

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”**  
**October 2, 2016**

**Ezekiel 3:16–5:17.** Watchman on the wall.

**Revelation 2:1–11.** First love.

**Job 32:11–22.** Elihu is more occupied with his anger and theology than the Lord.

**COMMENTS.**

**Ezekiel 3:16–5:17.** This reading can be divided into two sections: **First**, Ezekiel is made “watchman” for Israel (**3:16-21**). The watchmen on the walls were important to the safety of the city and the image shows up frequently in the Scriptures (Isa. 21:11–12; 56:10; 62:6; Jer. 6:17; Psa. 127:1; 130:6; Heb. 13:17). The emphasis here is on judgment: the prophet must be faithful to warn the people of judgment, and the people must heed the warning and turn from their sin. Spiritually speaking, the “wall” that protected Israel was their covenant relationship with the Lord. If they obeyed the terms of the covenant declared by Moses, God would care for His people, protect them, and bless them; but if they disobeyed, God would chasten them. But whether He was chastening or blessing, God would always be faithful to His covenant. **Second**, God provides object lessons illustrating the siege of Jerusalem (**4:1-5:17**). These include the Lord instructing Ezekiel to draw a picture of Jerusalem on a clay tablet (or perhaps a brick) and to stage a miniature siege of the city, complete with siege ramps, enemy camps, and battering rams. The prophet was also to place an iron pan between himself and the city. The Lord also instructed the prophet to symbolically bear the punishment of Israel. He was to lie on his left side for 390 days, corresponding to the years of the Northern Kingdom’s punishment. He was then to lie on his right side for forty days, corresponding to the years of Judah’s punishment.

**By proper knowledge and by proper love.** Ezekiel was a faithful prophet of God with message of temporal judgment of God on the people God. It is not difficult to understand that these Jewish believers would not be *happy* with these messages Ezekiel would bring from the Lord, announcing destruction of Jerusalem and ravaging of the Promised Land. It was bad enough that the Jews were exiles in a pagan land, but to be told that they would have no city to return to was in their eyes rubbing salt in the wound. It is not difficult to see why they preferred encouraging messages of false prophets. There are parallels today in Christendom. It is undeniable that much of contemporary Christianity is lukewarm with regard to the Lord and Truth as evidenced by all of the apathy and anti-intellectualism in Christianity, an anti-intellectualism that is so beneath the dignity of Christ’s followers. However, when a pastor points out how we have all been guilty of mixing pagan anti-intellectual concepts in Christianity, it is not easy to swallow. When a pastor points out that America is increasingly becoming corrupt and under divine discipline, the message is not appreciated. When a pastor tells people who live for Mammon rather than the Lord that they are living in evil, the message is not appreciated. At least “not appreciated” by those who love darkness rather than light (John 3:19). They much more enjoy the message of false teachers who encourage them with more American- Mammonism, especially when it is all “baptized” in the name of Jesus as preached by prosperity preachers. However, for those who really desire to walk with the

Lord by proper knowledge and by proper love, they welcome messages of corrections so they can move closer to the Lord—their true love. To love the Lord first means just that, which means removing anything in the life that comes between us and the Lord. Why is it easy for a believer who loves the Lord and difficult for a believer who does not love the Lord very much? The answer is quite simple and lies in what we really value in life. The believer who walks with the Lord *with proper knowledge and proper love* has such a value of the Lord that when compared to the value of the world, the latter is like dung (Philip. 3:8)—which means that the world is not even a temptation. *Quo Vadis?*

**Revelation 2:1–11.** This text contains Christ’s messages to the church of Ephesus (2:1-7) and Smyrna (2:8-11). The church at Ephesus was told to return to its first love or else its lampstand would be removed out of its place, a judgment implying the death of the church, though not the individual loss of final salvation. Note the commendations given to the church. This was a serving church, busy doing the works of the Lord. No doubt their weekly schedule was filled with activities. It was also a sacrificing church, for the word labor means “toil to the point of exhaustion.” The Ephesian Christians paid a price to serve the Lord. They were a steadfast assembly, for the word patience carries the meaning of “endurance under trial.” They kept going when the going was tough. The Ephesian church was a separated people, for they carefully examined the visiting pastors to see if they were genuine. Paul had warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would come in from the outside and even arise from within the church, and John had instructed them to “try the spirits” (1 John 4:1–6). Ephesian Christians separated themselves not only from false doctrine but also from false deeds (Rev. 2:6). The word Nicolaitan means “to conquer the people,” reference to a sect who “lorded it over” the church and robbed the people of their liberty in Christ (see 3 John 9–11). They initiated what we know today as “clergy” and “laity,” a false division that is taught nowhere in the New Testament. All God’s people are “kings and priests” (1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6) and have equal access to the Father through the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19). The believers at Ephesus were a suffering people who patiently bore their burdens and toiled without fainting. And they did all of this for His name’s sake! No matter how you examine this congregation, you conclude that it is just about perfect. However, the One among the lampstands saw into their *hearts/wills*, and He had a somber diagnosis. This busy, separated, sacrificing church really suffered from “heart trouble”—they had abandoned their first love! The church at Smyrna was tenderly encouraged to be faithful unto death.

**By proper knowledge and by proper love.** The message to the Ephesian church further substantiates what we have been studying at FBC with regarding to the priority of love for God as the point of *all* Scripture and of life itself (Matt. 22:37-40)—we were created to know and love God—period! The Ephesians displayed “works ... labor ... and patience” (Rev. 2:2), but these qualities were not motivated by a love for Christ. What we do for the Lord is important, but so is why we do it! What is “first love”? It is the devotion to Christ that so often characterizes the new believer: fervent, personal, uninhibited, excited, and openly displayed. While it is true that mature married love deepens and grows richer, it is also true that it should never lose the excitement and wonder of those “honeymoon days.” When a husband and wife begin to take each other for granted, and life becomes routine, then the marriage is in danger. Just think of it: it is possible to serve, sacrifice, and suffer “for My name’s sake” and yet not really love Jesus

Christ! The Ephesian believers were so busy maintaining their separation that they were neglecting adoration. Labor is no substitute for love; our love for Him must be “pure” (Eph. 6:24). In other words, life with the Lord must be by *proper love*, which means that He takes first place in everything! Everything!

**Job 32:11–22.** Elihu continues to express his great desire to speak. Since the three had run out of words, Elihu felt it was his time to speak had come. He would tell what he knew (**6, 10**), for he was “full of words” (**18**). He notes that he would not take sides nor would he “flatter” either party in an effort to win its favor. He said to be guilty of “flattery” would mean that God who gave him life (“my Maker”) would take it away (**21-22**)

**By proper knowledge and by proper love.** While Elihu did keep his promise and not flatter Job nor his three “friends,” it is obvious that he was angry and things he said were *more personal* than theological or philosophical. Elihu believed that God’s Spirit was compelling him to speak in this manner. He felt that God gave him a mandate to tell everyone what he knew. However, he was mistaken. Little did he know that, when God finally appeared on the scene, He would completely ignore Elihu and all that he said. In order to really walk with the Lord *by proper knowledge and by proper love* there *must* be serious personal contemplation—contemplation of God, love, truth, and reality as such. Had Elihu been more occupied with the Lord than dishing out his theology, he would have enjoyed partaking of the nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4) and by doing so share in divine love and mercy for Job.

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

*Pastor Don*