

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
September 6, 2016

Hosea 13:1–14:9. Return to the Lord!

Acts 6:1–15. The wisdom of Stephen.

Job 17:1–16. Job contemplates death.

COMMENTS:

Hosea 13:1–14:9. After cataloguing Israel’s disgusting sins (**chapter 13**), she is entreated to return to the Lord (**14:1-3**). Though this final appeal would surely be rejected by His arrogant and stubborn nation, it would instill hope in the hearts of any believer who was faithful, namely, the righteous remnant, and provide the repentant generation of the future with a model to follow in returning to the Lord. Note what is involved in the repentance: “Say to Him, forgive all our sins;” note the call to love and praise the Lord, “that we may offer the fruit of our lips,” Israel’s only Savior, God, and Helper. Also, note that they were not to trust others, like Assyria or her hand-made idols, “our gods” (**14:3**).

Personal reflection: Note the spiritual problem of forgetfulness and ingratitude in **Hos. 13:4-6**. It was the same old story: the Jews were glad for what God had done for their forefathers—the Exodus, God’s provision and guidance in the wilderness, the abundant wealth in the Promised Land—but they didn’t really possess appropriate appreciation. In their trials, they turned to God for help, but in their prosperity, they became proud and turned away from God to idols. Moses had warned them about this sin, but they committed it just the same (Deut. 8:10–20). Throughout these sections, again and again God reminds His people of His grace toward them. One of the greatest things we can do is to take time to think about how God has been so faithful to us every step of the way, from the gift of life, to the gift of eternal life, to daily provisions regardless of our spiritual status. There is something very enlightening about taking time and just thinking about our history in the Lord, and how God has always been there to love us and provide for us, and how He is preparing us for the next life.

Acts 6:1–15. Note the characteristics of Stephen. The emphasis in Stephen’s life is on fullness: he was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (**3, 10**), full of faith (**5**), and full of power (**8**). In Scripture, to be “full of” has the idea of being very influenced. He was influenced by the Spirit, faith, wisdom, and power. He was a God-influenced man influenced by the Holy Spirit. We should not take “full” in any literal quantitative manner, as if people have different amounts of Holy Spirit in them (e.g., $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$). “Full” here is a metaphysical concept, not a physical concept as if the Holy Spirit is doled out materially or spatially. He is, after all, omnipresent as well as transcends the material world. Technically, the Holy Spirit is present in everything. In sum, “filling” here speaks of actualization of certain spiritual virtues in believers.

Personal reflection: Note in verse 10 that all of those who were arguing and countering Stephen were unable to refute him. Note the emphasis on wisdom and the Holy Spirit “in” Stephen. Wisdom is all about really understanding. Anyone can memorize Bible passages and throw them at everything that seems to apply. However, not many today really understand those passages on a level that opens up reality, creation, and God in a deep and “wow” manner. Wisdom, not knowledge, is the principle thing. When we really get it, we gain wisdom. Gaining wisdom is always exciting whereas knowledge for the sake of knowledge can be very boring, seem irrelevant, and lead to skewing Truth. One example of the difference between mere knowledge and true wisdom is how one approaches reality. The person who lacks wisdom will go to a dictionary for the meaning of a concept and allow that to give him a meaning according to usage (superficial). However, the wise person (Realist) approaches understanding reality in a totally different manner. He will arrive at the meaning of a concept by careful abstracting and understanding meaning based on the reality of the object—though, of course, he may check a dictionary, not for meaning, but for usage to see what *essence* the word is pointing to. For the realist, meanings always come *after* reflection, not before. It is not hard to see the difference in understanding between the person who may have a lot of knowledge (dictionary definitions), but little to no wisdom about reality as such. The same holds true to doctrinal definitions: true understanding comes *after* reflecting on the object of knowledge. This is analogous to the spiritual life. There is no shortcut to wisdom, no “quick trip”—contemplation is required! Wisdom is only gained by a lot of time reflecting on the Lord, His love, and His gracious plan for our lives. We are far better off turning the TV off and getting rid of distractions and spending personal time with the Lord, than simply pumping in more doctrine and never taking quiet time to really meditate and thus grasp those amazing truths. In sum, there is no shortcut to true and deep wisdom about God and reality as such. It is a long and hard process and only appealing to those who really want to *understand!* This is too much work for the pragmatist who just wants to get God to work for him.

Job 17:1–16. We can see Job’s despair in this section. One reason Job wanted his Heavenly Advocate to act quickly was because he sensed that death was very near. When people suffer so much that their “spirit is broken” (1), then they lose their “fight” and want life to end. Job’s friends were against him and would not go to court and “post bond” for him (3–5). People treated Job as if he were the scum of the earth (6). His body was only the shadow of what it had been (7), and all of his plans had been shattered (11). His friends would not change their minds and come to his defense (10). In fact, they would not face his situation honestly, but they kept telling him that the light would soon dawn for him (12). Is it any wonder that Job saw in death the only way of escape?

Personal reflection: Life can be so racked with pain and anguish, that a person is more than ready to die. For the believer, death is a promotion to be face-to-face with the Lord (Philip. 1:23). However, it is never right for a believer to commit suicide, which is nothing short of murder, murder of self. Note that at no time did Job ever consider taking his own life or asking someone else to do it for him even though he suffered excruciating pain. Life is a sacred gift from God, and only God can give it and take it away. In the above section, on the one hand, Job wanted to live long enough to see himself vindicated; but on the other hand, he didn’t know how much more he could endure. However, with God there is always hope. As long as we are alive, God has a plan for us being here even when it does seem *so* much better to go to our true Home.

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

Pastor Don