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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Bible Study-94
Galatians 4:16 – It really is all about Truth.2
(Excursus: God’s timelessness, His will, and our prayers.2)

Galatians 4:16 Have I therefore become your enemy because I communicate to you Truth?
(ὥστε ἐχθρὸς ὑμῶν γέγονα ἀληθεύων ὑμῖν;).

As suggested previously, my strategy in these studies is twofold: (1) bring out implications of the above verse as it pertains to Truth and our relationship as pastor and congregation at FBC and, (2) continue to advance our understanding on God’s timeless will in relation to prayer as per our current FBC studies.

It is apparent in the above verse that the issue for the communicator of God’s Word is Truth, regardless of whether the congregation likes it or not. The pastor-teacher who teaches with the goal of pleasing believers in the congregation (whether by just giving them the truths that he knows they will like, or by making outright false statements that he knows will encourage them) is not serving the Lord (read Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4; Eph. 6:6; 2 Tim. 4:2-8; Isa. 6:9-11).

Sooner or later as the communicator (no matter who is he) teaches the Truth, you will likely hear something that you may not like for one reason or another. If and when this happens, it is extremely important for you to redouble your efforts in seeking truth. Don’t react. Think about it carefully, and if he is wrong, you need to reject the false teaching. But you need to do all that you can to understand if he really is wrong. You also need to ask yourself why it is that you do not like it. Are there ulterior motives in the reaction? Are you really sure that he is wrong? Attempt to remove all motives except for truth as such. One way you can tell if you really know what you are talking about is that you know why you know what you know and why it cannot be otherwise. If you do not know why it cannot be otherwise, then you really do not know what you think you know. In such cases, it is best to “put it on a mental shelf” and prayerfully think about it. God has a way of removing false motives that tend to move our wills into wanting something to be true whether it really is or not.

Pastors need to always be open for questions, not only for the sake of fellow believers, but for the sake of his teaching to the congregation. If he never has to give an account of his teaching, then what is going to keep him from making small but grave errors that end up spoiling other areas of teaching? I know of two influential pastors whose sons questioned them and this caused both pastors to make major changes in the core truths that then influenced other truths they were teaching. In both cases the pastors and the congregations were better because the pastor had to rethink some fundamental truths. Pastors do make mistakes, unfortunately.

Let's now move to our study of the timelessness of God and prayer. I really appreciate the many great questions and comments made by members of FBC in regard to prayer. It shows me you are really thinking about these issues. Let me first attempt to deal with one common question related to

Matthew 6:10 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

The question that arises is 'Why pray for God's will to be done since God is sovereign and His will is always done?' Since God's will is always done and God's will is always the best, then it seems an exercise in futility to pray for God's will to be done. God's will is always done, period! Therefore, the petition as such is futile. Right?

Right and wrong! Right in that God's will is always best. Wrong in that prayers for His will are ineffacious and therefore worthless. Let me try to explain by examining a couple of passages.

First, note James 4:2 " . . . *You do not have because you do not ask.*

It is self-evident that there were certain things that these believers did not have because they did not pray for them. Since God's will is always best and is what actually happens, then we are logically forced to say that it was best that they did not receive certain provisions they needed.

However, the passage suggests that they would have received certain things from God if only they had asked. In other words, if they asked, God would have given them certain provisions, which also would have been good, the best under those circumstances. So God's good and best will includes both not giving to them and giving to them, both are God's best but under different conditions of their prayerfulness or lack thereof (or false motives as per the next verse).

Second, note

1 Samuel 1:2 . . . but Hannah had no children. 5 but the **LORD had closed her womb.** 6 Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. 8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" 9 Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. . . 10 And she, greatly distressed, **prayed to the LORD** and wept bitterly. 11 And she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy maidservant and remember me, and not forget Thy maidservant, but wilt give Thy maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head. . . " 19 And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and **the LORD remembered her.** 20 And it came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the LORD."

Regardless of how you feel about her vow, it is plain to see that (1) God closed her womb, (2) she prayed, and (3) then the Lord opened her womb. It is very possible that had she not prayed the Lord would not have opened her womb. If she just said, 'Oh well, my barrenness is God's perfect will. Therefore I will accept it without praying for Him to open my womb,' she may not have had Samuel.' Without going into all of the details of God's atemporality and how it relates to our temporal captive state, the bottom line is that asking makes a difference. This principle is taught throughout the Word of God. In sum, God invites man to share with Him in His governance of the world.

Just to be clear, this does not mean that we should continue to pray and pray and pray until God changes details in our lives. The proper attitude is always "thy will be done." We are always to accept His will whether we personally like His decision or not. Say, for example, with Hannah, if God did not open her womb after her prayer, the right thing would be for her to trust that it was God's perfect will for her not to have a child. However, in consideration of her active prayer, it was best for God to grant her what He would have already been disposed to give her. This is an important point: prayer does not change the immutability of God. All it does is provide a means for God to do what He was inclined to do anyway—if only the believer would have asked.

God does often "wait" (from our perspective) until we come to Him. He honors our volition. As a matter of fact, it was the asking of the disciples that resulted in the Lord giving them the Model Prayer. It sure appears that Jesus was indeed waiting until He was asked before He taught them how to pray:

Luke 11:1 And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

Luke 11:2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. 3 'Give us each day our daily bread. 4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

Asking makes a difference☺

In 'Ehyeh,

Pastor Don