

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”**  
**September 10, 2016**

**Amos 4:6–5:27.** Divine discipline and the problem of ignorance and legalism.

**Acts 9:20–43.** Conversion of Paul.

**Job 20:1–11.** Judging others.

**COMMENTS:**

**Amos 4:6–5:27.** **Chapter four** outlines various types of divine discipline on the Jewish people: famine (4:6), drought (4:7-8), destruction of crops (4:9), sickness (4:10a), defeat in war (4:10b), catastrophe (4:11), and final judgment (4:12-13). **Chapter 5** begins with the solution: hear the Word of God (5:1-3) and seek the Lord (5:4-6), after which “woe” is pronounced upon the ignorant (5:18-27). This ignorance includes ignorance of the coming day of the Lord (5:18-19) as well as the very nature of worship and life with God (5:21-27). The people of God were going through all of the divine mandated religious motions, but were ignorant of the point of it all and thus living in habitual sin and perpetuating injustice on the poor.

**Growing in proper knowledge and proper love of God.** Note in 5:21-24 that God tells His people that He hates all of their religious activity. But why? are they not doing exactly what He commanded them to do? They honored special days on the Jewish calendar, called sacred assemblies, offered sacrifices, brought offerings, and sang songs of worship. Their meetings looked so beautiful and holy, yet God not only refused to accept their worship, He said He despised and hated it all! What is the difference between obedience and legalism? The answer is found in understanding proper love and proper knowledge of God. True spirituality does not come by obeying rules and going through the motions, even when those “motions” are commanded in the Word of God, like confession of sin (1 John 1:9) or make learning and living the Word of God the top priority in life (Matt. 4:4). Without proper knowledge and proper love, it is all collapses into a conduit sham. We need true understanding and true love. It is unfortunate that we find ourselves in one of the most anti-intellectual ages in church history, a time in which Christians lack devotion of loving God *with their minds—it has gotten to the point that Christians are even suspicious of higher learning and science.* This eventually collapses into lack of a robust life of the mind for the service of Jesus Christ. Without a robust mind, the believer is easily moved by rhetoric and conduit forms of Christianity that collapse into some type of “spiritual higher life” system—which is, in fact, a form of legalism and ignorance. Legalism comes in many colors and flavors, but it always from the same poisonous root of ignorance coupled with just going through the motions. Going through the motions for God is anything but doing things out of love for the Lord. Moreover, love for God is the only thing that kills all forms of legalism. As we have studied, love for God is the source of living power to overcome sin and for all spiritual virtue as per 1 Cor. 13, *love thinks no evil, love is not proud, love believes all things, love endures all things.* When Christ was asked what the greatest command was, He noted that the entire Old Testament *hangs* on love for God and love for others. No matter how much Bible study or doctrine or “religious” activity we participate in, if we don’t love God and live for Him, we can’t honestly worship and serve the Lord or have much of a living

relationship with God, so says Jesus, Amos, as well as all of the New Testament epistles—one cannot even know God apart from this spiritual love. **1 John 4:8** *The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* In sum, God must be our greatest good (love) before we can have power over sin and power to live the Christian life. What we need is more of the Lord and more understanding of Him as such, not more contrived systems of “higher (conduit) power.”

**Acts 9:20–43.** In this section we see Paul’s ministry right after his conversion. Note how Saul “immediately” began to proclaim the Christ that he had persecuted, declaring boldly that Jesus is the Son of God (**9:20**). This is the only place in Acts that you find this title, but Paul used it in his epistles at least fifteen times. It was a major emphasis in his ministry. The dramatic change in Saul’s life was a source of wonder to the Jews at Damascus. Note the opposition to Paul in **9:21–25**, the rejection of Paul by Jerusalem believers (**9:26**), and how Barnabas, “the son of encouragement,” helped the Jerusalem church accept Saul (**9:27–31**). This is followed by miracles of Peter (**9:32–43**).

**Growing in proper knowledge and proper love of God.** Note the complete transformation of Saul’s life as he went from being a persecutor of Christ to an *immediate* proclaimer of Christ. Paul considered it the highest privilege to live for Christ as His representative. All of us Christians are representatives of Christ. We are to represent Christ wherever we go and in whatever we do. Christ is the Master and we are His disciples, and the goal is always to increasingly become like our Master, this is the mark of really learning from the Master (Luke 6:40). What a privilege and responsibility to know that we are walking representative of Jesus Christ, the Greatest Person who ever graced this earth, and that our thought life and actions are to increasingly reflect His. This takes life to a whole new blessed dimension!

**Job 20:1–11.** Zophar wants to make sure that Job knows about the awful fate of the wicked. According to Zophar, the higher the wicked man climbs in his success, the farther down he will fall when his judgment comes. When he falls, he will go down the drain like his own dung; and people will ask, “Where is he?” (**20:6–7**) He will vanish like a forgotten dream or like a night vision that cannot be called back (**20:8**). Not only will the wicked man’s person and name vanish, but so will his wealth. After his death, the truth about his crimes will become known; and his children will have to use their inheritance to pay back the people their father has robbed. Their father was still in “youthful vigor” when he died (**20:11**), but now he lies lifeless in the grave. According to Zophar, the wicked die young, when they least expect it. However, when one surveys both sacred and secular history, he discovers that there are no ironclad rules that govern when either the wicked or the righteous will die. Generally speaking, people who ignore God’s laws are more vulnerable to problems that could lead to an early death. Sexual promiscuity, the use of narcotics (including alcohol and tobacco), and a reckless lifestyle can all help shorten a person’s life; *but there is no guarantee that this will happen.* Some godless people live to an old age, as the grace of God gives them time to repent. Zophar was not talking about the natural consequences of a wicked life, but the judgment of God on sinners. Zophar and his two friends were certain that Job was a hypocrite, that his pious life was only a veneer to cover his secret sins.

**Growing in proper knowledge and proper love of God.** The worst thing about judging other believers is not in being wrong about why they are suffering. The worst thing is the kind of person we become when we judge others. We become miserable, arrogant, self-righteous, and insensitive to fellow believers who not conform to our conduit system. It is one thing to be wrong, it is another to become more judgmental and inhumane toward those who need care, comfort, love—not condemnation and self-righteousness. It is one thing to be mistaken about the source of someone’s woes. It is another to become a nastier and meaner person because of someone else’s sorrows.

*Life in the Lord by proper knowledge and by proper love,*

*Pastor Don*