

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”  
July 19, 2016**

**2 Samuel 3:1–4:12.** Political power struggles.

**1 Peter 3:8–22.** Christ-centered virtue.

**Psalms 135:1–21.** Praise the Lord of His goodness.

**COMMENTS:**

**2 Samuel 3:1–4:12.** This section begins with David’s six wives and their children in order to show the building of David’s family in Hebron (**3:2-5**). The diversity of David’s harem suggests that he was deliberately using marriages for political, as well as familial, reasons; he was in fact skillfully consolidating his power base with them. Most of the rest of the circumstances in this reading section revolve around two-year political power struggles as a result of the death of Saul and claims to the throne by members of the “house of Saul”—the conflict between the House of Saul and David. In this crucial section, active opposition to David’s bid for kingship over all Israel temporarily coalesced around Saul’s surviving son, Ish-Bosheth. Empowered by Saul’s cousin Abner, Ish-Bosheth made a bid to rule the territories formerly under the control of his father. Unfortunately for the house of Saul, King Ish-Bosheth proved to be essentially inert and decidedly incompetent: though he reigned two years, the writer depicts him performing only three acts: (1) wrongly accusing Abner of misconduct, (2) giving his sister back to David, and (3) lying on his bed. The death of Ish-Bosheth enabled David to gain control of all Israel from the house of Saul. In **chapter 4**: The death of Abner meant the end of Ish-Bosheth’s ability to retain the throne of Israel. Now no effective military opposition could be mounted against David’s forces in the battle for control of the northern tribal areas. Note David’s respect for Saul and his family when Recab and Baanah, assassins of Ish-Bosheth (**4:5-7**), approached him with the news as they went with *pride* straight “to David” with “*the head of Ish-Bosheth*.” The men showed no signs of remorse for their murderous deed and apparently believed that they were serving as the Lord’s agents of divine vengeance “*against Saul and his offspring*.” Whatever their thinking may have been, they were crediting God with what was in fact a vile, sinful deed. No doubt they believed that a handsome reward awaited them for their success in eliminating this rival claimant to Israel’s throne. **4:9–11**: But the men’s confident expectations were not based on an accurate understanding of David’s respect for Saul and his family or his commitment to the royal responsibility of upholding the teachings of the Torah. Rather than commending and rewarding the men, David obligated himself by an oath in the Lord’s name to “*demand*” their lives in punishment for their murder of Ish-Bosheth (**11**). In the last verse in this section, David publically demonstrates that Recab and Baanah died under a divine curse by having his men “*cut off their hands and feet*” and then hang “*the bodies by the pool in Hebron*.” By contrast, David showed respect for his murdered brother-in-law by burying Ish-Bosheth’s head “*in Abner’s tomb at Hebron*.”

**1 Peter 3:8–22.** Peter sums up his previous section on the different categories of relationships (government, masters, husbands, wives), with some concluding principles of virtue: he says “*Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*” Note that the kind of love to be found among Christians is familial, that of brothers—all Christians are in the same family of God. Both tenderhearted and courteous describe how Christians are to respond to each other, setting the stage for the question of unfair treatment. **3:9:** Peter now points back to Jesus’ example in **2:22–23**, Who did nothing wrong, and Who did not respond with reviling or threats when He was treated unjustly. Rather, He trusted God. In contrast to our natural response, Christians are to return a blessing to those who mistreat them. Note the rewards promised for faithfulness. The Christian responds because of his or her eternal destiny and expectation that Jesus will reward them for their faithfulness at His return. **3:10–12:** Peter’s use of Psa. 34:12–16 shows that God is on the side of those who do not retaliate and He opposes those who do evil. The point of the psalm is that those who respond to evil with evil face God’s judgment along with the offender. God will judge both rather than bless the victim while punishing the instigator. Of course, the lack of retaliation is on a personal level and should not be confused with the right and duty of government to prosecute evildoers. In **3:13–17** Christians are to not only to be able to give a rational account of their faith (apologetics), they are to follow the example of Christ when they are the objects of unfair treatment. In other words, Christians are to have virtue that is Christ-centered. They are to follow the example of Jesus Christ when they face difficulties. It is so easy to talk about the grace of Jesus and how He forgives our sins. However, what about the virtue that He requires of His followers? What about His scathing denunciation of sins? What about the whole truth about being a true follower of Christ in actualizing virtue in the life rather than *using* Jesus Christ as a divine forgiveness-dispenser to indulge and then excuse sin? What about Christ’s demands for absolute obedience? The Whole Truth, Total Truth, is always more difficult than picking and choosing certain truths that appeal to us. But then again, when it comes to God and His Truth, *it is far easier to lie* than to tell the truth, the Whole Truth. The bottom line is that one cannot enjoy sustaining, deep, and growing fellowship with the Lord apart from a life of virtue. To build a life of virtue takes a great deal of work. As human beings we are amphibian: On the one hand, we breathe the spiritual air of our immaterial intellects, wills, and regenerate natures. On the other hand, we swim in the murky waters of our animal sense natures. To live truly free and blessed lives requires that our immaterial and spiritual natures permeate all of our animal natures. Again, this takes a great deal of work in concurrence with God raising us to the supernatural level through His Spirit, who alone can take us from being occupied with our bellies (temporal orientations) to living in the reality of His coming kingdom, our true Home (see Philip. 3:18-19).

**Psalm 135:1–21.** Following the introductory “*Praise the Lord*”, the psalmist called the priests, the servants of the LORD in the temple, to praise God. The reasons for giving thanks to the Lord is that *He is good* and *His name is pleasant*. Verses **4-18** provide a list of the various blessings of God, which all stress God’s sovereignty and His election of the nation of Israel, both His past actions for Israel as well as future. Any nation that messes with Israel signs its own death warrant, and that includes our nation, the most powerful nation in the world. The fact that our current nation’s top leader displays such animus and disrespect for Israel illustrates the extent of evil in some portions of American government and policy. We need to pray for Israel and for our own country.

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

*Pastor Don*