

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”**  
**September 12, 2016**

**Amos 8:1–9:15.** Divine destruction and restoration of His people.

**Acts 10:34–11:18.** The gospel is for all nations.

**Job 21:1–16.** Job’s reply to Zophar: the wicked many times do go unpunished.

**COMMENTS:**

**Amos 8:1–9:15.** In **chapter eight** Amos shows that Israel is ripe for judgment. Just as the right time comes for harvest, so has the moment arrived when Israel’s sins must be punished. She has been obsessed with materialism—squeezing trade into every possible minute, manipulating quantities and prices, and treating the poor as slaves. But, in God’s universe, everything belongs together. The land is going to rebel against the behavior of its inhabitants. There will be a major earthquake and the sun will go into eclipse. The joy of Israel’s religious celebrations will be plunged into the grief of a family funeral. Most terrible of all, there will be no word from God. When people look for guidance, they will find only silence. This silence is more dreadful and complete than any physical famine or drought. **Chapter 9** begins with the continued judgment of God on His sinful people. The shrine is to be destroyed. Amos sees God directing the work of demolition. The people will find no escape from His anger. There is nowhere to hide from God’s judgment, because He is always ahead and in complete control. He is not a local, limited god, or one of merely human origin. He is the all-powerful, ever-present, Sovereign Lord, who governs heaven and earth and directs the history of nations. Israel is to be sifted and sorted along with the rest—because she has behaved no better than they have. However, by the time one gets to **the end of chapter 9**, we see the Lord’s promise that Israel’s destruction will not be a total annihilation. One day the Lord will restore his people and renew the kingdom of David. Israel will fulfil her calling as God’s first nation and other nations will join her in acknowledging the Lord. In the early years of the Christian mission, Amos’ prophecy will be quoted by James at the Council of Jerusalem. It is a mandate for including Gentles (non-Jews) in the Christian church (Acts 15:13–19). When God brings Israel back from exile, the whole of creation will celebrate. God will set his people in a land of peace and plenty. The God who has sworn and delivered destruction now promises a perfect future. Amos ends his prophecy with the wonderful promise that Israel shall be planted, protected, and never again pulled up from her land “says the Lord your God.” Your God! What a great encouragement for the Jews to know that, in spite of their unbelief, their God will be faithful to keep His covenant promises. God is always the God of mercy (**9:8–10**), who will keep His covenant with Abraham and his descendants and not destroy the nation. The nations would be sifted, and the sinners punished, but not one of His true worshipers would be lost. It’s always the believing remnant that God watches over so that they might fulfill His will on the earth. The self-confident sinners, who don’t expect to be punished, are the ones who will be slain by the sword (**9:10**).

**By knowledge and by love.** As we walk with the Lord in a second-person relationship, we should always focus on His grace. It is focus on the goodness of God that cultivates our personal love for Him—by nature we all love what we perceive as good. We need to be careful, however, because it is very easy to use God’s grace and faithfulness as excuses to engage in certain illicit activities. This amounts to using grace as a license to sin. Yes, God is faithful in grace, but also in divine discipline as with the Jews above. Failure to respect this fact denigrates love for Him because without respect there can be no true love. We do not love those we do not respect and that includes God. The “fear of the Lord” is not some relic just for the Old Testament believer, see 2 Cor. 7:1; Rev. 14:7; 19:5. Those who sin with impunity because of “grace-orientation,” do not know God, love God, or really understand the true grace that makes it possible for the believer to overcome sin and continue to grow in respect and love for God and increasingly *become* more Christlike.

**Acts 10:34–11:18.** This reading can be divided into three sections. First (**10:34–43**), Peter was convinced by his vision that God considered no one “impure or unclean” and so proceeded to share the gospel with Cornelius and his fellow Gentiles. It is Peter’s third and final major sermon in Acts. The sermon basically was a summary of Jesus’ ministry, emphasizing the significance of His death and resurrection. What was really striking about it was Peter’s opening statement which recognized that God accepts people of all races and nations. Second (**10:44–48**), we see the universal ministry of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit descended on the gathering of Gentiles, who outwardly demonstrated the Spirit’s presence by “tongues.” Recognizing their possession of the Spirit, Peter arranged for their water baptism. Now he fully understood his vision. He had no trouble accepting the hospitality of his Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ. Third (**11:1–18**), we see endorsement of this witness in the final scene in Jerusalem, where Peter was questioned by some of the more conservative Jewish Christians about his having dined with Gentiles. Peter related the whole incident to them. Both visions are given in detail for the third time. The reader cannot miss the importance of the event. Peter’s critics could not deny the Spirit’s work, so they had to agree with Peter that God was including the Gentiles in Christ. Not all the details had been settled. The issue would arise again in the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15. But the general principle of the Gentile mission had been agreed upon. The door was now open for the mission of the Antioch church. God’s people is no longer restricted to the Jews, it is now open to all who want a relationship with Him.

**By knowledge and by love.** The mass influx of Gentiles into the assembly of God’s people would entail a great many changes. Things were about to change in a major way. Refusing to change in the presence of truth that demands such a change is a dangerous mindset. Failure to change in the face of truth reveals a hardened heart. It is why many Jews would not accept Christianity. It is also a reason why many believers continue to hold on to conduitism, Cartesianism, and Cratyleanism in the doctrinal movement—they simply refuse to change, due in no small part to the fact that this entails admission that they, as well as their favorite pastor-teacher, was wrong. If we hope to continue growing in proper knowledge and love of God, we must be willing, without hesitation, to change any view or behavior in order to conform to Whole Truth, Total Truth, reality as such—no matter the cost. Anything short of this is nothing but negative volition to truth, which no amount of excuses could ever change or cover up.

**Job 21:1–16.** Whereas Zophar filled his speech with illustrations of how the wicked are punished, Job filled his response with illustrations of how the wicked escape unscathed. This is the nub of the question and the irreconcilable difference between the friends' view of retribution and Job's sure conviction that he was an innocent sufferer. Specifically, Job notes that the *life of the wicked may be long* (**Job 21:7–16**). In contrast to Zophar's text (**20:5**), Job said, "Why do the wicked still live, continue on, also become very powerful?" (**21:7**) They have security on every side: their children and homes are safe (**21:8–9, 11–12**), their business prospers (**21:10**), and they have long lives in which to enjoy their prosperity (**21:13**). They also have many descendants who share the family wealth and enjoy it. The death of the wicked is sudden; they don't linger in agony and long for deliverance. Of course, Job's situation was just the opposite: His family had been destroyed, his wealth was gone, and he was suffering greatly as he waited for death to come. But the saddest thing about the wicked is the way they leave God out of their lives *and still prosper* (**21:14–15**). They want nothing to do with the Lord; in fact, they say to Him, "Get away from us! Leave us alone!" They refuse to pray to the Lord, obey Him, or give Him credit for their success. This is the philosophy of most unsaved people today; you might call it "practical atheism" (see Psa. 10). God is not in their thoughts, let alone in their plans (James 4:13–17). They are self-sufficient as they do what they want to do, and they do it "their way." Jesus described such a person in Luke 12:13–21. Job hastened to say that this was not *his* philosophy of life. "But I refuse even to deal with people like that" (**Job 21:16**). The wicked take credit for their wealth, but Job acknowledged that everything comes from God (1:21). How, then, can Job's three friends classify him with the wicked?

**By knowledge and by love.** Many righteous believers (sanctification) suffer physically and economically more than some unrighteous people. Jesus certainly suffered in these areas more than Herod, Nero, or Pontius Pilate. The apostle Paul suffered far more than many of his fellow unsaved Jews. We must avoid at all costs the temptation to ever envy the ungodly because they may experience more temporal blessings than we do. The believer who loves the Lord keeps his eyes on the Lord as His greatest wealth even if he is living in a shack with very little in the way of financial or physical health. Again, let us never envy anyone who does not have the Lord. Of course, those who love the Lord already know this; it is those who focus on materialism who reveal what constitutes wealth for them—in a word they are *in heart* "materialists" (the greatest curse of modernity).

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

*Pastor Don*