

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
September 25, 2016

Zechariah 6:1–7:14. God hates it when believers do right things for Him but without love.

Acts 22:22–23:22. Paul’s conscience.

Job 29:13–25. Love and encouragement.

COMMENTS.

Zechariah 6:1–7:14. Outline: The vision of the four chariots (6:1-8); the symbolic crowing of Joshua the High Priest (6:9-11); the prophetic message (6:12-15); and the message of repentance (7:8-14).

By knowledge and by love. In response to a question of fasting, God answers:
Zechariah 7:4-6 *Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, 5 "Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: `When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me-- for Me? 6 `When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves?` This shows the importance of proper knowledge and proper love. This issue is not so much what we do, but why we do what we do. Why do we pray, take in Bible doctrine, and confess our sins? Our relationship with the Lord is not so much a matter of traditions, rules, spiritual principles, power systems, taking in doctrine, confessing our sins, trusting the Lord, or presenting ourselves to the Lord. The person who orients to these things first and foremost will eventually become legalistic even about good and legitimate biblical mandates and directives. Consider how God told the Jews how He hated all of the things they were doing—things which He Himself commanded—and this included their prayers, Isaiah 1:14-15. We must keep first things first. And the first thing is always a vital and loving relationship with the Lord. Our love relationship with the Lord must be the first thing lest God hates our prayers and activities like intake of Bible doctrine, prayer, and confession of sin. If we just do things for God *just* out of ritual, even if He commands them, He hates them. He hates it when we go through motions if our hearts are far from Him. The whole point of life, the reason you and I were born, and our destiny, is to love God and build our lives around Him. The point in Zechariah about motives applies to the church age as per 1 Corinthians 10:31, *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* After all, our relationship with the Lord isn’t so much a matter of traditions and rules as it is faith, love, and a desire to please Him. Immature people require religious regulations to tell them what to do, and these regulations help them measure their “spiritual life.” But God wants us to mature spiritually and grow from just obeying rules to cultivating a vital personal relationship with Him *by proper knowledge and by proper love.* Moreover, true spiritual life can’t be turned on and off at our convenience, so that we serve God one minute and forget Him the next. If we feast, we must do it to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31); if we fast, we must do it to honor Him. The Lord must be the center of our lives and the reason for our actions. If we keep a fast (or any other religious tradition) just to please ourselves and win the admiration and approval of others, then God was not pleased and the activity was wasted. Apart from getting this point, it is hard to see how God’s statement in Isaiah 1:14-15 (*"I hate your new moon**

festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them. 15 "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen") could not apply to mandates we obey, if they are done just for the sake of doing them, for all of the wrong reasons rather than by knowledge and by love.

Acts 22:22–23:22. This reading includes Paul’s trial before the Sanhedrin (**22:30–23:11**) and the plot to kill Paul (**23:12**). Note that when Paul was placed before the Sanhedrin, he seized the first word: “*Brothers, I have lived as a citizen before God with all good conscience to this very day*” (**23:1**). The implication is that he had nothing on his own mind to condemn him, that he had been faithful in his conduct toward God in every respect. Such a remark was itself something of a provocation. If Paul’s life as a Christian left him in complete innocence before God, then the Sanhedrin members who did not share his commitment to Christ were the guilty parties. It is small wonder that the high priest Ananias immediately ordered him to be struck on the mouth for blasphemy (**23:2**). His action was completely in character. Josephus depicted him as one of the very worst of the high priests, known for his pro-Roman sentiments, his extreme cruelty, and his greed.

By proper knowledge and by proper love. “Conscience” is one of Paul’s favorite words; he used it twice in Acts (**23:1; 24:16**) and twenty-one times in his letters. The word means “to know with, to know together.” However, the nature of this knowledge is often misunderstood. In sum, Realism rejects Plato’s theory of innate ideas. This means that man is not born with ready-made set of ethical conclusions. Rather, we are only born with the power of reaching such conclusions, once we have experienced facts from which they can be deduced. We are not born with the ideas of “murder” and “bad,” but only with the intellect whose nature is such that it joins these two concepts, once learned, in the appropriate judgment. Judging is an act of the intellect; what is inborn is the power. Conscience is simply the functioning of the intellect in making moral judgments. God’s Word is the light, the more the light shines our souls in the better. As “the window” of our souls gets dirty, the light gets dimmer; and finally the light becomes darkness. A good conscience, or pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:9), is one that lets in God’s light so that we are properly convicted if we do wrong and encouraged if we do right. A defiled conscience (1 Cor. 8:7) is one that has been sinned against so much that it is no longer dependable. If a person continues to sin against his conscience, he may end up with an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22) or a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:2). Then he would feel convicted if he did what was right rather than what was wrong! Of course the only life that can truly live with a clean conscience as far as life with the Lord is one that is lived *by proper knowledge and proper love*. If what I do, I do out of *proper knowledge and proper love* for the Lord, my conscience before the Lord will always be clean, given that knowing God and loving God are the highest, purest, and most powerful motives.

Job 29:13–25. In this reading, we see Job’s confidence in the future (18-20) and his history and joy in speaking words of encouragement and help to others (21-25).

By proper knowledge and by proper love. A natural result of walking with the Lord *by knowledge and by love* is that we will regularly find ourselves living in and increasingly growing in the realities of the virtues mentioned in 1 Cor. 13:4-7, *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* And life in these virtues means that we will love and encourage others as we share in the love of God for others. Loving God always leads to loving others. Being filled with the love of God is far more powerful in every area of life than going through conduit systems or trying to make yourself or pump yourself up to love others. In other words, being filled with the love of God is more powerful than some system whereby we supposedly control being filled with the Spirit in some conduit manner. Loving others with God’s love cannot be done by spiritual systems. It is done by loving God, a love and knowledge of God that will transform the believer more than any other single factor. And it is by walking with the Lord *by knowledge and by love* in a second-personal relationship that opens our eyes to the beautiful of the gift of life, people, and all of creation. Most Christians are familiar with John 3:16, what about 1 John 3:16-17?

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

Pastor Don