

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
July 11, 2016

1 Samuel 18:1–19:24. King Saul attempts to murder David.

James 5:13–20. Serious illness, sin, and prayer.

Psalms 120:1–7. Under attack from pagans and the people of God.

COMMENTS:

1 Samuel 18:1–19:24. Jewish men had to be at least twenty years old before they could go to war, but David was probably only eighteen when he was made a high-ranking officer in the Jewish army (**1 Samuel 18:5**). From the beginning of his new assignment, David found himself in a life-threatening conflict with King Saul. David didn't *create* problems for Saul; he *revealed* the deep-seated problems that were already there. David was a man of virtue, but Saul was a deceitful, scheming man filled with vice. With great humility, David had accepted his appointment as Israel's next king, while Saul was almost paranoid as he tried to protect his throne. God had turned Saul over to his own evil, but had given His Spirit's power to David, and David moved from victory to victory as he led Saul's troops. We can trace some of the major stages in Saul's growing opposition to David: **(1) 1 Samuel 18:1-2: Saul wants David killed.** Note the transition from Saul loving David greatly (**16:21**) to hating him enough to want to kill him sparked by jealousy even though he knew that David's success was due to the fact that '*the Lord was with David*' (**18:12**). Envy is a dangerous and insidious enemy, a cancer that slowly eats out our inner life and leads us to say and do terrible things. Proverbs 14:30 rightly calls it "*the rottenness of the bones.*" Envy is the pain we feel within when somebody achieves or receives what we think belongs to us. Envy is the sin of people who can't stand to see others reach the heights they have reached and eventually replace them. As I mentioned in our last Bible class, all sin can be traced to the root of selfishness. The more selfish we are the more trouble we are going to have with every category of sin in our lives. The first step is to recognize it. Then, we need to take it to the Lord. He does not change our attitude apart from our desire for it to change (2nd order desire), otherwise it would not be our will that He changes and we would be puppets instead of moral or immoral free human beings. **(2) Saul plots to have David killed (18:13-30).** Since David was an excellent soldier and a born leader, the logical thing was to give him assignments that would take him away from the camp where the enemy could kill him. Saul made David commander over 1,000 and sent him to fight the Philistines. If David was killed in battle, it was the enemy's fault; and if he lost a battle but lived, his popularity would wane. But the plan didn't work because David won all the battles! After all, *the Lord was with him* and the power of God was upon him. Instead of eliminating David or diminishing his popularity, Saul's scheme only made him a greater hero to the people, and this increased Saul's fear of David all the more. Saul had promised to give one of his daughters in marriage to the man who killed Goliath (**17:25**), but this promise had not yet been fulfilled. The fact that David had killed Goliath wasn't enough, for Saul now expected David to "*fight the battles of the Lord*" in order to gain his wife, Saul's eldest daughter, Merab. Saul wasn't beneath using his own daughter as a tool to get rid of David. The details aren't given, but it seems that David had to fight a certain number of battles before the marriage could take place. Of course, the king was hoping that David would be slain during one of those battles, and then Saul would lose his enemy but still have his daughter. Then, Saul happily discovered that his younger daughter Michal was in love

with David! Saul spoke to David about it and said he would give him a second chance to claim his reward. Once again David demurred, but Saul persisted. This time he asked selected servants to lie to David and tell him that Saul liked him and wanted him to marry Michal, and that Saul's attendants agreed with the proposal. But David put them off by telling the truth: he was from a lowly family and he didn't have any money to pay the bride price. When David's reply was reported to Saul, the devious king saw in it a great opportunity to attack his enemies and get rid of David at the same time. Saul told his servants to tell David that all that the king required for a bride price was 100 foreskins from the "uncircumcised Philistines." Saul was certain that at some point in this endeavor, David would meet his death. Once again, Saul was using one of his daughters to help destroy an innocent man, and in this instance, it was a man she truly loved. In spite of Saul's schemes, David and his men accomplished even more than Saul had asked. David once more survived the battles and he brought the king 200 foreskins. Another of Saul's schemes had failed and he had to give Michal to David as his wife. **(3) Saul continues to look for more opportunities to have David killed (1 Samuel 19:1-17).** Saul's mind and heart were so possessed by hatred for David that he openly admitted to Jonathan and the court attendants that he intended to have his son-in-law killed. Saul was now through with behind-the-scenes plots and was out to destroy David in the quickest way possible, and he ordered Jonathan and the royal attendants to join him in his endeavor. The hope of Israel lay in the heart and ministry of David, and yet Saul wanted to kill him! Note the odd events of Michal's deception (**19:11-17**): Saul surmised that David would go home, so he sent men that night to watch David's house and kill him when he came out the next morning. Knowing her father's thought processes, Michal urged David to get out that night and flee to a place of safety. She let him down through a window and arranged a dummy in the bed by using an idol and some goats' hair. What Michal was doing with a pagan idol (teraphim) is a mystery, especially one as large as a man. Apparently, Michal was still depending on idols while married to a man after God's own heart, and like her father, she was a schemer and thus not living with the Lord.

James 5:13-20. Although many Charismatics believe that we have the gift of healing in this passage, there is nothing here at all about a gift of healing possessed by any of *the elders*. Rather, these church leaders function simply as intercessors on behalf of the one who is *sick*. Notice that James does not say that recovery *always* occurs. Since this anointing was to be done *in the name of the Lord*, at the very least we might take it to signify dependence on God's *sovereignty* over the healing process. It was the sovereign *Lord* who alone could *raise* the sick person *up*. This agrees with the fact that much of the anointing with oil that occurs in the OT points to God's sovereignty in choosing a person for some role, as we have seen with David. There is the possibility, however, that the *anointing* James refers to was a popular medicinal practice of the day (cf., Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34). Anointing with oil was a household remedy for those who were sick or ill. If this is what James is referring to, the elders pray over the one who is sick after administering medicine to him. James then observes that in cases where sin has occurred, forgiveness as well as healing can take place. But it is precisely the words if he has committed sins that serve as a necessary caution. Not all sickness is the result of sin (as some teach), but some of it is (cf., 1 Cor. 11:30). The fact that someone calls for the church elders suggests that he or she is prepared to deal with any underlying sin that may have been committed. **5:16:** However, all of James's readers should be prepared for that open and honest confession of sin which was a *necessary* prelude to healing ("that you may be healed"). But the command to confess your trespasses to one another is still based within James's discussion of sickness and

should not be stretched into a general admonition. There is no biblical command to publicly confess all our known sins. Confession to God is necessary in regard to any sin one is aware of, and should be made in conformity with 1 John 1:9. But only here in Scripture is there a command to make confession to one another and this lies fully within the parameters of the need for prayer by the elders and fellow Christians (*pray for one another*) that God will make the sick person well. Prayer *can* work wonders! Not, however, if it comes from an unrighteous heart, or if it is shallow, glib, and superficial. Rather, it avails much when it is an effective, fervent prayer expressed by a righteous man. The words *effective, fervent* both translate a single Greek verb form (*energoumenē*) which is difficult to render precisely in English. The familiar English words used by the NKJV are on target, but since the verb “energize” is from the Greek verb in question, James’s statement might be paraphrased as “a spiritually energetic prayer” or “a prayer energized by God.” The point is that such prayer is more deeply at work than prayers that are verbalized in a perfunctory state of mind. James is speaking of prayer that is Spirit-wrought and that comes from the heart and soul. Such prayer can be offered only by a *righteous man*, so that James implies that if the sick man will indeed turn from any sins he has committed, he could even pray effectively for himself. James follows this by noting Elijah as an example (**5:17-18**). Note how this epistle closes with the Christian efforts of saving a fellow believer from the sin- unto-death, “*save a soul (life, person) from death*” (**5:20**). But he will do more than that, since a restored sinner receives the gracious forgiveness of God. Thus, the many sins created and multiplied by a man who turns away from God are all removed *from view* when that man turns back to God. James has carried his readers all the way from a state of grumbling against each other (**9**), to a loving mutual concern for one another’s physical needs (**16**), to the highest point of all: concern about a brother’s sin (**19–20**). When believers have reached this plateau, they have indeed surmounted their self-centered concern for their own trials. They now have their eyes focused on the spiritual needs of their brothers and sisters, their hearts are lifted in prayer for them, and their hands are outstretched to draw them back onto the right road.

Psalm 120:1–7. This psalm takes us from distress and prayer (**1**), concludes with war (**7**), and in between deals with deception and slander. The opening phrase can be translated “*I cried*” or “*I cry*.” The writer had prayed in a previous time of trouble, and the Lord had answered him, so now he had confidence to pray again. Instead of complaining about his situation, he shared it with the Lord and, in this psalm, shared it with us. His problem was that people were lying about him and slandering his name. In the ancient Near East, “*Meshech*” was located in Asia Minor, to the northwest of Israel, and “*Kedar*” was a nomadic nation in northern Arabia, southeast of Israel. Meshach was a Gentile nation (Gen. 10:2) and the people of Kedar were descended from Ishmael, Abraham’s son by Hagar (Gen. 16; 25:13, 18). Both peoples were at great distance from Israel and were considered enemies of the Jews. The writer was not actually dwelling with these people, because he could not live in two places at once, especially places thousands of miles apart. Rather, he was dwelling with Jewish people *who were behaving like people who lived outside the covenant blessings of God*. Believers today must not only live with unbelievers but also with professed believers who live like unbelievers due to lack of spiritual virtue, lack of spiritual strength, lack of power for spiritual good, because they have chosen the world rather than the Lord for their first love.

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

Pastor Don