

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
June 29, 2016**

Esther 3:1–7:10. The invisible and often unmentioned God who is always there.

3 John 1:1–4. Beloved Gaius.

Psalm 117:1–118:16. Praise and trust the Lord.

COMMENTS:

Esther 3:1–7:10. Sometimes life can look so bleak that it seems as if all hope is gone. This was the situation for Esther and Mordecai: “Letters were sent by couriers to all the provinces of the king to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children” (3:13). Genocide was upon Esther, Mordecai, and their people, and it seemed that little could be done. Yet God unexpectedly used Esther to do His work and made Mordecai a hero for thwarting the enemies’ plan to destroy God’s people (chapters 5–7). As a result, the people who wanted to kill Mordecai ended up dead (7:7–10). But these events depicted more than poetic justice; they provide an example of hope in the midst of adversity. This story shows that God is at work even when we don’t realize He is there—when even prayer feels like a waste of energy. While God is not mentioned by name in the book of Esther, His presence is implicit in every scene of goodness coming out of chaos. No matter how chaotic something may seem, God is always there to bring beauty and life out of ugliness and death. We were not there to see *Esse*’s manifestation talking in a burning bush, but we can know that He is always there as the existential and efficient cause of all that is, and this includes the free wills of all people involved. These actions aren’t credited to God directly in the text, but for the realist He does not need to be named—for the realist knows He is in all things. Even when we don’t always pray properly, since we do not always know exactly what God’s will is at times, God can still answer. And that’s goodness, above all else, that’s God in, by, and through all that is/*esse*. God is intimately involved in this whole diabolic section against the Jews. Keep in mind that the extermination of the Jews would mean the end of the messianic promise for the world. The reason God promised to protect His people was that they might become the channel through whom He might give the Word of God and the Son of God to the world. Israel was to bring the blessing of salvation to all nations (Gen. 12:1–3; Gal. 3:7–18).

3 John 1:1–4. There is no question that the Apostle John dearly loved Gaius! He called him “the well beloved” in this greeting, and “beloved” in 3 John 5. Gaius is one of those believers in the local church who would be easy to love because he was a virtuous believer. John may be hinting here that his dear friend was not well and that John was praying for restored health: “*I want you to be as healthy in body as you are in soul!*” If this is the case, then it is evidence that it is possible to be spiritually healthy and physically sick. It is interesting that Word of Faith ministries love to use the first part of this verse, “*I want you to be as healthy in body*” as they sell their snake oil products. To be sure, Gaius was a man whose “spiritual health” was evident to all. “*Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day*” (2 Cor. 4:16). We need to remember that, for the most part, physical health is the result of nutrition, exercise, cleanliness, proper rest, and the disciplined order of a balanced life. Spiritual health is the result of similar factors. We must nourish ourselves with the Word, and then “work out” that nourishment in actualizing truth in our lives (“godly exercise”), 1 Tim. 4:6–7. We must keep ourselves clean (2 Cor. 7:1) and avoid the contamination and pollution that is in the world (2 Peter 1:4; James 1:27). A balanced life is a healthy and happy life, a life that honors God with body and soul, for both are to be given to the Lord (Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:31).

Psalm 117:1–118:16. Psalm 117 is the shortest psalm in the Bible, yet note how it encompasses the whole world in three short sentences. This psalm is an invitation to people everywhere to turn to the Lord and join with believers everywhere in praising Him. This reminds me of the comparative size of the universe to our brains and minds. As far as our material brains, they are swallowed up by the immensity of the universes. However, as far as our immaterial minds, our minds can swallow up the entire universe. Note the emphasis on God’s grace and truth in 117:2. **Psalm 118** is sandwiched between the shortest psalm and the longest. It is filled with joyous praise of the Lord and complete trust in Him. We also have prophecy in this psalm regarding Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is seen in this psalm—His triumphal entry (25–26), His rejection (27), His death and resurrection (17), and His exaltation as God’s chosen Stone (22–23)

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

Pastor Don