

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
September 29, 2016

Malachi 1:1–2:9. Failure to respond to God’s love and failure to honor Him.

Acts 27:1–44. Paul saves the day.

Job 31:9–22. Sexual sins and the sin of materialism (covetousness): hearts far from God.

COMMENTS.

Malachi 1:1–2:9. This reading can be divided into two parts: (1) First oracle: Respond to God’s love (1:1-5), (2) Honor God (1:6-2:9).

By proper knowledge and by proper love. The first sin Malachi named was the people’s lack of love for God: 2 *"I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'"* (1:2). As we have been studying at FBC, love for God is the root, hinge, and fruit of all virtue (cf., 1 Cor. 13). Love for God is the only way to avoid evil, sin, legalism, and all forms of conduitism. Waning love was the first sin Jesus mentioned when He wrote to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2:4), and it’s listed first because lack of love for God is the source of all other sin, evil, and misery. For centuries, the Jews have recited “The Shema” as their daily prayer: *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might”* (Deut. 6:4–5). But the people Malachi preached to doubted that God even loved them, so why should they love Him? Note how God responds by showing His blessings on Israel, from her election to her being privileged to have special revelation of God that discloses His magnificence (**Mal. 1:5**). Of course, we Christians have even more evidence of God’s love for us because of the cross of the God-man, which is the most powerful demonstration of God’s love while we were totally undeserving (**Rom. 5:8**). There is no spiritual life without love for God. The believer who lives in the love of God understands that love of God is not only its own reward, it is the greatest reward in life. To live in the love of God is to get just how impoverished all human language is with reference to the reality of love and how love surpasses knowledge and fills us up to the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19). To move into the love of God is to move into supernatural joy and strength regardless of the circumstances of life: Habakkuk 3:17, *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. 19 The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills. To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.* Love for God is not loving Him for earthly blessings as if He were the means to greater earthly blessings. He is not Santa Clause. He is the God who loves all and invites all to have a love relationship with Him—a relationship that transforms a life more than any other virtue: 1 Corinthians 13:4, *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. Consider the magnitude of all of these virtues—all empowered by love for God. There is no other single virtue that can so transform our lives as love for God. Again, this is love for God as such and not for things God gives us. “Loving” someone for money/blessings is closer to prostitution than true love. In sum, the believer who is growing in his love for God increasing finds himself thinking about the greatness of the Lord rather than the “greatness” of solutions to his problems or material blessings. What did Christ teach us in Matthew 6:24? Who are we serving, God or Mammon? Who are we despising, God or Mammon?

Acts 27:1–44. This section is a record of Paul’s voyage to Rome. **27:1-13** records Paul’s journey from Caesarea to Crete. In **27:14-44** a great storm arises after Paul’s ship leaves Fair Havens. The storm rages for 14 days and the ship runs aground on a sandbar, but all escape safely to the island. Note the blessings of Paul’s leadership in the crisis. Note how Paul as a servant of God was used of God to share God’s Word with them (**22-26**), to warn them (**27-32**), to be a good example before them (**33-38**), and to rescue them (**39-44**). Note the confidence of Paul as he gently rebukes the centurion, pilot, and captain for ignoring his warning. Soon they would discover that God had spared all of them only because of Paul, the man after God’s own heart.

By proper knowledge and by proper love. Paul began as a prisoner, but ended as God’s captain of the situation. Paul took over the situation when nobody else knew what to do. A crisis does not make a person; a crisis shows what a person is made of. In other words, our difficulties do not make us, they only reveal what kind of person we are—if we are numbered among those who walk with God *by proper knowledge and proper love* or among those who have little to no proper knowledge or love of God. Paul’s love for God brought him into partaking of the very life of God, which by such partaking, sharing God’s love for others. Note Paul’s prayer and thanksgiving and how his example encouraged others to join him. One dedicated believer can change a chaotic situation simply by living with, with, and for God *by knowledge and by love*. It really is the secret to living the abundant life.

Job 31:9–22. Outline: (1) Job denies being guilty of adultery (**31:9-12**), (2) Job affirms his fair treatment of his servants (**31:13-15**), and (3) denies being guilty of social sins like oppressing the poor and needy or not sharing his food with the unfortunate, like orphans (**31:16-22**). So, we have Job defending himself against the implications of adultery and materialism (covetousness).

By proper knowledge and by proper love. Although I have heard in certain circles (that pride themselves on being “grace oriented”) that all sin is the same and that sexual sins and sins of materialism are not that big of a deal since Christ died for them all, the Bible does teach that adultery, fornication, and covetousness (materialism) are heinous sins that bring shameful and serious consequences in this life and the next due to the judgment of God: **Proverbs 6:27-29**, *Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? 28 Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared? 29 So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.* **Ephesians 5:3-7**, *But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know, that no fornicator,*

unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. **Hebrews 13:4-6** Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. 5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. Note how sexual impurity (adultery and fornication) and love of money (materialism) are linked in Job and Hebrews 13:4-6, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and Ephesians 5:6. Sexual impurity and love of money are sins of dissatisfaction with God's provisions. For both sins the antidote is contentment in God and fulfillment in what God has given and this can only be done by proper knowledge and proper love of God. Unless one sees God and His plan as the greatest good, which brings the greatest satisfaction, there is no solution to these problems of dissatisfaction that plague man. **1 Timothy 6:6-11** Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 6:17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 6:19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. We all have the freedom to pick our greatest goods, our loves: pleasure and materialism or God and spiritual virtue. While we have the freedom to set our hearts on God or Mammon/pleasure, we never have the freedom not to serve what we choose to love. A life that is given over to illicit sexual activity and a life that is given over to materialism renders itself incapable of having an intimate relationship with God by knowledge and by love. Quo Vadis?

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

Pastor Don