

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
October 4, 2016**

Ezekiel 9:1–11:25. Divine judgement on the people of God.

Revelation 3:1–13. Churches of Sardis and Philadelphia.

Job 33:8–18. Love outstrips knowledge.

COMMENTS.

Ezekiel 9:1–11:25. Chapter 9 portrays God’s judgment on Jerusalem’s inhabitants. Ezekiel was so overwhelmed by the magnitude of this judgment that he cried out “Are you going to destroy the entire remnant of Israel?” He was a man of compassion who cared for his nation in spite of their wickedness. In chapter 10 we have the departure of God’s glory from the Temple. Chapter 11 covers God’s judgment on Jerusalem’s rulers.

Life with God by proper knowledge and proper love. It is indeed a fearful thing to fall in to the hands of the Lord—yes, even in the grace Church Age, Heb. 10:31. Note the extent of divine judgment in Ezekiel 9:6, *“Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.”* Note where judgment starts: “begin at My sanctuary!” Often in Scripture you find God sending judgment, not because unbelievers have sinned, but because His own people have disobeyed His law! Twice Abraham brought judgment on innocent Gentiles because he lied about his wife (Gen. 12:10–20; 20:1–18). Aaron the high priest led Israel into idolatry and 3,000 people were slain (Ex. 32:1–6, 26–29). David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband, Uriah, and his sins brought years of trouble to his family and the nation. A crew of Gentile sailors almost drowned because of the disobedience of God’s prophet Jonah. God’s people are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13–16). If there were more salt in this world, there would be less decay, and more light would mean less darkness. Peter warned believers in the first century that *“judgment must begin at the house of God”* (1 Peter 4:17). If our great country falls, it will because of the idolatry [Mammonism] of God’s own people. God only knows how many Christians put their hope in political leaders to fix our ailing country. Such hope only underscores the cancer in Christianity. If and when our nation falls, it will do so because of Christians. The only way to heal the cancer in contemporary Christianity is for Christians is to live for the Lord *by proper knowledge and by proper love*. Apart from this, as the Lord put it, Matthew 5:13: *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.* Spiritually speaking, are we being trampled underfoot by *kosmos diabolicus* and the circumstances of life or are we growing in the Lord *by proper knowledge and by proper love* and thus find ourselves named among the overcomers? *Quo Vadis?*

Revelation 3:1–13—messages to the church of Sardis and Philadelphia. Regarding Sardis, these believers had a “reputation” for “being alive.” However, the reality was that they were “dead.” Like the “dead” Pharisees, they merely had an outer appearance like a façade hiding their life. They are exhorted to “wake up” from their spiritual slumber and to “strengthen” the few evidences of life that they still had. Notice that Christ does not overlook the remnant in the church of Sardis. The church at Philadelphia (“love of the brothers”) was a faithful *small* church. It is important to understand that it is not the size or strength of a church that determines its status or approval by the Lord. What determines the health of any church is faithfulness to the Lord and His Word. To those who are faithful, Christ promises that they would be vindicated before the world (3:9), and that God would honor them in the next life (3:12).

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love. The church of Philadelphia lived up to its name: as most people know, Philadelphia means “love of the brethren.” Certainly, brotherly love is an important mark of the Christian. We are “taught of God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9): by God the Father (1 Jn. 4:19), God the Son (Jn. 13:34), and God the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Failure to love fellow believers as Christ loves us (John 13:34) is indicative of lack of healthy life in the Lord by *proper knowledge and by proper love*—it is an indication that one truly is not living as a disciple of Christ: John 13:35, *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* In other words, the believer who follows Christ’s mandate to love one another is seriously committed himself to being a disciple of Christ. Failure to love fellow believers, regardless of their denomination affiliations, makes it impossible to really know God in an experiential manner: 1 John 4:8, *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* Consider all of the implications of love in the following passages: 1 John 4:7, *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.* 8 *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* 9 *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.* 10 *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* 11 *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* 12 *No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.* One of the most prominent indications of rejection of His command to “love” is to redefine such love, usually in Stoic mentalistic terms. For those who are so tempted, I ask them to seriously consider 1 John 3:16-17, *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* 17 *But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his **compassion** (τὸ σπλάγγνα) from him, how does the love of God abide in him?* Of course, to redefine terms is but a manifestation of not only rejection of God’s Word, it is evidence of a false view of philosophy of language—one of Cratylean method rather than one of Realism. Yet, Cratyleanism is the standard system of almost all exegetes in modernism. On a practical level, love for fellow believers is, *at the very least*, to prefer the company of Christians to unbelievers: Romans 12:10 *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.* However, the key to living in this love is not to try to work up this love in our own power nor try to obtain it by some spiritual conduit system. It is only possible by *living in God by proper knowledge and proper love*, a life that shares in the very love of God for all, especially His own people.

Job 33:8–18. Elihu cites Job’s own testimony beginning in **verse 8**, "*Surely you have spoken in my hearing, And I have heard the sound of your words, saying.* Elihu proceeds to repeat Job’s claim to innocence in **8–11**, and then, in **12-18**, Elihu tells Job that ‘you are not right, for God is greater than man. Why do you complain to Him?’ (**12-13**). While Job had indeed insisted on his righteousness (9:21; 10:7; 16:17; 23:10; 27:5–6; 31:1–40), he had never insisted upon sinlessness. His contention was that his sufferings were not commensurate to his sins; he did not deserve such terrible suffering. Again, Elihu bluntly tells Job that he is not right. Moreover, he also counter’s Job’s charges of God being silent (33:13–28) by noting that God speaks in dreams (15), illnesses (19), and angels (23).

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love. It is important, especially in times of suffering and confusion, to keep love for God front and center. Instead of focusing on our problems or justifying self (Job) or justifying God (Elihu), the focus should be on loving God. While we think that the solution to our woes is to know “why,” this is not true, at least it is not the ultimate resolution. It is love for God that not only unites us to God, it is the source of all faith and hope. We will not trust or hope in someone we do not love. We cannot even really know someone we do not love. At the same time, we need to understand that love (will) is distinct from knowledge (intellect): we can love God completely as our ultimate good even when our knowledge of God is obscure. While we cannot love what we do not know, our love can far outstrip our knowledge of God. If we depend upon precise knowledge of what God is doing in difficult times, we cannot thrive in times of darkness. In times of darkness, we can nevertheless, still know much about God and His grace. Moreover, we can love Him for His own sake with a love that just is its own reward; we can thrive in our love for Him even in times of darkness. In spite of the fact that we may not understand this or that event, we do know God as such is the Lover of our souls and can do no wrong. Regardless of the circumstances of life, we can walk in the Lord by *proper knowledge and by proper love* with a love that always outstrips knowledge and actually fills us up with the fullness of God Himself: Ephesians 3:19 *to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don