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

Personal Study of the Bible-51
The 4 options: good-BAD, Bad-GOOD, bad—BAD, GOOD-GOOD

In our recent studies, both in our personal study of Thessalonians and in our Bible classes at Faith Bible Church, we have been noting the three crucial supernatural virtues that are required and accompany true, inner, spiritual transformation: theological faith, hope, and love. There is no authentic spiritual life or dynamics apart from these imparted supernatural virtues. Apart from these virtues, all the believer can do is go through dead religious motions. This does not mean that such a believer will not use doctrinal vocabulary or talk about the grace of God. It just means that without these supernatural virtues the believer does not live in the *reality* of biblical faith-hope-love, that transcendent, spiritual life with God. We have also noted that these transcendent virtues cannot be manufactured by any believer, regardless of how much doctrine he knows or studies the Bible. However, he does have the potential to receive these superhuman virtues bestowed upon Him by God alone. The believer who does not possess theological faith will not live in the reality of God and His truths. The believer who does not possess theological hope is unable to live in eager anticipation of being with Christ, thus will fear death instead of seeing it as a blessed gateway to be with Christ. The believer who does not have theological love will not live out his daily life with an attitude of glorifying and serving God out of love; he will not be motivated to present himself to God (Rom. 12:1) let alone live for His purposes.

In our last Bible class we looked at several passages on theological faith and noted that this faith is given directly by the Holy Spirit. The believer who lives a life of grieving (personal sin) and/or quenching (evil, e.g., marginalizing the ministry of the HS through human autonomy) the Spirit is not in a position for God to grant him these superhuman virtues. Such a believer is fighting against the ministry of the Holy Spirit (James 4:4-6), who is given to infuse superhuman faith, hope, and love in the believer (Gal. 5:22-23).

By reading 1-2 Thessalonians you have seen, among other things, Paul's celebration and consuming desire for these believers to have and grow in theological faith, hope, and love. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 8; 3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12; 4:9, 13; 5:8, 13; 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 4, 11; 2:10, 13, 16; 3:2, 5; note how important they are to Paul; note their transformative, supernatural nature as vividly illustrated in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10.

It is in the spirit of Paul that I, as pastor-teacher of FBC, wish all of the believers of FBC increasing theological faith, hope, and love this Christmas season and for the next year. My greatest concern for you is your continued growth in theological faith, which enables you to see God more accurately and clearly, continued growth in theological hope that brings greater joy and anticipation in being with the Lord, and continued growth in theological love that motivates you to love, adore, and serve Him in all things.

My *primarily* wish for you is *not* regarding the myriad of things in your temporal life, i.e. the details of life—better health, less problems at work or with people, or more temporal blessings in general. Although I do *not* wish you ill health, more problems, or less temporal blessings, those things really are not my *primary* concern. As a matter of fact, it may take failing health, more problems with people, and less temporal blessings for you to be in the best position

to receive and live in theological faith, hope, and love. If it takes greater hardships in the coming year to get you to live in the reality Jesus Christ and His kingdom instead of your own, so be it! This is true for me, you, and everyone else! I am not here to give you various “problem solving devices” to be used principally to help you with your earthly kingdom if that is going to blind you to the next grand life awaiting you when you are face-to-face with the Lord. I am not here to give you temporal hope that eviscerates the great hope of dying and being face-to-face with Christ. I am not here to give you biblical passages to aid you in your struggles with this world if that means you are going to love this world more than the Lord. I am not here to provide you with a spiritual emotional energy drink to help you through another week of your earthly kingdom building. I am not here to make you feel better about yourself, especially in light of the fact that *we all* think more highly of ourselves than we ought. The church was never designed *primarily* to be a place to stroke believers or a place where believers could come and receive an experience that will simply make them feel better (be it from the experience of tongues or Faith-rest). You do not find that attitude anywhere in the epistles. The church was designed to teach Truth and those who come for truth rather than simply an experience will find all of the encouragement they need, not *mainly* by a faith-rest procedure, but by getting their head straight about God, creation, and His plan for their lives.

People with true positive volition are always interested in Truth rather than something to just make them feel better. Negative volition always takes correction *too* personally because negative volition sees personal correction as more evil than the evil that the person is involved in. For example, a negative believer who habitually gossips (over decades=character issue) and is corrected about her gossiping will hate the correction more than the evil of gossiping—she loves the “pleasure” of gossiping more than loving and honoring others by not hurting them or their reputation with her gossip. This is in contrast to a true positive believer who is appreciative of correction precisely because she is more interested in truth than her personal experiences. As a pastor-teacher, I do not believe in being subtle from the pulpit. There are times I am very forceful to be as clear as possible. It is always amazing to me how some believers really appreciate the correction while others will sulk and even complain because they were not served up some encouragement in their self-serving life.

The fact that evil and negative volition always see correction and painful consequences of evil greater than evil itself can be seen with Cain and the first murder. Read Genesis 4:5-16 and note Cain’s attitude regarding God’s correction and punishment. Cain expressed no remorse for killing his brother, it was all about *his* feelings, *his* experience: Genesis 4:13, “*And Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is too great to bear!”*” Cain was more interested in his personal experiences than the *truth* of the evil he committed. This holds true for unbelievers as well as believers. We can see this among liberals in the judicial system who get apoplectic and maudlin over murderers receiving capital punishment instead of seeing the great evil of the crime of murder.

Political correctness is not only a problem in society. It is also a problem throughout Christianity (= spiritual correctness) as most churches are geared to presenting pleasing messages to Christians instead of teaching truth, the whole truth, total truth. This is a major reason almost every modern Christian is not only in great darkness with regard to the nature of truth, and the nature of man and virtue, but the nature of God (Esse) as well. Practically every Christian today has atheistic and deistic views about the created world. What a horrible price to pay just to satisfy the personal desires of negative believers for devotional type of Christianity. I am well aware that learning objective, dogmatic, logical truth is very difficult for modern (irrational)

man. However, the Christian must develop a Realist way of thinking if he ever hopes to really get it. Those who really want truth will have the attitude of really wanting to know these truths no matter what it takes. Those who really do not want truth will complain that it is “too hard.” The positive believer, when exposed to even the most recondite truths, will go away thinking, ‘man I really want to know that [=Truth].’ The negative believer who is not interested in truth will be turned off because, deep down, truth as such is not worth the effort. This is also often accompanied by the conscious or unconscious belief that Christianity is not a whole truth, total truth system: rather, it is just for the spiritual devotional life. Such a believer deep down really does not believe the Bible serves much purpose outside of devotional aspects life. This is nothing short of a blasphemous view of God, the Bible, and Jesus Christ.

I have so much more to offer than a feel-good spiritual message: whole Truth, total Truth, which alone provides the means of growing in theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. *More importantly look* what God offers those who advance in theological love: Romans 8:28. *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.* “Those who love God” are not those who come to Him mainly for a religious experience. They are not those that merely use Him to solve their problems. The only ones who love Him are those who love truth as such—whole truth, total truth, and not just certain truths that sought for personal benefits. As far as our recent studies two things come to mind in loving God: *presenting self to God* (Rom. 12:1) and living according to God’s purpose as indicated in the last clause of Romans 8:28.

I wish for all things to work together for good for you and your loved ones. However, I recognize what the “good” is and how Romans 8:28 restricts things working out for good to “those who love God.” Romans 8:28 is not a blanket statement for all believers. It is only for those who love the Lord, which is marked by living according to His purpose. I know that if you love God all things will work out together for good. You cannot image how much I want that for you. However, I recognize that that good may not be what you think it is: e.g., better health, more financial success, or being more liked. The good is always related to growing closer to God regardless of the details of life. Whatever enables you to grow in theological faith, hope, and love is the Good. Whatever keeps you from growing in these virtues is not good, even if it seems good or temporally pleasing at the time. Consider the four choices we all have for next year and beyond (upper case indicates spiritual GOOD/BAD).

1. A good—BAD year. A good-BAD year would be a year of “good” in the sense of an abundance of temporal “blessings” for the next year. However, due to focus on these goods, the year becomes increasingly BAD because it was accompanied by a deteriorating relationship with God (carnality and reversionism). This happens when a believer’s main focus is on the temporal issues of this life and only uses God as a means to help cope with issues of forgiveness and the stresses that accompany living in this world. In this good-BAD year the believer could experience good health, financial success, social blessings, and yet progressively suppress knowledge of God, which is always BAD. Unchecked, this believer will continue to harden himself against God and the plan of God as he marginalizes God. The chief two characteristics of anyone who suppresses knowledge of God is failure to honor God as God and failure to thank Him for His many blessings—lack of gratitude for the nature of God and His grace. See Romans 1:18-21.

2. A bad—GOOD year. A bad—GOOD year would be a bad year in terms of temporal life issues (e.g., failing health, dwindling financial resources, being liked less by those you love, rejection by friends and family) that wakes you up to the Excellences of God. The GOOD is learning to find your value in God and not in people, places, and things. You realize that only God loves you the way you desire and need to be loved. You realize that God really is the only one who is totally faithful to you. You realize just how fantastic His plan really is and how it brings meaning and purpose to your life. The first bad—GOOD year for me was the year I accepted Christ as my Savior. If not for the bad that preceded that decision, I certainly would not have changed the direction of my life, at least not then. The bad I was experiencing at that time really was the best thing that ever happened to me, but only because through God's grace it was parlayed into the GREATEST year of my life up to that point.
3. A bad—BAD year. This is the worst option. This is a year of hardships and difficulties that do not result in the believer responding appropriately to the Lord and Bible doctrine. Instead of turning to the Lord in humility, the believer continues in increasing frustration and bitterness. This carnality precludes any capacity to receive supernatural theological faith, hope, and love from God. A good example of this, as noted above, is in Cain who was more concerned with the consequences of the punishment of his crime than his heinous crime of murder of his own brother out of jealousy.
4. A GOOD-GOOD year. This is what I wish for you. This is the Romans 8:28 year: *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God.* This is the direction of loving God first and foremost, which enables the believer to love life and everything else. What a promise this options offers us: no matter what happens if we love God, He will cause it *all* things to work together for GOOD. This does not mean there will not be hardships; it does mean that even in those hardships, you will receive even greater blessedness and capacity for faith, hope, and love. Regardless of what happens, you will enjoy the supernatural life and a plan that is above all you could ask or imagine. All we need to do is love God and be guaranteed that all things, all details of life, will lead to the good life. What a deal!

Increasing love for God is what Christmas and the coming new year should be all about. To grow in love for God requires understanding many things about Him and the Bible, which is filled with truths about creation, philosophy/reason, and reality as such. To really grasp the Bible requires a mindset of a philosophical Realism, a different way of thinking than the modern mindset. For these truths to a living reality in theological faith, hope, and love requires the God Holy Spirit in the context of Realism. Let's note the theological virtues in Mary, the mother of the humanity of the Lord, in

Luke 1:46-48: And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

To begin with, note how Mary's thoughts of praise of God come first. To give God His due is not, with Mary, an afterthought; it is not about the details of life or her friends, family, or even herself. In Mary's soul, God takes precedence over everything and everyone. Although she

is replying to Elizabeth, she turns her eyes upwards and addresses her words to God. This is what theological faith, hope, and love look like.

Notice the fact that she speaks of her soul and her spirit. She is praising God with all the faculties of her human soul and spiritual being. I can assure you that she did not think that her soul was in the pineal or thalamus glands; she was not Cartesian; she did not believe that the soul had lobes and categories of storage. She intuitively understood biblical-philosophical psychology, which teaches that the soul gives life to the body and the mind and that the spirit is from God who gave it. She was well aware of the fact that the soul in man is analogous to animal life (as per Biblical revelation), but that animal life had nothing that corresponds to the human spirit. Her soul was the seat of her mental, volition, and emotional capacities that permeate her entire being. Her spirit was the seat of capacity to resonate with God and spiritual truths.

It was her love for God that elicited her praise in calling God “My Savior.” “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Mary’s praise is for God. This is transcendental or supernatural praise. It is praise based on supernatural reality of the greatness of God. This is not to be confused with general praise for temporal blessings, e.g., like family, country, good health, success in business, etc. This is supernatural love and adoration for God that is first and foremost spiritual. She is personally thanking God from her soul for salvation from eternal death. She understands that she is a sinner deserving of eternal wrath from God. She lives in the reality of God and His grace salvation that came to her in her “lowly” estate. Here is a young lady who, although lives in financial poverty, is one of the richest women in the world in that she possesses the treasures of theological faith, hope, and love.

Her love for Truth is evidenced by her allusions to over fifteen Old Testament references in her Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). Truth, total truth, whole truth is always the central issue. Do you want the whole truth or just truth to your liking? Is Truth worth all of the effort and adjustments? What is the central problem of the world? Suppression of truth—on the part of unbelievers and believers! Read Romans 1:20-21; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:1-4. What happens when people suppress truth? “They did not honor Him as God or give thanks.” Mary loved Truth and honored God and expressed her thankfulness. The world and all those who suppress truth do not honor God as God nor are they thankful. They ignore Him, abuse Him, and attempt to use Him with little to no eye to His Greatness. All men are accountable to God: the unbeliever at the Great White Throne and the believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ. All will be judged or evaluated based on what they did with Incarnate Truth and all of the Truth that God provides. The issue is not when we come into the world and when we leave. The issue is what we do in between those two events. We live in a world that despises the idea of a God who judges and holds every man accountable.

My prayer for all believers of FBC is that we would never be distracted by the world and contemporary apostate, anti-intellectual Christianity, which seems intent on reducing Christianity to some type of “spiritual” function or pragmatism. To do so is to suppress truth and fail to grow in capacity to honor God as God or live a life of thanksgiving for the privilege of being in His family and growing up into Him. To do so is to be precluded from being in a position in which God grants supernatural faith, hope, and love. To do so is to miss out on so much regarding the true nature of Esse.

We are so blessed at FBC to have so many believers in our church that really do love Truth as such. I look forward to another wonderful year of growing in the Realism of the Bible, creation, God, and the *true* spiritual life. What a blessing to know that we are all recipients of

God's unfailing promise of a DIVINE GOOD-GOOD future, day after day, year after year, as we grow in love for Him, a love that will culminate when we see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

With much love and respect for the FBC family.

*In 'Ehyeh,
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