

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”**  
**September 11, 2016**

**Amos 6:1–7:17.** Condemnation of apathy, pride, and extravagance.

**Acts 10:1–33.** Cornelius.

**Job 20:12–29.** Judging Job as a wicked man.

**COMMENTS:**

**Amos 6:1–7:17.** Note the denouncement, the “woe,” upon those caught up in extravagant sensual pleasures and indulgence during times of national degeneracy and imminent collapse of the nation (**6:4-6**). It is all too common that in times of national degeneracy and national peril many continue to live out their lives in lust and recreational activities as ways of escaping the nihilism of materialism—wine, women, songs, and parties to fill the void in the soul. Note in the text that Israel’s wealthy citizens slept on the best beds, ivory inlaid beds, while others were hurting. The poor could not afford a bed, much less one inlaid with ivory. In times past only royalty enjoyed such luxury (“the houses adorned with ivory”). Implied in these descriptions are laziness, sensuality, drunkenness of Israel’s leading citizens as they ate the best food and lived the good life of luxury with no thought of their Maker. Ordinary citizens probably ate meat only three times a year, at the annual festivals. “Fattened calves” is actually “calves from the midst of the fattening pen.” “Veal” is the common name for this delicacy now. Such a meat diet was for the few in Israel’s society, a luxury for the wealthy only. Note in **6:5** that the leading citizens of Israel had the luxury of a leisurely lifestyle as they lounged around eating, drinking, and making up songs, imagining themselves to be little “Davids.” “You strum away” translates the active participle of a verb that occurs only here. It may have the idea of composing “some frivolous verbal accompaniment to music.” “On your harps” is literally “on the mouth of the harp” and means “to the accompaniment of the harp.” These activities would have enlivened their revelry. In **6:6** Israel’s leading citizens overindulged themselves in drinking, for containers to drink wine they used “bowls” rather than cups. “Use the finest lotion” is literally “the first [best grade] of oils they anoint.” The indictment in all the accusations of indulgence is that Israel’s leading citizens went on in their revelry as if all was well. “Joseph” (Israel) was about to break up as a nation, yet the leading citizens were not sick over it as they should have been. They were “totally self-centered, totally preoccupied with the pleasures of life but blinded to the threatening reality all around them.” Life, so they thought, could not be better. According to Amos, it could not have been worse. There are many contemporary parallels to our nation.

**Growing in proper knowledge and proper love of God.** No believer should feel ashamed of his wealth or his enjoyment of the luxuries of life that he may possess *as long as his priority* continues to be on living for and loving God and His plan. However, the believer who just lives for things and puts the temporal things of life before the Lord should be ashamed of himself—and one day will feel great shame before the Lord Jesus Christ. No believer should feel guilty about his wealth, unless he is selfish and does not care about helping the poor. The wealthy believer who is so uncaring that he does not give to the poor should feel guilty. Of course, the main issue is always the Lord. It is one thing for unbelievers to be “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4), it is quite another for believers to love pleasure more than God as illustrated in the church of

Laodecia, who thought they did not need to be serious about the Lord and the plan of God because “they were rich, increased with goods” (Rev. 3:17)—such believers only see God as a good to gaining more temporal things and only turn to the Lord when and because their “earthly treasures” are threatened. This is the mindset of many modern believers and it is shameful. It not only makes me sick as a pastor, it makes the Lord sick to His stomach as well (see Rev. 3:16). Moreover, I hope I never get to the point where I think that it is “OK” for a believer to be apathetic to the Lord, for such a day will signify that I too have become lukewarm.

**Acts 10:1–33.** Chapter 10 is pivotal in the Book of Acts, for it records the salvation of the Gentiles. We see Peter using “the keys of the kingdom” for the third and last time. He had opened the door of faith for the Jews (Acts 2) and also for the Samaritans (Acts 8), and now he would be used of God to bring the Gentiles into the church (see Eph. 2:11–22). The stoning of Stephen and the subsequent persecution of the church marked the climax of the Apostles’ witness to the Jews. Then the Gospel moved to the Samaritans. When God saved Saul of Tarsus, He got hold of His special envoy to the Gentiles. Now was the time to open the door of faith (Acts 14:27) to the Gentiles and bring them into the family of God. Before He could save the Gentiles, God had to prepare Peter to bring the message and Cornelius to hear the message. Salvation is a divine work of grace, but God works through human channels. It is interesting to see how religious a person can be and still not be saved. Certainly, Cornelius was sincere in his obedience to God’s Law, his fasting, and his generosity to the Jewish people (compare this to Luke 7:1–10). He was not permitted to offer sacrifices in the temple, so he presented his prayers to God as his sacrifices. In every way, he was a model of religious respectability—and yet he was not a saved man. The difference between Cornelius and many religious people today is this: he knew that his religious devotion was not sufficient to save him. Many religious people today are satisfied that their character and good works will get them to heaven, and they have no concept either of their own sin or of God’s grace. In his prayers, Cornelius was asking God to show him the way of salvation and God answered that prayer.

**Growing in proper knowledge and proper love of God.** There are at least two lessons we can glean from this section. **First**, the idea that “one religion is as good as another” is completely false. Those who tell us that we should worship “the God of many names” and not “change other people’s religions” are going contrary to Scripture. “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22), and there can be no salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ, who was born a Jew. Cornelius had piety and morality, but he did not have salvation. Some might say, “Leave Cornelius alone! His religion is a part of his culture, and it’s a shame to change his culture!” God does not see it that way. Apart from hearing the message of the Gospel and trusting Christ, Cornelius had no hope—he was Hell-bound. **Second**, the seeking Savior (Luke 19:10) will find the seeking sinner (Jer. 29:13). Wherever there is a searching heart (formal cause), God responds (efficient cause). This is why it is essential that we as God’s children obey His will and share His Word. We never know when our witness for Christ is exactly what somebody has been waiting and praying for. We need to be conscious about the fact that we Christians represent Christ to every single person we meet. This is a high calling and one of the highest of privileges of our lives. As we live with Christ in second-person relationship, He makes His mark on us as we will find ourselves loving like He does and forgiving like He does as illustrated by Stephen when he was stoned. What a blessed life!

**Job 20:12–29.** In this section, Zophar preaches to Job about how the pleasure of the wicked is temporary. Zophar uses *eating* as his basic image here. The wicked man enjoys sin the way people enjoy food, keeping it in his mouth where he can “taste it” before swallowing it. In fact, he enjoys sin so much, he can’t make himself swallow it! But eventually that delicious food in his mouth becomes poison in his system, and he becomes ill and vomits everything up. While enjoying his sin, he hasn’t noticed that he’s been bitten by a poisonous viper and is destined for death. In other words, sin carries with it both enjoyment and punishment; and if you want the one, you must also accept the other. The pleasures of sin are only for a season (Heb. 11:25). But God’s judgment involves much more: the wicked man not only gets sick from his sin, but he does not enjoy the everyday blessings of life, **Job 20:17**: “He will not see the streams, the rivers flowing with honey and cream.” The land of Canaan was a land “flowing with milk and honey.” Milk and honey were staples, not luxuries; and a land “flowing with milk and honey” would be productive and able to support the people. But the wicked man has lost his taste for basic foods, and nothing satisfies him anymore. His taste for sin has ruined his enjoyment of the fundamental blessings of life. Using the image of *eating*, Zophar has made two points: what the wicked man swallows will make him sick and will take away his desire for the good things of life. He makes a third point in **Job 20:18–19**: the wicked man will not be able to enjoy (swallow down) some of the things he labored for. Because he acquired his wealth through sinning, that wealth will not satisfy him. This certainly has been reflected in the lives of many people who have rejected Christ and devoted themselves to the pleasures of sin. The more they indulge, the more they crave; and the more they satisfy that craving, the less they enjoy. The less they enjoy, the more they have to sin in order to recapture the old thrills; and the more they sin, the more they destroy their ability to enjoy anything. Note in **Job 20:20–29** that while he is enjoying his prosperity, the wicked man will experience distress, misery, and God’s burning anger. God will “rain down His blows upon him” (**20:23**). The evil man will try to run away, but God will come at him with a sword and shoot at him with a bronze-tipped arrow that will pierce him (**20:24**). He describes the wicked man trying to escape God’s judgment. The arrows come at him as he runs through the darkness, and the fire falls around him. Then a flood catches up with him and destroys everything. But that’s not the end: The wicked man is finally dragged into court where heaven and earth testify against him and find him guilty (**20:27**). In **20:29**, Zophar sums it up with ‘such is the “portion” of “the wicked.”’ This is what God has “appointed for them” as their “heritage.” How then, as Zophar saw it, could Job think that his situation was any different? Since he had lost his wealth so suddenly, how else could such a calamity be explained except that he was wicked?

**Growing in proper knowledge and proper love of God.** Zophar, of course, in his religious shortsightedness, made no allowance for a person being afflicted for any reason other than retribution for sin. In his stubborn invective, he flared at Job with venomous words, like the poisonous snake he spoke about. Let this be a lesson to us all about the dangers of judging any believer. It is so easy to judge believers who “don’t have doctrine” or understand “philosophical realism.” However, such a judgmental attitude of not loving fellow believers, regardless of their denomination or beliefs, destroys our love for the Lord and life itself (read 1 John 4:7-21). We are called to love others as we are loved by Jesus Christ (John 15:12). As we love God, we actually become partakers of the Trinitarian love so that God’s love for others becomes part of our lives. This love goes far

beyond mere virtue. It cannot be mandated for the human race. It cannot be universalized. Yet, it is mandated for the Christian. We are to love God, love all others, and love ourselves, all done for the sake of God. What a privilege we have of being like Jesus Christ as illustrated by Stephen when he was stoned and forgave those who were murdering him—this is nothing less than Stephen sharing in Christ's love for those who were murdering him. This is clearly supernatural, but then again that is what the spiritual life is all about: the supernatural character of God in our lives. What a life!

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

*Pastor Don*