

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
November 13, 2016

1 Kings 18:1–46. Elijah, the faithful servant of the Lord.

Mark 10:17–52. Inheriting eternal life and the grave danger of materialism.

Proverbs 4:8–17. The value of wisdom.

COMMENTS.

1 Kings 18:1–46. Summary: For three years Ahab sought Elijah. When Ahab met the prophet, he called Elijah the “troubler of Israel” (18:17). Yet, it was Ahab who caused Israel’s distress. Elijah proposed a contest with the prophets of Baal and Asherah at Mount Carmel. The contest was for the benefit of the people to learn who truly ruled Israel—the Baals of Ahab and Jezebel or the LORD God of their fathers. The contest consisted of preparing a sacrifice and praying for the deity to prove his existence by answering with fire from heaven. Baal was reputed to be the god of storm and therefore should at least have been able to bring down fire (lightning). The prophets of Baal prayed all morning, but there was no answer. Elijah ridiculed their pagan theology. Then in ecstatic frenzy they frantically slashed themselves to draw their god’s attention), but there was no answer. At the evening hour of sacrifice, it was Elijah’s turn. He rebuilt the altar of the LORD and called upon God, identifying Him as the “*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel*” (18:36). Fire fell, and the people exclaimed, “*The LORD—He is God!*” (18:39). Then, the people executed the evil prophets (18:20–40). God also sent a great rainstorm to end the drought. The storm rained upon Ahab as he hurried to Jezreel. The hand of the LORD empowered Elijah to run ahead of Ahab’s chariot to the city (18:41–46).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Although we do not look for trouble, there will be times in our lives when we must make a very unpopular stand for the Lord and His Word, and this will cause conflict with others. Elijah was a servant of the Lord. I Kings 18:36: “*LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant and that I have done all these things at Your word.*” Because He was serious about the Lord and His Word, he was branded a troublemaker (18:17). Both Jesus and Paul would also be branded as troublemakers (Luke 23:5, Acts 16:20; 17:6), so Elijah was in good company—and so are we when we make God and His truth the issue of life. Of course, the issue must be the whole truth, total truth in its whole being, rather than some morcellated view of truth. The way we treat the Bible is the way we treat the Lord. If we cut up the Bible according to our favorite passages, we will also cut up our image of God according to our favorite views of God. The believer who is rightly related to God views God’s Word in its wholeness as more precious than wealth (Psa 19:10) or the best tasting food (Psa. 119:103). When the Word of God is grasped in its wholeness, it brings spiritual satisfaction (Jer. 15:16). God has given us His Holy Spirit to raise up our intellect and wills so we can gain the capacity to see the beauty of God and His Word, which enables us to walk with the Lord *by proper knowledge and proper love, finding our greatest satisfaction in Him.*

Mark 10:17–52. Summary: The rich man’s question (17) follows naturally from verse 15: “*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*” What is involved in receiving “*the kingdom of God like a little child*”? Jesus challenged the rich man to trust that God alone was good (18). One essential thing was missing in the rich man’s life: “*Sell what you own ... then come follow me*” (21). The rich man’s problem was not wealth per se but the failure to trust that God—not wealth—was the only good and that God’s radical call to discipleship was for his own good. Only radical trust in God’s goodness makes possible abandoning wealth and following Jesus in the way of the cross. Such absolute trust in God’s goodness that is the prerequisite for entering the kingdom is impossible without a work of grace in one’s life (24–27). And God does the impossible in conversion, radically reordering human values. Jesus promised a reward—and persecution—for those like Peter who left all to follow Him (28–30).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. The incident with the rich man can be described as a pre-evangelism ministry where the Law shows an individual his sinfulness and need for Christ. Because of his trust in riches, and his unwillingness to radically remove what was blinding him to eternal life, the young ruler was not prepared to believe in Christ. As far as application to the believer, focus on Mammon is one of the most pernicious prevalent evils of our times. Seeing money and details of life as greater goods than life in God *by proper knowledge and proper love* destroys love for God (1 John 2:15-16), enslaves the believer to Mammon (Matt. 6:19-24), and destroys Christian faith: 1 Timothy 6:7 *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.* Of course, when Christian faith is destroyed, when that faith is no longer clear, lucid, absolute, one can no longer seek God fervently. It is the absolute conviction that motivates the believer to learn more and more so he can move closer and closer to the Lord. We either make our bastions of the goods of this life or in the Lord. Only when we make our bastion in the Lord can we really enjoy the many blessings He showers upon us. But if we get our eyes on the things, we lose our faith and with that everything else, starting with our loving relationship with Him. And with the loss of love for the Lord, we lose the light that floods our lives with the light on all of the true, good, and beautiful things of life—like life itself. The rich man thought he had it all when actually he lost it all; he may have known the price of everything, but he knew the value of nothing.

Proverbs 4:8–17. Two paths are presented in this reading. The ways of wisdom (**10-13**) and the ways of wickedness (**14-17**). The son-learner is against urged to pursue wisdom and avoid wickedness.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. The father tells his sons to treat wisdom the way they would treat their mother, sister, or wife: love her, honor her, embrace her, exalt her! Our loves always control our thoughts and our lives. We are told to embrace Wisdom and we will have security (6), honor (8), and beauty (9). Note again verse 9: *"She will place on your head a garland of grace; She will present you with a crown of beauty."* With wisdom comes beauty as one lives in the light, which enables one to avoid the darkness and live in grace and happiness as one walks in the Lord *by proper knowledge and proper love.* What could bring more pleasure than living in the Lord, in the fountain of life, in God's light, and in God's presence? Psalm 36:9 *For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see the light.*" Psalm 16:11 *Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is the fulness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.* Such a life requires wisdom. And wisdom always goes beyond a propositional relationship with God, and that includes a biblical propositional relationship with God. We all start with a propositional relationship with God based on propositions of the Bible, but from there we must ascend to a second person relationship with God *by proper knowledge and proper love.*

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

Pastor Don