

Personal Bible Study-97
Galatians 4:16 – It really is all about Truth.5
(Excursus: The Need for Philosophical Realism)

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

As previously noted, I have been taking a bit of time applying this passage to our relationship, the relationship between me as pastor-teacher and members of Faith Bible Church. Today I would like to touch upon the need for philosophical realism to properly understand the Bible, God, creation, and human nature.

I have an extensive history in the doctrinal and the ICE (isagogics, categories, and exegesis) movement. I have been studying the original languages for about 35 years. I have had the great privilege of being under some of the greatest teachers of Bible doctrine in the world. I was graduated from Tulsa Seminary of Biblical Languages, where I majored in the biblical languages in the context of ICE method of studying and teaching. I have been truly blessed by the system that emphasizes the teaching of the Word of God in the local church coupled with the importance of fellowship with God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

However, it was not until I learned philosophical realism that I realized that there are many problems in the doctrinal movement with regard to the understanding of man, God, and reality as such. How could this have happened? In sum, it happened because of anti-intellectual trends. Let me explain. Beginning about the 16th and 17th centuries much of Christianity reacted to perceived threats from science and philosophy by retreating into a Bible-only, spiritual-life-only mentality. The result is that churches cut themselves off from science and philosophy (metaphysics, logic, philosophical psychology) in an effort to protect themselves from these perceived threats. This, then, resulted in the local church almost exclusively focusing on the Christian spiritual life. All one has to do is note that the various marquee messages on churches today to see the emphasis, not on understanding God, reality, man, or creation; rather it is primarily on fulfilling the emotional and spiritual needs of man. The result of all of this is that Christianity is no longer about the whole truth. Rather, it is about fulfilling subjective needs. As a matter of fact, it has gotten so bad that Christians are not interested in churches that teach total truth: They are only interested in getting their emotional and spiritual needs fulfilled. This is devastating—and blasphemous! Devastating because such a focus cultivates an anti-intellectual, sensate, superstitious, and victimized mentality among God's people. What's worse is that the very foundations of truth regarding the nature of God and reality are undermined—most believers today, no matter how much doctrine they have, have a very distorted view of man, God, and creation.

Again, how did Christianity get so fouled up? How in the world could believers who love the Word of God become so paganistic in their views of fundamental reality? To be sure, no one could question the motives of the great doctrinal teachers who demonstrate enormous respect and

commitment to the Word of God. The fundamental error is in departure from foundational truths of philosophical realism. When was the last time you have heard of metaphysics taught in any modern church—yet it is the foundation of everything from *Esse*, and *esses*, to the nature of the spiritual life (cf., intellective vs. sense appetites). The rejection of philosophical realism as the foundation of Reality created a vacuum, which sucked in the all kinds of false philosophies (e.g., Cartesianism, Deism, Nominalism, Idealism, Mysticism, Naturalism, Pragmatism). These false philosophies influence fundamental understanding of the nature of man, God, creation, and the spiritual life. Man is a metaphysical and philosophical being. When modern man rejected philosophical realism, he rejected truth about fundamental reality along with its orthodox philosophical tradition in church history, and unwittingly embraced modern philosophical notions for his foundation of biblical truths. The motive of wanting to keep the Bible and doctrinal studies pure is laudable. However, motives as such do not guarantee truth. By rejecting philosophical and metaphysical realism, believers have unwittingly embraced ungodly and paganistic philosophical principles that they receive daily (from birth) from their culture. Satan is indeed a genius!

In the above passage, Galatians 4:16, Paul addresses the attitude of the Galatians toward him because he taught them the truth. I so appreciate believers of FBC who continue to demonstrate their love for truth. I never know who really is interested in the whole truth, especially when believers are challenged by new ideas that are not in accord with what they had been taught. I am so pleased that so many have continued to press on as we advance our understanding in philosophical foundations. Foundations are essential! By now you should have already seen a plethora of applications from this new way of viewing reality, the biblical way!

In our next Bible class, we will continue to develop the nature of the human will and volition from the perspective of philosophical realism. This goes far beyond linguistic analysis. Philosophical realism is always concerned with whole truth and its most profound implications. It is never satisfied with an understanding that is primarily *reduced* to +v and -v.

On the subject of human nature, consider the explanatory power of philosophical realism over a Cartesian dualistic view of man. The Cartesian view is that man is a soul with a body attached. In other words, the body is just a way to get around. With this *foundation*, it is very easy to view the soul as a pure entity that is corrupted by a body that has a sin nature, which fights against the Casper-like soul. In other words, the soul has pure motives for good, but the body is filled with evil “cootie-like” entities that fight against the soul’s attempt to do good.

However, philosophical realism teaches that man is a hylemorphic being, with the two co-principles of soul and body. The rational soul is the immaterial life principle of the body. We know from natural knowledge that it will continue to exist after the death of the body due to its immaterial/spiritual operations in the intellect and will. Moreover, the spiritual struggle is between the immaterial intellectual appetites and physical sense appetites. Before Adam fell, he lived in special grace which allowed his intellect to rule over his sense appetites; his intellect's orientation to God as Infinite Good was greater than his sense orientation to the limited good of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. However, when he and Eve fell, it was because they chose the sensed limited goods over the Infinite Good of God. The result for their progeny is that human nature lost that grace and therefore is oriented to limited goods instead of God. Through regeneration the believer receives capacity in the intellect to see God as ultimate Good and be drawn to Him. The struggle thereafter is always between the intellect's apprehension of the unlimited good of God and sensed limited goods. We also see this with Jesus Christ in the desert, especially with the temptation of turning stones to bread. The temptation of 40 days without food is unquestionably a test regarding the limited sensed good of turning stones to bread versus the unlimited goodness of God and His plan. Furthermore, consider all of those passages that warn about the danger of sensed goods of this world in destroying capacity of the intellect to see God and His plan as the unlimited good:

Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Matthew 6:24 "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.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh [with its sensed goods] sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please [intellective good of God].

Romans 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh [sensed goods], but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit [intellective spiritual goods].

Matthew 4:3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread [sensed good]." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God [intellective/spiritual good]."

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money [sensed goods] is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith [intellective/spiritual good], and pierced themselves with many a pang. 11 But flee from these things [life orientation to sensed goods], you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness [intellective/spiritual goods].

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 [sensed goods], but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [intellective/spiritual goods, which enables believers to enjoy sensed goods because they are all viewed under the umbrella of intellective good of God].

So, the issue is not a soul wishing Good and some evil force in our bodies (old sin nature) fighting against us. Instead, we are always seeking good. When we sin, it is because we think that sin is a good in some way, usually short-term. This is self-evident and undeniable—and also fits the biblical testimony because objective truth in the Bible is founded on the same objective reality of today.

Human beings are rational animals. In our sense appetites we are very much like animals; we even share similar physical organs with them. What are the chief sense appetites that God puts in animals? Survival, nourishment (hunger and thirst), and reproduction (more vulgarly known as the three fs: fight, food, and ____). Likewise, these three dominant desires exist in man: survival (protection, safety), food, and sex. However, we are not only animal-like, we are also Godlike in that we have intellect and will, which are spiritual/immaterial and are designed to inform and rule over the sense appetites. When man is controlled by safety, food, and sex, he increasingly becomes more sensate and is more like an animal. But when man cultivates his intellect with God, he is more godlike and develops spiritual virtue that enables him to educate and govern his sense appetites, and even glorify God in his sense appetites, *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Cor. 10:31).

In our next Bible class, I will be using philosophical realism to help us understand God in a much richer way in relation to gender. In our last Bible class we touched on Christ directing us to call the first member of the Trinity “Father.” However, this does not mean that God is male in gender. He is far beyond gender. He is Esse, IS, AM. I will explain the whole issue of God and gender in the next Bible class. Furthermore, believers often say that “God is a person.” This is false. He is not *a* Person. He is a substance of **Three** Persons. Eventually, we will also need to look at the issue of “male” human soul vs. “female” human soul, ideas that come, once again, from a Cartesian foundation—certainly not from hylemorphism.

New discoveries always bring new questions with yet more new fascinating truths as we delve deeper into Reality and capacity to worship our all-good, comprehensible, yet incomprehensible God. The only way to truly love God is to see Him as our ultimate good. We will always seek what is good. All lack of seeing God as our greatest good can be traced to inaccurate views of God as our Highest Good. Let’s advance beyond linguistic and nominalistic

or pragmatic analysis of God and reality, and with a love for wisdom (=philosophy) develop our God-given intellectual capacities for His glory. Since we are always seeking and choosing what we think is good, let us do the *intelligent* thing and make sure that it is God, the only unlimited good—the only good that will ever satisfy our otherwise insatiable wills that demand unlimited good for satisfaction. Of course, all of this requires Pure Act of God Himself to activate our potential, which like all potentials requires an Actual, God Himself, *Esse!*

In 'Ehyeh,

Pastor Don