

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
July 7, 2016**

1 Samuel 14:1–52. Foolish Saul versus his great son, Jonathan.

James 3:1–12. A grim portrayal of the tongue’s pernicious capacity.

Psalms 119:97–120. To really know God’s Word, we must ‘keep His precepts.’

COMMENTS:

1 Samuel 14:1–52. The focus in this chapter is on Jonathan, Saul’s oldest son, who had won the first major battle against the Philistines, but his father had taken the credit (13:1–7). It’s a remarkable blessing of the grace of God that a man like Saul should have a son so magnificent as Jonathan. He was a courageous warrior (2 Sam. 1:22), a born leader, and a man of faith who sought to do the will of God. As the account progresses, it becomes clear that Saul is jealous of Jonathan and his popularity, and this jealousy increases when Jonathan and David became devoted friends. It is hard to fathom how a father could be jealous of his own son. He should be “proud” of his son. He should be delighted in seeing his son become a greater man than himself, exceeding his own levels. The same thing is true in the ministry. A pastor should be delighted that his spiritual sons take truths to new levels. However, such is not always the case. I have witnessed ugly attacks on one of my pastors from his former pastor for the same reason, jealousy. I have witnessed with amazement great men of God who became jealous of their students who excelled them in certain areas, as they attacked them because they felt threatened due to their students correcting false beliefs and/or taking truths to new levels. How does a great man of God become jealous over a pastor trained under his ministry who excels him in Truth? After all, the whole goal of the ministry is truth, right? The same way anyone else becomes jealous: inordinate love of self, which is fundamental root of all sin. We are to love ourselves, but it is that inordinate love of self that is the source of any and all sin, just as it is the love for God and others that are the sources of all virtue, at least that is what the Bible declares, and unequivocally: 1 Corinthians 13:4 *Love is patient, love is kind, and **is not jealous**; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*” As we have learned, jealousy is not some alien old-sin-nature force residing in our bodies that attacks our souls. It is nothing less than an inordinate selfish love and preoccupation with self over others, including God. To recognize this is to take a giant step in the spiritual life in virtue that is compatible with God’s grace gifts of supernatural virtue. Again, if we take a look at every sin we commit, we will find that it all comes back to self, “I, I, I,” instead of “God, others, and, then I” or as acronym puts it JOY (Jesus, Others, You). Consider how this would have changed King Saul’s jealousy, which ate him up and turned him into a monster. There is only one way to overcome jealousy in any person’s life and that is love, “*love is not jealous*” (1 Cor. 13:4). How could anyone be jealous of someone they wished the best for? They can’t. You cannot be jealous of anyone that you really seek the best for; this is self-evident and undeniable. Of course, there is a lot to this love on both natural and supernatural levels, but the truth remains that the virtue of love removes the vice of jealousy. Enough preaching for now, back to our text! **14:1-15:** Jonathan, the man of faith (**14:6**), initiates the attack on the Philistines while Saul hesitated in unbelief (**14:2**). God had called Saul to begin Israel’s liberation from the Philistines, but most of

the time he only followed up on what others started. In spite of all that the Lord had done for him and all that Samuel had taught him, Saul was not a man of faith who trusted the Lord and sought to glorify Him. Saul is a tragic example of the popular man of the world who tries to appear religious and do God's work, but who lacks a living faith in God and a heart to honor Him. Unfortunately, church history records the lives of too many gifted people who "used God" to achieve their own purposes, but in the end abandoned Him and ended life in disgrace. In **14:24-52** we see Saul's arrogance and foolish vow. Saul's heart was not right with God and he foolishly forced his army to agree to a vow of fasting until evening (**24**). He didn't impose this fast because it was the will of God but because he wanted his soldiers to think he was a man wholly dedicated to the Lord. But this command was only more evidence of Saul's confused and superstitious faith. He thought that their fasting plus the presence of the Ark would impress the Lord and He would give them victory. But Jonathan and his armor-bearer were already enjoying victory without either the Ark or the fast! No sensible commander would deprive his troops of food and energy while they were fighting the enemy. If the Lord commands it, then He would give the strength needed, but God gave Saul no such commission. When Jonathan and his armor-bearer joined the Israelite army in their march, they knew nothing about the king's foolish command, and Jonathan ate some honey from a honeycomb that had dropped to the ground. Then one of the soldiers told him that his father had put a curse on any soldier who ate any food that day. Why hadn't somebody warned Jonathan sooner? Perhaps they hoped that his innocent "disobedience" would open the way for all of them to eat! Perhaps Saul was deliberately putting his son's life in jeopardy. However, Jonathan wasn't too worried, and he even dared to admit that his father's leadership had brought "*trouble to the land*" (**29**). Saul's foolish vow not only weakened the soldiers physically and hindered their ability to pursue the enemy, but it also created in the men an abnormal craving for food. When the sun set and ushered in a new day, the vow was no longer in force, and the men acted like animals as they fell on the spoils, killing the sheep and oxen and eating the meat with the blood. As he often did, the king assumed "spiritual leadership" and commanded the men to bring the animals to a great rock to be slain and the blood easily drained out. He then built an altar so that the animals could be offered as fellowship offerings, parts of which the people were allowed to eat in a fellowship feast. Saul was feebly trying to turn a "gastronomical orgy" into a worship service, but he didn't succeed too well. The men were famished and more interested in eating than in worshiping the Lord. We get the impression that Saul was almost determined that he would demote or destroy his own son, and it's clear that Jonathan didn't agree with his father's policies and practices. Hence, Saul made another oath (**39**), and because he did not have the right motive, he was actually taking the Lord's name in vain. This time they cast lots and the lot pointed to Saul and Jonathan. The second lot fell upon Jonathan. God could have changed the results, but He wanted to bring the whole thing out in the open and humiliate King Saul, whose pride had caused the problem to begin with. The people praised Jonathan, not Saul, as the man who had brought the great victory to Israel, and if the Lord had used Jonathan in such a wonderful way, why should he be executed, especially under the orders of his own father? Moreover, due to jealousy, Saul will continue to grow in evil until it takes over and destroys his mind. Sin is not only destructive, it is irrational and even more so for those who claim to adhere to God and what He says about the good life.

James 3:1–12. Wow! What a description of the evil power of the tongue! It not only destroys others, it “defiles” one’s whole body. By the words a man speaks, he can actually increase the sin and wickedness in his own life because what man says can lead to physical acts of greater sin and evil, for example, words of rage can lead to discord, fighting, divorce, just as sexual flirting at the office can lead to fornication or adultery. James makes the point that man has enormous power to training virtually every animal, yet he cannot even control his tongue. Moreover, this tongue is viewed as evil, full of deadly poison (8). Let us remember that this is not in the context of modern politics. Christians need to remember at all times that they carry in their mouths what could be compared to a poisonous viper, and that serpentine instrument can affect others in a way that even results in their death (for example, ridicule of a suicidal person). Since the Christian can never relax with the assumption that this “viper” is fully under control, he or she must be especially alert against its most disastrous eruptions. Christians need to think about the horrifying inconsistencies of cursing human beings while claiming to praise God. As James points out, the same lips that ‘bless our God and Father, in a hymn or prayer of praise, may also curse men despite the fact that they bear the similitude of God who created them in His image.’ As I pointed out, this would be like a person on the way to Bible class cursing those in traffic and then when he comes to Bible class has nice things to say to fellow believers and even the pastor, e.g., ‘what a great sermon.’ James clearly says that such behavior is unsuitable, “*out not to be, Οὐ χρή*” (10) because it flies in the face of the consistency we see in nature all around us: “*Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.*”¹¹ *Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?*¹² *Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh* (3:10-12). In light of this, is it possible for a believer *not* to have much virtue in the areas of prudence, patience, and control as manifested by disdain for and cursing of people and flipping them off as he goes to Bible class, and then all of a sudden in church he instantly gains virtues of prudence, patience, love, and a high regard for others (who may also be obnoxious like people in traffic)? Yes, but only in conduitism, which, of course, is false—gaining spiritual virtue is more than just finding your sin on a list of sins and naming it to get under power to make you a better conduit for God—it *does not work that way!* Moreover, as far as building virtue and how our acts affect our character, would not the very act of ceasing from words (acts) of rage and cursing tend toward some natural virtue, say of *control*? In all situations, we all, especially myself! need to heed the biblical warning of “*being quick to hear, slow to speak,*” for in doing not only do we learn more, we become more caring and put ourselves in a position where we can actually partake of the nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4-11) and thus love God, His creation, and see life itself as a wonderful a gift instead of an angst existence that is constantly filled with friction, frustration, and irritability at others, whom God says we are to respect because they are made in His image. *Quo Vadis?*

Psalm 119:97–120. This psalm is a magnificent psalm on the psalmist’s absolute love for the Word of God, treasuring it above all else. This section shows us very personal aspects of love for the Word of God. Note the personal meditation in verses **97-104**. We enjoy thinking about people and activities that we love, and meditation means pondering His Word and allowing its truths to penetrate every aspect of our lives so that we continually gain new and fresh understandings of its truths with every challenge in life. We can learn from our enemies in the encounters of life (**98**), from our teachers in the explanations of life from books and lessons (**99**), and from the older saints who have had the experiences of life and know the principles that work (**100**). He so meditated on and lived out Truth that he learned more than all of those before Him: *“I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts.”* Note the connection between *keeping* the precepts and *understanding*. There is direct connection between living out the Word of God and really getting it. The Word of God is unlike any other book: we must be on good terms with the Author if we are to learn from what He has written. Our relationship to the Lord is determined by our relationship to His will, and that is determined by how we relate to His Word. Academic knowledge of the Bible does not automatically transfer to living knowledge. We must live it to really know it.

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

Pastor Don