

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
July 5, 2016**

1 Samuel 10:1–11:15. King Saul, what a glorious start!

James 2:14–18. Faith without works is dead (as far as experiential sanctification).

Psalm 119:65–80. God is good, all the time!

COMMENTS:

1 Samuel 10:1–11:15. In **10:1-8** we have Samuel’s longest recorded speech to an individual (147 words in Hebrew), Samuel accomplished three things: he (1) revealed that Saul was God’s choice to be Israel’s first king, (2) laid out for Saul a series of confirmatory signs, and then (3) intimated to Saul the proper relationship that was to exist between king and prophet in Israel. Samuel’s “message from God” first took the form of anointing, an action heretofore reserved for sacred objects (cf. Lev 8:10–11, 30; Num 7:1) and Aaronic priests (Lev 8:30). The act of pouring a flask of specially prepared olive oil on Saul’s head apparently symbolized the staking of a *divine claim on him*, as well as the outpouring of the Lord’s enabling Spirit into the newly designated king’s life. **10:13:** Note the power of the Holy Spirit that extended to Saul’s “heart,” by lifting it to a new different *level* due to the efficient cause of the Holy Spirit. The change was obvious to all around him. **10:14-16:** Saul conceals his anointing and empowerment from his uncle. **10:17-27:** Saul is publically installed as King. **10:23-24:** Note the details included about Saul, “*as he stood among them he was a head taller than any of the others*” (23), “*there is no one like him among all the people*” (24). Saul was the people’s choice as well as “*the man the Lord has chosen,*” and the people responded with enthusiastic shouts of “*Long live the king!*” (Hebrew = “*May the king live*”). However, Saul was not without his detractors, however, as “*some troublemakers*” (lit., “sons of Belial”) “*ridiculed him and brought him no gifts*” (27). In spite of compelling evidences that the Lord had indeed chosen Saul as Israel’s king, these individuals rejected the outcome of the events and withheld all support from their new ruler, including tokens of goodwill customarily presented to newly installed authorities. Admirably, Saul’s first act as an oriental monarch was one of grace; he “kept silent” in response to the critics’ effrontery instead of ordering their deaths. In **chapter 11** we see that Saul’s first major undertaking as Israel’s king was a positive one in the conquest. Note how Saul instantly moved into action and in a dramatic way sent the message to the men of Israel that they were needed for battle. He also identified himself with Samuel when he issued the call to arms, for he and Samuel were working together. The Lord worked on Saul’s behalf by putting fear in the hearts of the people so that 330,000 men gathered for battle. Samuel had anointed Saul privately (10:1) and then presented him to the people (10:17–27), and now Samuel led the nation in an act of dedication to the Lord. It was a time of spiritual revival and national rejoicing. Saul had passed his first test, but it wouldn’t be long before he would fail in a much simpler test and lose his kingdom. However, so far, all was well before the Lord and all the people as per the last verse of this section: **1 Samuel 11:15**, “*So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.*” What a great start for Saul: he became king, became God’s choice, received supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, and enjoyed victory with the people of God!

James 2:14–18. James opens this section of admonition by confronting the fundamental issue. Suppose someone lays claim to faith but cannot point to acts of obedience of the kind James has been discussing (1:26–2:13). What then? Can he expect his faith in God’s Word to “save his life” (1:21) if he is not a work-doer (v 25)? In other words, can faith save him? Actually the question (in Greek) implies its own answer and might better be translated, “*Faith can’t save him, can it?*” The expected response is, “*No, it can’t!*” But, of course, faith can and does save when one is speaking of eternal salvation (e.g., Eph. 2:8–9). But here—as James makes plain—faith cannot save under the conditions he has in mind, which is salvation from the power of sin and evil, which points to progressive sanctification rather than eternal salvation. Thus in James 2, the writer plainly makes works a condition for salvation. The failure to admit this is the chief source of the problems supposedly arising from this passage for most evangelicals. Readers need to recognize that James cannot be discussing salvation by grace. But instead of admitting these points, many interpreters dodge them. This is frequently done by trying to translate the question, “*Can faith save him?*” (2:14), by “*Can that [or, such] faith save him?*” But the introduction of words like “that” or “such” as qualifiers for “faith” is really an evasion of the text. The Greek does not support this sort of translation. Nevertheless, support for the renderings “such faith” or “that faith” is usually said to be found in the presence of the Greek definite article with the word “faith.” But in this very passage, the definite article also occurs with “faith” in 17, 18, 20, 22, and 26. In none of these places are the words “such” or “that” proposed as natural translations. As is well known, the Greek language often employed the definite article with abstract nouns (like faith, love, hope, etc.) where English cannot do so. In such cases the Greek article is left untranslated. The attempt to single out 2:14 for specialized treatment carries its own refutation on its face; it really is an example of eisegesis. The whole book of James is talking about salvation from the power of sin and the sin unto death. It must be classed as a truly desperate effort to support an insupportable interpretation. These statements by James cannot be willed away. As clearly as language can express it, faith by itself does not “save,” according to James. But “save” in what sense? Or better, “save” from what? From eternal hell? Or from something else? The only appropriate answer, in the light of the whole epistle, is to say that James is picking up the theme of 1:21 (expressed again in 5:19–20). This theme is the truth that obedience to God’s Word can “save” the life from the deadly outcome and consequences of sin. Faith alone cannot do this. Works of obedience are completely indispensable. As we have been studying, virtue is acquired through works, which is but the actualization of precepts of the Word of God as unto the Lord. Believing is never enough for the spiritual life. As I illustrated in the last Bible class. Say there are two men, believer A and believer B, they both have faith that it is the responsibility of the believer to study the Word of God, love his wife as Christ loves the church, help the poor, and support fellow believers. Say believer A actualizes these principles in his life and believer B does not, but they are both Bible believers who have faith in the Word of God. In such case believer A will experience victory over sin as he actualizes virtue in his life whereas believer B will not and will suffer from divine discipline, possibly terminating in the sin unto death. As I asked in our last Bible class, what is the difference between believer A who knows he should help the poor and actually helps the poor and believer B who knows he should help the poor but does nothing? which one is actually virtuous? which one is being saved from the consequences of sin, like being self-deceived and having no *compathy* for the suffering of fellow human beings? Does anyone really think that believer B is better if he just takes in more and more doctrine, for example, on the passages about helping the poor? Is he more virtuous because he learns more doctrine about helping the poor or by actually *doing what the Lord says*? There is

not one scintilla of evidence in the Word of God that simply believing God's truth without obedience blessed anyone—let us not allow Gnosticism (spirituality by knowledge) to corrupt authentic Christianity. Christians are to be exceptional *living* examples of the love and wisdom of God.

Psalm 119:65–80. The emphasis in this psalm is on what is good in the life of the believer. The Hebrew word *Tob* (טוֹב) is used six times in these eight verses and can be translated good, pleasant, beneficial, precious, delightful, and right. God does what is good because God is good and because what He does is “*according to his word*” and His Word is good (v. 39). Neither His character nor His Word will ever change, so, “*God is good all the time.*” While we often talk about how good God is when things are going great, the truth is that God is good all of the time. Note in verses 67-71 where God overrules evil in the life of the believer and is able from it to bring good. So, even when evil comes our way, God is good in that He always stands by to redeem us out of our sufferings. Note the goodness, the value, of the Word of God in verse 72. The person of faith does not live by the priorities and values of the world, see Heb. 11:27-27, because he sees the Lord and His kingdom, which cannot be seen with the physical eyes, which just is the nature of true faith: conviction about things one cannot see with the physical eyes, as we noted in Heb. 11:1. This psalm concludes with the idea that we sometimes receive God's best in our afflictions (15-18, 80). Life in this cursed broken world is difficult and we must accept from the hand of God both the pleasant experiences and the unpleasant (Job 2:1–10; Phil. 4:10–13). In the dark hours of life, the Word is a light that shows us the way (v. 105), and we do not go stumbling down the wrong paths. We have the love of God to comfort us and the promises of God to encourage us. We should not allow the modern evil in modern America so rankle us that we forget or get distracted from the fact that no matter what happens, the Lord is good and can turn evil into good for us.

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

Pastor Don