

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
September 4, 2016

Hosea 8:1–10:15. Israel’s rebellious history and punishment.

Acts 4:1–37. Persecution and prayer of the Early Church.

Job 16:1–9. Job expresses his disgust at his “friends.”

COMMENTS:

Hosea 8:1–10:15. Chapter 8 records God’s punishment on Israel for her disobedience. Note Israel’s pretense of devotion of God in **8:2-3**. She claimed to acknowledge His authority over her, but this was mere lip service. In reality, she rejected what was good, namely the Lord’s moral and spiritual requirements. Consequently, an enemy will route her, causing her to retreat swiftly. The calf-idol in Samaria (**8:6**) is singled out because it epitomized Israel’s idolatrous ways. Note the sarcasm in the verse in that this “god” was made by the hands of the Israelites. The proverb of sowing to the wind and reaping the whirlwind (**8:7**) is a vivid way of describing Israel’s futile activity in idolatry. Review of Israel’s history and God’s judgment is summarized in **chapters 9-10**. This section closes (**Hosea 10:11–15**) by comparing Israel to a young heifer that enjoys treading out the grain because she can eat and work at the same time. But then she is yoked to another beast and forced to do the hard work of plowing. Israel would feel the Assyrian yoke. In **verse 12**, the prophet gives one more appeal to the nation to repent and seek the Lord. “Fallow ground” is land that has lain idle and become hard and full of weeds. The plow of conviction must first break up hard hearts before the seed of the Word can be planted and the gracious rain be sent from heaving. The nation did not repent, and judgment fell. In 722 B.C., the Assyrian army invaded the land, and the ten tribes as a nation vanished from the pages of history. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Ps. 33:12).

Reflection: Based on what God says about how He deals with Gentile nations, in the above last two aforementioned passages, what is the most important factor for our great nation: integrity (as per the divine establishments of freedom, marriage, family, nationalism) or just free-enterprise and capitalism? Absent a return to virtue, can a return to more free enterprise save this nation? If you were given the assignment to defend capitalism, could you do it apart from induction? In other words, could you defend capitalism based on general and objective principles rather than using history and induction? (Don’t worry, I am a capitalist, but one in principle, rather than one who simply points to instances of success in history as per subjective induction, which can always be manipulated with other particulars. To be a capitalist in principle means that one is a capitalist because it is right rather than for pragmatic/financial reasons).

Acts 4:1–37. Verses 1-22 record the persecution of the Early Church and her responses in 23-31, note the response of prayer, and how they shared their possessions with each other. This is not communism because this is voluntary and done on a personal, not State, basis. Note the root of unity in the heart (will) and mind (intellect), 32. The idea is that the unity of soul extends to the material realm.

Reflection: Do you value fellow believers more than your possessions? Are you more of a spiritually minded person or more materially oriented? Show me a person's value system, and I can show you his metaphysics and daily life. We all live out our values daily. These believers fulfilled the command of Christ to love each other as Christ loved them. Do you see the blessings of loving fellow believers as Christ loves you? How is love for believers a “new” and unique “commandment” (John 13:34)?

Job 16:1–9. What disgusting consolers these so-called friends turned out to be! They told Job nothing new, in fact they were “miserable comforters.” They compounded rather than eased his suffering. Furthermore, they babbled with “long-winded speeches,” antithetical to good counselors who console and listen. Apparently Job was surprised that Eliphaz came back at him a second time as if something “ails” him. If they could change places, Job could “shake” one's “head” to mock them. But he would not do that. Instead he would give encouragement and comfort (as he had done in the past for others; Job 4:4; 29:21–23) in order to provide some relief to their problems. He would condole, not condemn. In his appeal for loving sympathy, Job told his friends what he was receiving from the hand of God (16:7). Job is worn out; his family is gone; he is gaunt and weak. Both men and God attack him. Job feels like God has painted a target on his back and handed everybody bows and arrows! There is no relief—God keeps assaulting him like a relentless warrior. “I didn't attack God—He attacked me!” God was his enemy (16:9), and nothing Job could do would bring about a truce. If Job looked up, God was against him. If he looked around, his friends were against him. Where could he turn?

Reflection: If you find yourself in deep sorrow and anguish and no one with understanding and sympathy to turn to, if you find yourself bewildered by crisis after crisis with no hope in sight, if you find yourself alone and depressed, if you find yourself at the end of your rope, if you find yourself doing all that you can to follow the Lord yet find yourself alone and unappreciated, you are in good company for this was the case with Job, the greatest man on the earth in his time, and Jesus Christ, the greatest human being who has ever or will ever live, and one of the greatest apostles of all time, the Apostle Paul. Each one resolved the issue by renewing their focus on the Lord as the object of love and goodness—read Job 1:8; 42:1-3; John 19:30; Philip. 4:11-13. Because God is Real, there is always hope and Job would see this Hope in the end and receive greater blessings. Don't quit!

Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Pastor Don