

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”

December 10, 2016

Jeremiah 18:1-18. God is the Potter and Judah is the pot.

Romans 2:12-29. How are the privileged people of God reflecting the nature of their God?

Proverbs 16:12-33. Living out the righteousness of God by respecting government (Rom 13)

COMMENTS.

Jeremiah 18:1-18. The Lord sent Jeremiah to a potter’s house, where he illustrated His sovereign control over Judah. As Jeremiah watched the potter shaping a pot, the clay was marred. The potter reshaped the marred clay into a different style pot. The Lord explained that His people were like clay in His hands which He is free to reshape in accordance with His desires. When He threatens to destroy a sinful nation, He remains willing to reshape that nation’s destiny if they are repentant. When He plans to bless a nation, He will alter His purpose if they are disobedient. Though He had once blessed His people, He was now planning disaster against them because of their idolatry and disobedience. Repentance would reshape their destiny, but they refused God’s offer.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. In this reading, we see emphasis on both the sovereignty of God as well as the free choice ability of man. As the Potter has power over the clay, so God has sovereign authority over all. This doesn’t mean that God is irresponsible and arbitrary in what He does, even though He is free to act as He pleases. His actions are always consistent with His nature, which is holy, just, wise, and loving. The Lord presented two scenarios that illustrated His sovereign power over nations (**18:7–10**). If He threatened to judge a nation and that nation repented, then He would relent and not send the judgment. He did this with Nineveh when Jonah’s preaching brought the city to repentance (Jonah 3). On the other hand, if He promised to bless a nation, as He did Israel in His covenants, and that nation did evil in His sight, then He could withhold the blessing and send judgment instead. God neither changes in character nor needs to repent of His actions (Mal. 3:6; Num. 23:19), but He has the sovereign freedom to alter His actions depending on the responses of the people. In rejecting their God and choosing dumb idols, the people of Judah were acting contrary to their own nature and everything reasonable. God made them for Himself. All men by nature are designed to love the Good. God is the greatest Good. God is the good behind all that exists. In other words, it is in our deepest nature to be drawn to the good. And God simply is the ultimate good. He is the good behind all things as Jeremiah illustrates by noting the nature of birds, which obey what God tells them to do and water which is consistent with its nature: On the heights, it becomes snow; at lower levels, it flows in the streams. God’s people, however, were totally inconsistent, willing to *use* God’s blessings but not willing to obey the laws of God that governed those blessings. If nature acted like that, where would we be? We are created to walk in God by *proper knowledge and proper love*. Moreover, we are already walking according to what we perceive as proper knowledge and proper love on the first-order level. In one way or another, we are all passing through the eye of a needle and unloading things that we do not think are real or very valuable.

Romans 2:12-29. After Paul deals with God's judgment on Gentile moralists (1:16-16), he shows that the Jews had no better standing even though they had received God's special revelation through the law of Moses. Though they knew the will of God expressed in the Law, they had not kept the law. One's heritage does not make one a true Jew with right standing before God.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. The Jews were a privileged people of God who were invited, even wooed, into a relationship with Him *by proper knowledge and proper love*. They had His Word and a multitude of articles in the tabernacle that taught them the things of God. However, instead of using these advantages to enhance their knowledge and love of God, their relationship, they corrupted these privileges into a religion of outward action. Instead of glorifying God among the Gentiles, the Jews were dishonoring God as Paul points out by quoting Isaiah 52:5. The Gentiles could see the Jewish hypocrisy and concluded that the god the Jews worshipped must not be very good. You and I have the highest privilege in the universe to represent the Son of God. The closest embodiment of the love of Christ that any unbeliever will ever witness or experience is through Christians in whom Christ has been "formed" in them. For a believer to be an imitator (μιμητής) of Christ is not an outward act. Rather, it is an outward expression of the inner form (μορφή) of Christ that God "presses" in the believer's inner nature (Gal 4:19). Divine love is the most dominant characteristic of the form of Christ. Only by being grounded and rooted in the love of Christ, can one advance in the various dimensions of Christ's love (Eph. 3:17-19). One cannot give what one does not have. Before one can share the love of Christ with others, he must first have it, grasp it for himself. This divine love is provided by grace as a person walks in God by *proper knowledge and proper love*, which is why Paul prays for it in the previous passage and repeatedly directs believers to actualize true knowledge and love of God as the top priority of life—how apropos!

Proverbs 16:12-33. This reading focuses on integrity in and respect for government. Note the repetition of “king” in every verse except 11, which nevertheless plainly deals with justice in government. The royal government is described in highly favorable terms here; indeed, the king appears to be a flawless minister of justice in **10** and **12**. These pronouncements, however, should be understood as ideal rather than actual. They represent what a king should be. Devotion to justice and truth are preconditions for good government

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. The New Testament likewise speaks of being respectful to government. As a matter of fact, the book of Romans is about living out the righteousness of God by faith and this includes life with God, love of fellow Christians and respect for government (Romans 13). Note the life of *proper knowledge and proper love* that is emphasized in the context of living out righteousness in government: Romans 13:6 *For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. 8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* What would you think of someone who marked out all these true-good-beautiful references to love? Is there a practical difference between marking them out with a marker and ignoring or redefining them? What possible motive would any Christian have to use modern concepts of love (from purely emotional to purely cognitive) to imperialize over biblical concepts of love (right thinking and right desires, desire for the good of the object and proper union with the object of love)?

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and by proper love,

Pastor Don