

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
October 26, 2016

Daniel 2:17–3:30. The dreamed revealed to Daniel; Daniels’s friends face death.

1 Thessalonians 3:6–4:12. Paul prays for love to abound even more.

Job 40:13–24. God’s behemoth and love.

COMMENTS.

Daniel 2:17–3:30. In **chapter 2**, Daniel has the opportunity to interpret King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. He does so with tact and humility towards the king, and complete trust in God to reveal the mystery. The dream is of an enormous, dazzling statue. It’s not clear whether this statue is an image of Nebuchadnezzar himself. The head is gold, the chest and arms are silver, the belly and thighs are bronze, the legs are iron and the feet are a mixture of iron and clay. While the king watches, the statue is smashed to pieces by a rock. The rock is from God, ‘cut out, but not by human hands’. After destroying the statue, the rock grows to become a mountain which fills the whole earth. Daniel explains the dream to the king. The statue is a model of the Babylonian kingdom and the empires which will follow. The gold head is Nebuchadnezzar. His kingdom is the first and the finest. After him come kings and kingdoms of lesser quality. It is possible to identify the great empires which followed Babylon. The silver chest and arms are the Medes and Persians; the bronze belly and thighs are the Greeks; the iron legs are the Romans. By this interpretation, the rock is the impact of Christianity on the world—coming from God to establish his everlasting kingdom. Whatever the details of the dream, the overall message is clear. God is in control of the rise and fall of earthly empires. All kings are under his rule and his kingdom will ultimately reign supreme. In **chapter 3** King Nebuchadnezzar seeks to unite his people in the worship of a gold statue. The event is heralded by a big band making a mighty crescendo of sound. The penalty for disobedience is to be thrown into a furnace. Daniel’s three companions refuse to worship the statue. They decide they must make their stand against the excessive demands of the state, and they are not afraid: *If we are thrown into the burning furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up (3:17–18).*

Life in God by 2nd person proper knowledge and proper love. What gave Daniel’s three companions the courage to face the burning furnace rather than bow a knee to the statue? What gave Peter and the apostles the courage to face the Jewish council? Acts 5:29, *We must obey God rather than any human authority!* What gave the Christian martyrs the courage to face being burned on poles to light the nighttime gladiatorial games in the first century? Nothing less than 2nd person proper knowledge and proper love of God. It was the second person relationship with God, “You,” rather than thinking of God in terms of one’s experience as per first person “I,” or third person “He” (as if He were not present). It was proper in that they knew God and His will with first-hand knowledge. And it was all within the proper context of love. As I noted last evening, love commands all the other virtues and this includes courage. We always choose our greatest good (God or sin) and until God is our greatest good, we will always miss true

blessedness. The single greatest power to transform our lives really is life in God by 2nd person proper knowledge and proper love.

1 Thessalonians 3:6–4:12. Outline: Timothy’s good news (**3:6-10**), Paul’s prayer (**3:11-13**) and paraenesis regarding sex (**4:3-8**) and love for fellow believers (**4:9-12**).

Life in God by 2nd person proper knowledge and proper love. Note Paul’s prayer. He asked the Lord to perfect and enlarge the love the Thessalonians had already displayed toward one another. Love toward God and toward others turn us away from selfish concerns and open the way to virtue that is the condition of holiness. Most, if not all, of the so-called people testing is a result of our lack of love and thus patience with others. Usually it is our self-righteous outrage that causes us to say “I can’t believe they did this to *me*.” It is this love that Paul prayed for that brings peace and joy even in the most difficult circumstances, read Hab. 3:17-19. Daringly, Paul set himself as a standard of love to be emulated, a step he could take only because of his imitation of Jesus (1 Thess. 1:5–7). Consider how love transformed Paul from persecuting Christians prior to salvation to a life in 2 Cor. 5:14, “the love of Christ controls me.” Consider how love removed all of his former problems with jealousy, covetousness, and materialism as noted in Philip. 3, as the new Paul set his heart and life on Christ as his greatest good.

Job 40:13–24. In verse **15** we are introduced to the “behemoth,” which word is the plural of the Hebrew word for beast, but the verb used with it in this passage (**15–24**) is third-person masculine singular. A single beast is obviously in mind, suggesting that behemoth may be a proper noun, with the plural number used to show intensity or majesty. Some consider behemoth to be an allusion to a mythical beast, some a dinosaur, and some a hippopotamus, the latter is the most popular. However, the description does not fit given that its tail is likened to a cedar tree (**17**). Whatever creature is in mind, the behemoth was made by God. It feeds mainly on grass and lives in the water. Note its power and the difficulty of humans to capture it in verse 24.

Life in God by 2nd person knowledge and proper love. Given God’s power in controlling the behemoth and all creation, why does He take so much time and effort in wooing us? Why go through so much trouble of sending His Son to die for man’s sins? Why does God expend so much time and effort seeking a relationship with man? He does it out of love. He loves us and seeks a second person love relationship with us. He has demonstrated this again and again, especially in the life and sacrifice of Christ. Without His love and grace, we would be without hope—totally lost. We must never forget that the only reason we love the God of the Bible is because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). He is always seeking a 2nd person relationship with us. Unfortunately, there are a lot of things that can undermine a robust 2nd person relationship with God. Recall that a second person relationship is characterized by two things: a desire to be closer and a desire for the good of the object of love. As I will demonstrate in our next Bible class, this means that it is impossible to be angry in 2nd person love relationship. To get angry we all must switch to first person “I” or third person “he/she.” Thanks be to God He is always seeking a second-person with us. However, let us be aware that there are a lot of things that undermine a second-person relationship with God and others—a lot of things that would get in the way of us wanting to be closer and wanting the good of those we love.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love,

Pastor Don