

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

December 13, 2016

Jeremiah 25:1–26:24. Divine judgment on the people of God.

Romans 4:1–24. Declared righteous by faith alone in Christ alone.

Proverbs 19:1–29. Our plans, God’s plans, and God’s incredible journey for willing vessels.

COMMENTS.

Jeremiah 25:1–26:24. Chapter 25 is all about divine judgment. Through faithful prophets like Jeremiah, the Lord had repeatedly called the nation to repentance. They had rejected the offer and persisted in idolatry. The day of reckoning had come. Nebuchadnezzar’s armies would sweep down from the north and overrun Judah and the neighboring states. These nations would serve Babylon for seventy years, after which time the Lord would overthrow their oppressor. This prophecy of Babylon’s doom was fulfilled in 538 when the Persians defeated the Chaldean empire and conquered Babylon. The coming judgment of the nations is likened to an intoxicating cup passed from mouth to mouth. Judah would take the first swig, followed by several other nations (25:19–26). In **chapter 26** Jeremiah’s life is threatened after he delivered a message to worshippers at the Temple that disaster was impending. Those who heard his message, including the priests and false prophets, grabbed Jeremiah and threatened to kill him. When royal officials intervened, the priests and prophets accused him of treason. Jeremiah declared that the Lord had sent him, and again he issued a call to repentance and protested his innocence.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. False prophets always preach what the people want to hear. However, Jeremiah preached what the people needed to hear. All whole truth, total truth teachers can expect to face a backlash from God’s people who demand that the message be according to their liking. For example, if someone is not interested in truth as such and only wants a relationship with God *for the primary goal* of helping them deal with life and work, they will never stay with the Lord for the Lord’s sake. They will like it when the message helps them in their earthly goals but hate it if does not because earthly goals are their greatest good, their god. Jeremiah had a much more difficult ministry that I will ever have to experience. He was not only accused of being unpatriotic to God’s people; he was accused of being blasphemous for declaring God would destroy His holy city and Temple. He was also treated as a false prophet. It would be like me being accused of being unamerican or unpatriotic for pointing out problems with American lack of integrity, or being charged with blasphemy by teaching that God judges lukewarm churches, or a teacher of false doctrine because I do not deliver sermons with spiritual/political correctness. Moreover, I doubt that believers who reject my messages would ever try to murder me as they did Jeremiah. Jeremiah loved the Lord and His people. He agonized over their idolatry. It is important to understand that tolerance often means ‘I have stopped caring for you or truth.’ Love is active; it means I will tell you the truth even if you won’t like me for it. This is the kind of love we find in God and in the God-man and in all faithful prophets and apostles of the Word of God. One thing that you will never find among any believer who walks with God *by knowledge and by love*: apathy toward truth as such—because it is the truth that brings Him closer to the Lord of Truth. And anything that is not true is

impossible with a thriving life with Him, even if it might make us feel better temporarily (like conduit Christianity).

Romans 4:1–24. The plan of God has always centered around faith. The apostle had shown that God declares Jews and Gentiles righteous by their faith in Jesus. How was this different from God’s dealings with His people in former times? Paul demonstrated the unity and continuity of God’s plan by illustrations from Abraham and David. Paul showed that God declared Abraham righteous by faith, not by works or ritual or the law (**4:1–17**). Neither Abraham nor any other person had anything to boast about before God because of what he had done but by his faith in God’s promise (**4:18–25**).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. The foundation of life with God *by proper knowledge and proper love* is faith-knowledge. I add “-knowledge” to “faith” because of modern views of faith as simply about trusting without cognition or according to one’s desires. Faith-knowledge is the term I use to describe the faith in the Bible. Faith by nature is always mediated. No one can prove faith. In other words, faith is never direct, unmediated knowledge of the object. One must always take someone else’s word on some fact or testimony. In the Bible, the faith is mediated by God Himself. We trust what God says. We take His Word on it. However, God Himself provides the grace (efficient causation) to lift up our minds and wills so we (formal cause) can believe. There are over sixty references to faith or unbelief in Romans. God’s saving power is experienced by those who believe in Christ (Rom. 1:16). His righteousness is given to those who believe (Rom. 3:22). We are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). The object of our faith is Jesus Christ who died for us and rose again. As noted in a previous study, Christ is not the object just at the “point” of salvation. He is the daily object of faith in our spiritual walk with God *by proper knowledge and proper love*. For example, we continue to live in the faith-knowledge of His love for us daily (Gal. 2:20), and by doing so, we obtain a new sense of self-esteem as we see ourselves wrapped in His righteousness. This is all of grace. In and of ourselves we really are inapt in every way before Almighty God.

Proverbs 19:1–29. As Proverbs continues with wisdom sayings about family and social life, it notes that many who call themselves friends are merely attracted by money and power (**4, 6**). However, they show their real character in dealing with those who have neither (**7**). It also points out that bad relatives can ruin life (**13**), and that a good wife is a gift from God (**14**). In short, happiness is often impossible without domestic tranquility, and a good wife is an anchor of tranquility. It adds that a contentious wife is like an incessant leak. The imagery is of a leaking roof (not faucet), which brings far more damage than a minor irritation. A leaking roof can lead to great destruction of a home.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. In verse **21** we are told that “*There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD'S counsel-- that will stand.*” The previous verse emphasizes the need to learn so one can be wise in one’s latter days. So, the issue is humility or the willingness to change. For many, the older they get, the more they become set in their ways and thus less they will change. While this may be appropriate for certain temporal issues like when one gets up, gets ready for

the day, or drinks his coffee in the morning, it is an awful mindset when it comes to life in the Lord. God's has an amazing adventure of growing in Him *by proper knowledge and by proper love*—which the Bible says is beyond what we could ask or imagine, 1 Cor. 2:9. One misses out on so much if he does not constantly grow in knowledge and love of the Lord. As I reflect on my life, it has been an amazing journey for me. I was reared in abject poverty and rejected by my parents and lived on the streets for much of my young life. Then, at 26, I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, which totally changed my orientation. Shortly after that I attended seminary to earn a Master of Biblical Languages to master biblical Hebrew and Greek for personal Bible study (with no idea or plan to be a pastor). Following this, I have pastored a small church with amazing believers for more than 20 years, earned a Master of Apologetics and now working on a Ph.D. with concentration of philosophical realism for understanding God, the Bible, and ultimate reality. All of this is beyond what I have ever asked or imagined as a young, poor man with *'many other plans.'* But God's counsel stands. He had this in mind for me in eternity past and brought it all about by His matchless grace. For many years, I have had and taught false views of God and the spiritual life (conduit spirituality). It is only within the last couple of years that I have come to understand that it really is all about life in God by *proper knowledge and proper life* in concurrence (not by conduit). By moving into realism, I have learned more about God, man, sin, science, reality as such, love, second-person relationship with Jesus Christ, God as the greatest good, et al., than I have in the previous 20 years of nominal, conduit, and Cratylean thinking. While I do take seriously my responsibility to feed both the mind and the will of every believer in my small congregation, my drive is also very much related to my own "selfishness" in wanting to know and love the Lord more accurately and coming to appreciate Him as my greatest good. The fact that I have the gift of pastor-teacher and can show others the "most excellent way" (1 Cor 12:31-13:13) is just icing on the cake. In closing, we all have *'many plans in our hearts,'* but the Lord is sovereign and will work out His plan in our lives for honor or for dishonor, depending upon which way we turn the steering wheel/will (formal cause) of our lives. Every believer has the option to be a vessel of honor or a chamber pot. 2 Timothy 2:20, *But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.* God's Word, His plan, His counsel will stand. The only question is how will it be confirmed in our lives? How will we be remembered by the Lord? A Paul or a Demas? A believer who lived with God *by proper knowledge and proper love* or a believer who lived his temporal life in lukewarmness. As Paul puts it, love for God and all others is the most excellent way (1 Cor 12:31ff). This is God's unchangeable plan. A plan for life that is lived out in His love—a love that is entirely unfigurative on a natural level; this plan never enters the heart lest it comes from God Himself. The only ability that God looks for is availability, all the rest is grace upon grace. The issue is always God's plans, not ours. God really does know best. We really do not.

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

Pastor Don