

Dearest FBC family,

We live in the most anti-intellectual age in the history of Christianity, and there is growing pressure on pastors and churches to adopt nominalistic and popularistic approaches to God's Word. On the philosophical level, these approaches make Christians into practical deistic pragmatic problem solvers; on the biblical level it makes them totally dependent upon a pastor to tell them what to believe. The result is that God's people are extremely deficient in truth with regard to reality (metaphysics) and what counts as justified beliefs (epistemology). Think about it: God's people deficient in personal knowledge and the certainty of truth around them in creation and in the Word of God. Is it no wonder that Christians are always running on empty spiritual gas tanks and have become so inordinately dependent upon the teacher to tell them what to believe to fill up their tanks? There is no reason for this cruel and unusual "punishment" on any Christian. As I mentioned last night, I believe that the reason believers cannot stay in fellowship for most of every day is because of their ungodly metaphysical and epistemological viewpoints that they have absorbed from anti-Christian culture.

In an effort to deal with biblical illiteracy and the believer's lack of personal, direct and certain knowledge of the Word of God for himself, I have decided to provide an opportunity to guide believers through a personal study through Paul's epistles. The objection that "I can't read the Bible because I do not understand the original languages" is bogus on so many levels. You might not be able to get as much out of it as someone who has been trained in the original languages, but it is important to point out that what you do know in metaphysics even the greatest exegetes cannot get out of the text from original languages alone—like esse, virtue, and the nature of man's intellect, will/heart, and "emotions." You already know more than any of the greatest lexicographers. Think about it, you can read the Word of God and get more out of it than someone who is not metaphysically trained, even if he has 100 years of the original languages. I am not exaggerating; I will illustrate this as we go through the books of the Bible.

Today I would like for you to first read 1 Thessalonians 2. It will take you about 2 1/2 minutes (I just read it aloud and timed it). After you read it, I would like for you to read 1 Thess 1-2 once again (about 4 minutes total—I timed it too).

After reading the two chapters I would like for you to reflect on Paul's love and delight in these believers and the celebration of their virtues of faith, hope, and love (1:3), joy (1:6), dedication to God (1:10), eager expectation to be with Christ in the kingdom (10), and their love and certainty of the truths of the Word of God (13). What believers! They were filled with faith, hope, love, Christ-centeredness, and absolute conviction about the realities of the Word of God. All of this be gleaned by a elementary schoolchild reading any English translation.

To be sure, there is much depth to many of the original Greek words, and the metaphysical depths of philosophical psychology are even deeper and more pertinent to our understanding of things like faith, hope, love, dedication, joy, conviction. I dare say that those who have learned from our studies in philosophical psychology about the mind, will, and affections know far more than even the greatest exegetes. We need the depth, but first we need to be biblically

literate and this demands understanding the Bible for yourself. This demands reading it for yourself to understand the basic framework, an understanding which will bring about many life-changing truths. The Word of God is alive and powerful. No man makes it alive and powerful. All we have to do is understand it *for ourselves* through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The job of the pastor is to help you become more independent from him. If he does his job, the believer will not need him as much to understand the Word of God written for each believer. For example, based on metaphysics, there are many passages that you no longer need me for (Ex. 3:14; John 1:3; Heb. 1:3; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17, and all of the passages that show God giving existence to all things all of the time). After we finish our study of philosophical psychology you will not need me as much when you come across these aspects of man in the Bible. You will know the structure of man's mind, will/heart, affections, passions, experiences, 1st and 2nd order wills, and so forth. While you will always need a pastor to challenge and to further develop truths, you should never be so dependent upon a pastor that you need for him to tell you what to believe or what the Bible says.

Tomorrow, I will provide some background information to fill in some details on the suffering Paul mentions in chapter 2.

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Don