

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”

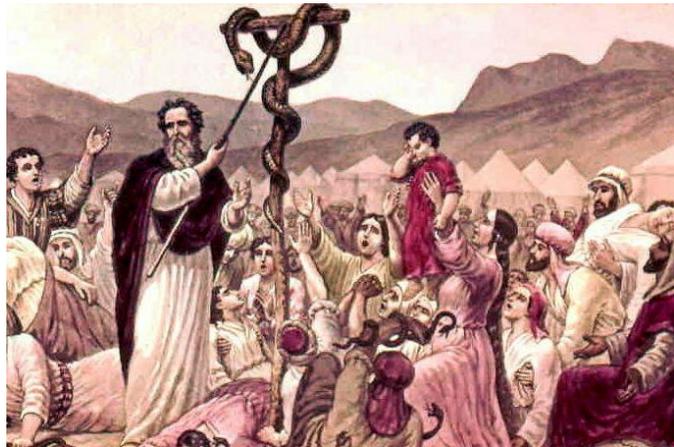
March 18, 2016

- ✓ Numbers 20-21 – The bronze serpent.
- ✓ 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:21 – Judgment Seat of Christ.
- ✓ Psalm 18:31-50 – Rejoicing in God’s blessings.

REFLECTIONS:

Numbers 20-21. In chapter 21 we see divine discipline once again. First, we are told that “the people spoke against God and Moses, *“Why have you brought us from Egypt to die in the desert? There is no food and no water, and our hearts detest this miserable food”* (5). Then Yahweh sends poisonous snakes that bit the people, causing them to die (6). This motivated the people to confess their sins: *“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived (8-9).”* My question is ‘Why did they

confess their sins?’ Is it because they recognized their evil or did they confess their sins simply for physical preservation. While God will accept any confession because it is, at least on some level, acknowledge of guilt, such low motives as to avoid divine discipline never solves the problem of sin and lack of virtue in the life. Related to this is a common saying in Christianity that if one did not experience suffering, then there would be no reason to worship



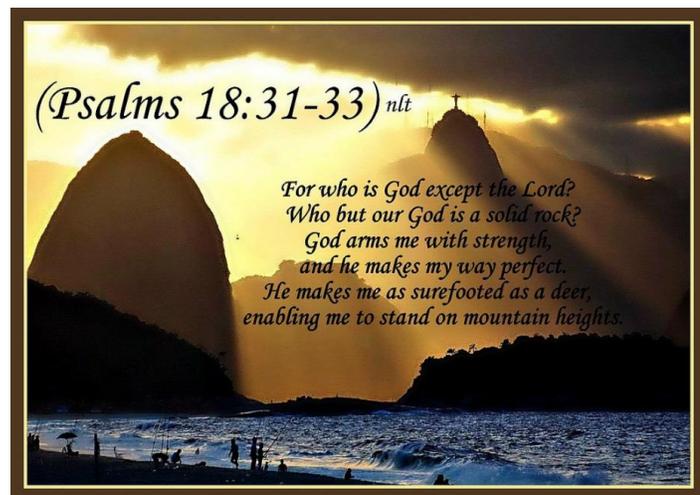
God. I categorically reject this view. It reflects a very low view of the goodness of God. It is saying in effect that God in and of Himself is not worthy to be sought and worshipped apart from Him helping us in our problems. There are plenty of Christians throughout the centuries who have not experienced great suffering in their lives and had a fantastic passion to know more and more of the goodness of God as it is in Himself. This is far higher than viewing the goodness of God merely in terms of avoiding pain and helping with problems. In sum, the low view of God is that God is not worthy to be worshipped for His essential goodness so we need difficulties, which God puts into our lives to make us run into His arms and love Him more. Quite incoherent and base if you ask me.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4:21. This section contains the Judgment Seat of Christ, where quality of each believer's work is judged. It is not a question of salvation which is a gift (Rom 6:23); rather, it is evaluation based on the quality of one's service for the Lord. As we have noticed, anything that is done apart from love for Christ is worthless (1 Cor. 13). By the way in keeping with the theme of suffering in the last couple of Bible classes and rewards, it is to be noted that these rewards are not dependent upon suffering. A believer can go through life without much suffering by serving Christ and still be richly rewarded. Suffering as such is not the basis for glory or rewards. It is attitude in one's suffering that is determinative. As far as rewards, the issue is serving Christ faithfully in the good times as well as in times of suffering. Christ is the issue. Living a life pleasing Christ is the bottom line in the spiritual life.



Psalms 18:31-50. In this section David praises God for His character and His benefits (not sufferings) to him: 'God's Word is flawless...God was His Shield, Refuge, and Rock.' God can be looked at for safety and salvation.

This is in contrast to God being viewed as the Bringer of evil and suffering for the purpose of making one a greater believer. In closing out this section, David declares his appreciation of the loyal love, the unfailing kindness, of the Lord. God's Word is flawless and provides everything we need to have a 2nd person love relationship with God that grows month after month, year after year. In fact, by deep reflection on the Word of God and the various narratives of suffering one can



understand them in a profound way through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a very personal way. Recall that the solution to Job's problem of evil was not in looking to some good compensation for his suffering, but in seeing God, *and He saw God by God describing His activity in all of creation at outlined in the last few chapters of Job.*

In, by, with, through, and for *Esse*,

Pastor Don