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Faith Bible Church  
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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

**Personal Study of the Bible-46**  
**(2 Thess. 2:10-12- God's active work according to man's 2<sup>nd</sup> order will)**

We have noted the basic structure of 1-2 Thessalonians. From personal reading and rereading of the two letters and going through the seven steps involved in personal study of the Bible,

1. reading the epistle *straight through* at one setting;
2. noticing the setting of the epistle;
3. studying the introduction of the epistle;
4. noticing the outline of the epistle from the introduction;
5. making a *verse-by-verse* study of the epistle;
6. doing a categorical/doctrinal study of a word/concept;
7. meditating upon and *digest* the *results* of your study,

you should have a personal understanding of basic structure and contents in these two books: 1<sup>st</sup> half doctrine of eschatology [Rapture and Second Advent] and 2<sup>nd</sup> half various exhortations to virtuous attitudes and actions to move believer from being potentially a virtuous person to an actual virtuous human being.

What I would like to do now is to advance us in some of the metaphysics of God as He *directly* instills personal grace needed for supernatural virtues. Recall that in the last FBC Bible class, I emphasized the point that supernatural virtues like faith, hope, and love require direct supernatural grace. This means that no believer has the power in himself to create faith, hope, and love in God or the realities in the Scriptures regardless how well he knows the Bible. This means that no matter how one masters the seven steps above, if God does not directly and personally grant you enlightenment required for faith, hope, and love, you will not possess them—you will not be able to really believe them, hope in them, or love them. As a matter of fact the truths of Scripture will not resonate with you spiritually apart from God directly enabling that process to take place.

This metaphysical insight brings a different emphasis, a less mechanical or autonomous power system, than some may be accustomed to. Instead of a believer by virtue of him being in fellowship with God *automatically receiving supernatural enlightening virtues* associated with faith, hope, and love, God actively, personally, and directly grants personal enlightenment according to His will, which is always compatible manner with the believer's 2<sup>nd</sup> order will (what they really want). Furthermore, God withholds this supernatural enlightenment and hardens the hearts of those who do not really desire God (let alone these virtues).

Biblical faith is not the sort of blind stumbling in the dark that some popular atheists assert, but rather a way of knowing. And, although it is a way of knowing, it is distinct from knowledge by scientific demonstration. This does not mean that the faith-knowledge is less certain, it is just a different kind of knowledge: a knowledge directly revealed by God in His Word and illuminated by God in the believer in accordance with positive 2<sup>nd</sup> order volition. While one can prove the existence of God by rational demonstration, the contents of supernatural revelation contained in the Bible cannot be proved in the same way. I can prove that God as Necessary Being must exist for all contingent beings to continue to exist. However, I cannot prove that God is Triune or that Christ died for my sins by any demonstration. I can know God's existence by reason alone, but I can only know God personally, existentially through an act of faith, which is the assent of the intellect moved by my will which has been supernaturally informed by a direct act of God's grace. God's act of grace upon my intellect enables me to know with absolute certainty the supernatural articles of faith. However, if I decide not to make God the most important thing in my life, then God will withhold this sure faith-knowledge—I will no longer have that certainty even though logically I may assent because of what I read in the Word of God. The point here is that God gives faith/hope/love-knowledge as man seeks Him and withholds this faith/hope/love knowledge to those who really do not seek God in their 2<sup>nd</sup> order will. On the importance of faith, hope, and love, and see where and in what manner they appear, [read 1-2 Thessalonians again](#) and note them.

The bottom line is that God supernaturally gives believers faith/hope/love knowledge on a case by case basis. The basis is found in a person's 2<sup>nd</sup> order will. God always honors free will and if a believer really does not care about such things, then it would be a violation of that person's soul for God to make them receive and like that they really do not want. Again, God is always working according to man's 2<sup>nd</sup> order will. He will work with it in hardening or enlightening according to what a person's really wishes and according that will fit in His plan. We have an example of this in

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, **because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.** 11 **And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence** so that they might believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

We also see this in Pharaoh who hardened his heart according to his 2<sup>nd</sup> order will, which prompted God to harden his 1<sup>st</sup> order will (to temporarily let Israelites go) when the first was temporarily weak. When God hardened Pharaoh's 1<sup>st</sup> order will to line up with his 2<sup>nd</sup> order will (he really did not want to let them go), God actually grants Pharaoh more freedom to do what he really wants. This principle works for positive believers who really want to advance in the spiritual life as well as negative believers who have put their hope in the mammon of this world instead of God: 1 Timothy 6:17, *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.*

Speaking of mammon, consider

Matthew 6:23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

The “eye” represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> order will. Such a person may go through the motions of listening to Bible doctrine and confessing their personal sins to regain fellowship, but there is no way God is going to give that person the faith/hope/love knowledge because that soul is dark and does not really want it. For God to give it to him would be to violate the freedom of the will to choose its good—God or mammon.

Concerning our Lord’s statement in the above passage of loving or hating God, consider the biblical meaning of love. What is it that characterizes love more than anything else: 1) desire for the good of the beloved and 2) desire to be close to the beloved. Consider how the hatred of vitriolic atheists plays itself out in the two contrary desires of hate: 1) the desire for the non-existence of God; and 2) the desire for isolation from God. The point is that God is nothing but a Bother in one way or another for those who have other chief aims in life. For them, God is in the way, so it is natural to wish that He did not exist. Man does this by suppression of truth and ignoring God as much as possible. Such a person has no rational basis for thinking God is going to grant supernatural truth in the areas of faith/hope/love, a truth that enjoys absolute and sure confidence in knowing God and His truths. How could a just God give that to a person who really wishes that God was not in his way.

Note the absolute clarity of Scripture on God handing a person over to their desires [2<sup>nd</sup> order will]:

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 **Therefore God gave them over** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen 26 **For this reason God gave them over** to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. 28 And

just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

Consider the application of the notion of God directly, personally, and specifically giving this sure knowledge according to a person's 2<sup>nd</sup> order will in contrast to the common view that as long as you are in fellowship you will automatically get this insight by virtue of the *power* of being in fellowship with God. In the latter it actually would be possible for a person to confess his sins before studying the Bible or listening to a Bible class, but God deciding not to give this sure faith/hope/love knowledge because the person really does not want it [2<sup>nd</sup> order will]. Yes, with restoration to fellowship a believer could enjoy, at least for a short time, fellowship with God but this does not mean *automatic* virtuous knowledge, which is a separate act by God in response to a person's desires of the heart. Furthermore, in the case of a heart primarily set on things of this world, it will soon forget all about the truth it may have exposed itself as it pursues the world. How could anyone expect for God to supernaturally interrupt the direction of his heart that has already set Him aside right after Bible class, prayer, or personal study of the Bible? The bottom line is that God does not automatically grant supernatural virtues (like faith, hope, and love) because a believer is in fellowship, He grants those virtues in separate acts and according to a person's volition. While fellowship is a necessary condition, it is not a sufficient condition for supernatural virtuous knowledge and attitudes. Nothing is automatic—neither contingent existence or anything else. God is very involved in everything all of the time☺

*In 'Ehyeh,  
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Genesis 17:1 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless [develop spiritual virtue].