

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

November 20, 2016

2 Kings 6:1–7:20. More miraculous works of Elisha.

Mark 15:16–47. Results of sowing hatred and bitterness in the heart: hatred of God.

Proverbs 6:20–27. Illicit sex denigrates one’s capacity to grow in faith, hope, and love.

COMMENTS.

2 Kings 6:1–7:20. In this section we have more stories about the miraculous ministry of Elisha. He causes an iron axhead to float in water (6:4-7). He keeps the king of Israel informed of his enemy’s most secret plans (6:8–12). He trusts absolutely in God’s protection, whatever the odds (6:13–18). He prays that enemy soldiers will be blinded, leads them into captivity and then advises that they be fed and sent home (6:18–23). And he predicts the precise day when a siege of Samaria will be unexpectedly lifted (6:24–7:20). On the bizarre event of a floating ax, it needs to be pointed out that in those days they didn’t have hardware stores stocked with tools such as we have today. Iron tools were precious and scarce, which explains why the student of Elisha had to *borrow* an ax so he could help prepare the timber. Not only were tools scarce, but they weren’t constructed with the strength and durability of our tools today. In fact, Moses gave a special law relating to damage that might result when an axhead flew off the handle (Deut. 19:4–5), so it must have happened frequently. It should also be pointed out that Jordan isn’t the cleanest river in the Holy Land and it would be very difficult for anybody to see the axhead lying at the bottom. Elisha didn’t “fish out” the axhead with a pole. He threw a stick into the water at the place where the axhead sank, and the Lord raised the iron axhead so that it floated on the surface of the river and could be picked up. It was a quiet miracle from a powerful God through a compassionate prophet.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. The “borrowed” axhead is a good reminder that all we have in this life is “borrowed” from God—“*what do you have that you have not borrowed,*” 1 Cor. 4:7? We have not received anything unless it is first given to us by God, beginning with our very lives—“*A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven,*” John 3:27. Our lives, and whatever gifts, abilities, possessions, and opportunities we have are from God, and we will have to give an account of them when we meet the Lord. The good news is that the Lord can recover what we have lost and put us back to work, as illustrated with the axhead. Every person will be rewarded for what he has done: Revelation 22:12, “*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.*” The idea that rewards do not matter and all that matters is getting to Heaven is unbiblical, unspiritual, and unchristian, given what the Lord and all writers of the New Testament taught. Of course, no activity will be honored by and for the Lord that is not done out of proper love for Him: 1 Corinthians 13:1 *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 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. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.* However, to have

proper love requires right thinking in a vast array of issues. We develop both right thinking and right desires (love) for the Lord by walking in Him and becoming partakers of the divine nature: “*you may be partakers of the divine nature,*” 2 Pet. 1:4. Love has a profound effect on our ability to judge things rightly. What and who we love motivates us to focus on the goodness of those objects, lack of love causes us to think with disdain about those objects. Without love, one does not know God: 1 John 4:8, *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* Love shapes our attitude to everything from the application of the Word of God to our very fellowship with God. There are many forces in our lives that seek to impregnate us with seeds of frustration, doubt, strife, and depression. There are many so-called solutions to the problems Christians face. The truth is that there is only one way and that is to walk with God *by proper knowledge and proper love.* Consider the attitude of Job regarding his loss of what he borrowed from the Lord (children, property, good health, friends): Job 1:18 *While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 19 "and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" 20 Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD." 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.* Again, all we have belongs to God and He can take it anytime He desires. It is all on loan from God, beginning with our very *esse* every instant. Let us celebrate the gift of life and the countless gifts on loan from Him.

Mark 15:16–47. The Messiah death’s death (15:21-41) and burial (15:42-47).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. It seems incredible that the religious leader so hated Jesus that they even went out to Golgotha to mock Him. The unreflecting crowds who passed by were only too eager to follow the bad example of their leaders. They were only too eager to mock Him. Thomas Carlyle called ridicule “the language of the devil”; in this case, the definition fits perfectly. To add insult to injury, to pain on the cross, they mocked Him as a Prophet (15:29), Savior (15:31) and as King (15:32). As we have noted in our intellect-will studies at FBC, one’s ability to love God and goodness as such requires right thinking and right desires. While the Jewish religious leaders and the Jewish passerbys *daily* quoted the mandate to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind,” they descended to hating the God they professed to love, all due to development of wrong thinking and wrong desires. Had they walked with the Lord *by proper knowledge and proper love* they would have daily adjusted their lives to whole truth and not developed hearts filled with so much hatred and malice. Our species is by nature an ungrateful, hateful, mean, and nasty sort. Only by God’s grace, can we ascend to becoming imitators of Christ by lovingly following Him. Anything and everything that is not done out of love for God collapses into some type of legalism.

Proverbs 6:20–27. This reading shows how the Word of God can protect the believer. The Word of God in the mind and heart is like a guide who leads us on the safe path and protects us from attacks. It's also like a friend who talks to us and counsels us along the way (**Prov. 6:22**). We walk in the light because the Word is a lamp (**23**). If we listen to God's voice in His Word, we won't fall for the enemy's flattery, which can lead to man's ruin (**24-26**). To be "brought to a piece of bread" (**27**) means to be degraded to the lowest level of poverty. To give into the sexual temptress is to run the risk of ruining one's health, wealth, and life.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Sex is compared to fire in verse 27. Fire is a good thing if it's confined and controlled. It can keep us warm and cook our food. Sex is a good gift from God but, like fire, if it gets out of control, it becomes destructive. What begins as a "warm" experience soon becomes a burning experience, like holding a torch in your lap or walking on burning coals (**6:27**). "But sex is a normal desire, given to us by God," some people argue. "Therefore, we have every right to use it, even if we're not married. It's like eating: If you're hungry, God gave you food to eat; if you're lonely, God gave you sex to enjoy." Some of the people in the Corinthian church used this argument to defend their sinful ways: "*Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods*" (1 Cor. 6:13). But Paul made it clear that the believer's body belonged to God and that the presence of a desire wasn't the same as the privilege to satisfy that desire. Moreover, the believer is to dedicate his body, mind, and will to the Lord (Rom 12:1-2). The most damaging thing about engaging in illicit sex is that it is destructive to the spiritual life—it destroys one's ability to keep growing in faith, hope, and love. We noted this in our 1 Thessalonian study, which begins with the vibrant supernatural faith, hope, and love and ends with exhortations to control their sexual passions. Failure to control sexual passions leads to partaking of evil, which then destroys one's view of good, which then destroys the believer's capacity to appreciate the true/goodness/beauty of the sanctified life as the illicit life is perceived as a greater good. The lines of cleavage between believers who continue to fulfill the lusts of the flesh under the guise of grace and those who use grace to overcome temptations and grow in the Lord *by proper knowledge and proper love* can be well illustrated by comparing and contrasting the Thessalonians and the Corinthians—those who grow in their love for the Lord and those who grow in their disrespect to the Lord and the things of God.

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

Pastor Don