

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
September 23, 2016

Zechariah 1:1–2:13. Israel must return to the Lord before she will receive the Kingdom.

Acts 21:1–26. Paul and his fantastic attitude to impending suffering.

Job 28:12–28. Wisdom and the critical problem of defective knowledge.

COMMENTS.

Zechariah 1:1–2:13. The Book of Zechariah is the most messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological of all the writings of the Old Testament. The messianic emphasis of Zechariah accounts for its frequent citation by New Testament authors—about 40 allusions in the New Testament. Note, however, that before moving into the eight apocalyptic visions, God calls His people to repentance as a prerequisite for the spiritual blessings promised to Israel (**1:1-6**). God will not bestow comfort on hardened, unrepentant hearts. God’s covenants with Abraham and David included a glorious Messianic kingdom (2 Sam. 7:8–16). However, those covenants did not nullify the need for each generation of Israelites to be obedient to God in order to experience His promised blessings. They must return to the Lord before He would return to them (**1:3**). God makes it clear that were to reject the evil ways of their disobedient forefathers (**1:4-6**). Again, the prerequisite for experiencing the spiritual blessings revealed in Zechariah’s visions and prophecies was a genuine and wholehearted turning to the LORD. They were not to be disobedient as were those of the former generation who were taken into Exile as a result of God’s certain judgment. In a single night Zechariah saw a series of eight visions which were interpreted by an angel and which described the future of the nation Israel. **The first vision** is of a red-horse rider among the myrtles (**1:7-17**). This vision established the general theme of hope for dispersed and downtrodden Israel. The point of this vision was to communicate God’s anger against the nations and blessings on restored Israel. **The second vision (1:18-21)** is of four horns and four craftsmen, which illustrates God’s judgment on the nations that afflict Israel. **The third vision (chapter 2)** is one of a measuring line to illustrate God’s future blessing on restored Israel.

By proper knowledge and proper love. In Zechariah 1:3 we have one of the most beautiful and remarkable promises in the Word of God: ‘*return to Me and I will return to you.*’ This promise is also found in James 4:8, “*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*” No matter where we are or what we have done, God stands ready for an intimate relationship with us. Given that nearness demands likeness, if we want to be close to God, we must move to Him in a befitting manner. In other words, there must be a meeting of the minds and wills on His terms; and this means moving to His viewpoint and will, which is possible by grace. We cannot draw near to Him in sin, selfishness, human works, or simply out of using Him to solve some temporal problem. We do not draw to Him through some conduit religious system, even if it is filled with biblical passages, to attain some other “benefit.” God must be recognized as our greatest good rather than simply a great means to some greater good. Throughout the Old Testament and New Testament the call is consistently to turn from setting our hearts on things of this world and to set them on the Lord first and foremost. This requires *proper knowledge and proper love*. Even the Jewish remnant of Zechariah’s era had stopped putting God

first, so God could not bless them as He desired to do. Given that it is our nature to be drawn to what we view as our Good, let us recognize the goodness of God and thus be drawn to God *by knowledge and by love*.

Acts 21:1–26. The same Spirit that was driving Paul to Jerusalem was preparing him for the ordeals he would experience there by issuing warnings of the danger through the Christians at each stopping point along the way (**21:10-12**). When Paul reached Tyre, the Christians there shared with Paul how the Spirit had revealed to them the dangers which would meet Paul in Jerusalem. The warnings came true. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and remained a prisoner to the very end of his story in Acts. His imprisonment subjected him to many trials. The trials were an opportunity for witness, which he did not allow to slip by. This long section of Acts is filled with Paul's speeches: before a Jewish crowd in the temple yard, before a Roman governor, and before the Jewish king. God's words to Ananias had come true which predicted that Paul would bear Jesus' name before Gentiles, kings, and the people of Israel (9:15). Paul would no longer bear his witness as a free man in the subsequent narrative of Acts. He would be in chains, but the chains would be unable to bind his witness. His witness would indeed become bolder still!

By proper knowledge and by proper love. In **21:13-14** we see Paul's proper knowledge and proper love of God: Acts 21:13 *Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."* 14 *So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."* His knowledge of God's will and personal love for God was more important to him than his personal comfort. Paul's respect and love for the Lord translated to firm conviction that the journey was within God's will for him. And if this was God's will for Paul, then 'the Lord's will must be done.' It was much like Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. He too did not relish facing the human agony of the cross but nonetheless committed himself wholly to God's purpose for him—"not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). It is not without reason that many refer to this scene as "Paul's Gethsemane." When can only cultivate our relationship with the Lord *by knowledge and by love*. Then our love for Him becomes far more important than our comfort zone. Instead of thinking in terms of what we want or in terms of duty, we think in terms of what would please Christ in a second-personal relationship. The believer who is filled with love for Jesus is never dissuaded by sufferings. Moreover, sufferings do not make them moose or miserable. The believer who lives with God *by proper knowledge and proper love* is filled with a hope that fills their present with love and joy even in the face of human suffering. Love for God always fills the present with joy regardless of the circumstances of life.

Job 28:12–28. Job continues to demonstrate the difficulty of finding wisdom in comparison to other difficult human endeavors. In **28:12-19** he makes the point that one cannot buy wisdom, which is more precious than "rubies" (**28:19**), and in **28:20-28** he points out that wisdom only comes from God. 'Go as high as the birds can fly, and you won't find wisdom there. Go as deep as Abaddon and death, and wisdom is not there. Only God knows where to find wisdom, for God sees everything. He doesn't have to dig into the earth to see what's there!' In the last verse of this section, Job answers his where-is-wisdom question in **28:28**: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Interestingly this "fear of the Lord" was

God's description of Job (Job 1:8; 2:3); so, in spite of what his friends said about him, Job was a man of wisdom (even if he got lost from time to time under extreme pressure).

By proper knowledge and by proper love. While proper love is not measured by proper knowledge, there is no proper love without proper knowledge. One cannot love what one does not know; but a love that is based on proper knowledge can exceed the proper knowledge of the object (see Eph. 3:19, 'love that surpasses knowledge'). Moreover, there cannot be proper knowledge that is void of wisdom. Proper knowledge and wisdom go hand-in-hand. As we have studied, there is an intricate relationship between the intellect (knowledge) and will (love). The roots of sin and evil are tree: ignorance, malice, and passion. Ignorance puts a shroud over the eyes of the intellect; malice twists and distorts its vision; and passion interferes with the clarity of its judgments. Where the knowledge in the intellect is defective, the love of the will will also be defective. As a result, men frequently set the particular goods (as illustrated by Job in this section) above the goodness which is eternal. This is the antithesis of wisdom. To live in God *by proper knowledge and love* is to enjoy a clearer vision of God and eternal goods and be drawn to Him in blessedness—which just is the epitome of Wisdom.

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

Pastor Don