

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
November 12, 2016

1 Kings 15:25–17:24. The evil rule of the evil rulers of Israel and the problem of induction.

Mark 9:38–10:16. Wholehearted devotion to the Lord.

Proverbs 4:1–7. Obtaining wisdom and thus capacity to see the beauty of God and all of life.

COMMENTS.

1 Kings 15:25–17:24. This reading consists of a summary of the evil kings of Israel. **15:25-32** notes Abijah and Asa. Abijah’s three-year reign was evil, but God sustained his throne as a “lamp” in Jerusalem for the sake of David. Asa, however, received a good report in that it included reforms, though he did not remove the high places. In **15:25-32**, Nadab of Israel succeeded his father Jeroboam but reigned only two years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord like his father. Baasha assassinated Nadab and killed the whole household of Jeroboam, fulfilling the prediction of Ahijah. **15:33-16:14** records the fact that Baasha was founded by assassination and ended in the same manner. The prophet Jehu condemned the evil of Baasha and foretold the demise of his house. He reigned for twenty-four years and was succeeded by his son Elah. In a drunken stupor, he was assassinated by Zimri, a court official. Zimri executed the whole family of Baasha just as Jehu had prophesied. Zimri’s seven-day reign (**16:15-20**) had the distinction of being the shortest in the history of Israel. He had ruled for seven days before he committed suicide in the flames of his palace. His demise was plotted by General Omri, who led an expedition against Zimri for his murder of King Elah. In **16:21-28**, Omri defeated Tibni, a rival to the throne, and founded the Fourth Dynasty in Israel. His reign was only twelve years. Then Ahab and Jezebel (**16:29-34**) reigned for 22 years. Together they attempted to make Israel a pagan nation devoted to Baal and Asherah, the deities of the Sidonians. Ahab erected an idol of Baal in Samaria and built an image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah. Twice he evaluated Ahab’s rule as more evil than all his predecessors even though Ahab had many economic and political achievements. During the reign of Ahab, a man named Hiel, who was from the sinful city of Bethel, rebuilt the city of Jericho. His sons died under the curse Joshua pronounced upon anyone who restored the city. In the last section of this reading (**17:1-24**), Elijah the Tishbite is introduced in the book suddenly as an envoy from the Lord. He proclaimed to Ahab a great drought which would end only when Elijah gave the word (see Jas. 5:17–18). The drought was a refutation of Ahab’s Baalism because Baal was reputed to be the god of rain and vegetation. This showed that the Lord was the true Lord of nature. During the three-year drought, Elijah dwelt with a widow and her son in Zarephath of Phoenicia, the native land of Jezebel, where Baal was worshiped. The drought had spread to Phoenicia, and the Lord used the prophet to provide food to this family.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Of course, there is much I could go into from this section regarding politics. I will just note two philosophical-theological points. First, with regard Ahab. 1 Kings 16:30 tells us that *“Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him.”* Even though Ahab was very evil, he brought significant blessings to his nation through his building projects and political alliances. In other words, Israel experienced many financial and political blessings even though Ahab was eviler than all other kings. Again, Ahab was evil and going against God’s will, and yet the nation received financial and political blessings. This should be a strong warning against evaluating God’s will in light of induction and temporal blessings. The Christian should not attempt to validate truth based on induction or temporal benefits. I am sure many Romans and Jews, who witnessed the crucifixion of Christ and their initial victory over Christianity as they watched Christians fed to lions, thought God was on their side. Interpreting history as it is occurring through induction always leads to great deception as one thinks he sees God’s *vindictam*. Moreover, by operating on an inductivistic epistemology, rather than solid principles in the Word of God, one will always cherry pick historical evidence to favor his proclivities. The second point I would like to make is that it is important for Christians to remove anything in their lives that hinders their second-person relationship with Christ. It is my belief that watching too much political news, like CNN or Fox News is not good for the spiritual life. There is much evil-speaking on these stations, all designed to counter each other, boost ratings, and satisfy their targeted listeners. As for me, I have decided to wean myself off these news networks and focus on my second-person relationship with Christ. I find it is much easier to focus my love for Christ when I do not subject myself to all the spins of the networks. Moreover, I have discovered that these “network-*Daseins*” have adversely affected my view of government, capitalism, and social policy. Moreover, these network *Daseins* are very polarizing, so much so that it is increasingly difficult to have a conversation about what the Word of God says about government and Caesar without being attacked, called names, and being attributed with saying things that one never said. Believers, it should not be this way. The challenge for us all is Truth. We must value Truth above all else to walk with God *by proper knowledge and proper love*. Anytime any of us oppose God’s plan, it adversely affects our walk with God. As for me, I know that I have gained ideas in my culture (*Dasein*) that are in opposition to God’s universal plan regarding government, economics, and social services. In sum, the only way to rise above all the political frays is to prize Truth, the Whole Truth, the Total Truth, above all else. I will speak more about this as I cover the *Dasein* of American inductivism as it relates to government, politics, and social policy in our next Bible class and how it can adversely affect our walk with the Lord *by proper knowledge and love*. Hint: note the commands of love following directives with respect to government (Rom 13), which God calls His servant—and that included Nero.

Mark 9:38–10:16. Outline: Rebuke of the Disciples’ sectarian attitude (9:38-42), the radical demands of discipleship (9:43-50), the permanence of marriage (10:1-12), and childlike trust (10:13-16).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Mark 9:40 is lucid: *“He that is not with Me is against Me.”* It is impossible to be neutral when it comes to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Since we cannot be neutral, if we are not for Him, we must be against Him; if we are not against Him, we must be for Him. The love that Christ demands is absolute! Of course, no one can love Christ absolutely unless he is absolutely convinced that Christ and Christianity are true. For no one can wholeheartedly love or be totally devoted to someone unless his faith-knowledge is clear, absolute, and undefeatable. Of course, this requires the ministry of the Holy Spirit working concurrently with a will that wants God. God is always handing us over to our desires—this is not only true with regard to darkness; it is true with respect to those who seek God *by proper knowledge and by proper love*. In short, we all are getting exactly what we are pursuing. Let us remember that God is never very far from us and desires a second person relationship with us 24/7. *Quo Vadis?*

Proverbs 4:1–7. This reading emphasizes the importance of wisdom of God’s Word.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Verses 5-6 exhort believers to *“Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you.”* Love her! Wisdom cannot be reduced to merely factual knowledge. He is not commanding us to love something simply because it is true. Wisdom is the whole truth, total truth perspective that sees reality in the light of God. To have wisdom is to see deeply. For example, wisdom is the ability to see *clearly* the beauty of God in all creation around us (Rom. 1:20). Wisdom is the ability to see all viewpoints and end with a balanced whole truth viewpoint instead of only seeing one viewpoint. Wisdom is not being right about one thing. Wisdom is seeing reality as such and in such a way that one sees beauty. There are three depths of knowledge: (1) to see something as true, it comports with what is true about the extra-mental world, (2) to see something as intrinsically good, as one delves deeper into the truth of something, (3) to see something transcendentally as “beautiful” as one penetrates even deeper. True, good, and beautiful are the three transcendentals which have a rich history of orthodox Christianity. Let us apply the three transcendentals to Christ forgiving the prostitute in Luke 7. It is one thing to believe Christ’s words and actions were true (historically), it is another to see them as intrinsically good (which the Pharisees didn’t), it is quite another to see them as acts of beauty. Moreover, every act of the God-man recorded in the gospels is not only true and good, it is also very beautiful. However, moderns seldom think or talk of Christ, His Word, or works in terms of beauty. Being reduced to materiality and practicality, modernity has lost its capacity for beauty—as good is primarily about what is practical for now. This not only kills love for the Lord; it destroys any chance of really obtaining wisdom. We are all attracted by what we see as truly beautiful—God or Mammon! Before one can really walk with God *by proper knowledge and by proper love*, he must obtain true wisdom to see God as true, good, and beautiful. Wisdom is not about what is

practical. Wisdom is about eternal abiding truths regardless of material consequences. The removal of metaphysics (third degree of knowledge) ends up destroying capacity for eternal truths that are necessary to see and walk in the light divine wisdom—rather than just living for the physical and practical (first two degrees of knowledge). As men and women of God of faith, we are not to live by pragmatism as so vividly illustrated by the saints in Hebrews 11 and by Jesus 12:1-2. What do we value the most, the pragmatic or the eternal, what are we living for? the pragmatic-now or that which lasts for all of eternity? Every single decision we make now counts for all of eternity.

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

Pastor Don