

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”  
September 15, 2016**

**Micah 1:1–3:12.** Indictment against Israel’s idolatry and injustice.

**Acts 13:13–14:7.** Paul’s sermon.

**Job 22:14–30.** Eliphaz’s appeal to Job for repentance.

**COMMENTS:**

**Micah 1:1–3:12.** As you read through these three chapters, note the rebellion, evil, idolatry, crass materialism, sin, false prophets, fraud, and injustices, all committed by God’s own people. Observe all of the warnings of divine judgment—it is not as if these evils were perpetrated in ignorance. Let us consider the issue of true versus and false prophets (cf., **2:6-11**). In much of her history, Israel had both good (true) and bad (false) prophets. The true prophets spoke for God to the people, and it always included urging them to return to the moral, ethical, and spiritual virtue laid out in the Covenantal Law. The false prophets, on the other hand, often said that God would not harm His people so long as they were involved in the outward ceremonial aspects of the Law, that is, as long as they “went through the motions.” True prophets urged the nation to follow the covenant, as outlined in Deuteronomy 27–28. A very strong ethical dimension was always emphasized in the messages of the true prophets. In fact, their messages were often more ethical than eschatological. The yet-future peace and prosperity for the nation (as promised in the Abrahamic Covenant; cf. Gen. 17:3–8; 22:17–18) will come only when the nation turns to the Lord and follows His Word. In contrast with the true prophets, the false prophets spoke only what the people wanted to hear. They would teach that God was for their nation and would not destroy it. This was of course partly true and partly false. God was for the nation of Israel, but He had said He would punish them if they did not obey Him. By not telling the people to repent and return to the Lord, the prophets were neglecting the only thing that could save the people from the invading Assyrians. In effect, the prophets were opening the way for the captivity by the Assyrians by not warning the people to turn back to the Lord. Contemporary Christians face the same type of issues with true pastors and false pastors. False pastors who will only be too happy to shape their messages to the itching ears of the congregation, read 2 Tim. 4:3; and it does not matter if it is true just as long as it makes people feel better, which Paul says collapses into “fables” (2 Tim 4:4). There are many modern fables in Christianity today regarding the nature of God, man, creation, and the spiritual life. What is most disconcerting is that there seems to be great loss of discernment and even loss of orientation to truth as such. Many Christians will think a message is good because it makes them feel good about themselves or even their problems. It will not even occur for them to ask themselves, “but is it true?” This is certain evidence that truth to them has become a functional or psychological issue rather than one that is about reality as such (correspondence). How did the church get this way, how did it get so psychologized and relativized and so anti-intellectual/truth, especially in light of the Word of God’s explicit declaration that the ‘church is to be the pillar of truth and support of Truth’ (read 1 Tim. 3:15) as such?

**By knowledge and by love.** God has graciously given us all the gift of life and on top of that the gift of eternal life that alone makes it possible to seek the true God by proper knowledge and by proper love. This is why God has given us the gift of life and the gift

of eternal life. By nature, we are all hardwired to seek the good! No matter where we are, no matter the circumstances, we always seek *what we think is our greatest good*. Our nature that seeks the good seeks infinite good; and of course God is the only infinite good, and thus the only object of our love that can fulfill us in a way that gives us true peace, supernatural peace. Our nature to seek good extends to seeking value, recognition, and love. Hence, we are divinely designed in our first and second births to seek value, recognition, and love in God. The problem, all too often, is that we end up seeking good in all the wrong places, which we always recognize sooner or later. Instead of seeking God as the greatest good and finding our value and recognition in Him, we tend to seek it in this world. The very restlessness that we all experience speaks to the reality that we are made for another world. Given the fact that it is our nature to seek the good and God is the good, one might think that the most natural thing in the world is to seek God first and foremost. However, such is not the case. While we cannot help but seek the good, the fact remains that we end up seeking evil and what is not good for us *but always under the guise of some good*, even if it is limited good of temporary pleasure. This perversion afflicts us all. We all love evil as a good every time we sin. The only solution is to change one's view of what is really good. This is what sanctification is all about. What does all of this have to do with the above passage? The perversion of seeking evil as good was the problem with the Jews that Micah was addressing. All of the sins, evil, false prophets, injustices were all viewed as beautiful and good things by God's people. The only cure for any and all evil for them or any Christian is to no longer see the evil as a good. Moreover, every time we commit a sin or evil we lay deeper tracks in our souls, called vices, that make it easier to see and commit further acts of sin and evil, both of which destroy appetite for God and the true goods that He offers. The worst thing about the situation of the Jews that Micah is addressing is not the impending judgment of Assyria. The worst thing about it is that the Jews loved evil and sin more than the God who gave them life, loved them, and called them to be His special people. The same can be said of a Christian: the worst thing about getting involved in evil is not the evil, it is seeing the ugliness of evil as a good and loving it more than the God-man who died for us and calls us to Himself and offers us the grace for sanctification that changes our appetites by enhancing them for God—to know Him more accurately and comprehensively and to love Him more fervently and deeper.

**Acts 13:13–14:7.** In **13:16-41** we see Paul’s sermon as well as the response. Paul’s sermon had much in common with Peter’s sermons of Acts 2 and 3. It was mainly constructed around Old Testament texts. It can be outlined in three sections. (1) Acts 13:16–25 is reminiscent of one of Stephen’s sermon. They summarize Israel’s history from the Exodus to David. Paul highlighted events which emphasized God’s promises and His mercy to His people. (2) In Acts 13:26-37, he introduced the Jews of Pisidian Antioch to Jesus, the promised Messiah. He told them of the death and resurrection of Jesus and quoted Old Testament texts which pointed to these events. (3) In Acts 13:38-41, Paul concluded his sermon with an appeal for them to believe in Jesus. He emphasized that salvation is through faith in Jesus, not by works of the law. This became a favorite theme in Paul’s epistles, which he would write later.

**By knowledge and by love.** Paul offered the good news of salvation in his sermon (Acts 13:32), he gave the gospel. All that remained for the hearers was to believe. He told them that through faith in Jesus Christ, they could have two blessings that the Law could never provide: the forgiveness of their sins and justification before the throne of God. Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Jesus Christ. It has to do with the believer’s standing before the throne of God. The Jews were taught that God justified the righteous and punished the wicked (2 Chron. 6:22–23). But God justifies the ungodly who will put their faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:1–8). The Law cannot justify the sinner; it can only condemn him (Rom. 3:19–20; Gal. 2:16). God not only forgives our sins, but He also gives us the very righteousness of Christ and puts it on our account! This was certainly good news delivered by Paul to that searching congregation of Jews and Gentiles who had no peace in their hearts, even though they were religious. To love God requires that a person see God as His greatest good. This cannot be done when one stands guilty before God. Moreover, as long as one has guilt in his life, he is precluded from seeing God as His good and thus be attracted to Him. One cannot be attracted to anything that is a threat. The good news is that God has forgiven all of our sins and has justified us and fully accepted us, making it possible for us to love Him and draw close to Him as our greatest good with absolute confidence and love.

**Job 22:14–30.** Eliphaz continues to preach to Job. He calls on Job to *return to the Almighty* (23), *i.e.* repent, *find delight in the Almighty* (26), *pray* and *fulfil his vows* (27). Then everything Job does will prosper (28), and he will even bring blessing to others, as he did in the past. No doubt that Eliphaz was sincere and actually said some things that were doctrinally correct. However, it simply did not apply to Job’s case.

**By knowledge and by love.** It has well been said that the highest reward for a faithful life is not what you get for it but what you *become* by it. What kind of person do we *become* when a fellow believer sits in judgment over us? What *becomes* of our attitude to God in difficult times? What *becomes* of our love for God in times of testing? What *becomes* of our faithfulness when we are challenged? No man, woman, or child is ever the same after testing; and the only test that can be considered as receiving a passing grade is one in which the believer comes out on the other side with more knowledge and

love of God. Of course, when the believer sees his love for and knowledge of God as the greatest rewards, greater than solving problems, he passes the test with A+--for he has mastered the meaning of life. He views God not primarily as a means of gaining some other reward or to solve a problem, but as the lover of his soul to which he responds with love (Gal. 2:19-20). In sum, the greatest reward or blessing from God is not what God does for us—it really is God Himself. Love for God really is its own reward, and as such the greatest by far.

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

*Pastor Don*