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http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html

LOGIC – Lesson 21
Modus Ponensing through Vital Philosophical and Theological Truths

Every born-again believer who really cares about God, the Word of God, and Bible doctrine should understand four basics of logic: 1) modus ponens, 2) modus tollens, 3) how to put propositions of the Word of God (or any proposition) into logical form, and 4) how to check any syllogism for validity and soundness. Without grasping the basics of logic, the believer will unknowingly distort God's Holy Word. Most believers today do not care about the integrity of Scripture or Bible doctrine as long as things are going OK in their lives. They would rather throw away their minds—the image of God in them—like idiots and just trust some pastor on key eternal truths about God and man because *only* the pastor "knows better." This attitude is an abomination. It is disgusting that any believer would rather trust any person about the Word of God, Jesus Christ, or any core issue of the spiritual life than to take the time to gain mental skills of logic and metaphysics so he can objectively see truth for himself as well as test any pastor's teachings. While every believer will always need a pastor to teach and challenge him, God did not set up a system whereby believers would have to trust a pastor concerning key eternal issues regarding God, creation, man, and salvation. These truths can be known with absolutely certainty by any believer apart from the original languages, but only through philosophical realism coupled with the Word of God.

"Getting" modus ponens is a wonderful skill for any believer. It enables him to really know truth with certainty and it keeps him from distorting the Word of God. It keeps the believer from adding or subtracting from what the Bible actually says, which is easy to do without understanding basic logic—basic reality. To illustrate this, let me ask you a question, If all statements in the Word of God about salvation was in the modus ponens form of "If you believe in Jesus, you will be saved," would it be accurate (logical) to say that if someone did not believe in Jesus Christ, he would not be saved"? In other words does the statement, "If you believe in Jesus, you will be saved" mean the same thing as "If you do not believe in Jesus, you will not be saved?" If you answered yes, then you are wrong and would be corrupting the Word of God. I realize that there are many passages that show that if someone does not believe in Jesus, then he is not saved. But the statement, "If you believe in Jesus, then you are saved," does not mean in any way "if you do not believe in Jesus, then you are not saved." Again, if the only statements in the Word of God about salvation was that "If you believe in Jesus, then you are saved," you could not truthfully make the claim that "If you do not believe in Jesus, then you are not saved." See how easy it is to distort, to be illogical, and untruthful with a simple statement like "if you believe in Jesus (p), then you are saved (q)."

Let's note the modus ponens of this illustration: "If you believe in Jesus (p), you are saved (q), you believe in Jesus (p), therefore you are saved (q)." This is a classic modus ponens, if p then q (=p>q), p, therefore q. Think very carefully about EXACTLY what is being said: if a p leads to q, and there is a p then there will be a q. Again, if p leads to q, then if there is a p then there will be a q. Again, if p leads to q, then if there is a p, then there will be a q. Again, if p leads to q, then by necessity if there is a p, then there will be a q. Again, if p leads to q, then by

apodictic certainty if there is a p, then there will be a q. Again, if p leads to q, then without question, if there is a p, then there must be a q.

The modus ponens is all about p. It is saying if a p leads to q, and you have a p then you will have a q. Who could argue with that? Note what this is not saying: it is not saying if p leads to q then q must lead to p (affirming the consequent, q, to get to the antecedent, p). And it is not saying if you do not have a p (=-p) then you do not have a q (=-q), which is what someone does when they say "If you believe in Jesus (p), you are saved (q)" = "If you do not believe in Jesus (-p), you are not saved (-q)." Of course, if someone does not believe in Jesus, they are not saved, but you could not say that *merely* from "if you believe in Jesus (p), you are saved (q)." That statement is only saying if you have a p then will have a q. It is not saying anything about not having a p or going from q to p. This is unquestionable.

Note how easy it is to violate the logic of a statement just because we want to bring in other information that we know is true—like clear statements in the Word of God that declare that those who do not believe in Jesus are going to Hell (John 3:36). There are countless passages that are twisted by believers because they believe that they can take a p>q and make a q>p or –p>-q. What is even worse is that most pastors are not required to take logic and therefore are constantly distorting God's Word before believers who are clueless about the distortions. Take another example: 1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins (p), God will cleanse us (q). Many pastors have no problem saying that this means that if we do not confess our sins (-p), then God will not cleanse us (-q). It is a violation of logic and the Word of God to make them equivalent. I believe that confession is important and necessary. However, for someone to say that 1 John 1:9 teaches that if you do not confess your sins, then you will not be cleansed is a distortion of that passage. John did not say anything about –p or –q. I know there is a temptation to make the passage say that because you know what it is true, but you simply cannot do that without violating God's Word. We need to stick with exactly what Scripture says. Violation of the logic embedded in God's Word not only corrupts God's Word, it leads to greater heresies. For example, we know that infants go to heaven apart from believing in Jesus Christ, and we know that when a believer dies he does not have to go to Purgatory for cleansing because he did not confess all of his sins before he died.

Exercises on modus ponens. (One more week of redundancy on modus ponens before moving to modus tollens)

1. Construct valid modus ponens using symbolic logic for "If a believer learns the basics of logic and metaphysics (p), he will not have to depend upon any pastor for fundamental, critical, and eternal truths of God (q)."

p=if a believer learns the basics of logic and metaphysics
q=he will not have to depend upon any pastor for fundamental, critical, and eternal truths of God.

p>q
p
Therefore q. VALID.

2. Construct invalid modus ponens using symbolic logic on "If a believer learns the basics of logic and metaphysics (p), he will not have to depend upon any pastor for fundamental, critical, and eternal truths of God (q)."

3. Construct valid modus ponens using symbolic logic on "If a believer does not learn the basics of logic and metaphysics (p), he will never be able to enter into personal, total and absolute confidence in metaphysical truths about God for he will always by necessity have to trust the pastor (q)."

4. Construct valid modus ponens using symbolic logic for "If the modern believer does not develop basic metaphysical skills, he will by necessity possess an ungodly, deistic, and Cartesian mental framework without even realizing it."

Answers to 2-4

2. Construct invalid modus ponens using symbolic logic on "If a believer learns the basics of logic and metaphysics (p), he will not have to depend upon any pastor for fundamental, critical, and eternal truths of God (q)."

p=if a believer learns the basics of logic and metaphysics
q=he will not have to depend upon any pastor for fundament, critical, eternal truths of God.

p>q
q
Therefore p. INVALID. Although we may want to say the reverse is true (q>p): "if the believer does not depend upon any pastor for fundamental, critical, eternal truths about God and life, then he has learned the basics of logic and metaphysics," logically it does not follow. Sure, p leads to q, but he could have gotten to q another way, by a different p: maybe God appeared to him personally in a burning bush. What we have to keep in mind is exactly what is being said. We are tempted to validate or invalidate the principle through illustrations. We need to forget the illustrations. It is true regardless of one's ability to find an illustration. The logic does not depend upon ability to find an illustration. Logic depends precisely on what is being said.

3. Construct valid modus ponens using symbolic logic on "If a believer does not learn the basics of logic and metaphysics (p), he will never be able to enter into personal, total, and absolute confidence in metaphysical truths about God for he will always by necessity have to trust the pastor (q)."

p= If a believer does not learn the basics of logic and metaphysics
q= he will never be able to enter into personal, total, and absolute confidence in metaphysical truths about God for he will always by necessity have to trust the pastor.

p>q
p
Therefore q. VALID.

4. Construct valid modus ponens using symbolic logic for "If the modern believer does not develop basic metaphysical skills, he will by necessity possess an ungodly, deistic, and Cartesian mental framework without even realizing it."

p=if the modern believer does not develop basic metaphysical skills
q=he will by necessity possess an ungodly, deistic, and Cartesian mental framework

p>q
p
Therefore, q. VALID

Logic Matters—because accuracy in God's Holy Word and Bible doctrine matter!

Advancing in the logos for the glory of the LOGOS,

Pastor Don