



FAITH 101

Leviticus 24–25

Following God means working alongside others in everyday tasks. God’s regulations for Israel regarding worship, punishment for various crimes, and the observance of Sabbath and Jubilee years remind us of His desire that we serve with others and encourage one another.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon writes: “A threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Now Solomon is not talking about going down to the hardware store and buying some good rope; he’s talking about what can happen when we allow God to bring several strands together and weave them into our lives to make our faith stronger.

And that is exactly what God is doing here in Leviti-



Depiction of an offering of bread in bottom register

cus chapter 24 as He strengthens the faith of the nation of Israel. The Lord says to Moses here in verse 2, “Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp [in the tabernacle], that a light may be kept burning regularly.”

The Lord is assigning His people to an ongoing task. They are to bring the best olive oil for the tabernacle lamp—not the cheap stuff, but pure olive oil. This candelabra more than likely represents the light of truth Israel was to shine to their world. It also points to Jesus, who will stand in the temple and announce that He is the Light of the World (John 8:12).

Now here in verse 5, the people are told to bring fine flour every week for the priests to make twelve loaves of bread. Fresh loaves were placed on the golden table inside the Holy Place every week, and they represented the twelve tribes of Israel. This also pointed to the coming Savior, who is the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

The Lord is assigning these tasks to the people so that they will work together with the priests. The Lord could give all the work to the priests, but He chooses to involve all the people in the work of the tabernacle.

So, here we see one strand of truth God weaves into our lives is that we *serve the Lord together with others*.



God never intended believers to live in isolation but in cooperation with others.

Today, the church is called a body—and you’re a foot or a hand, an ear, or a muscle. God designed you to fit into a community of believers, and you find where you fit when you find a way to serve.

Now it almost seems like Moses and the Lord are having this conversation about the Holy Place, when they get interrupted here in verse 10:

Now an Israelite woman’s son, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel. And the Israelite woman’s son and a man of Israel fought in the camp, and the Israelite woman’s son blasphemed the [Lord’s] Name and cursed. Then they brought him to Moses.

Here’s a man who gets into a fight with another man, and he curses the Lord’s name. This Hebrew verb for cursing doesn’t mean he let a bad word slip out of his mouth. It refers to denouncing and defying the character of God. In other words, this man is defying the God of Israel.

And in verse 14 God delivers the verdict on the blasphemer, demanding capital punishment at the hands of all the people. In doing so, the Lord is delivering a second strand of truth here that will make the people of God even stronger—and here it is: God’s people don’t just serve the Lord together; we *honor the name of the Lord together*.

Dishonoring God’s name brought an immediate sentence of death. Now you might think that isn’t fair. Well, let me tell you, the entire human race is under this same sentence of judgment; we just don’t see it applied immediately. And because of the delay of God’s final judgment, the world thinks they can dishonor God and get away with it.

No, there’s a coming judgment at the end of human history as we know it; and every sin will be uncovered, and those who have defied, and dishonored God will have an eternal sentence delivered in the courtroom of God (Revelation 20:11-15). Judgment eventually takes place.

God goes on to expand on the idea of capital punishment. We read here in verse 17, “Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death.” Now this is not a reference to the casualties of war or accidental manslaughter. God is referring here to what we call “first-degree murder”—premeditated murder.

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The death penalty for murder follows from the fact that humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Among other things, this image means that humans are able to interact with God on a personal level, worshiping Him in spirit and in truth. In addition to being given an immortal spirit, according to Genesis chapter 2, mankind is to serve as God’s representatives on earth, carrying out His desires as stewards of His creation. No animal was created with an immortal spirit or this unique responsibility as God’s representatives.

So, the murder of a human being is effectively killing a representative of God on earth. And that’s serious business.

You will also notice the principle here in chapter 24 is that the punishment matches the crime. So, the crime of taking a human life warrants the death sentence. Beloved, capital punishment is simply the declaration that human life is special. ¹



Now this does not mean murder is an unforgivable sin. The consequences might be severe, but the sin can be forgiven, and even a murderer can go to heaven, a forgiven, redeemed believer.

Now, chapter 25 gives us a third cord to weave into our lives. We not only serve the Lord together and honor the Lord together, but we also *trust the Lord together*.

For the Israelite this trust involved a real-life event called the Sabbath *year*. Verses 1 through 7 command the Israelites to allow the land to rest every seventh, or Sabbath, year. In other words, there is to be no planting or harvesting a normal crop.

So, every seven years, the Israelites had to enroll in this required class—we will call it Faith 101—and they were to watch as God provided for their needs as He promised. Imagine every seven years going without a paycheck!

And if you think that would be a challenge, the Lord goes on here in verse 10 to institute the Year of Jubilee, which is to take place every fifty years. During this Jubilee year, the Israelites are to wipe off the books any debt owed them. They are to return any parcel of land to its original owner. And all their farmhands who are working to pay off their debts are to be released—all their debts eliminated.

Now these regulations were designed to protect the Israelites from each other. They prevented anyone from monopolizing the land. They also developed compassion for those who had fallen on hard times. This law had a way of curbing greed and materialism.

In fact, chapter 25 goes on to urge Israelites to redeem, or buy back, the property of their brethren who, in their poverty, are forced to sell it. Likewise, one who is forced to sell himself into servanthood because of debts may be redeemed by a relative and released from his debts. These provisions protected

the poor and promoted compassion, and we have evidence that those who acted upon them were uniquely blessed. Years later a godly man named Boaz redeemed the property of a poor relative and ended up getting a wife out of it! Her name was Ruth.

Maybe God has you right now enrolled in a course called Faith 101. You didn't really want to sign up for it, but here you are. God isn't out to destroy you or even discourage you. He's wanting to strengthen you with this threefold chord of faith as you serve Him, honor Him, and trust Him today

Using these verses (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Galatians 5:13-14) Why is it personally important for you as a believer that you serve the Lord with others? What practical steps can you take this week to either join or include a fellow believer as you together make a difference in someone's life?

In what particular areas of life is God challenging you to trust Him? What lies is Satan telling you to get you to doubt God's good intentions toward you? How would a growing knowledge of God through His word help in such growing times?

¹ See Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy: Leviticus* (Victor Books, 1994), 120.

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