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Personal Bible Study-95
Galatians 4:16 – It really is all about Truth.3
(Excursus: God’s timelessness, His will, and our prayers.3)

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

I am taking this opportunity to (1) discuss some implications of this verse with regard to me as pastor and you as believers of FBC, and (2) continue to develop the important and very difficult concept of the eternity of God (in conjunction with our current studies at FBC).

It is hard to imagine more horrible state of affairs between a pastor and a congregation than what we find between Paul and the Galatians. Paul was communicating to this congregation the whole truth about grace. Yet, the more he taught them, the more they perceived him as their enemy. Now that is a tough state of affairs—one that rarely ever gets resolved.

Paul was in a pickle. He knew the important of teaching them the whole truth about grace. Yet, the more he taught them, the more they hated him and viewed him as an enemy (because he was not teaching them what they wanted to hear). Their love for truth as such, for whole truth, no longer existed. They had their own ideas about that the Christian life. They were not about to change their minds. What an onerous situation!

I am sure they felt they were being very practical in mixing works with salvation. But then again, all who stray from God’s truth think they are being practical about some other good. There is always some pragmatic “good” in all deviation, some other “good” that is better than the good of whole truth. As I noted in our last Bible class, the world is filled with all kinds of limited goods to distract us from truth, the plan of God, and the ultimate good of God Himself. Consider TV. Consider how much precious time human beings waste in their very short lives sitting in front of TV, being entertained and probably brainwashed. It is not that there is anything wrong with watching TV in and of itself. However, if most of one’s life is spent being entertained and inculcated by what has been accurately called the “boob tube,” it is just a horrible waste of a huge part of life. By the way, the boob refers to the *dumb* person watching the TV, which used to be filled with *tubes*. Since TVs no longer have tubes, I guess we should call those who waste their lives on TV today “boob plasmas.” Somehow that just does not sound right. Anyway, tubes in TVs may no longer exist, but I assure you that boob effect continues in society and in much of Christianity. How many unbelievers waste their lives on TV instead of taking that time to search out God in philosophical realism? But I digress, once again.

When Paul looked at the Galatian congregation he saw believers who were convinced that he was their enemy. The more intensely he taught them the whole truth about grace, the more agitated they became. What do I, as pastor of Faith Bible Church, see when I look at our congregation? I see both good and bad. As far as the good, I see believers who love truth. I see believers who have dedicated their lives to God's truth. I see believers who, out of their love for God, have made a decision (v2) to make the Word of God the issue of their entire lives. I see genuine believers who are not into religious games. I see believers who are very supportive of the pastor-teacher and FBC. I see believers who continue to demonstrate their love for truth no matter how much effort it takes to learn difficult truths about God. I see believers who really do think God is worth the mental effort to understand Him, reality, and man. In sum, I see a very healthy and genuine group of believers who love the Word, each other, and their pastor. We are, indeed, a blessed church.

But what about the bad? The bad that I see in our congregation is all about rotten foundations beneath all of the doctrines that we have learned over the years. These rotten foundations are very subtle, yet pervasively pernicious. They corrupt our view of reality, God, love, human nature, and even ethics. It is like we have these wonderful jewels of doctrine sitting on the top of dung heaps of godless foundations (pragmatism, deism, Cartesianism, anti-intellectualism). So, what am I to do? Ignore the problem and just give points on how to live the Christian life (pragmatism) because I think you are too stupid to understand the basic structure of reality or God or man? Am I supposed to ignore all of the weird current views on the nature of man and just give you more messages for more of your problems in life?

Furthermore, how do you feel about any pastor-teacher who thinks you are too stupid or apathetic to God to understand the nature of God (e.g. Esse, His eternity or simplicity), the nature of man (hylomorphism), or the nature of reality (metaphysical first principles)? How would you feel about being treated in such an anti-intellectual manner in which the pastor knows it all and you just have to trust him? How would you feel about a pastor who thought that God was not worth the mental effort that it takes to really understand Him? How would you feel about a pastor who bought Satan's lie that because we cannot really understand God completely, let's not even try? Unless you are an anti-intellectual, a pragmatist, or a Fideist, I think you would feel insulted by any pastor that treated you like a mushroom, which should be kept in the dark and fed a lot of manure. I will never treat you that way. I will challenge you. The goal is always to move you into fuller truth so you can see you're all-good God and live in worship of Him. That really is what FBC must be all about. To see Him is to see our greatest goodness and be drawn to Him irresistibly. The ultimate problem solving device is none other than God Himself, cf. Hab. 1:1-4; 3:17-19).

Again, so here we are with a wonderful group of believers who love God's word but whose foundations in whole truth have been corrupted by modernism. So what am I to do? Since I can't really spend the whole class dealing with these very broad and difficult foundations, I have elected to spend about 20 minutes in each class working on ripping out false foundations and laying down foundations of realism, which is what the Bible is built on and presupposes. I pray that I never become your enemy as I go about tearing up your false foundation. By the way, I am very well aware of what it is like to be confronted with false foundations. I faced mine after 35

years of serious doctrinal study in the original languages. Let's all work together to get rid of the bad and keep the Good, and thus move into more awe of our Maker.

Yes, it really is all about truth. It is about the congregation wanting more and more truth and the pastor-teacher teaching more and more truth. Truth always brings its own application. Something works because it is true, not the other way around. Be leery of anyone telling you it must be true because it works. For a lot of false things can work, at least for the short term, only to end up in disaster down the road. However, truth always works in the short-term and the long-term and for the eternal-term.

Enough about the pastor and the congregation, let's turn our attention to the eternity of God as per our current studies at FBC. The chief reason this is so difficult is that it is very hard for us to think outside of time. Yet, God is outside of time. Time was created by God. God is atemporal. There are no before or afters with God. He sees all of history all of the time in an eternal now. God is not time-bound. To even get a glimpse of His eternity is to rise up in great awe of our God. Wow! What a God! What must it be like to know everything at once? There are no surprises with God. He knows every one of our moments fully and completely. You see, God does not think like us. He does not think in a series. He does not deliberate through stages. He knows everything all at once. He literally does not plan things out. Here are a few principles on the eternity of God to chew on:

1. Eternity is not everlasting. Everlasting is just more time, endless time. There is no terminus on either end of eternity whereas our everlasting life has a beginning.
2. Eternity is a now whereas time has now and then.
3. God's eternity is not divided; it is all present to Him in His eternal now.
4. Eternity differs from time as time comes only moment by moment.
5. Eternity differs qualitatively, not quantitatively, in kind from time.
6. Everlasting can be computed in before and afters. Eternal is changeless, it has no before and afters.
7. The "now" of time is moveable. The "now" of eternity is not movable in any way. The eternal now is unchanging. The "now" of time is ever-changing.
8. God has no past or future; time does.
9. To put God in time is to make Him temporal.
10. Rejection of God's eternity will result in rejecting, among other things, belief (consciously or unconsciously) in His immutability and perfection. If God could change, He really is not God because God is perfect and if He changed then He would be less or greater than He *was*, which would be an attack on His perfection. God does not become better or worse through time. He is perfect absolutely, always.
11. Just because a believer can rattle off the term "immutability" does not mean he really believes God is immutable. For example, if he also believes that God is in time and changes, then, whether he realizes it or not, his position is irrational, absurd, and thus false. It is absurd to say that God cannot change (immutable) and at the same time say He is in time changing.

12. Rejection of God's eternity by putting Him in time destroys any possibility of understanding His own being, "BE," "Pure Act," "Esse." In other words, if God changed then He would be composed of actual and potential. If He is Pure Act, then He cannot change. Thus, an attack on the eternity of God is an attack on the foundation of Esse Himself.
13. The very name of God, 'Ehyeh, teaches us that God is the Timeless "IS" (Exod. 3:14.)

The Whole Truth matters!

In 'Ehyeh,

Pastor Don