

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”**  
**May 19, 2016**

- ✓ **1 Chronicles 7:1-40.** Exhaustive chronology for God’s troubled people.
- ✓ **1 Tim. 5:1-9.** How can a believer who praises Jesus and the Bible have a lower moral character than a rank pagan?
- ✓ **Psalm 78:30-52.** The curse of a functionalistic view of God and the spiritual life.

**COMMENTS:**

**1 Chronicles 7:1-40.** As we have seen, First Chronicles provides an exhaustive chronology of the Israelites. It shows that God is faithful even when His people were not: *‘But they were unfaithful to the God of their ancestors and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them (5:25).* This exhaustive genealogy was very meaningful to the Israelites as they were going through a great deal of radical changes. In fact, change *is* the backdrop of 1–2 Chronicles: In 586 B.C., Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, who in turn deported the bulk of the population to Babylon. In exile, the Judean community retained its unique identity and longed to return to their land. In 539 B.C. the Persian emperor, Cyrus, conquered Babylon and offered to send the exiles back to their homeland that they might rebuild their temple and restore Jerusalem. The returnees faced many challenges and struggled with how to rebuild “Israel” in the land that God had given them, which was now ruled by the Persians and had been partially settled by a mixed population. After they had rebuilt the Jerusalem temple and the city, the Jewish community struggled to understand what their relationship to God would be like in this new situation. First—Second Chronicles was written to show this troubled restored community that God is in complete control and continues His march with His people through His-story.

**1 Tim. 5:1-9.** In this section Paul starts out telling Timothy ‘don’t rebuke an older man, but appeal to him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters with all purity and honor widows who are truly widows.’ Note the respect that is to be shown among believers of all ages. Note the honor that is to be given to widows. By *honor* Paul means a deep sense of concern and an earnest, regular desire to help them financially and with their daily needs. This is revolutionary ethics for the time in which Paul lived. It was not that the elders were disrespected culturally, but they were not sought out as people to help. Widows, who were of the lowest rank of society, were to be loved as equals. And older men, at the higher rank, were to be respected for their understanding. In our Western culture of narcissism and greed, all too often an elder’s perspective is often rejected as outdated. Paul does not say older people are always right, just as our fathers are not always right, but he does encourage Timothy to show them the respect they deserve “as a father.” Now to verse 8, *But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* There have been a surprising number of believers I have meet, mostly from the prosperity movement, that are guilty of being worse than an unbeliever as far as their moral character and family responsibilities. I have watched in sheer amazement, time after time, where a Christian husband/father would leave his wife and family for another younger woman *all in the name of Jesus’ abundant life!* I noticed this among Christian families whose children went to Christian schools where I have taught. In every single case, the believer was always talking

about Jesus, the Bible as God's Word, and his exciting spiritual life. How is it that a believer could be so occupied with Jesus Christ and the Bible have such lack of moral character? By the way, in each case the believer knew the Bible inside and out and could quote passages that would impress any pastor. To be sure, they were all conduit believers in one way or another. As far as I could tell, they were, at least in their minds: Bible-only. In fact, their view of the Bible's power bordered on animism. Even though they were always talking about Jesus Christ and the Bible and living by faith, they were morally bankrupt. They were anything but complete/mature men (τέλειοι, James 1:4). How could they have so much Scripture in their souls and be such moral Lilliputians? The answer lies in virtue—natural, supernatural, and theological. Apart from virtue, the believer does not think rightly or desire rightly no matter how much doctrine or Scripture he knows. Without the virtues, the believer spends most of every day confessing his sins because of habituation of sin that no amount of spiritual conduitism could ever resolve. Certainly something is wrong! Certainly this cannot be described as moral victory/growth—especially in light of 10-30 years of eagerly studying the Bible or listening to Bible doctrine and “surrendering” to let the Holy Spirit do the work of sanctification in them. The fact that this passage says that a believer without virtue enough to take care of his family is worse than an unbeliever points to the fact that some unbelievers have greater development of natural virtue than the believer: some pagans think rightly and feel rightly on a moral level regarding family, while some *Bible* believers do not. What a strange monstrosity: a believer who is always talking about how great Jesus Christ and the Bible are and yet have lower moral feelings and standards than a rank pagan. Sunday we will continue to look at the nature of virtue and how important it is to spiritual growth and the moral maturity of the human nature—real maturity that is based on the Whole Truth instead of a partial truth (like spiritual conduitism). It has been my experience that one of the worst and subtlest enemies of the spiritual life is when one truth is exalted to the point of covering up many other truths. Only a foundation in the Realism of Total Truth can resolve this curse of hiding some truths as the expense of others, which de facto just is suppression of Truth.

**Psalm 78:30-52.** A good look at what I have condemned as a functional view of God is illustrated vividly in this section of Scripture. Note how Asaph points out how these believers only turn to God when they are in trouble; they neither love Truth nor the Lord. Observe that whenever the Lord punished His people, they turned to Him as their Rock and Redeemer, even though their hearts were not right. But God forgave them, repeatedly restraining His anger, because He remembered that they were mere humans with fleeting lives (38–39). See how often the people rebelled in the desert, forgetting the mighty works that demonstrated God's power (40–42). The believer who uses God for functional reasons, like to get more temporal stuff from this world, ends up living a cursed life: the world never satisfies him, he always wants more and more, he is always fraught with problems, and he only turns to God when he is overwhelmed by the gods of his own making. As I have noted repeatedly: every man is irresistibly drawn to who and what he really loves. Quo Vadis?

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

Pastor Don