

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
May 9, 2016

- ✓ **Judges 15:1-17:13.** The death of Samson—suicide or sacrifice?
- ✓ **Philippians 4:2-9.** We rejoice in the Lord, not in the evil in our broken world.
- ✓ **Psalms 69:18-70:5.** David prays for the Lord to destroy his malefactors.

COMMENTS:

Judges 15:1-17:13. This section includes Samson killing the Philistines, his infamous affair with Delilah, and death. In regard to his death, the question has often been raised, “If suicide is wrong, why did God bless Samson for doing it?” To be sure, suicide is murder, which is categorically prohibited, “You shall not murder” (Exod. 20:13). It makes no difference that the life taken is one’s own. All life belongs to God, and He alone has the right to take it. Even the most desperate believers in the Bible who desired death never considered suicide a morally viable alternative. Believers may have asked God to take it, as in the example of Jonah (Jonah 4:3), but they did not consider it right for them to take it themselves. Putting aside Samson for the moment, there are at least five cases of suicide in the Bible and none of them were approved by God. Each met a tragic death and divine disapproval. Suicide is an attack on the image of God in man (Gen. 1:27), an attempt to usurp God sovereignty over human life. In the case of Samson, he really did not take his life; he *sacrificed* it for his people. Suicide is an action “for one’s self.” What Samson did was to lay his life down for others. His death was no more a suicide than Christ’s. To be sure, every apparent death “for others” is not an act of love as per 1 Corinthians 13:3. Even a martyr may not be dying out of love for others, but in an obstinate commitment to his own self-centered cause. We see this with Saul who took self-death out of selfish reasons (1 Sam. 31:4). We also see it in our own day with Muslim suicide bombers. Samson by contrast asked God for permission to die, praying, “Let me die with the Philistines” (Judges 16:30). God granted his request, “so the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.” He was like a soldier who falls on a hand grenade to save his buddies, he is giving his life for others, not committing suicide. As I noted in yesterday’s Bible class, for something to be right/virtuous, it must be a right thing done freely, in a right way, for the right reasons, under the right circumstances. It is never *just* about freedom, or the act, or how, or why, or the circumstances. All conditions must be met for an act to be virtuous, and all were met with Samson. He freely did the right act, for the right reasons, under the right circumstances.

Philippians 4:2-9. In verse 4 the apostle Paul exhorts believers to “rejoice in the Lord,” and he repeats the verb. This is not a command to be happy about the trials of life. Paul is not commanding the believers to be happy about disease, persecution, and other forms of evil that come our way. He is not commanding them to be happy about tragedy and thank God for evil suffering. Rather, he is telling them to rejoice *in the Lord*. Christ is the One in whom the sphere of rejoicing it to take place. There are many circumstance *for which* the Christian cannot be happy. In yesterday’s Bible class, prayer for a family who lose a five week old child was offered. Is anyone really sick enough to think that we ought to be happy about the death of the little baby? As I have repeatedly noted, God does not directly bring evil into our lives. He is not the Author of evil or testing. However, He is always near to redeem a person who has felt the sting of this broken evil world. We see this repeatedly in the psalms, for example, as David prays to

God to deliver him from evil. David did not view God as bringing evil into his life just so He could then turn around and be his savior. We all live in an evil, fallen, broken world and we always have the option in our deepest sorrows to turn our eyes to the Lord and *rejoice in Him* and His comfort during those dark and painful days.

Psalm 69:18-70:5. David finds himself suffering persecution in an evil, broken world. He turns to the Lord, but not as to One who brings the suffering in order to get David's attention. No, he turns to the Lord as the source of all goodness and asks God to destroy the evil men who are trying to destroy him. Again, God is *not* the direct or formal cause of any suffering.

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

Pastor Don