential facts about the incident. This process results in the publication of a news story in the next edition of the paper. This is good journalism.
- i. In addition, there is what might be referred to as the newspaper's editors' opinions regarding the event. Having access to all the facts, the paper can then publish an editorial by which it may present its opinion.
- j. In other words, "here are the facts, these are the witnesses, here is what they had to say, and here is what we have to say about happened." *Journalism* is writing characterized by a direct presentation of facts or description of events without an attempt at interpretation. An *editorial* is a newspaper or magazine article that gives the opinions of the editors or publishers about what happened.
- k. Therefore, journalism is a system that accumulates all the pertinent facts about what happened and publishing them to subscribers of the newspaper or broadcast electronically.



- l. Here is how I correlate the function of journalism with that of a pastor-teacher. I have given the outline of how good journalism works. It sends out reporters to gather information about an event, write an article about what happened, and then publishing the findings in the next issue, and the editor may contribute an editorial.
 - m. The end result is expected to contribute pertinent information about the incident to the general public. The pastor, on the other hand, is tasked with the responsibility of accumulating information from Scripture and communicating his findings to his congregation.
 - n. What is designed to inform the pastor is the Scripture's asserted claim that what it contains is unassailable: what it reports is either absolutely true or absolutely false. These claims are replete throughout its contents.
6. These claims are asserted in Scripture under the **Doctrine of Two Immutable Things**:
- a. Definition of **immutable**: **Ἀμετάθετος** (*Ametúthetos*): immovable, immutable, unchangeable.
 - b. God is immutable in:
 - Psalm 102:27** You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end. (NASB)
 - Malachi 3:6** “For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. (NASB)
 - James 1:17** And He is before [aoristic present active indicative of εἰμί (*eimi*): He keeps on being before, i.e. eternity past] all things, and all things by means of Him hold together [intensive perfect² active indicative of the verb συνίστημι (*sunístēmi*): gravitation]. (EXT)
 - c. Jesus Christ is immutable:
 - Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (NASB)

² “The perfect tense may be used to *emphasize* the results or present state produced by a past action. ‘The Greek [present] tense is concerned with *result*, while the English [present] tense is concerned solely with the absence of an *interval*.’ The Greek perfect should be extensive, not intensive. This use of the perfect does not exclude the notion of a completed act; rather, it *focuses* on the resultant state” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 574–75).



- d. When man changes, God seems to change in certain passages of Scripture. But in reality, God is consistent with His own unchanging character. While God is immutable, He handles different things in different ways consistent with His immutable integrity.
- e. Immutability means that God uses His power in a manner consistent with His person and integrity. God's policies and acts are never arbitrary. They are never conditioned on human responses. They are totally compatible with His plan and His purpose.
- f. "Repent," or **μετανοέω (metanoéō)**, is sometimes used for God, meaning a change of mind, e.g., Exodus 32:14; Genesis 6:6; 1 Samuel 15:35; Psalm 90:13; Jeremiah 15:6, and 26:3. **NOTE:** This seems to deny the immutability principle, but these are anthropopathisms which ascribe to God a human characteristic which He does not actually possess, but is used to explain divine policy in terms of human frame of reference. They also describe divine judgment in terms of man's frame of reference. Therefore, this is language of accommodation; it does not really describe who and what God is.
- g. The immutability of God's character means that God never loses His integrity or lets others down, "... with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17, (KJV))
- h. The NET Bible's translation reads this way followed by a footnote, posted below, regarding the underlined phrase at the end of the verse.

James 1: 17 All generous giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change³. (NET)

James 1:17 Every good-of-intrinsic-value act of giving and every completed gift keeps on being from above, coming down from the ultimate source of the Father of lights, with Whom there is no change or alteration or the occurrence of an eclipse. (EXT)

1. In closing this section, I want to salute Colonel R. B. Thieme, Thieme, Jr., for his who ongoing encouragement to me while me and our family attended Berachah Church and then after our move from Houston to St. Louis County in 1985.

³ tn Grk "variation or shadow of turning" (referring to the motions of heavenly bodies causing variations of light and darkness.)" *The Net Bible (The NET Bible [Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005], 2353, ft, 1.



2. The notion was proposed that we invite the Colonel to come up to the St. Louis area and teach a Bible Conference. I thought it was a fine idea but reluctant to bother the Colonel about such an idea.
3. Before leaving for a vacation, I wrote a letter to the Colonel making the request that he might put Grace Doctrine Church on his list of Bible conferences. I felt, once that letter went into the mail, would be the last I would know about the idea. On my return back in town, I had a letter informing me of when the Colonel would come up and present a Bible conference.
4. That started a string of ten Bible conferences over the course of the next ten years. Number 10 was canceled because the Colonel had become ill and had to cancel the visit.
5. The problem we had was that the Conference was to begin in about 10 days. The venue was paid, and we knew from the previous nine conferences that there was no way we could possibly inform visitors of the cancellation. I was left with the only possible solution: I had to cook-up a Bible conference on my own, which I got busy and did.
6. I told the gathered throng, which filled up the auditorium, that the Colonel was not coming to town. I told them there was no way that I could have reached them all who were scattered hither and yon over numerous states.
7. Thus, after the opening prayer, I told the story of the Colonels cancellation; that I was prepared to teach a Bible conference but that we would pause for a few announcements at which time they were free to exit the room and ride off to wherever.
8. During this brief interval, it turned out that no one left, leaving me to fill-in for the Colonel of which I had no option to back out. Pretty much all the folks stayed around, but more surprisingly, pretty much the whole crowd came back for the rest of the Conference.
9. The Colonel was pleased with our efforts to hold the fort in his absence.
10. Several years later the Colonel's health declined, and plans were made for his eulogy to be observed at Berachah Church. I among several others were asked to deliver eulogies.
11. I was suddenly tasked with the responsibility to eulogize my mentor, which I did among several others. I'd like to present that eulogy to you now which in my way of tipping my cap to him as I now prepare to ride off into the sunset of my duties in the pulpit. Here is how it was read:

The Eulogy of Robert B. Thieme, Jr.
(April 1, 1918—August 16, 2009)

Berachah Church
Sunday, 23 August 2009

“The Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”¹

Whenever this verse boomed off the walls of this auditorium it caused those gathered to rivet their attention upon this pulpit in anticipation of another dynamic presentation of biblical truth from the man we memorialize this morning.

Thousands of classes were introduced with this verse over the course of Robert B. Thieme, Jr.’s 53-year ministry at Berachah Church. Genetics provided him with The Voice and God provided him with the message. It was The Voice that first captured one’s interest. It was the flair of his personality that solicited concentration. It was the content of the message that won positive response. It was in this place that the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were revealed through his dedicated study of the Word of God.

Accolades have engulfed the offices of this church in remembrance of the Colonel. They express how much he meant to so many whose lives were changed by his ministry. Great encomiums could be delivered on his behalf from a host of admirers. Yet, it would be his desire that not too much be made over him. He always gave credit to the Holy Spirit who empowered his pulpit persona and engendered his private persona. The two were different and there were good reasons for it.

First of all, his pulpit persona was a reflection of how earnestly he took his mandate to communicate the Word of God with clarity and accuracy. Another verse that introduced his Bible classes documents this imperative:

“Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.”²

¹ Hebrews 4:12

² 2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)

These were the Colonel's marching orders. He took them seriously. He also believed that anyone who had placed his faith in Jesus Christ was under orders to "Grow in grace and the knowledge of his Lord and Savior."³ Therefore, his study schedule was rigorous. His teaching schedule was grueling. Because his mandate was: "study and teach."

When he mounted this pulpit, he considered himself nothing more than an ordinary man honored by God with the spiritual gift of communication and he took the assignment to heart. The incredible result was a pulpit personality that complemented the authority of the message. It attracted many who recognized the importance of paying proper respect to the teaching of the Bible. Some were taken aback, possibly for a couple of reasons: maybe the Colonel was not their right pastor; maybe the truths of Scripture were too demanding. Yet he made no apology for insisting that proper esteem be paid to the Word of God.

His private persona reflected old-school genteel courtesy. His manners were impeccable. He was kind, considerate, and polite. He was a gentle man who had a great sense of humor, and his laughter filled up a room.

Grace Doctrine Church was honored to host ten of the Colonel's Bible conferences in St. Louis. Each evening, he would take his meals at the home of our church's Board chairman. On one occasion, the Colonel decided to read a humorous newspaper column about an accident-prone ship that, during World War II, accidentally fired on a vessel carrying President Franklin Roosevelt. The writer's style in relating the story got the Colonel to laughing. And when he got really tickled his eyes closed to a squint and tears rolled down his face. Those attending the dinner were in hysterics both over the article and the Colonel's valiant attempt to read it over his own laughter.

Well, we'll miss that, won't we? We'll miss the grand times we had here at Berachah hearing that captivating stentorian voice extol messages that enabled us to grow in grace, learn God's plan, and increase our inventory of ideas. Night after night, year after year, decade after decade came Holy-Spirit-inspired studies of God's Word.

And so, we gather to celebrate the life of a devoted pastor to this congregation, a loyal and loving husband of his wife, Mrs. Betty Thieme, and a proud father and mentor to his son, Bobby.

³ 2 Peter 3:18b

We celebrate because we know from Scripture that last Sunday night, even though his body remained here on this earth, his soul and spirit were transferred immediately into the eternal state – absent from the body; face to face with the Lord.

The word *celebrate* does not imply that this isn't a time of sorrow. But sorrow is a human emotion that is natural for those who are left behind by a loved one's departure to be with the Lord. It is the result of a sudden realization that there can never again be a time for earthly fellowship, companionship, or rapport. Even though sorrow and grief are legitimate emotions, they do not overwhelm those who have placed their trust in Christ.

Colonel Thieme leaves behind a heroine of grace. Mrs. Thieme, I know from personal experience that one of the greatest blessings a pastor can have is a grace-oriented wife devoted to the duty of enabling him to study and teach. The part you played in your husband's ministry is your invisible historical impact, details of which are unknown to us but the proof of which is evident in the Colonel's success as pastor of this church. We salute you today and thank you for a job well-done.

The Colonel leaves behind a champion of truth. Bobby, you thrilled your father by your honorable service in the United States Army. He was proud of your distinguished academic achievements at university and seminary. He was honored to pass the colors over to you as pastor of Berachah Church after which he referred to you as "My pastor." You have an enviable legacy, but you have already demonstrated that you are up to the challenge. You rightly miss this man, but you carry in your soul the principles of integrity that will enable you to continue the standard of excellence that your father established.

Our prayer for you and Mrs. Thieme is that your grief will be tempered by memories of good times past and that the sorrow of his absence will be soon replaced by the joyous expectation of the promised future reunion.

David wrote in Psalm 23 about the "death-shadowed valley." This is the believer's last stage of life here on earth. It can last only a second or it can go on for years. But the thing that lights the way, if the way is to be lit, is what the believer has in his soul. If he has learned nothing about the grace and love of God; nothing about God's plan and his place in it, then the darkness of fear, dread, and panic accompanied by doubt, anger, and bitterness prevent him from enjoying dying grace.



The believer who is prepared knows all about the circumstances that are involved in death. He has a soul armored with confidence and courage. The confidence that he has eternal life and will go to heaven when he dies gives him the courage to live the remainder of his life with tranquility of soul so that he can continue to serve the Lord.

The interesting thing about the Colonel's ride down the valley was that although Alzheimer's gradually robbed him of his memory, he never lost his love for the Lord. He possessed true happiness. He was content. He remained always the exquisite gentleman. He enjoyed life to the very end.

Doctrine never abandons the mature believer. Having transformed the soul into a vessel of honor, the personality of the individual enjoys permanent peace with God.

The psalmist wrote in Psalm 100:2a, "Worship the Lord with superabundance of happiness." This the Colonel did and because of it he died happy.

What he possessed is what any believer can possess if he devotes himself to a consistent, ongoing study of the Word. So, I pose this question: Are you happy?

True happiness is an inner resource developed from maximum doctrine resident in the soul and is so advanced in its grace orientation to the plan of God that all aspects of life are evaluated in the light of eternity. Consequently, true happiness is the unique possession of the mature believer through which he shares the happiness of God.

This kind of happiness is only available to believers, but it cannot be developed unless they place themselves under the ministry of a prepared pastor. For the pastor to be prepared he must be proficient in the process and procedure of analyzing Scripture from its original languages of Hebrew and Greek.

One of the Colonel's emphases at Dallas Theological Seminary was textual criticism, the process of studying biblical manuscripts whose original autographs are lost. But before engaging in this analysis one must know in what language the manuscripts were written.

It is obvious that the New Testament is written in Greek. But until the late nineteenth century it was assumed by theologians that the form of Greek utilized was a special language inspired by the Holy Spirit.



When it was later determined that this was not the case, some theologians concluded that the Holy Spirit had inspired the writers to use classical Attic Greek while others thought it a biblical Greek dominated by Hebrew modes of expression. As a result, translations of Scripture were developed by referring to what the grammar and vocabulary of these two sources required.

In the late 1800s, the research of three men, Adolf Deissmann, William Moulton, and A. T. Robertson, removed all doubt by discovering the New Testament was written in the common Greek spoken in the first-century Roman Empire.

It was not until the early twentieth century that application of this discovery became fully established among Protestant theologians. One man in particular came to realize that an accurate translation of the New Testament required a fluent understanding of this common language known as Koine Greek. This motivated Lewis Sperry Chafer to found Dallas Theological Seminary where instruction in Koine Greek, as well as Hebrew, was a required subject.

Those who graduated from Dallas were the most thoroughly prepared pastors since the Reformation having been trained in Koine-based biblical analysis. Among these stellar graduates was Robert B. Thieme, Jr. Few, if any, biblical scholars of the twentieth century exploited his knowledge of the Koine Greek as thoroughly, accurately, and effectively as he did.

Upon his graduation from Dallas, Dr. Chafer told the Colonel and his fellow classmates that he had taught them all he had been able to discover in his years as a pastor and professor. He then challenged them to take their knowledge of systematic theology, textual criticism, and the languages and continue the advance.

I submit that the one who met Dr. Chafer's challenge to the greatest degree was the Colonel. No one delved into the Koine with greater expertise and precision. His literal, grammatical, historical exposition of the New Testament set the standard for pastors throughout this country and the world. His protégés, ordained 'round this pulpit, subscribed to this system of hermeneutics and some have remained faithful to it. He set the standard that others are now obligated to follow.



Our dear Colonel has now departed to be with the Lord. He is now assembled with the Jeshurun believers of the Church Age, and his absence leaves a tremendous void in this client nation's pivot. The resultant doctrinal brain drain will be hard to replace. Ergo, doctrinal pastors must redouble their efforts under the mandate to study and teach; their respective sheep must intensify their interest in learning the divine message.

You have come here today to give the Colonel a final salute. This window of opportunity will close in a few minutes. What then? I urgently recommend that we must all go beyond the paying of respects. The best way we can show gratitude to this man for all he did to change our lives for the better is to make Bible doctrine Priority One.

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be required."⁴

I'd like to close by offering a poetic toast to the Colonel that I've entitled "Call to Quarters."

⁴ Luke 12:32a (NET)

“Call to Quarters”

Through the stormy winds of cosmic chaos
He faithfully guided us through the night.
He showed us how with clarity to think
By exposing Scripture’s revealing light.

His intrepidity gave us courage:
Pursuing vict’ry we e’er forward trod;
That voice, his words, his proclamations
Brought truths to mind from the Word of God.

Nightly he led the battalion onward:
A gallant knight, steely-eyed and blade-straight,
Stood before the gathered hungering throng
Laying waste to the lie with truth’s debate.

Half a century this advance continued
As thousands fed at the banquet spread—
Heathen saved, lives changed, souls renovated
By the feast prepared for those he led.

Suddenly, memory betrays recall;
Words are trapped in a dendrite jumble;
But with tranquility of soul, he rides the valley
Lifting prayers to God, lucid and humble.

Time blew his last tattoo and is dismissed.
Angelic reveille sounds interim rest;
With loyalty he has done his duty;
To his Savior, he has given his best.

Before the Lord he stands promoted,
A royal priest, he’s allowed to come near;
As he salutes the Lord of the Armies
His thoughts and memories are crystal clear.

Years will pass by and time will march onward
As others seize the colors he left behind;
But know ye this: “You’ll ne’er be forgotten.
Aye, Colonel, you will e’er be brought to mind.”

Whenever we face life’s adversities
And consider our lot most sorrowful,
Uplift your souls and remember The Voice:
“The Word of God is alive and powerful!”⁵

⁵ © 2009 by Joe Griffin.