

Don Hargrove
Faith Bible Church
Thursday, October 10, 2013
<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study of the Bible-33 (From 1 Thess. to 2 Thess.)

As I noted in the last couple of lessons, there are 5 modern myths about personal Bible study. Let's note the fourth one: *Only believers who are in fellowship can understand anything in the Bible.* The fallacy of this myth is easily exposed by pointing out that whole books and sections of the Bible were written for the explicit purpose of rebuking believers who are not in fellowship with God, cf., the Galatians, the Corinthians, and most of the churches mentioned in Revelation. The fact that the rebuking is coupled with the correct explication of doctrines indicates that these carnal believers could understand the issues, at least on some level. When Paul addresses the carnal, legalistic Galatians, he expects them to understand something of the grace of God, which he systematically reviews and explicates without a word about the necessity for first getting in fellowship before they can understand anything he has to say. The same could be said of the Corinthians. While it is true that a believer must be in fellowship to *fully* grasp the reality of the beauty of God's grace, it is not true that he cannot understand teachings of grace on any level unless and until he is back in fellowship.

The last Thessalonian lesson included exercises to provide you with the opportunity to become more personally active in learning your Bible. One exercise was to write down something about the Rapture from certain verses from each chapter in 1 Thessalonians. Here is what I came up with:

1:9-10, Believers eagerly waiting for Christ to return at the Rapture.

2:19-20, Believers and rewards ("crown") associated with the Rapture

3:12-13, Believers will be fully established in their wills/hearts at the Rapture.

4:13-18, Believers will forever be with the Lord beginning at the Rapture.

5:23, Believers will be ultimately and perfectly sanctified at the Rapture.

Another exercise was to list the various virtues in the following verses:

1:6-7, imitators of the Lord, love for the Word of God, joy in tribulation, and being great examples for all believers.

1:9-10, consecrated life unto the Lord, occupation with Christ.

2:13-14, conviction that the Word of God really is God's inerrant holy Word and not the word of man, being exemplary Christians

3:4-6, faith and love

3:12, love for fellow believers

4:9-10, love for fellow believers

5:1-2, doctrinal understanding of eschatology related to the Tribulation

Some of the problem or potential problem areas:

2:5-6, listening to the slander against Paul that he was motivated by money.

4:3-8, sexual temptations,

4:11-12, being a busybody, not working,

4:13, thinking like unbelievers regarding the death of loved ones

5:12-14, lack of love and respect for the office of pastor-teacher

By now you should have a basic conceptual understanding of 1 Thessalonians: e.g., the background, Paul's tone in and purpose for writing the letter; the virtues of the Thessalonians (love of the Word; OWC; faith, hope, love; joy even in tribulations); the major themes of the Rapture and eschatology; some of the issues that could harm the spiritual lives; and the need for these virtuous believers to keep advancing spiritually.

To be sure, this is just the first level. However, the more you read it, the more you will be able to get out of it. I know you must have many questions about many details, which may require exegetical or metaphysical analysis. However, I hope you can see that you can read and understand the Bible on a basic level. The Reformers were right when they insisted that the Bible is perspicuous for all believers—in their opposition to the Roman Church, which insisted that believers were too stupid to read the Bible for themselves. Don't let anyone tell you that you cannot understand the Bible for yourself. You can! You can understand it on a foundation level, a level that will give you enough wisdom to see God's structure of truth and see when a pastor might be shoving his theories and views into the Word, rather than providing an exposition of the pure Word.

You do not have to understand everything in passage before you can understand anything in a passage. As a matter of fact, it would be very easy for me to show an exegete (who tells believers that they cannot understand the Word if they do not have the original languages) the fallaciousness of his claim, by making the claim on him that if he does not know metaphysics, he cannot know what the Bible is *really* talking about *ultimately*, and thus he should never exegete or teach the Bible. As a matter of fact, I could take him to 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and illustrate that no matter how much of the original languages that he knows, he cannot understand the

spirit/body/soul apart from hylemorphism. Just because one knows how to translate a word does not in any way tell him the objective reality to which the word is pointing. As far as that goes I could show him that even with all of his languages, he really does not understand the *ultimate nature* of love unless he understands the metaphysics of love as per philosophical psychology. I could also show him that the very act of basing reality on the original word instead of what the word is pointing to is faulty—so what good are his original languages, when he is not even tracking ultimate reality as per metaphysics? Even though I could show him that he does not really understand ultimate reality no matter how much of the languages he knows, I would *never* tell him he should never exegete or teach the Word because he does not understand metaphysics and philosophy of language. In the same way, he should not be telling believers not to read their bibles because they do not know the original languages. Both the believer at the first conceptual level and the exegete at the second level of the original languages level can still get things out of the Bible. I will not deny those with the original languages the right to exegete unless they contend that only they can understand the Bible. Again, you do not have to understand everything about a passage to get much *objective* truth from that passage.

We need to understand and appreciate all three levels of understanding. As pastor-teacher, it is my goal to establish believers in each of these levels so that they personally know their bibles conceptually from personal study, exegetically from key exegetical principles, and metaphysically to get to the ultimate realities of these truths.

In our PBS we now move to 2 Thessalonians. I would like for you to spend time reading this book over the next few days (I just read it and it took me about 5 ½ minutes). As you read it, I would like for you to first compare it with 1 Thessalonians. Now that you have a basic conceptual understanding of 1 Thessalonians, we are going to take that and compare it with this letter. For now, I do not want you to get bogged down in the details of the eschatology of the day of the Lord and the Tribulation (basically, the Thessalonians got confused about the day of the Lord). I just want you to recognize the emphases of Paul on such things as the spiritual virtues of faith, hope, and love, as well as some problem areas in 2 Thess. 3:6-11, which echo those in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. Throughout this PBS, we are going to continue building our biblical conceptual framework as advance through each book of the Bible. The end result will be that your mind will be fundamentally grounded in God's Word: you will be able to clearly see God's emphases, problem areas for believers, the spiritual life, and the *natural* development of Bible doctrine and metaphysics. Stick with it and you will increasingly see more clearly: God's Word, God, the spiritual life, and the ultimate reality of His amazing plan for all of our lives.

*In 'Ehyeh,
Pastor Don Hargrove*