

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
July 6, 2016**

1 Samuel 12:1–13:23. Samuel reviews Israel’s sins/perversions.

James 2:19–26. James shows that works strengthen faith.

Psalm 119:81–96. The Word of God.

COMMENTS:

1 Samuel 12:1–13:23. Note in Samuel’s address to the people that he is not afraid of pointing out the people’s transgressions/perversions in juxtaposition to the faithful grace of God (12:6-25). As I have been pointing out in our last few Bible classes, every time we sin it is because our intellects see the sin as a good and our wills desire/love the sin under the guise of some particular good—no man sins without seeing that sin under the guise of some particular good (consider David’s sex with Bathsheba). In other words, when we sin, we see and love sin as a particular good under a certain particular circumstance. We have noted in our last Bible class on the metaphysics of sin that this thinking and loving evil/sin as a particular good is a perverted way of thinking. So, in essence when we sin we are acting like perverters in our thinking and desires/loves. Reminding ourselves that we act like perverts when we sin is a powerful way of seeing evil and sin in their ugliness instead of something attractive that can be rationalized away with such common views as “everyone does it,” “old sin nature made me do it,” “Jesus did for all sins so it really is no big deal.” To downplay the ugly perversion of sin or blaming them on some old sin nature boogeyman only helps retain wrong thinking about and wrong desires for sin. Thinking of ourselves as perverters when we are tempted to sin may seem to naturally lead to despair and a “woe is me,” pitiful attitude of self-loathing, and failure to love self as a special creation of God. To what seems to be natural negative consequences of viewing ourselves as perverters when we sin, I offer four responses. First, consider those in the Bible who got a good look at their own unclean perversion, like David, Isaiah and Job. They had anything but a “woe is me,” self-loathing attitude *after* they recognized their own perversions. It all depends on what one does with one’s consciousness of one’s own filth: there is Judas who hanged himself and there is David who rose to new heights as he turned to God’s grace and away from seeing sin as a good or just peccadillos. Second, grace is always greater than our sins. The key to victory over sin is not by downplaying them, but by seeing them in their filth and turning to the grace of God for cleansing. In fact, I doubt that one can really appreciate the grace of God unless one sees his filthiness for what it is. As a matter of fact, the very downplaying of sin naturally leads to the downplaying of grace. If sin is no big deal, how can grace be? This leads me to my third point: victory over sin. The only way to have victory over sin is to see sin as something repugnant rather than some good. For by nature, we are all attracted to the good and as long as we have an appetite for some sin as good, we are doomed to partake and even indulge in that “good,” even if afterwards we confess the sin, with a confession that, for the most part, is superficial, just a stopgap, until the temptation (desire from seeing the sin once again as a good) arises—so round and round we go, only fooling ourselves and never really changing our appetites regarding True. Good, and Beautiful. Fourth, while it might seem that viewing sins as perversions rather than peccadillos might lead one to judge others who sin as perverts, and thus looking down on them rather than loving them, there is good reason to think that the opposite is true. For, when I view myself as guilty of perversion, I am far less likely to be looking down on others and casting

stones. It really is all about Total Truth and Total Grace, rather than partial truth and partial grace with partial views of sin and spiritual victory.

James 2:19–26. We have noted repeatedly, in this study and in Bible class, the importance of works as a means of actualizing God’s truth in our lives to mold our true character into one of spiritual strength, otherwise known as spiritual virtue. We see this principle once again in verse 22. The faith that justifies—and James never denies that it does justify!—has a very active and vital role in the life of the believer. As with Abraham, it leads to transformation of character. In the process, faith itself can be made perfect, that is, “perfected” (ἐτελειώθη). The Greek word suggests development and maturation. Faith is thus nourished and strengthened by works. It would hardly be possible to find a better illustration of James’ point anywhere in the Bible. The faith by which Abraham was justified was directed toward God’s promise about his seed (Gen 15:6), a promise that reaffirmed the initial promise of Gen 12:1–3, which carried soteriological significance (see Gal 3:6–9). But Abraham’s faith was also implicitly faith in the God of resurrection (cf. Gen 15:6 with Rom 4:19–21 and Heb 11:17–19). Abraham had confidence that the God in whom he believed could overcome the deadness of his own body and of Sarah’s womb. But it was only through the testing (this is not evil-suffering) with Isaac that this implicit faith in God’s resurrection power becomes a specific conviction or greater reality that God could literally raise a person physically from the dead to fulfill His oath. The faith of Abraham was strengthened and matured by works. From a conviction that God could overcome a “deadness” in his own body (inability to beget children), he moved to the assurance that God could actually resurrect his son’s body from literal, physical death. In the process of carrying out the divine command to sacrifice his own boy, his faith grew and reached new heights of confidence in God. Any “doctrinal” believer who denies the vital importance of works would have to reject this passage (2:22), and if he still glories in his doctrinal knowledge, he must be ready to accept the title of being a “gnostic” Christian (spirituality by knowledge), which is at odds with classical Christianity, James, Jesus, and God Himself.

Psalm 119:81–96. This section begins with focus on the responses of the believer while he waited for the Lord to judge his enemies and deliver him from persecution and danger. His oppressors were also the enemies of the Lord and of Israel, so his concern was more than personal. Satan has been seeking to exterminate the Jews (119:87) since the time the nation was in Egypt, and he will continue until the end-times (Rev. 12). Fainting but hoping (119:81–83). “*How long?*” he asked in verse 84, and “when” in verses 82 and 84. These questions have often been asked by suffering saints (see on 6:3), even by the martyrs in Heaven (Rev. 6:9–11), because they are the natural response of people who are suffering. It is so difficult for most people to wait for the things they can see—a traffic jam to end, a checkout line to speed up, an important letter or e-mail to arrive—and it is even more difficult to wait for our unseen Lord to work out His will. It is through “faith and patience” that we inherit what God has appointed for us (Heb. 6:12; Rom. 15:4). Our trials will produce fortitude if we trust in the Lord (James 1:3–4). When the Father *allows* His children to go into the furnace of affliction, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat. He knows how long and how much. To walk by faith will bring unrest and weakness, but to meditate on the Word will bring peace and power. Once again, the psalmist prayed for new life and the Lord revived him. **Psalm 119:89–96** is about change. To the young, change is a treat, but to older folks, change is a threat. We like to relax in our comfort zone and resist the dramatic changes going on around us and within us. But if we do, we fail to

grow spiritually and we miss the opportunities God gives us to grow to new heights in spiritual virtue, which always glorifies God directly since He is the source and light of all spiritual virtue. The psalmist made some wonderful affirmations in this section: God's Word is settled (119:89), regardless of what modern atheists aver. God is on the throne; He holds the world in His hands; His promises can never fail! God is here and He is not silent. He is as close as a wish or prayer in our souls or as near as our Bibles.

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

Pastor Don