

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
September 20, 2016

Habakkuk 2:6–3:19. Habakkuk’s joy in the Lord regardless of the circumstances.

Acts 18:1–28. Paul in Corinth.

Job 26:1–14. Job’s ninth speech.

COMMENTS.

Habakkuk 2:6–3:19. In **chapter 2** of this section, God describes the wickedness of Nineveh and pronounces judgment on them. **Chapter 3** records Habakkuk’s prayer and recognition of God’s glory. In his prayer and praise, Habakkuk was overwhelmed by God’s splendor throughout the universe (**3:2-6**), and he was aware of God’s work among His people in delivering them from Egypt and sustaining them in the wilderness and throughout the Old Testament (**3:7-15**). Habakkuk vowed to wait patiently on the Lord (**3:16**) and promises to rejoice in the Lord regardless of the circumstances of life: Habakkuk **3:17-19**, *Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls-- 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

By proper knowledge and by proper love. “Proper” (knowledge and love) refers to direct knowledge and love between the believer and God. “Improper” knowledge, whether true or false, refers to knowledge that is mediated by another person, knowledge that has not been examined directly by the believer. For example, when the pastor teaches the Word of God and the believer just takes his word for it, then it is improper, mediated knowledge—again, even if it is true. It only becomes proper knowledge when the believer checks out the information for himself, like reads the Bible for himself and thinks about it seriously so that it becomes his own. Proper knowledge also refers to knowledge that a person gains directly through first principles. For example, if I think the Earth is spherical based on what I was taught in school yet I never checked it out myself, it is improper knowledge—in fact, it is blind faith in that I am not aware that I am accepting this by faith. However, if I look at the moon during a lunar eclipse and through first principles see the round shadow of the Earth on the moon, then my knowledge that the Earth is a sphere is proper knowledge gained by first principles. So, what does this have to do with our passage? A lot! Habakkuk’s knowledge of God, joy in God, and love of God was proper knowledge—he, and all mature believers, possess proper joy, and proper love. It was direct and personal. There is no real or proper joy apart from proper knowledge and proper love that is only gained by personal relationship with God that is not dependent on any human teacher. Habakkuk began this book with frustration with God and ended with unconditional glorification of God. This is impossible apart from spiritual self-esteem, which can only be gained by proper knowledge and proper love. The best thing we can do for ourselves is stop trying to get our self-esteem from how we look, what we have, or what people think of us. All that really matters is what the Lord thinks of us—but that kind of attitude is not possible unless we are living for Him *by proper knowledge and by love*. When life really is about the Lord, how could circumstances ever really threaten our joy?

Acts 18:1–28. Paul moves from Athens to Corinth—from the intellectual center of Greece to its commercial heart (18:1–17). Corinth is the capital of the province of Achaia. It is famous for its trade. It hosts the famous Isthmian Games, which are second only to the Olympics.

By proper knowledge and proper love. Corinth was a byword for sex. Sex and vice saturated the city. The temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, stands high above the city. So, what does Paul have to offer this busy, wealthy, vice-ridden metropolis? The same thing we find everywhere else in Scripture: a relationship with God *by proper knowledge and proper love*. All of the love, acceptance, and fulfillment that people seek in illicit, insatiable sex speaks of a deep need of a love that goes far deeper than sexual satisfaction. Those involved in illicit sexual activity are never satisfied because sex will never satisfy the deepest longings in male and female—total love, acceptance, recognition, and appreciation. Only the love of God can satisfy the deep longings of man's heart. However, man is too mentally weak and sensual to see God's love. He must be regenerated. His eyes must be opened by God Himself; he must be born again, as beautifully expressed by John Newton in *Amazing Grace* (note the beautiful relationship with God *by proper knowledge and by proper love*):

Amazing Grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.
Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.
Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.
The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.
When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Job 26:1–14. Before magnifying God’s great power in the universe, Job first rebuked Bildad for giving him no help (**Job 26:1–4**). Then Job extolled the greatness of God (**5–13**). God sees everything, even the realm of the dead (**5–6**). If God sees what’s going on in the world of the dead, then surely He knows what is happening in the world of the living! God not only sees everything, but He made everything and controls it (**7–13**). Job began his hymn of praise with a statement about God’s power in the heavens (**7–9**), and he described the earth with remarkable scientific accuracy (**7**). God also controls the clouds and the rain. Job then moved his attention to the earth (**10–11**) and praised God for marking out the horizon where the sun rises and sets. He is the God who controls day and night, land and water. The last stanza of Job’s hymn centers on God’s power in the waters (**12–13**). God blows the storm clouds away and clears the sky after the storm. This fits perfectly with the doctrine of concurrence in philosophical realism. To modern deists, this is viewed more as ignorant superstition to think God controls *everything*.

By proper knowledge and proper love. As we will cover in our next Bible class, in our study of ultimate reality and science, there are three degrees of knowledge. The first degree of knowledge is called *physica*; it deals with moveable, sensible beings (like an apple), it remains dependent upon matter. The second degree deals with mathematics and while it comes from matter, it is a bit more separated from matter and consists of numbers and shapes (geometry)—for example, the idea of a perfect circle comes from something round in the material realm even though in the material realm there is no perfect circle. The third degree of knowledge is metaphysics; it excludes all matter. Examples would include angels, God, truth, justice, love. This threefold division is not only critical in understanding ultimate reality and how science is becoming a threat to the survival of man by redefining man in terms of only the first two degrees, it is key in developing metaphysical capacity in life, a metaphysical capacity that is central to orientation to God and virtue. The believer who is only oriented to the physical (degree #1) and quantity/extension (#2), will not be able to develop metaphysical understanding which is required to really live with God *by knowledge and by love*. Moreover, materialism (1st and 2nd degree) always moves the believer to skepticism or fideism, and lack of faith in things he really cannot see (3rd degree). How can one live with God *by knowledge and by love* if his total orientation is to the physical and quantitative realm? If he thinks that that is all there is, then God and spiritual virtue are necessarily excluded.

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

Pastor Don