

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
July 2, 2016**

1 Samuel 2:22–4:22. God calls 12 year old Samuel.

James 1:9–18. God, the Father of lights, and the immutable Giver of Good things.

Psalms 119:17–32. Depression: sinful, not sinful (or perhaps even due to physical exhaustion, which a hot bath, a glass of wine, and some rest could cure).

COMMENTS:

1 Samuel 2:22–4:22. Up to this point, the focus has been on Elkanah and his family (1:1–2:11), but now it will shift to Eli and his family (2:12–3:21). Throughout this section, you will see a deliberate contrast between Samuel and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas. Eli’s sons “abhorred the offering of the Lord” (2:17), but “Samuel ministered before the Lord” (18). The two brothers committed evil deeds at the tabernacle and invited God’s judgment, but Samuel served at the tabernacle and grew in God’s favor (26). The priestly line would end in Eli’s family, but Samuel would be called of God to carry on a holy priesthood (2:34–3:1). From the human viewpoint, it looked as though Eli’s evil sons were getting away with their disobedience, but God was preparing judgment for them while He was equipping His servant Samuel to continue His work. Hophni and Phinehas not only showed disrespect for the sacrifices on the altar, but they also had no regard for the women who served at the door of the tabernacle (22). Instead of encouraging them in their spiritual walk, the two brothers seduced them. These women were not official servants appointed by the law but were volunteers who assisted the priests and Levites. Perhaps they helped care for the little children who came with the adult worshipers, or they may have been there just to be close to the presence of the Lord. Immorality in the ministry is nothing new. **Chapter 3:** Samuel was probably twelve years old when the Lord spoke to him one night. The Lord spoke to Samuel four times (1 Sam. 3:4, 6, 8, 10), and the first three times, Samuel thought it was Eli calling him. One of the marks of a faithful servant is an attentive ear and an immediate response. But Samuel had never heard God’s voice, so he didn’t know who was calling to him. For the second time we’re told that Samuel grew (2:21; 3:19), but the affirmation is added, “the Lord was with him.” This statement will also be made about youthful David (16:18; 18:12, 14). The Lord was against Eli and his sons, but His blessing was upon Samuel and his ministry. Unlike the other judges, Samuel’s words and influence would reach the entire nation. The people recognized that God had called Samuel to be a prophet and declare the Word of God and the will of God. Once again, the Lord appeared from time to time at Shiloh and revealed Himself to His prophet. Israel was about to experience a new beginning that would lead to new challenges and dangers as well as new blessings and victories. **In Chapter 4,** Israel was defeated by the Philistines (4:1-10) and the ark was taken, a phrase repeated five times (4:11, 17, 19, 21-22). Never in the history of Israel had the Ark of God ever fallen into enemy hands! So holy was the Ark that it was kept behind the veil in the tabernacle and seen only by the high priest on the annual Day of Atonement. The Ark of God was the throne of God, but now God’s throne was in enemy territory! The Jews had forgotten that the Ark was God’s throne in Israel *only if Israel was submitted to Him and obedient to His covenant.* Anything else was nothing but ignorant superstition, like people trusting good-luck charms. It wasn’t a sin to take the Ark into battle if the people were truly devoted to the Lord and wanted to

honor Him. God put the Ark into pagan hands, but Eli's two sons had lived like pagans while ministering before the Ark, so what was the difference? God would use the Ark to teach both the Jews and the Philistines some important lessons, starting with killing two priests (4:11) and Eli, the High Priest (4:18), and the departure of the glory of God (4:19-22). The wicked sons of Eli thought their scheme would save the glory of God, but it only took the glory of God away! When King Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of God returned, but before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Prophet Ezekiel saw the glory leave the temple and the city. The glory of God didn't return to this earth until the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world (Luke 2:8-11; John 1:14). Today, God's glory dwells in His people individually (1 Cor. 6:19-20) and in His church collectively (Eph. 2:19-22).

James 1:9-18. In James 1:9-11, James deals with two different kinds of Christians: the poor and the rich. Apparently, money and social status were real problems among these people (see James 2:1-7, 15-16; 4:1-3, 13-17; 5:1-8). When "testing" comes to the poor man, he should remember that he possesses spiritual riches that cannot be taken from him. When "testing" comes to the rich man, he should rejoice that his riches in Christ cannot wither or fade away. In other words, it is not your material resources that take you through the testings of life; it is your spiritual resources. Note the immutability of God in verse 17. Indeed, He is a flawless Giver, unlike all earthly givers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from Him and therefore from above. One might have expected James to say that God only gives good and perfect gifts, but in fact he says more than this. Wherever there is such a thing as a flawless gift, that gift is necessarily from above. All human gifts, by contrast, are flawed in some way because the human giver is flawed. Only God can give perfect gifts. That is because He is the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Note in verse 18 that it is God who "gives birth" to believers! Moreover, it is not related to the "will" of man, by which it could be flawed because of the corruption of that "will." Rather, new birth finds its source in God's will and is effected by the word of truth. God's role in conversion may be described as revelatory. As an act of His own will He commands the light of the Gospel to shine into a person's heart so that he can perceive that light in faith, as Jesus said to Peter after his great confession (Matt 16:17). This of course in no way diminishes man's responsibility to seek God and the illumination He alone can give (Acts 17:26-27; Heb. 11:6). Thus the teaching called "Lordship salvation" is flawed. By insisting that saving faith is an act of the will, it demolishes the Biblical concept of faith as a reception of God's truth. Biblical saving faith is a conviction or persuasion about what God says in the gospel (Rom 4:21). All man can do is respond to God's grace. In short, all man can do is stop resisting the light, a quiescence of the will, which is far different than an act of the will toward God.

Psalm 119:17–32. In 17-24, the psalmist focuses on his love for the Word of God. Notice his openness to learn new things in the Word of God (18) and his recognition that he was a stranger in this world (19-20). As a believer, he knew he lived in a hostile world and needed God’s word to guide him. What would be surprising in our situation in 2016 is if the world actually “go it” and appreciated the Word of God, God, and the people of God. In 25-32, the psalmist is depressed. Depression can be sinful and evil, or not so, depending upon the evil danger that one faces, as depression is always about some present or future threatening evil or harm. It all depends on the nature of the perceived evil threat. If the depression is due to some threat to inordinate love of self, or entitlement attitude, or human approbation lust, then it is sinful. However, if the depression is a result of the perception of some real harm that threatens one’s being, then it is not sinful, as a matter of fact it is normal as even Jesus Christ experienced depression when He perceived the Cross, the cup that He was about to drink for all of the sins of the world. If you find yourself depressed, write down the possible reasons to identify the perceived evil that causes the turmoil. In some cases, the depression is due to physical exhaustion, which could be cured by hot bath, a glass of wine, and a good night’s sleep, so recommended Thomas Aquinas.

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

Pastor Don