

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

December 22, 2016

Jeremiah 42:1–43:13. Surreptitious rejection of God’s will.

Romans 9:30–10:21. Demanding Law vs Bestowing Grace and the affective connection.

Proverbs 24:23–34. The curse of laziness and the blessedness of grace in the eternal perspective

COMMENTS.

Jeremiah 42:1–43:13. In **chapter 42** Jeremiah warns the survivors about Egypt. The survivors from the destruction of Jerusalem has gathered near Bethlehem. Their leader, Johanan, intends to take refuge from the Babylonians in Egypt. But first they ask Jeremiah for a word from God (**42:1–3**). They promise to do whatever God says (**42:4–6**). After ten days, Jeremiah answers their enquiry. God says that they should stay in their own land, where He would keep them safe and restore them. There is nothing to be afraid of from the Babylonians (**42:7–12**). But if the survivors are determined to go to Egypt, then the very things they dread—starvation, disease and violent death—will follow them there (**42:13–22**). As always, God wants his people to trust Him, to live in faith-knowledge, rather than using force, deceit or political alliances—a lesson we Americans would do well to learn. However, the survivors reject Jeremiah’s advice (**42:1-2**). Moreover, they accuse Jeremiah’s secretary, Baruch, of trying to hand them over to the Babylonians (**43:3**). In rebellion against the Word of God, they make their way south to Egypt (**43:2, 4, 7**). Jeremiah and Baruch go with them—they are either forced to go or are simply willing to join in the suffering of the people of God. The group of survivors arrives at Tahpanhes in Egypt, on the eastern boundary of the Nile Delta. God tells Jeremiah to bury some large stones at the entrance to the Pharaoh’s palace. Jeremiah predicts that Nebuchadnezzar will conquer Egypt and build his palace on this very spot (**43:8–10**). The king of Babylon will also destroy the temples of the Egyptian gods (**43:12–13**).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Note the faux request of the Jews in **42:1-6**. Their request to Jeremiah, no doubt, sounded very sincere and spiritual, but at heart they were obstinate and self-willed believers against God and His will. They had their minds already made up to go to Egypt, and they were hoping Jeremiah would agree with them. It is not uncommon for God’s people take this phony “godly” approach in discerning the will of God. Instead of honestly seeking God *by proper knowledge and proper love*, and thus really seeking His will as such, they go from preacher to preacher or from believer to believer, asking for advice and hoping they’ll find somebody who will agree with their hidden agenda, which is the true and highest object of their love. Per contra, believers who truly and sincerely seek God’s will are lovers of His Word because it is the expression of God’s will (John 14:15, 21), and they live to please Him instead of self. In fact, the ambition of all lovers of God is to please God in all things (2 Cor. 5:9)—they would not countenance any plan or agenda that would be displeasing to God in any way. God only knows how many Christians go around asking “what is God’s will concerning x, y, and z” while at the same time turning up their noses at God’s expressed will for the essence of their whole lives: 1 Thessalonians 4:3 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.* 1 Thessalonians 5:18 *in everything give thanks; for this is the*

will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Without submitting completely to God's will, no believer really connects with God in a way that invites the full light of God's grace and love to flood his soul, bearing the fruit of a truly abundant life—a life that lives in ardor love of God, that affectionate connection with God that goes far beyond analogical knowledge (Romans 1:20) and conceptual knowledge (the Word of God), though never running contrary to proper knowledge of God gained through analogies and language (biblical or otherwise). In sum, a living, loving, experiential relationship with a present God exceeds any propositional knowledge of God gained through analogy and mere words. It is one thing to conceptually know that God is present and loving. It is quite another to connect with the present, loving God affectively—experientially.

Romans 9:30–10:21. This reading moves into the application God's sovereign choice. In **9:30-10:21** we see how Israel stumbled over Jesus Christ due to a zeal that was not based on proper knowledge (**10:2**), which only led them to attempt to establish their own righteousness (**10:3**). This is followed by God's gracious offer of salvation in Christ and the provision of righteousness by faith (**10:5-15**). However, Israel rejected God's grace offer in Christ (**10:16-21**).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. In this section, Paul draws a contrast between the grace of Christ and the law of Moses. At core, Law and grace are antithetical (John 1:14). The Law commands and demands: 'do this or else.' Grace is loving giving: 'partake of eternal life, the very life and love of God Himself.' Law demands, grace bestows. Law comes in demanding, and man's consciences respond with obligation. Grace comes in and says "Let me help by giving you new life, new desires . . . let me restore your sight, raising up your intellect and will to new suprarational levels . . . let me forgive you . . . let me bring you into the very depths of God's own life." Law is God requiring; grace is God bestowing. Law stands over the evil man and says "don't be evil" but offers no help. Grace is a love that bends down to the evildoer, and instills in him suprahuman desires for the Ultimate good of God Himself. Law attempts to establish a relationship with God by human righteousness, to earn blessings by performance—like even reading the Bible, learning doctrinal concepts, or prayer. Grace is a whole new life, an abundant life that wells up from within. The object of law is to regulate human conduct. The object or focus of grace is to see God Himself in all of His beauty—the true, good, and beautiful. It is not difficult to see who utterly impossible it is to ask man to *walk with God by proper knowledge and proper love* by loading him up under the burden and weights of the mandates of the Law. It is not difficult to see how utterly easy (Matt. 11:29-30) and natural it is to *walk with God with proper knowledge and proper love* in grace as one experiences the flood of light and love of God. We begin our journey with a faith (conceptual knowledge) that is to reach affective, personal knowledge of God as we move beyond the inadequate words that attempt to describe God to the very being of God Himself. Let us not forget that words are only formal signs, it is the Reality that the words point to that is the Reality, and we get to that Reality only by His grace and only by love—that affective connection with

God that all language and ideas point to. As Psalm 34:8 puts it, *O taste and see that the LORD is good*. Obviously, to “taste” is to exceed the conceptual realm all the while never leaving its foundation.

Proverbs 24:23–34. This reading consists of a further collection of sayings of the wise regarding law courts (23-29), and laziness (30-34).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. A common response among Christians, who lack proper knowledge and love of the Lord, to the biblical mandate that the Christian is to live his whole life in anxious anticipation of the Lord’s return (“faith/hope/love”) and the coming the Kingdom is that such a life would “logically” lead to laziness about the temporal details of this life. The hackneyed response, “he is so heavenly minded that he is no earthly good,” carries the sentiment well. While it is true that some Christians have become lazy and busybodies under the *guise* of living for the coming kingdom (2 Thess. 3:10-11), the Bible is adamant about the evil of being lazy about earthly, temporal issues. The command given over and again to the church was, “If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10) The necessity of working formed part of the ethical tradition of the church (Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:11–12), finding its roots in the Old Testament (see Gen. 3:17–19; Ps. 128:2; Prov. 10:4; 24:30–34). However, a hard work ethic that is not lived out in the light of the coming kingdom will lead to a host of ailments from being stressed out to having little to no time for family, loved ones, friends, or the local church. Instead of being so heavenly minded that one is no earthly good, today many are so earthly minded they are no heavenly good. What is true is that living in the light of the Lord and the kingdom always opens up the soul to God’s grace that provides suprahuman energy and abundance in *all* that one does. The abundant life that Christ promises really is abundant—a life that overflows (ζῶην ἔχουσιν, καὶ περισσὸν ἔχουσιν). The believer *who lives with God by proper knowledge and proper love* lives in the sunshine of His grace and power and enjoys an abundant life in the sphere of both the temporal and eternal. One of the best examples of the proper Christian attitude toward hard work in light of living for the Lord and His Kingdom is the Apostle Paul, who was anything but lazy and who always preferred to be with the Lord than here on this earth: Philippians 1:23, *For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.* 2 Thessalonians 3:7 *For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.* Eternal life begins *here and now*. It begins below and should grow unceasingly till we are absent from this body and face-to-face with the Lord when we shall see Him as He is.

*Life in God by second person proper knowledge and by proper love,
Pastor Don*