

Don Hargrove  
Faith Bible Church  
Thursday, December 19, 2013  
<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

### **Personal Study of the Bible-50 Thessalonian Absolute Faith in Contrast to Modern “Christmas Faith”**

In last evening’s Bible class we noted the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love in the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:2-3, 1:8-10; 3:5-12; 4:9-10; 4:13; 5:8; 2 Thess. 1:3-4, 11; 2:10-13; 3:2-5). I noted how these virtues are supernatural and are bestowed supernaturally by God the Holy Spirit on believers who are walking and seeking God.

I also touched on the relationship between reason and faith in the two levels of truth of natural revelation and supernatural revelation. By natural revelation alone, man can *reason* to absolute certainty of the existence of God. For man to reject God, he must by necessity reject not only reason but the scientific laws of causality. It always amazes me how quick people can become irrational in their desire to reject God as they posit all kinds of bizarre theories, all of which violate the known laws of science, which many make their foundation.

What concerns me more, however, is the irrationality of certain Christians who reject supernatural revelation of the Bible. Even though this is the height of irrationality, many of these believers will attempt to come across as being more rational than “naïve” Christians who believe in things like the Virgin Conception or being transferred to the immediate presence of God at death. Can’t they see how irrational it is to believe in Jesus and at the same time reject the Virgin Conception? Just as I am not shy about pointing out to unbelievers their irrationality and self-defeating position, I have no problem pointing out to fellow believers how asinine and self-defeating they are to reject any supernatural revelation in the Bible. Yet there are churches all over America where liberal Christians gather and talk about “Christmas faith” with an attitude of “believing what you know is not true,” just to make them feel better in the name of ecumenicity and humanity. To many this is what Christmas is all about: brotherhood of man, universal peace and personal mysteries of snow, decorations, and believing in myths. All over this country liberal Christians gather together under their idea of “faith” as they whisper to each other their doubts of divinity of Christ, His miracles, and Christianity to find support and understanding (in skepticism). Is this the kind of faith we read about last evening in Thessalonians? Of course not. Having doubts about reality is not a mark of intelligence, it is a mark of ignorance and stupidity. Christ never put His arms around anyone who had doubt and expressed how He understood them. Instead of seeing them as intellectually superior for not being able to see Truth, He called them what they are: ignorant, which is exactly what anyone is who cannot see Truth either on a natural level or, for the Christian, on the supernatural level.

Romans 1:20 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.

Luke 24:25 And He said to them, "O **foolish** (ignorant) men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

Although calling people "stupid" for being willfully ignorant is not consider proper, I would argue that the point needs to be made (regardless of what term one uses) to both believers and unbelievers who continue to think so stupidly. You might check your own attitude with that of Jesus Christ. If a believer came up to you and said he had great doubts about the existence of God or any Christian truth, would you understand their doubts because of your own doubts, or would you recognize the malfunction in their thinking (because you have the same viewpoint of Christ, namely biblical-philosophical realism)? Don't misunderstand me: I am not saying that you should not be caring toward those with broken cognitive faculties. What I am getting at is whether you have the same broken faculties and therefore understand their irrationality because you too have broken cognitive faculties.

In addition to certain Christians, usually liberal, bringing great shame on Christ by equating Christianity with irrationality, they are also often guilty of patronizing Him. The words of C.S. Lewis are apropos,

*I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really **foolish** thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing **nonsense** about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*

The last thing any believer or church needs is patronizing nonsense. So go and enjoy all your myth movies on faith, like *Miracle of 34<sup>th</sup> Street*, just do not impose that idea of faith on Christianity. Biblical faith is absolute certainty about absolute reality. For this the Thessalonians were praised again and again, and by this they became imitators of Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:6). They were filled with ever increasing faith, hope, and love precisely because they had presented themselves to the Lord for transformation (Rom. 12:1).

For Bible reading in this lesson, I would like for you to read the following passages that deal with prophecies of Jesus Christ and the need for believers to understand the Bible.

1. Luke 24:25-27, 44-48. Note how Christ expected these believers to be familiar with and believe the prophetic truths in the Old Testament about Him coming to earth. What did He call those who did not know or believe?
2. Acts 8:36-39. After Jesus made it clear that prophecies about Him are found in all three parts of the Old Testament, we see a eunuch reading one these prophecies. Note how God sent Philip to help the eunuch in understanding.

3. Acts 17:1-4. Note how Paul uses the Old Testament to demonstrate to the Jews that Jesus Christ was predicted in the Old Testament.
4. Acts 18:27-28. Note how Apollos was debating with Jewish leaders and using the Old Testament to prove how Jesus satisfied the requirements of Hebrew prophecy.
5. Acts 28:23. As Paul debated with the Jewish leaders in Rome, his evidence once again does not rest on Matthew, Luke, or John but rather the Scriptures of the Old Testament.
6. Genesis 3:15. Note the first prophecy of Jesus Christ is that He would be of the “seed of the woman,” not man, thus the virgin conception.
7. Isaiah 9:6-7. Jesus Christ is Eternal God.

Grasping the implications of these passages should be enough to put away all of those irrational ideas against miracles of Christianity, Christ or His Virgin Conception. What is so satisfying about Realism is that it deals with reality as epistemologically justifiable (and it is the only philosophical system which deals with reality as such). Whether that reality is what can be gained by reason alone (existence of God) or that reality is gained through theological faith (Trinity, incarnation, justification, redemption, reality of Christ living in me, and absolute certainty of God’s love and grace). It is all truth, and God desires it for all:

*1 Timothy 2:3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

All of the references to the Thessalonians’ faith, hope, and love are testimonies not only to their glorification of God but to their own blessedness. There is nothing like living in these realities of faith, that absolute conviction guaranteed by God Himself. On the other hand, I can think of nothing sadder than a believer who lives without these realities and thus with doubt simply because of persistent stifling of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19), who alone can bestow absolute veridical assurance. Don’t you just love living in the realities of theological faith? Is that not what we long for when we pray (after FBC Bible classes many times) that God would make these truths a reality? Another great blessing the Lord has given to us is the company of other believers who are growing and thriving in faith, hope, and love. They are such a delight to be around any time of the year. (Sure beats being around those filled with irrationality, skepticism, despair/stress, and self-centeredness—especially around CHRISTmas).

*In ‘Ehyeh,  
Pastor Don Hargrove*