

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”**  
**September 21, 2016**

**Zephaniah 1:1–3:20.** Be silent, seek the Lord, and wait for Him—and the problem of Mammon.  
**Acts 19:1–41.** Events in Ephesus.  
**Job 27:1–23.** Job questions God’s justice.

**COMMENTS.**

**Zephaniah 1:1–3:20.** Zephaniah contains three judgment oracles (**1:2–6; 1:7–2:3; 3:6–8**), one “woe” oracle of judgment (**3:1–5**), four oracles against foreign nations (**2:4–15**), a promise of salvation (**3:9–13**), and one oracle of *salvation* (**3:14–20**). Let us note the three principal directives in this Book: “**be silent**” (**1:7**), “**seek the Lord**” (**2:1–3**), and “**wait for Me**” (**3:8**). **First, the command to be “silent”** is in the context of a sacrificial feast of three parties: the host (Yahweh), the invited guests (enemies of Judah), and the sacrifice (Judah, the people of God), **1:7-9**. What a dreadful picture! This admonition of silence is a call for men to recognize the difference between the Creator and His creatures. Man cannot justify himself before God, the Master of the universe. The sacrificial language is a prophetic metaphor of the day of Yahweh. The guests have been consecrated to participate as priests in the sacrifice. The sacrifice consists of the leaders of Judah: the princes, the royal household, those living for Mammon, and the courtiers. The aristocracy of Judah had adopted a pagan way of life and idolatrous practices, symbolized by their being clothed in “foreign clothes” (**1:8**). In **1:12–13**, Yahweh’s judgment is expressed against the wealthy, who are callous seekers of their own pleasures. Yahweh will carefully investigate and bring to judgment on the wealthy. The wealthy are compared to wine left on its dregs. The figure is borrowed from the wine industry, where wine was transferred from vessel to vessel to remove the dregs and yeast. The wealthy are so oblivious to the impending judgment that they think that God is powerless. They believe that they hold the future in their hands, and that God stands idly by, but Yahweh’s judgment reverses the fortunes of the wealthy. They have enriched themselves by having no regard for Yahweh, His covenant, His mandates, or their fellow citizens. Their aim is to build and to plant, but their goals will be frustrated by Yahweh’s judgments. **Second, the command the “seek the Lord”** is in the context of repentance (**2:1-3**). The shameful elect nation of Judah is called to prepare itself like chaff for the judgment of God, which will consume them like fire or blow them away like the wind. Judah must do something before the terrible day of the Lord comes. The day of the Lord is not one of peace and prosperity, but an expression of divine wrath. The repetition of the warning gives ground to the exhortation to “seek Yahweh,” the root problem of all godlessness (**1:6**). **Third, the command to “wait” on the Lord** is addressed to the faithful remnant. Though the righteous, faithful remnant would be effected by the judgment which would come upon all the world, they are enjoined to fix their hope in the righteousness and mercy of God. The righteous are to wait on the Lord (**3:8**). Waiting for God’s vindication is neither desirable nor easy. Yet, waiting on God is the only choice for those who love Him and seek to live according to His commands. Patience is not natural, either for the wicked or the righteous, but God called on the people to wait on Him for deliverance—a deliverance which would come in the form of God’s judgment against the nations. Sometimes the only hope comes in judgment. *This may be the case in our own country if Christians continue to worship Mammon* (read Matthew 6:19-24). *Why should God answer the prayers of Christians who are primarily concerned with their financial status*

*and are more concerned about their financial wealth rather their wealth in the Lord?* When God poured out His fierce anger against the nations, then He would purify the lips of the peoples that that might call on the name of the Lord and serve him (3:9). The remnant—those meek and humble who trusted in the name of the Lord (3:12–13)—would endure the judgment. God would purify those who remained. These would be people whose lives matched their professions of faith. They would speak the truth; no deceit would be found in their mouths (3:13).

**By proper knowledge and proper love.** Some of the strongest denunciations against God's people whose lives are characterized by materialism, sensualism, and Mammonism are found in Zephaniah 1:7-13. Living for the world and the flesh is also harshly condemned in the New Testament (Matt. 6:19-24; 1 John 2:15). The most pernicious thing about living for the world is that it evacuates a believer's love for the Lord: 1 John 2:15, *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* All a believer needs to do to destroy his ability to walk with the Lord *by proper knowledge and proper love* is to set his desire on the world and the things of the world (e.g., materialism, shaping one's philosophy by the world). The believer who sets his desires on the world will find himself antagonistic to the Lord and the plan of God (Matt. 6:24). This is in contrast to the believer who puts the Lord first and grows in Him *by knowledge and by love*. How does one know if he really loves the Lord rather than the world given that love is not primarily about feelings? Love is so much more than emotional feelings. The truth of the matter is that love is the root of all human actions and feelings. Love, in a sense, is the alpha and omega, of all movements of our appetites. Love really is the cause of everything the lover does. In fact, love is the cause of everything that anyone does. All of our hatreds and repulsions, all our sorrows, hopes, and despairs, all of our enterprises, fears, and angers, ultimately point to the place where our treasure of love lies. If there were no love, there could be no hatred; for, we hate the things that endanger our loves. If there were no love, there could be no hope; for our *ambitions always center about the things we love*. By love we are judged. The character of men can always be evaluated by the price they set upon their loves. Thus, love drags us down or lifts us up, according to the value of the thing that we love. Where are our values, in the things of God or the things of the world? The believer who loves the things of the world will value the world's standards and thus be occupied with making money, being liked, entertainment, and sensual pleasures. However, the believer who loves the Lord will love the things of God like God's values, God's people, the local church, the Word of God, sharing in the life of God, helping the poor, et. al. What are we more concerned with, our financial condition and what people think of us, or our spiritual condition and what God thinks of us? What do we find yourselves thinking about (valuing) throughout each day? Where do we get our self-esteem? Christ or the world? Galatians 2:19 or the mirror and scales? *Quo Vadis?*

**Acts 19:1–41.** Paul’s third missionary journey, which concluded in Ephesus is recorded in this section. Ephesus, with its 300,000 inhabitants, was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia and its most important commercial center. Thanks to a large harbor, Ephesus grew wealthy on trade; and, thanks to the temple of Diana, it attracted hosts of visitors who wanted to see this building that was one of the seven wonders of the world. Paul’s three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31)—the longest he stayed in any city—were certainly exciting and fruitful. In this reading, we meet several people who were involved: 12 men who had incomplete knowledge on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the issue of baptism (**19:1-10**); 7 men who lacked power and were overcome by demons (**19:11-20**); and a mob of indignant citizens (**19:21-41**).

**By proper knowledge and by proper love.** In **19:21-41**, we see the evil of mob mentality and violence. There are two aspects of the mob that are worth noting. **First**, there is the Satan’s financial motivation. Satan incited the guild of silversmiths to stage a public protest against Paul and the Gospel. It would have been a master stroke on Satan’s part to climax that ministry with a city-wide attack that could result in Paul’s arrest, or even his death. Wherever the Gospel is preached in power, it will be opposed by people who make money from superstition and sin. Paul did not arouse the opposition of the silversmiths by picketing the temple of Diana or staging anti-idolatry rallies. All he did was teach the truth daily and send out his converts to witness to the lost people in the city. As more and more people got converted, fewer and fewer customers were available. “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). Demetrius and his silversmiths were promoting idolatry and immorality in order to make a living, while Paul was declaring the true God and pointing people to cleansing and purity through the free grace of God. The silversmiths were really more concerned about their jobs and their income than they were about Diana and her temple, but they were wise enough not to make this known. **Second**, there is the evil of mob mentality, which Benjamin Franklin aptly described as a “a monster with heads enough, but no brains.” How sad it is when people permit themselves to be led by a few selfish, self-serving leaders who know the art of manipulation. Demetrius made use of the two things the Ephesians loved the most: the honor of their city and the greatness of their goddess and her temple. Consider how easily modern selfish and race agitators manipulate masses with lies (false narratives), like in Ferguson and Charlotte. Although not recognized, this is a sign of declining Christian influence in America. Throwing out true Christianity not only destroys the humility necessary for divine establishment of law and order, it also removes a sense of self-esteem that one can have in Christ, and with that loss of self-esteem comes frustration, antagonism, and defensiveness we see among many who do not realize that the value that seek is not to be found in others but in Christ. Consider how living in Christ *by knowledge and by love* removes from one’s soul hatred, racism, revenge, materialism, violence, and the desire to demonize others to vindicate oneself. The solution to our country’s ills is not found in politics or science or even economics. The solution is found in God as far as divine institutions like family and law in order and in Christ as far as transformation of the soul – as illustrated in the lives John Newton and Booker T. Washington. Where are such white and black Christian leaders today? Consider just how many problems would be resolved by *proper knowledge and love*.

**Job 27:1–23.** As he questions God’ justice, Job maintains his integrity (27:1-6), curses his enemies (27:7-10), sets himself up as a teacher about God (27:11-23).

**By proper knowledge and proper love.** In Job 27:2, Job writes, "*As God lives, who has taken away my justice, And the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter.*" The only cure for such an attitude is *proper knowledge and proper love of God*. Job would gain the proper knowledge in the last chapter of Job—and without any other change would love and worship God. However, knowledge by itself is not the sufficient cause of love. Love is an act of the will. It is love that transforms the life. Moreover, what we love we desire and think about with delight. Knowledge of God, or anything, in itself does not motivate one to focus on the object of knowledge. Only love can do that. With proper love and knowledge of God, the believer not only knows God, he loves the object of knowledge. Again, we always focus on what or who we really love.

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

*Pastor Don*