

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

April 18, 2016

- ✓ **Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12.** Moses final blessing on Israel (33); the death of Moses (34).
- ✓ **2 Corinthians 8:16-24.** Avoiding impropriety in grace giving.
- ✓ **Psalm 46.** God is our Mighty Fortress even if the Earth was destroyed.

COMMENTARY:

Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12. Note how Moses praises the Lord before (33:2-5) and after (33:26-29) pronouncing blessing on the tribes (33:6-25). Moses is at the end of his life and is preparing to meet his Maker, as we will all do one day. In his introduction, Moses recognizes God’s gift of the Law and His love for the Israelites (33:2-3). Moses closes out the section on blessings by depicting God as an eternal refuge with everlasting arms. This would provide the needed encouragement for the Israelites to enter Canaan and live there in safety and prosperity (33:27-28). In chapter 34 we have the death of Moses. Though Moses was disciplined for his act of unbelief by not being allowed to enter the Promised Land, *he died in faith and as an honored servant of the Lord* as indicated by his recognition of the Lord and His promises to his people in the previous chapter. Moses was so special that his last moments were spent in intimate fellowship with God who then permitted no human to take part in his burial. The Lord Himself buried him. Although some have expressed a wish at the time of death to die suddenly, either while asleep or a sudden heart attack, as for me, I would much rather be conscious upon my impending death and transfer. I can think of nothing better than to be fully conscious of the Lord when it is my time to go be with Him. Note how God provided for the people after Moses departure: “Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom.” God always provides for his people. As a matter of fact, God has already selected the person to replace me at FBC when my time is up on planet earth.

2 Corinthians 8:16-24. This section covers the church collection for the Judean believers. Note the very careful way the money was handled. Paul insisted that trusted representatives from several churches accompany him. He wanted to avoid even the appearance of impropriety with respect to finances. He wanted to do what was right “not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men (21). The extra care is understandable. His critics were quick enough to suggest that the collect was merely a covert way of receiving financial support, see 2 Cor. 12:16-18. Moreover, it was a lot of money, quite “lavish” (20). Note Paul’s attitude with respect to this grace giving: it was for God’s glory, “to the Lord of the Lord Himself” (19). Paul was very careful that God’s reputation not be damaged by not keeping everything above suspicion. Consider the lack of respect for the Lord displayed today by all of the religious hucksterism that takes place in, for example, the Word of Faith movement. There is hardly anything that invites more slander from the world of unbelievers than to observe prosperity preachers on TV scamming believers out of their money with their snake oil messages.

Psalm 46. This is one of the most beautiful psalms in the Word of God, especially in times of anxiety and trouble. This is the psalm that moved Martin Luther to write the famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” The theme of the whole psalm is confidence in God in the face of monumental troubles like natural disasters (2-3), political troubles (4-7), and divine discipline on a nation (8). Instead of living in stress and trouble, we need to “be still” and know God is “with us” and “our refuge” (11); no matter what happens, nothing will ever separate us from His love, see Romans 8:31-39. The term “be still” (Hiphil imperative of שָׁבַח) has the idea of relaxing. Of course, the only way one can relax in times of turmoil is to know not only that God is in control, but have a mature second person relationship with Him that is far greater than the issues of life. God really is our greatest good, even more than the peace that He offers. Unless and until He is the Greatest Good in a second person relationship, the believer can never get beyond basic formulas that might provide some experiential peace, but never really advance beyond the “fix” as the greatest good. There really is so much more in the Whole Truth, Total Truth, eternal perspective of Realism than the experiential fixes (even though such experiential fixes are valid, especially for baby believers). Consider the difference between a believer who uses various spiritual formulas as experiential fixes to obtain a level of peace in times of trouble to a Realist with eternal perspective. Say they both face a life-threatening health diagnosis from a doctor. The believer who has not developed a second person relationship with God, but does know the Bible will be quick to pull out verses out of *fear of death* to find peace and comfort that God will take care of it here and now. However, the believer who has developed a second person relationship with God will not fear death (Heb. 2:15) in such times because of his anticipation of being with the Lord, who is His Best Friend. Like Paul, he would rather be with the Lord than on Earth, unless the Lord has more work for him to do on his short stay here (Philip.1:23). Does it not seem very strange when believers who are destined for glory for all of eternity with the Lord become afraid of death as such and so use the Bible to get some peace and assurance that that things will be OK *here on Earth*? “God is our Refuge and Strength . . . even if the Earth is removed” (46:1-2) because it really is about our relationship Him even if the Earth and everything in it is destroyed.

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

Pastor Don