

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

December 31, 2016

Lamentations 4:1–5:22. More lamentations of God’s people under siege.

Romans 16:1–27. Paul’s closing divine sentiments.

Proverbs 31:20–31. The inner transcendent beauty and praiseworthiness of a virtuous woman.

COMMENTS.

Lamentations 4:1–5:22. Chapter 4 is a powerful depiction of the miseries of God’s people with emphasis on the sufferings of the various classes of leaders like the princes, prophets, and priests. The chapter states explicitly that the sufferings were the result of the nation’s sinfulness. Observe the total breakdown of the family in the abuse of children in **verses 3-4** (one of the reasons the nation is being judged is because hungry children are neglected). **Chapter 5** contains a prayer for mercy and deliverance. An appeal is made to God to take note of the humiliation and suffering that had come upon the covenant people. Their inheritance, the promised land, had been overrun by aliens and foreign troops. The people felt they were all alone, as defenseless as orphans and widows. There is an implied appeal for God to act on behalf of His people because of His well-known concern for widows and orphans. Yet, one of the reasons they were being judged by God was their own neglect of their own children and the vulnerable. Life for the conquered people was extremely harsh. In sum, God’s people were as poverty-stricken and helpless as orphans and widows that they had exploited and neglected. Their sin, evil, arrogance, and mammonism had now bore the fruit of misery as their arrogant joy was now turn to sorrow. However, in a final burst of love, Jeremiah turned to praise God as the eternal King, asked how long they had to suffer, and prayed that God might restore and renew His relationship with His people.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Lamentations shows the honest face of prayer in the midst of tragedy. It shows that the road to hope is paved with honesty before God, and honesty that includes questioning that is always mixed with praise. The honesty points to a desire for *proper knowledge*. The praise speaks of *proper love*. Knowledge alone does not produce love. It is possible for a believer to be a perfect theologian and not possess a personal love for God. It is possible to be absolutely flawless in one’s intake of Bible doctrine and in accuracy regarding its content and yet have little to no affection for God. A person can be a consummate theologian and yet not possess love for God. As noted many times, love is formally an action of the will, not knowledge, even if that love requires a certain knowledge to love. Moreover, one does not even need the benefit of the Spirit’s wisdom or even be fellowshiping with God to have an accurate *view* of God and sacred Bible doctrine. One can know divine realities and yet not experience/enjoy those realities in the divine lights that are only turned on by living in God *by proper knowledge and proper love*. Without an active life walking with, in, and before God in love we really are nothing regardless of how much doctrine we have: 1 Corinthians 13:2 *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* It is our wills that carry our true dispositions toward what we really view as good and evil. And we always pick what we view as our good at any given moment, even when we sin, which we know is wrong

on a cognitive level but see as a good on an affective level (with respect to our wills)—otherwise we would not commit let alone enjoy sin. Why do we sin? because we are attracted to some good it offers our wills/affections, not our minds. Our minds can know something is evil without our wills really “knowing/seeing” sin as an evil/bitter thing.

Romans 16:1–27. Chapter 16 closes Romans with Paul’s greetings and commendations from various individuals. Note Paul’s appreciation of fellow believers as he offers greetings to twenty-seven people, including a significant number of women. Paul appealed for the church to avoid divisions and disunity. He offered greetings from his colleagues and closed with an appropriate doxology: “To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ. Amen”.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Paul’s proper knowledge of God is reflected throughout this great epistle, from his depictions of God as absolutely righteous (3:25) to beautiful portrayals of God’s perfect and unconditional love for the believer (8:35-39). However, even as supreme as Paul’s knowledge of God was, Paul’s proper love for God was even greater. As we have noted, love for God always surpasses knowledge even though it is dependent on it for its foundation (cf., Eph. 3:19). Our knowledge of God is always mediated by words taken from our earthly realm and thus are always infinitely inadequate: Romans 11:33, *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!* However, love for God is an affective connection that is far more direct than knowledge could ever be. It was this proper love for God that enabled Paul to praise God even in his consideration of God’s sovereign wrath on His own people (Romans 9), and it was this love that enabled him to end Romans with the appropriate doxology “*To the only wise God be glory (supreme, infinite beauty) forever through Jesus Christ. Amen.*”

Proverbs 31:20–31. The qualities of the virtuous woman are praised throughout this reading. The woman is trustworthy, industrious, intelligent, and kind. She adds dignity to the family and has much foresight and prudence. She takes care of her home and always treats her husband with the utmost respect and honor—she never demeans her husband in public in any way as he is her earthly lord. For all this she is much loved in her family and is the real center of the home. Above all she fears God [respects God, takes Him very seriously]. This is the key to her greatness. She lives a prudent and respectable life because she is governed by her respect for God and His directives, which precludes her from being lazy, gossipy, or lording over her husband in any way.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. The final verse speaks eloquently against the tendency to regard the role of the virtuous godly woman as of inferior significance: Proverbs 31:31 *Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates.* As she lives an honorable and godly life, so she is treated with honor and godly praise. Is it not interesting that the book that is devoted to wisdom ends with the excellencies and praiseworthiness of a godly, wise woman? Is it not interesting that such a woman should have the last word in God’s book on wisdom? As she walks with God *by proper knowledge and proper love* she clothes herself with divine strength, character, honor, humility, and grace—she becomes a beautiful example

of God's own beauty because she prized beauty in God above the charm and beauty of this world that fades: Proverbs 31:30 *Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.* Ladies, what beauty are you seeking?

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