

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

December 28, 2016

Jeremiah 52:1–34. Description of the fall of Jerusalem.

Romans 14:13–15:7. By knowledge and by love: Christians should accept one another.

Proverbs 29:1–27. It is the will, not the mind, that loves righteousness or unrighteousness.

COMMENTS.

Jeremiah 52:1–34. The book of Jeremiah ends with a detailed account of Jerusalem’s fall (52:1–27). The numbers of people taken into exile are recorded (52:28–30), with the years counted in Babylonian time. The seventh year is 598–597 BC, the eighteenth year is 587–586 BC, and the twenty-third year is 582–581 BC. A king, Jehoiachin, survives in Babylon (52:31–34). Nebuchadnezzar is succeeded as king of Babylon by King Evil-Merodach. The new king treats Jehoiachin kindly, releases him from prison and invites him to dine at his table (52:31–32). After the terrors and traumas of conquest and deportation, there is a glimpse of a new start, a new relationship and a definite future for the royal line of King David (52:34).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Jeremiah is a difficult book for anyone to get his head around. It demands a great deal from the reader with regard to history and cultures of the nations around Israel. However, in closing our study of Jeremiah, there are at least four things that are very helpful for one’s walk with the Lord *by proper knowledge and proper love*. *First*, it is imperative that we listen to and submit to the Word of God. We can see the consequences on the people of God as they rejected the Word of God that was faithfully proclaimed by faithful Jeremiah. *Second*, true teachers of the Word of God are always misunderstood and persecuted as their message always stands in radical contrast to the ways of the world. The people of God often wanted a sweet and encouraging message and so garnered false prophets all the while rejecting Jeremiah’s tough message of Total Truth, Whole Truth. *Third*, a true doctrinal believer is not blind to the sins of his nation. Jeremiah loved his country enough to point out its flaws. He was even willing to be viewed as a traitor rather than compromise the Word of God. *Fourth*, God is sovereignly in control of all nations and what He looks for more than anything else is righteousness. It is righteousness that exalts a nation (Prov. 14:34; Micah 6:8). The same Lord who enabled Jeremiah can enable us. The same world that opposes Jeremiah will oppose us. God has given us a plentitude of truths in Jeremiah for our own nation. Our accountability extends beyond political slogans or putting “In God We Trust” on our money. To walk with God *by proper knowledge and proper love* means to take our cue from God and not from news networks or street myths regarding God or government. To walk with God means to walk with His higher lights on all issues of life be they personal or national.

Romans 14:13–15:7. Harmonious relationships among fellow believers are important. Believers should live without judging others and without influencing others to violate their consciences (14:13–23). Not only should the mature not hinder the weak with their freedom, but the weak must avoid restricting those who have discovered Christian freedom. Mutual love and respect are the marks of true disciples of Christ. In Rome, Christians of Jewish and Gentile backgrounds are going into one another's houses and sharing the same meals—for the first time in their lives. Paul knows that some Christian Jews will still want to keep their food laws and observe their holy days. He describes their faith as 'weak.' They don't realize Jesus has done everything for their salvation. They feel they still have to add some details themselves. Gentile Christians, on the other hand, may know they can eat anything and regard every day as holy. If so, their faith is 'strong'—but they must not be proud. Paul tells Christians of different backgrounds to respect one another's consciences. Everyone should take their lead from the Lord. Those who hold to a strict diet, avoid certain foods or refuse meat that has been killed in pagan temples do this to honor the Lord. Others thank God for everything and eat with grateful hearts. They, too, honor the Lord in their way. Each group should accept the other, as Christ has accepted both.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Paul knows all about food laws. He used to be a Pharisee. Now he can eat anything! But he is careful not to offend anyone with his new-found freedom. If someone will be misled or upset by what Paul eats, then Paul won't eat it. Paul gives Jesus as the perfect example. No one was more free to please himself than Jesus, and yet He always put Himself out for the needs of others. This is the way that leads to unity and so gives glory to God. As one walks with the Lord *by proper knowledge and proper love*, he lives in and thus shares in God's love for fellow believers and thus thinks of the fellow believer's spiritual goodness rather than his own "grace rights." What is your attitude toward fellow believers regarding unessential matters? Do you tend to run your views down their throat no matter what to show them how right you are? Or do you think more lovingly of them as fellow believers in the Lord? Are you only too ready to correct others or do you actually think about them as fellow human beings who belong to the Lord? Being right is not enough. Knowledge is never enough. 1 Corinthians 8:1, *We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.* Due to the problem of polarization, some Christians think that it is all about love and that knowledge always leads to arrogance (they even use this passage), whereas other Christians think it is all about knowledge and tend to minimize true love. Total Truth, however, is obtained by *walking with God by proper knowledge and proper love*. In Total Truth, both knowledge and love are interlocked synergistically rather than approached as contradictory or aporetically, which means that the believer is able to avoid vices of "Christian ignorance" and "Christian Stoicism" (inefficacious love due to rejection of affections and emotions). 1 John 3:17, *But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts down his emotions* (σπλάγγνα αὐτοῦ) *from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*

Proverbs 29:1–27. This reading provides a medley of proverbs concerning the government (1-2, 4, 12-14), human traps (5-6), the poor (7), order in society (8-11), discipline (15-18), self-control (19-23), and the importance of trusting the Lord and orientation to righteousness (24-27).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. This chapter ends with what is known as a moral merismus bicolon, which serves an apt summation of this Hezekian text (cf., 25:1): “*The righteous detest the dishonest; the wicked detest the upright.*” Righteousness and immorality are mutually exclusive as is love for the Lord or love for Mammon (Matt. 6:24). One must follow one path or the other. We are either increasing in righteousness as we walk in the Lord *by proper knowledge and love* or we are increasing in the worst kind of unrighteousness for the Christian: departure from the Lord. God provides the choice for our wills, and it is the will that sets everything else in life. Jeremiah 6:16 *Thus says the LORD: "Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'* It is the will that loves the Lord or the world **with** the mind, soul, and heart. The mind, soul, and heart are not the subject that reaches out to the object of love. The will is the subject, which performs its activities with the powers of the mind, soul, and heart—*with* the mind, *with* the soul, *with* the heart. In sum, love is not an act of the mind. It is an act of the will, which then uses the mind. Our will is our appetite, which then looks for reasons in the intellect for what it truly desires. This fact should make us all be very careful how we develop our wills/appetites—what we feed our wills!

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

Pastor Don