

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

November 25, 2016

2 Kings 15:1–17:5. More evil kings.

Galatians 5:1–6:18. Christian living.

Proverbs 8:1–8. God’s plea to man to listen to His wisdom.

COMMENTS.

2 Kings 15:1–17:5. This reading covers the regencies of Azariah, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hoshea. Azariah, also named Uzziah, was contemporary with Jeroboam II, giving Israel and Judah their greatest periods of prosperity. However, the LORD struck Azariah with leprosy because he offered incense in the temple. Jotham, who coreigned with his father, Azariah (**15:5**), ruled for sixteen years. His reign pleased the LORD, except that he left the high places for sacrifice. Ahaz was one of the most wicked of kings in Judah’s history. He committed the horrible atrocity of human sacrifice and promoted the practice of sacrifice at the high places (**16:1–4**). He even burns his own sons as sacrifices. Ahaz makes many outrageous changes to the temple and its worship. He himself acts as a priest, offering every kind of sacrifice as Solomon once did. He also breaks up much of the bronze furniture to cash its wealth—either for his own treasury or to pay tribute to Assyria. Judah’s worship is now in chaos. Through all the years that the northern kingdom has had pagan shrines at Dan and Bethel, the southern kingdom has kept its temple for the exclusive worship of the living God. Now pagan practices are brought into the very heart of the Jerusalem temple. The God of Israel is “worshipped” alongside the gods of Assyria.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. There is an English proverb that says, “Consider well who you are, where you came from, what you do and where you are going.” The first two considerations were easily answered in both Israel and Judah, for both nations would have said, ‘We are God’s chosen people, descendants of our father Abraham.’ As for the third question, both kings would have had to admit, ‘We do what our wicked predecessors did.’ King Ahaz of Judah didn’t follow the godly example of his ancestor David, and Hoshea, king of Israel, imitated the wicked kings that ruled before him. They were free to make these decisions, but they were not free to change the consequences of their decisions, which brings us to the fourth question, ‘Where are you going?’ For both rulers, God’s answer was clear: ‘You and your people are plunging rapidly toward judgment and ruin.’ Solomon’s words were about to be proved in both kingdoms: ‘Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people’ (Prov. 14:34). Consider the implications of the proverb on our personal lives. We know who we are in Christ—we are Christians. We know where we came from—we are products of His grace. But what are we doing and where are we going? Are we living in God *by proper knowledge and proper love*? Are we advancing in the wonderful Christ-centered life? Or are we taking our cue from American Laodecianism? We are free to make decisions regarding the objects of our loves, but we are not free from the consequences.

Galatians 5:1–6:18. Having secured the argument for freedom in Christ through justifying faith alone, Paul examines the nature of that liberty. While again rebuking the tendency to turn back to legalism, he also deplored the opposite extreme of license. Paul expertly showed that freedom in Christ is a Spirit-guided life-style within the limits of a new “law” given by Christ: the law of love. He deals with both circumcision and the false teachers. In closing, he summarizes the issues of the entire letter by setting the pridefulness of those pushing circumcision on the Galatians over against the cross of Christ and the new creation that begins when a person becomes a believer.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Both sin and legalism are destructive to the Christ-centered life. Christ offers us all a truly abundant life in Him, but this abundance is found in Him, not self-righteous legalism nor licentiousness in the name of grace. Only by living in *Christ by proper knowledge and proper love* can we truly live a transcendent life of joy each and every day regardless of the circumstances of life. That joy is not primarily about all temporal circumstances as such working out. That joy is all about a second person loving relationship with Him. It is about living in the love of Christ. It is about a personal relationship with Him that is more powerful and important than any circumstance of life: *Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* The confidence, joy, and love is in Christ as such.

Proverbs 8:1–8. In this reading, God in His mercy continues to call out to sinners to listen to His wisdom. Note the wonderful adjectives used of wisdom.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Observe the scoffers at God’s counsel and how they turn away from truth. Fallen man, by nature has more of an appetite for materialism than eternal truths. Though he has a capacity to live above the animal nature, he often prefers to live like an animal that is void of capacity for the suprasensible realm. You will never find an animal worshipping God or caring much about eternal truths that transcend the natural realm. For an animal and a human fool, life is just about the here and now. Only by turning to the *Lord in proper knowledge and proper love* will He lift our minds and wills and enable us to live as human beings are designed to live—seeking, serving, and loving God as our greatest good. Only God can lift us up to true dignity and the blessedness of being worthy of the title of image bearers of God.

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

Pastor Don