

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”**  
**October 16, 2016**

**Ezekiel 32:1–33:33.** Guilt without repentance.

**Revelation 16:1–21.** The wrath and love of God.

**Job 37:9–15.** The sovereignty and love of God.

**COMMENTS.**

**Ezekiel 32:1–33:33.** Summary of this reading: **(1) 32:1-16:** The Lord revealed to Ezekiel a taunting lament the nations would someday sing over fallen Pharaoh. Though he was like a mighty lion or a powerful crocodile, he would be captured, destroyed, and eaten by scavengers. Darkness would settle over his land as a sign of judgment and destruction. Babylon would invade Egypt, destroy its people, and steal its wealth. **(2) 32:17-32:** Pharaoh’s armies would be slaughtered and descend into the land of the dead. They would join the armies of other nations who spread terror on the earth but eventually met their demise. These nations included Assyria, Elam (located east of Mesopotamia), Meshech and Tubal (northern nations, compare 38:2), Edom, and Sidon; **(3) 33:1-20:** Shortly before the fall of Jerusalem, the Lord renewed Ezekiel’s commission as the nation’s spiritual watchman (compare 3:16–21). One of a watchman’s primary responsibilities was to warn his people of approaching danger. As long as the watchman carried out his duty, he was not responsible for those who failed to take his warning seriously and were unprepared when disaster arrived. Ezekiel was in a similar position. He was to warn both the wicked and backsliders of impending doom and call them to repentance. Even though the nation was weighed down with sin, it was God’s desire that they turn from their evil ways and live. **(4) 33:21-33:** in January of 585 B.C., five months after the temple had been destroyed, a fugitive delivered the news to Ezekiel. The evening before, the Lord had opened Ezekiel’s mouth, ending his long period of enforced silence. Now that Ezekiel’s prophecies of judgment had been fulfilled, his ministry would be primarily one of encouragement, and his messages would focus on the future restoration of the exiles. However, he was to deliver one more judgment speech. The survivors who remained in Judah following the destruction of Jerusalem retained delusions of grandeur, thinking that the land was now theirs. Ezekiel corrected their faulty thinking, pointing out that their idolatry and hypocrisy precluded them from enjoying the land. Another wave of judgment would sweep them away. In the past they had not taken Ezekiel’s messages seriously, but in the day of judgment they would finally realize that he was a true prophet of the Lord.

**Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love: Ezekiel 33:10**

suggests that some of the Jews were now feeling the pain of their sins like a heavy weight upon their shoulders, and day after day they were ‘pining away.’ However, this feeling of regret fell short of actualizing their will in the right direction: to the good of God and His plan. It is one thing to feel guilty about not living out the Christian life, be it with reference to lack of daily prayers to the Father and the Son, or lack of assembling with fellow believers in a local church, or lack of living for Christ due to distractions with the world, or active involvement in illicit associations or activities. However, it is another to turn the will away from these evils and to the good of God and His plan. Guilt and shame in and of themselves are only indications that one is violating his conscience. The

solution is not to sear or suppress the conscience. The solution is to turn to the good by God's grace and actualize the will in life with God *by proper second person knowledge and love*. Consider two examples, one who turned to the good and the other who did not: When Peter remembered his sin of denying Christ, he turned to the goodness of Jesus for grace and forgiveness; but when Judas remembered his sin of betraying Christ, he experienced only remorse, and he went out and hanged himself because he would not turn his will to the good of God and His matchless grace—"the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Cor. 7:10). Life in God brings life and brings it more abundantly. A life of guilt that continues to suppress the conscience's hunger for God and grace only brings more angst. Quo Vadis?

**Revelation 16:1–21.** This reading describes the pouring out of the seven bowls of the wrath of God. Chronologically this chapter is close to the time of the Second Advent of Christ, and the judgments described fall in rapid succession. World events are now pictured by John as rapidly coming to their climax as predicted in Daniel 11:36-45.

**Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love.** When reading this section, it may be troubling for some to read so much of God's wrath (16:1). However, four things must be remembered. **First**, God's wrath and judgment are not arbitrary, but are always in response to man's defiant sin. God takes no delight in the death of the wicked as noted in Ezekiel. **Second**, judgment comes only after every other avenue has been exhausted. God sends blessings, prophets, warnings, preliminary testings, short-term judgments—all before the final wrath appears. **Third**, God's nature does not change in the exercise of His wrath. God is love (1 John 4:16) even when He must pass judgment upon the wayward peoples of the earth. **Fourth**, in all of this, ample opportunity to repent is given (**Rev. 16:9, 11**). That people did not do this is testimony to the deep-seated nature of the human predicament and our bias toward evil. But God cannot be faulted. All day long he stretches out his hand to a disobedient and obstinate people (Isa. 65:2; Rom. 10:21). We have all been given the gift of life (there is nothing in our human nature that provides for its own existence), a life designed for the blessedness of loving Him. He loves us so very much that He actively pursues us all of the days of our lives for the goal of *walking with Him in second person knowledge and love*. What a deal! Without a doubt, it is the best offer you or I will ever receive!

**Job 37:9–15.** In the last part of this section Elihu attempts to move Job to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. In this admonishment, which is largely made up of rhetorical questions, Elihu was correct because such a confession is required of all God's children, altogether apart from repentance. Elihu did not urge Job to confess sin as the others had done earlier but to grant God his place as sovereign of all He has made, including earth's human inhabitants. The speech sounds very much like God's speech in the next chapter—except God would also demonstrate His love in creation.

**Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love.** Elihu was spot-on with regard to the sovereignty of God. However, what is missing is 2<sup>nd</sup> person knowledge and love of God. Elihu reminds me of many Calvinists who are often very sound in their theology with regard to the sovereignty of God, and often stress the majesty of God as if

it alone would resolve our distance from and issues with God. However, it often only makes things worse, at least as far as the heart is concerned. Yes, the majesty of God should be honored. God should be revered. However, apart from loving God as our greatest good, we cannot be experientially, intimately, connected to Him. For example, consider how the love of God so transformed Saul of Tarsus from being a legalistic Jew who persecuted others out of desire to honor the majesty of God to a man who became completely overwhelmed by love for God and all others as we *walked with God by second person proper knowledge and proper love of God*. Or consider what John says about love in 1 John 4. Life really is about loving God. Moreover, as we love God we are irresistibly drawn to His majesty and sovereignty.

*Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love,*

*Pastor Don*