

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

November 28, 2016

**2 Kings 20:1–21:26.** Godly Hezekiah and his very evil son, Manasseh, who finally repented.

**Ephesians 4:1–32.** Bitterness and anger destroy the capacity to love God.

**Proverbs 8:27–36.** The value of wisdom: seeing and loving God as true, good, and beautiful.

### COMMENTS.

**2 Kings 20:1–21:26.** In **chapter 20**, Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the Lord sent Isaiah to tell the king to prepare to die. But Hezekiah prayed earnestly, and the Lord through the prophet Isaiah promised to prolong Hezekiah’s life for fifteen years. The Lord encouraged the king by a sign, causing the shadow of the king’s sundial to move backward ten steps (**20:1–11**). The Thanksgiving hymn of Hezekiah is preserved in Isaiah 38:9–20. Merodach-Baladan, the king of Babylon (721–710 B.C.), sent a delegation to congratulate Hezekiah for his recovery. He sent envoys to learn of Judah’s strength and lure Hezekiah into an alliance. Isaiah condemned Hezekiah for his sinful pride in openly displaying his treasures. The prophet continued with a divine oracle in which he prophesied that Judah’s treasures and people would be carried away to Babylon (**2 Kings 20:12–21**). We see in **chapter 21** that Hezekiah bore a son, Manasseh, who would undo all that he had achieved in turning Judah back to God (**21:1–18**). During his fifty-five-year reign (697–642 B.C.), the longest in Judah’s history, Manasseh committed every pagan atrocity. The historian remarked that Judah “*did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites*” (**21:9**) and blamed Manasseh for the eventual fall of Jerusalem (**21:12–15; 22:16–17; 24:3–4**). Such wickedness yielded the fruit of more violence. Amon, the son of Manasseh, was assassinated by palace officials after only two years on the throne (**2 Kings 21:19–26**). Godly King Hezekiah’s son, Manasseh, was the most wicked king in Judah’s history, so much so that he is blamed for the fall of the Southern Kingdom. Even though Manasseh lived a most ungodly life, he had the longest reign of any king in Jewish history. Among other things, this demonstrates the fallacy of attempting to build moral truth on induction. In the reign of Manasseh, it was as though the Lord took His hand off the nation and allowed all the filth to pour out of people’s hearts. In character and conduct, he was even worse than the Amorites whom Joshua defeated in Canaan, a nation with a reputation for brutality and wickedness. All that his godly father, Hezekiah, had torn down, Manasseh rebuilt as he led the nation back into idolatry, including the worship of Baal. He also made a detestable idol which he placed in the temple of the Lord, and he encouraged the people to worship “all the starry hosts.” There was to be but one altar in the temple court, but Manasseh added altars dedicated to various gods and thus made Yahweh one “god” among many. Yet the Lord had put His name in only one place—the Temple in Jerusalem; and now a multitude of false gods shared that honor with Him. Manasseh followed the religion of Molech and caused his sons to pass through the altar fire, and he consulted spiritists and mediums. In His mercy, the Lord sent prophets to warn the king and the people, but they refused to listen. Some of these witnesses were no doubt killed by the king (**21:16**), along with other godly people who opposed the worship of false gods. God reminded His people that their enjoyment of the land depended on their obedience to the law of the Lord. This was the basic requirement of the covenant God made with His people. God had promised to keep them in the Promised Land, but now He warned them that they would be taken from the land and scattered among the nations (Deut. 28:64–68; Lev. 26:33–35). This judgment had already fallen

on the Northern Kingdom with the invasion of the Assyrian army, and it would happen to Judah when the Babylonians came (606–586). However, with the grace of God, there is always hope. In 2 Chronicles (33:12, 33:19) we have the record of Manasseh repenting of his enormous evil.

**Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love.** The eventual repentance of evil Manasseh demonstrates hope for even the most wicked human beings. The possibility exists for anyone to repent of their evil ways. Repentance is a work of God in the heart and a willing response of the heart to the Lord—God provides the efficient cause, and the believer provides the formal cause. 2 Chronicles demonstrates that Manasseh’s repentance was authentic. When he returned home, Manasseh proved the reality of his conversion by seeking to undo all the evil he had done. He fortified Jerusalem and other cities in Judah; he removed his idol from the temple (2 Chron. 33:7, 15), and he removed from the temple all the altars he had put up to false gods. Having purged the temple, he then repaired the altar of the Lord that had been neglected, and he offered thank offerings to the Lord who had rescued him. He commanded the people of Judah to serve the Lord, and he set the example. He allowed them to offer sacrifices in the high places, but not to pagan gods—only to the God of Israel. The bottom line here is that anyone can change, not matter how much evil he has actualized in his soul and life, *but only by God’s power*. Nothing less than the power of God can lift our first order will to the level of the second order will. But God only does this if the first order will really desires the good in the 2<sup>nd</sup> order will on the first order level. God provides the efficient power to the formal human cause. Let me illustrate. Say a believer is engaged in regular immoral activity. On a second order level, he knows this is wrong, and at least in some degree he wishes that he was not an immoral person (which is why he will continue to make excuses to justify the activity). However, on a first order level he continues his immoral activity because this activity is “good” in some way (e.g., “pleasurable”). So, we have a divided person. He has a divided heart and thus is precluded from having a thriving, robust relationship with the Lord. He has a divided heart. Now God can change him, but only if he seeks the change in his first order, which is extremely difficult due to former acts of habituation. In sum, a person must want God to change his first-order desires for sin before God will raise those first orders to the second-order desires (what one knows is right and what he should wish experientially). Man does not have the power to raise up the first order to second order. All he can do is provide the formal cause, the desire; then God provides the efficient cause raising it up and thus transforming it. The formal cause goes back to love. The only way to put oneself in a position of transformation is to desire it and God. This only takes place by life in God *by proper knowledge and proper love*. We provide the direction, the steering wheel, and God provides the divine impetus. God actualizes our desires, be it good or evil, love or hate, peace or perturbations.

**Ephesians 4:1–32.** Outline: God’s purposes in the church (4:1-6), the church’s gifts (4:7-16), and holy living (4:17-32).

**Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love.** The conclusion of chapter four includes ethical exhortations grounded in theological truth. Believers are to rid themselves of vices like “bitterness,” “anger,” and “slander” and instead imitate the compassionate kindness of Christ (4:25–32). Bitterness and anger are never just isolated sins. With every single act of actualizing bitterness and anger, one corrupts his soul, and loses capacity for love—for God, self, and others. We, like every other created thing, are composed of actual and potential, both on immaterial and material levels. We never remain the same, physically or spiritually. As we actualize acts of bitterness and anger, we become more bitter and angry people. The very act of actualizing these vices are also acts of “love” for we only do them out of some “love” of them, that is, in seeing them good in some way. In other words, we come to love the evil of bitterness. But the more we see these vices as good, the less we are able to see true goodness. And the less we are able to see true goodness, the less we will see the goodness of God. And the less we see the goodness of God, the less we will be able to walk with Him *by knowledge and by love*. In short, bitterness is impossible with love.

**Proverbs 8:27–36.** This reading continues the discourse on how wisdom was present with God at creation (8:22-31). However, “she” should not be interpreted in a mythological sense, as if she were a goddess, or in a Christological sense, as if she were Christ. Lady Wisdom is a personification, not a person. When the text says wisdom was there when God made Heaven and Earth, it means that wisdom is not some recent innovation. Principles of right and wrong are not human inventions but are embedded in the very fabric of the created order. Those who reject wisdom, therefore, are going against the very principles God built into the world and are on a path of self-delusion and self-destruction.

**Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love.** As Proverbs noted earlier, wisdom is of more value than gold or jewels (Prov. 8:10-11, 18). It has better gifts to offer than perishable riches—blessings like prudence, knowledge, discretion, the fear of the Lord, humility, godly speech, wise counsel, understanding, guidance on life’s path, strength for the journey, and truly “durable riches.” But the highest and greatest gift is *proper knowledge and love of God*. A life that’s enriched by God may be poor in the world’s goods, but it is rich in the things that matter most: a loving relationship with God. It’s good to enjoy the things that money can buy, provided you don’t lose the things that money can’t buy. What Wisdom has to offer can’t be purchased anywhere, no matter how rich you are. It is the fool who thinks that stuff of this world is more valuable than a loving relationship with God. Wisdom has always existed and will always exist for those who will partake of its light and life in the Lord. Wisdom shows us a different world—a God and a world of the true, good, and beautiful. With wisdom, one can clearly see the glory of God in creation, even fallen creation (Rom. 1:20), and love God as a result of seeing His glory in creation (Psalm 19). However, without wisdom, one ends up with an amorphous view of reality, one that is blind to the wisdom and beauty of God revealed in and imbedded in all of creation.

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

*Pastor Don*