

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
June 21, 2016

Nehemiah 1:1–3:32. Two Nehemiahs.
1 John 4:13–15. Love, concurrent-style.
Psalm 108:1–13. “The help of man is useless.”

COMMENTS:

Nehemiah 1:1–3:32. On a very personal level, I cannot help but feel both blessedness and grief at the sound of the name of this man, as it brings up memories of the man of God that I loved and lost last year, a man whom I had plans to complete the work of Realism and Truth at Faith Bible Church. He was both a best friend in the faith as well as a spiritual son to me. Of course, those of you who are part of the Faith Bible Church family know that I am talking about Nehemiah Blessed Fischer, the finest young man I have ever met. As a church family, we have all experienced profound loss of such a great man, a loss that cannot come near the unspeakable loss his beautiful wife and family continue to experience. Please keep them in your daily prayers that God would give them the strength to move forward in the spiritual life, which is exactly what Nehemiah would tell them. So much for my personal memories. **In this text we see his namesake, the great Nehemiah,** who could have been discouraged as he sees the suffering of His people: “in great trouble and shame,” living in a city with no walls (Neh. 1:3). He could have said, “I’d love to help, but what can I do from this far away?” Instead, he decided to take action (1:3), and he did so thoughtfully. Rather than making a rash decision, he prayed (1:4–8). He then volunteered to be the one to help God’s people (1:9–11), even though doing so meant risking his life. As the cupbearer to the king, Nehemiah recognized his unique place of influence and acted upon it (2:1–3). He chose to appear saddened before the most powerful man in the world by hanging his head. His actions could have been perceived as a sign of disrespect, which was punishable by severe beatings and even death. But God protected Nehemiah, and the king honored his request (2:4–6). Nehemiah’s initial actions show his character, but his later actions show his leadership. He moved from being a man of influence to a man of strategy. Immediately upon arriving in the city, Nehemiah inspected the city walls, found the craftsman, and began his work (2:11–3:32). He realized the urgency of his task; his people needed this wall to survive against the surrounding nations. Nehemiah’s story offers an example of identifying providence, responding to the pain of others through prayer, and acting strategically. It’s a lesson in what it means to be a leader who follows *God’s* leadership. Nehemiah stands as an example of one who takes action that is well-researched, strategic, and prayerful. He was a man of integrity and virtue as was our beloved Nehemiah. Let us honor our beloved Nehemiah by moving forward in the spiritual life in anticipation of standing with him once again, but this time in glory and before our Lord and Savior. Wow! What a time that will be! God’s plan is for believers to be inspired by great believers He puts in their path. Let us honor the memory of our blessed Nehemiah by recognizing his greatness to the extent that it inspires us to be greater manifestations of God’s matchless grace, and as lights shining brightly in a dark world testifying to the reality of Christianity as a faith of hope and eager anticipation of God and His goodness.

1 John 4:13–15. Verse 13 is inextricable with the ideas just expressed. The mutual abiding of a believer in God and God in that believer is indicated by that believer's experience of God the Holy Spirit. The Greek for "of His Spirit" (ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ) suggests *participation* in the Spirit of God, literally, "He has given us *out of His Spirit*." This is not to be confused with conduitism. There is a radical difference between the believer participating in the divine nature and the idea of divine nature flowing through the believer like a conduit. In conduitism, the love of God never becomes the believer's love as a free will response to God's love; it just flows through him like electricity through some conduit. In realism and concurrence, God enlightens and raises up the believer's nature of love to supernatural level by participating with God's love. In this case when a believer loves, he is drawing that love from God's Spirit, who is also the Source of his confession of Christ (1 John 4:2). Thus both the faith and the love enjoined in the dual "command" of 3:23 are products of the Spirit's operation in a believer. A believer's Spirit-led obedience becomes the evidence that he is enjoying the mutual abiding relationship with God that John wrote about. In verse 14 the apostle reaches a climactic point in his argument. He had just written that "if we love each other," then the God whom no one has seen abides "in us and His love is made complete in us." *This is a description of true fellowship of 1 John 1:7. Although 1 Jn 1:9 is often used as the key passage for fellowship, that is not what the Bible teaches.* 1 John 1:9 is about recovering after failure—and constant failure is guaranteed by focusing on 1 John 1:9 and being powered up rather than from walking in the Word of God, which just is walking the Spirit, which, I would add, is more about the intellect (knowing) than the will (desire) as per 1 John 1:7. In sum, John teaches that the indwelling God, whose presence is manifested in the midst of a loving Christian community, thus becomes in a sense truly visible to the eye of faith. Though no one "has seen" (*tetheatai*, "beheld") God (12), believers who abide in Him (13) "have seen" (*tetheametha*, "behold") the Son as He is manifested among loving Christians. Christians who behold this manifestation have in fact "seen" and can "testify" to the fundamental truth that "the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." This great truth can be put on display through the instrumentality of Christian love. Wow!

Psalms 108:1–13. As I read through this psalm after watching a bit of Fox News and CNN (as a realist seeking both sides = Whole Truth, Total Truth), verse 12 really resonated with me. There is no human help for our country. CNN lies to us, Fox News lies to us, as does our leaders and both candidates for president. As I think about the likelihood of Hilary being President, I experience anguish and despair. But then, as I read verse 12, God tells me "the help of man is useless." Now that is a message that you will not hear in the media, as they love to lie, build up, and destroy people—all for making more mullah. Our country has pretty much gone to pot. I had lunch with a great believer today, and we discussed how Americans have lost the ability to think logically and coherently on so many levels. Consider all of the hues and cries about more gun control in light of the last shooting, even though all agree that the new proposed laws would have done absolutely nothing to have stopped the last shooting. Think about it: "let us make new gun laws that have nothing to do with the tragedies that motivate us to make new 'useless' gun laws." Consider the perversion of calling evil good and good evil as law abiding gun owners are disrespected and Islam is treated with respect, by not wanting to blame them for their Islamic beliefs that leads to terrorism, even though the Koran itself contains at least 109 verses that call for Muslims to make war with nonbelievers—but our government is intent on telling us that Islam is a peaceful religion—Really? Instead of calling evil what it is, there is more interest in passing more laws and confiscating more of law abiding citizens' guns. Makes perfect sense in a

universe that calls evil good and good evil, in a universe where there is more respect for Islamic terrorist than Americans, especially Christians who are white and male. In light of the current insanity, not to even mention that there are now 51 gender identities one can choose from, let us join the psalmist in verses 12-13 “(God) gives us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless. Through God we will do valiantly, For it is He who shall tread down our enemies.” It is just a matter of time when God will stop all of this nonsense! God will get the last word! Yes, it will be final, it will not be overturned by CNN or Fox News analysts or American polls that are supposed to communicate what is true, good, and beautiful.

Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Pastor Don