

## “Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”

April 12, 2016

- ✓ **Deuteronomy 23:1-25:19** – Various laws.
- ✓ **2 Corinthians 6:1-13** – Suffering in the joy of the eternal perspective.
- ✓ **Psalm 39**- We are but a vapor.

### COMMENTARY:

**Deuteronomy 23:1-25:19** – Note God’s care for the ox in 25:4. Even animals were under the protection of the Lord. Man had been created to have dominion over all things (Gen 1:26-28), but even after his fall and the consequent alienation that had developed between him and all creation, including the animal world (Gen. 9:2), he was not to exploit nature but live in harmony with it (Gen. 9:3–10). The prohibition here (Deut. 25:4) about muzzling the working ox reflects the spirit of mercy that pervades all of God’s dealings with his creation, human or otherwise. The purpose clearly was not only to provide for the ox itself but to make the point by *a fortiori* argument that if a mere animal was worthy of humane treatment, how much more so was a human being created as the image of God. Paul, in fact, cited this very text twice in making a plea for the support of those involved in Christian ministry (1 Cor 9:9–14; 1 Tim 5:17–18). Such concern for animals should not be construed as adherence to some kind of notion of pantheism, “world soul,” evolutionism, or the like. The animal is nowhere “brother to the man” in Scripture but always sharply distinguished from humans. Nevertheless, the animal world, like all nature, is part of the divine creation entrusted to humankind as a stewardship. To abuse animal life is to fail to discharge that stewardship, and to fail to show mercy to God’s lowest creatures is to open the door to disregard of human life as well. It is well known that many serial killers started with torturing and killing animals. Although animals are not to be worshipped, as some Americans seem to do today in caring more for their animals than the Lord or the poor, they are to be treated as *God’s* creatures. While I do not believe my Sophie will be in Heaven with me, I do believe that I will have one that looks just like her that I will name “Sophie.”

**2 Corinthians 6:1-13.** Paul defends his ministry by listing his various trials and tribulations: troubles, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger. He makes it clear that it was with God’s help that he not only had great endurance, he was “always rejoicing.” Even though Paul notes that materially he had “nothing”, yet he was “possessing everything” because of his eternal perspective. There is no true victory in the spiritual life apart from the eternal perspective, which is virtually absent in contemporary Christianity. Also, it is important to note that God is not viewed as the source of the testing and difficulties. This came from our broken world that always persecutes God’s people. As I have noted, we must make a distinction between the presence of suffering and what God can do with it. He does not send the suffering, but He is always there to redeem a believer out of any suffering by raising his intellect and will to perceive and orient to the eternal perspective.

**Psalm 39.** Verse 4 in this psalm is as profound as it is needful for all of God's people regardless of what dispensation they find themselves in; and in this case the situation with David was that he was suffering from divine discipline. The believer who accepts the truth that his life like a vapor, here for a very short time, will not waste his time. Our lives are far too short to waste chasing the world and the things of the world. Right now counts forever! And we will take *all* our memories with us for all of eternity. No believer is perfect. I know I have my own share of shortcomings as a pastor, husband, father, and fellow believer. I know that I have wasted far too much of my time fretting over our country and our debased political "leaders." I should know better. Does not the Lord say, "cursed is he who trust in man?" There is no political leader that is going to fix America's mess. Let us redouble our efforts in the Lord and the things that matter forever and redeem the time for all of eternity! As I have noted, how we live here will determine much about our privileges in the New Heaven and Earth. The Bible is clear that there will be a qualitative difference between believers in Heaven. It is all what we did with our lives here that counts for all of eternity. Everyone who is in Heaven will be happy, but some will have a far greater happiness than others. To use an extreme example, take Ted Bundy (who raped and murdered at least 30 women) who claimed to accept the Lord before he was executed. While he will be happy in Heaven (if his conversion really did take place), does anyone really think he is going to be as happy as someone like the Apostle Paul or the faithful unknown believer who lives daily for the Lord with the eternal perspective?

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

Pastor Don