

# CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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## LESSONS IN FAITH

Ronnie Scherffius

When studying the gospel records we often discover multiple accounts of teachings and events in the life of Christ. One would expect to observe a repetition of *Jesus' betrayal* (Matt. 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-52; John 18:1-11), His *trials* before the Hebrews (Matt. 26:57-75; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54-71; John 18:12-27) and Romans (Matt. 27:1-25; Mark 15:1-14; Luke 23:1-26; John 18:28-40), His *suffering and crucifixion* (Matt. 27:26-66; Mark 15:15-47; Luke 23:27-56; John 19:1-42), as well as His *resurrection and ascension* (Matt. 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-25). However, we also find multiple recordings of parables and events. For example, the parables of *the leaven* and *lost sheep* are recorded by both Matthew (13:33; 18:12-14) and Luke (13:20-21; 15:3-7) while the parable of the sower is recorded by Matthew (13:3-9), Mark (4:3-9) and Luke (8:4-15). Similarly, we find the account of the *rich young ruler* recorded in three gospel accounts (Matt. 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-30) each with a varying degree of detail.

One event in the life of Christ found in multiple passages is the sending of Peter and John into Jerusalem to make preparations for the Passover (Matt. 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13). While these passages provide background and information concerning Jesus' final observance of the Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper, they also provide three lessons on faith. We will study Luke's account as it is more detailed.

Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall

a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover (Luke 22:7-13).

From this text, we learn three key lessons regarding faith in Jesus Christ. First, we learn that faith in Jesus Christ will cause us to follow His will: “**follow** him into the house” (10). A faith that follows was demonstrated by Peter, Andrew, James, and John when Jesus called them from their business of catching fish (Luke 5:4-11) to become fishers of men (Matt. 4:18-22). Levi also exhibited a *following faith* when he forsook all earthly endeavors and took up the cause of the Savior (Luke 5:27, 28). Genuine saving faith is that faith

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# I HAVE FOUND A FRIEND IN JESUS

Cody Westbrook

With Song of Solomon 2:1 in mind, hymn writer Charles Fry penned the song “The Lilly of the Valley” in 1881. Seeking to describe the intimacy that exists between the Savior and His disciples, the song begins with the words “I have found a friend in Jesus.” Friendship in the ancient world was a reciprocal relationship built upon loyalty, trust, affection, and service (2 Sam. 16:16-17; Pro. 18:24; 1 Sam. 18:1-4; Phil. 4:1). Such a relationship exists between people, but it also exists between man and God. Abraham was called the friend of God (Jas. 2:23) and so were his descendants (2 Chron. 20:7). Likewise, one can find friendship with Jesus the Christ. In His farewell address to the apostles Jesus outlined the parameters of friendship for them, and us.

**Friendship with Jesus involves sacrificial love (John 15:13).** In John 13:34 Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” The newness of the commandment is not that the children of Israel had never been commanded to love. Leviticus 19:18 says, “...but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The newness is seen in the model. The standard of love for one’s neighbor is no longer self, but Christ. We are to love one another as He has loved us (cf. 1 John 3:16). But how has Jesus manifested His love? John 15:13 answers the question—“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Because of His great love for us, Jesus endured the pain of the cross (2 Cor. 8:9; John 10:15; Eph. 5:2). He died that we might live! The only appropriate response to such sacrificial love is reciprocation. Paul wrote, “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:15). To truly be His friend, we must sacrifice our lives for the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2). His will must become our will and His service must become our priority (Matt. 6:33). As Paul said “...Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life or by death” (Phil. 1:20). With love

as the motivating factor (1 Cor. 13:1-3) we must give everything to our Friend.

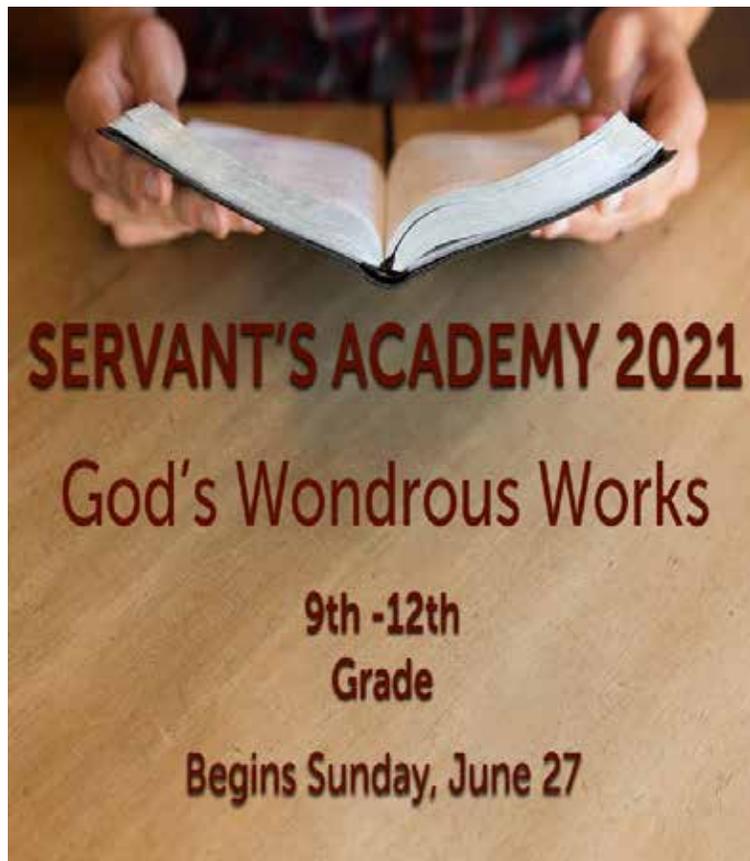
**Friendship with Jesus involves obedience (John 15:14).** Abraham was called the friend of God because of his obedience to God’s will (Jas. 2:21-23). Similarly, our friendship with Jesus depends upon our willingness to obey Him. Friendship is a relationship based upon loyalty and sacrificial love. Jesus loved us enough to leave the splendors of Heaven, walk the dusty streets of Judea, and endure the agony of the cross on our behalf. He has more than proven His love and loyalty to us. How will we prove ours to Him? No less than five times in His discourse, Jesus referred to love and obedience as that which defines the proper relationship between Himself and His followers. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). We abide in His love by keeping His commandments (John 15:9-10). Jesus not only commanded obedience, He demonstrated it. He “humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). He “learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8). We must, therefore, follow the example of our Friend and Savior by giving ourselves over to complete obedience to the Lord’s commands.

**Friendship with Jesus involves knowledge (John 15:15).** Though we are commanded to obey and serve our Lord, such service is not rendered without knowledge. A master may give his servants orders to follow without any rationale or explanation. But our Master calls us friends “for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” Jehovah’s plan for man’s redemption has existed in His mind from eternity (Eph. 3:11). The details of that plan were hidden but have now been revealed to mankind. Paul refers to it as “the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest... (Rom. 15:25-26). The “mystery of His will” (Eph. 1:9) “which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 1:9; 3:5). Jesus came into the world to fulfill

the Father's will (Heb. 10:9). He came to save us from our sins that we may be reconciled back to God. Throughout His ministry He revealed His purpose to His disciples and it is through knowledge of that purpose that we are drawn near to Him (John 17:6-8). Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9). The next two verses identify four benefits of growing in our knowledge of God's will, one of which is "increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10). To increase in the knowledge of God is to grow closer to Him. It identifies our relationship with Him as one of intimacy. The more we know about our God and our Savior, Jesus the Christ, the more we know them, personally, and the stronger our relationship becomes.

We often sing "What a friend we have in Jesus" and indeed it is so. No relationship exists in the world like the one that a Christian can have with the Savior. But that friendship is not cheap. Friendship is a relationship built upon love, loyalty, and affection. Our Lord displays all these things, and more, to us. He requires that we do the same. To truly be His friend we must love Him sacrificially, obey His will, and grow in our knowledge of Him. We cannot find a friend in Jesus if we are not willing to be a friend to Jesus.

**CW**



## BIBLICAL BALANCE ENDS WITH ATTITUDES

Ross Haffner

So much controversy, so much conflict! To answer the division present in the Lord's church today, many are calling for Biblical balance. I am sure some who are asking for balance actually mean, "There should be less preaching that expects me to change and more preaching that makes me feel good." Others mean, "Let's change the truth slightly so that it's easier to digest." Neither of these positions should be supported because they show a lack of concern for God's authority. Godly men and women are also calling for Biblical balance, but what does that mean, exactly? Simply put, it is the narrow way (Matt. 7:14). It means that we will not add to or take away from what scripture has said. We will bind only what God has bound and loose only where God has loosened by command, implication, or authorized example (Matt. 16:19, Col. 2:16). How will we know if someone truly wants balance? Certainly, it begins with God's word (Matt. 15:7-9) but it ends with attitudes.

Attitude Toward Study — Luke 8:18 reminds us that we have to be careful how we hear. A common misconception about Biblical balance is that it is about finding the truth that is in the middle of two positions. But if our standard becomes the middle of two positions our standard slides away from God's view over time as the culture changes. Was the truth somewhere in the middle when the Pharisees were arguing with Jesus? Certainly not. Biblical balance is about considering all that the Bible has to say about the subject instead of putting on blinders to the passages that disagree with my position.

Attitude Toward Reflection and Application — Reflection and application are about loving and doing all of God's law, not just the parts that agree with my thinking (Ps. 40:8). It is not one scripture against another, but one scripture in light of others. Reflection and application are about loving and doing only God's law and rejecting the counterfeit (Gal. 1:8-9).

Attitude Toward Repentance — This is where the rubber meets the road. Once I understand the proper application of the word in my life based on study and self-examination I must ask, "What am I going to do with this knowledge?" Consider some texts that can be understood in a Biblically balanced way.

- 1 John 1:7-9: All grace and no law? No. Constantly worried I am going to be eternally condemned if Jesus comes back right now? No. Keep walking in the light (which would involve correcting errors) and confessing fault and your sins will be covered.
- Galatians 5:22-23: I'm fine as long as I have most of those down? No. I am weak in all those, therefore God must be so displeased with me? Not necessarily! I should respond by working on those things that are lacking. God graciously allows for time to grow.
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15: Call out every sin here and abroad without speaking to them first? No. Let it go and never question apparent sin? No. We should be diligent to mark, withdraw from, and admonish those who depart from the faith.

Being balanced is about striving to do all that the Bible says on a subject, with the proper attitude. The answer to division in the Lord's church is not to justify ourselves by finding room in the middle. Neither do we solve the problem by looking to please those in our inner circle or those with greater influence in the brotherhood. Look to God's word for the answers and have the attitudes sufficient to make all necessary changes.

CW



## FROM GARBAGE TO GOODNESS

Justin Guess

Last month a cyclist was riding from Portland to Corpus Christi across the bay bridge. For an unknown reason, the man veered diagonally across two lanes of traffic, running into the wall. As he the collision happened, the man flipped over the barrier and fell about 30 feet down into the four foot water below. A couple following

not too far behind witnessed the accident and pulled over immediately to render aid. A 60 year old man got out of the driver's seat and ran to the wall looking down into the bay. As he was surveying the situation, he noticed that the man below was starting to drown. If he waited for help the man would surely die. However, if he jumped into the water, he could risk serious injury to himself and maybe even death. Within the minute the man jumped over the bridge wall. He was able to save the man's life and was not injured in the process. The title of the news section on that August day was: A Good Samaritan in Corpus Christi. Since when did it become a good thing to be known as a "Samaritan?"

When one considers the past of the Samaritans, it is clear that they have not always been the most favorable people. When we take a look at the Old Testament we find that Samaria was the capitol of the northern kingdom of Israel. When the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom and carried off the people of the 10 northern tribes into captivity, the city was destroyed. Second Kings 17:24-41 gives the narrative of the intermarriage of those who were left behind with the people from surrounding areas who worshipped different things and gods. When doing this they began to worship God along with the other deities. Ezra and Nehemiah both record that the Jews of the southern kingdom refused to allow the Samaritan people to help them rebuild Jerusalem. The hatred between the two groups grew to an enormous amount! This hate carried over into the New Testament. Mark Black said it this way, "It may be that they regarded the Samaritans as little more than idolatrous "half breeds" (Based on 2 Kings) and themselves as the true people of God." In other words, the Jews did NOT consider these people to be part of God's children. They deemed them as "mutts," or as Harry Potter would say, "mud-bloods." They were no better than the common Gentile and no better than garbage.

Since when did it become a good thing to be known as a "Samaritan?" In Luke, the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, we read the Lord's parable of the "Good Samaritan." In verse 25 a lawyer tests Christ with the question, "How can one inherit eternal life?" Jesus replies as He often time did with a question. He asked the lawyer, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" Please note that eternal life is found in the written Word of God. Answering correctly, the lawyer responded with the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18 (Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself). Jesus informs this expert of the law that he is correct and that he will have eternal life if he continues in this faithful saying. However, this man is an expert with a measurable amount of pride.

Wanting to “justify” himself, he asked the question, “Who is my neighbor?” It would be on this momentous occasion that Jesus Christ would change the view and the reputation of the Samaritan forever.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was about twenty miles and a significant drop in elevation. The terrain was very rocky and amongst mountains. It was a perfect place for thieves to ambush travelers. Jesus tells them of a “certain man” who was traveling down this road and who was attacked by a group of robbers. Some writers would say that this man was probably a Jew. Luke records for us that the man was stripped of his valuables (money, clothing, and anything that was worth money), beaten (most likely so he was not able to follow them to retrieve his items or to turn them in), and left for dead. Jesus tells of 3 different characters that would pass this man who was in need of much help. First He mentions a “certain priest.” Jesus mentions that the priest (who most would expect to stop and help) saw him, AND THEN passed by on the other side. When describing the priest and his actions, Anthony Lee Ash says, “The priest was probably returning from Jerusalem (had he been performing religious duties?). Normal compassion for any person would help a man in such a state as the wounded sufferer so that it must take a repression of something basically human to pass him by.” In like manner, a Levite was traveling down the road and when he saw the man he passed by on the other side. A Levite was a priest’s helper. One would expect him to stop and help the beaten man as well, but he didn’t. The third of the three in which Jesus mentioned is the Samaritan. The picture that Christ paints is one that shows this man’s goodness and concern. As he was traveling, he saw the man and felt the basic characteristic in which the priest and Levite both lacked. He felt compassion for the man. Instead of maneuvering around this poor man, he stopped, treated his wounds by pouring oil and wine on them, set him on his OWN beast, took him to an inn, and took care of him. An extensive list compared to the two righteous men of the Jews. However, that was not all that he did for the man. He also put him up in a room and gave the innkeeper two days worth of wages for his keep. He told them keeper that if he spends more he would be back to repay him. Money or even gratitude was not the concern for this Samaritan, but the hope to relieve human need. Upon completing this parable Jesus asks the question, “Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?” As painful as the answer may have been, the lawyer answered correctly. He said, “He that showed mercy on him.” The reply of Jesus is still in effect for man today, “Go and do thou likewise.”

This would be the first time that a Samaritan had ever been

considered as good. The question that we must ask is: How did he do so? This Samaritan was said to be good because, he followed the written law of God. He was believed to be more righteous and the religious leaders of the Jews (the priest and the Levite). Without any doubt, because of the Samaritan’s actions, he went from garbage to goodness. Who is your neighbor and how are you treating them?

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## THE AGE OF THE TROLL

Patrick Hammack

The internet is a remarkable thing. Now, I know that in the darker corners of the online world there are things that are unsavory to those professing Christ. But, all in all, the internet has made an undeniable and beneficial mark on our lives. Unless you want to set out

for open wilderness, there are very few places that you can go and very few things you can do where the internet isn't somehow involved, either directly or indirectly.

Just as abundant and inescapable are people who scour the internet looking for any opportunity to tear down and insult their fellow man and his ideas. In internet lingo these people are known simply as trolls. And, again, they're everywhere. Its worth noting that while they are everywhere, they seem to congregate in the comments sections of any website you can find. It doesn't matter what the content of the website might be. If there is a comment section, the trolls will be there in droves with their unkind, rude, disrespectful, comments. Trolls can find something wrong with anything, and they do everything they can to make sure you know about their negative opinions. Unfortunately, trolls are beginning to leave their normal hunting grounds and can now be found in the real world, even in a congregation of the Lord's people.

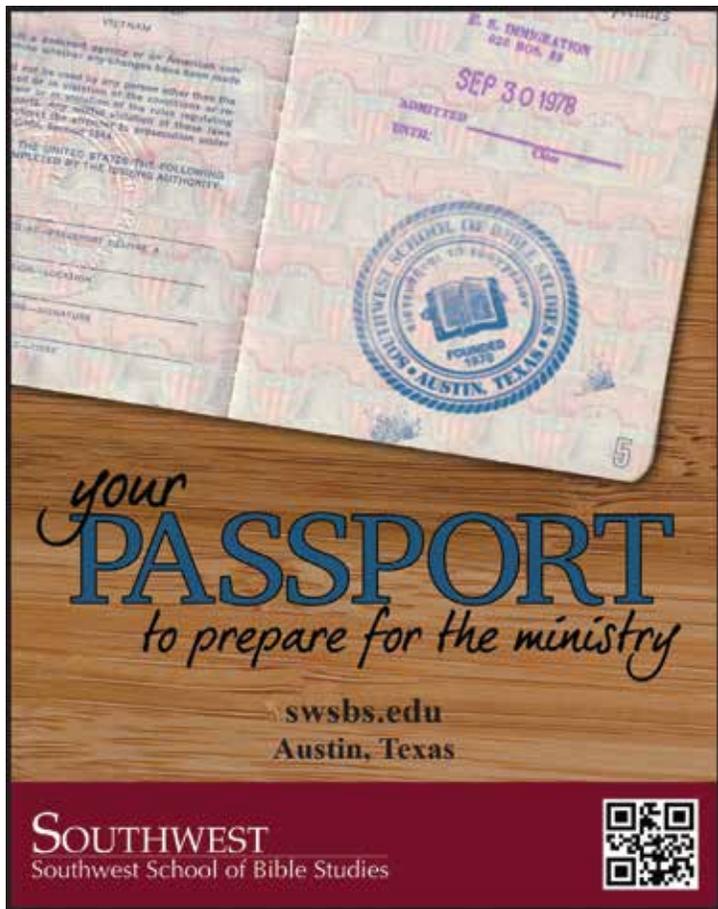
I recently looked up articles about internet trolls. I found one that caught my eye entitled "The Most Telling Characteristics of a Social Media Troll." Surprisingly, there are several noticeable parallels between internet trolls and congregational trolls. Using the article's main points, let's look at a few of the similarities.

- **ACT OVERLY CRITICAL: You join a chat and your only contribution to the collective discourse is to criticize comments, opinions or people.** This seems to be a trait that is easily seen in the congregational troll. Some Christians seem to find comfort in pointing out the hypocrisies and wrongs in the lives or worship of others. However, as Christians, we are commanded to build up others in our lives instead of tearing them down with negativity. In the English Standard Version, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 reads, "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."
- **ARGUE AD NAUSEAM: You continue to argue a point well beyond any educational value for you or the audience to the point where your comments are simply repetitive rhetoric.** Some people love the sound of their own voice when discussing differing opinions. They talk and talk as if logic will take a backseat to an avalanche of words. Again, the Bible gives us advice for speaking with others, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;" (Jas. 1:19).
- **WAGE ATTACKS: You post personal attacks on someone's character, family, job etc. instead of respectfully discussing the point at hand.** There is a latin phrase for this kind of tactic: The Ad Hominem

attack. Ad Hominem means "against the man." The congregational troll finds ad hominem attacks very useful, but its nothing more than a distraction from the facts at hand. Its simply an attempt to remove the audiences thoughts from the present facts of a disagreement and place them upon the character of the presenter. Its also a direct violation of Philippians 2:3, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."

- **PRESENT OPINIONS AS FACTS: You fervently argue subjects in which you have no real experience or subject matter expertise, yet present your point of view as fact.** How often do discussions about religion and the Bible begin with the phrase "I think" or "I feel"? The answer is an undeniable, "Far too often." In the arena of theological thought, phrases such as this have zero value. John 12:48 reads, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." Simply put, if its the words of Christ that will judge us, what we think or feel about any subject doesn't matter.
- **LOVE TO BEAT A DEAD HORSE: You introduce topics you love to hate-on even when no one else is discussing them or when it's not part of the group's discussion topic, simply to fuel your need to criticize.** People have hobby subjects when it comes to the Bible. Hobby subjects are subjects we are acutely interested in or have more comfort discussing. However, a problem arises when we keep trying to turn every subject into our hobby subject. Bible classes get derailed by those that inject their own agendas into the discussion. Bible class teachers can become discouraged by not being able to use the material they've spent hours preparing. Moreover, students can get frustrated in not being able to grow spiritually because the class can't seem to move past the same subjects.

What can we do about the plague of a congregational troll? We can first make sure we are not guilty of such behavior. If so, its time to remove the plank from our eye. When others are trolling, we can also use the same advice one might find on the internet. Don't feed the trolls. They eventually get hungry and go find other places to continue their trolling ways.



good, showing compassion to those less powerful, integrity, justice, and being morally pure (Amos 5.11ff).

CW

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that willingly and without regret follows the will of Jesus.

Second, we learn that faith in Jesus Christ will furnish us with what is needed: *“he shall shew you a large upper room furnished”* (12). When Peter and John followed the will of Jesus they were led to an upper room that was furnished, i.e., carpet and couches were set for Jesus and His apostles, and (Mark adds) the room was “prepared” (14:15). Thus, all that was needed for Peter and John to make ready was furnished. Such is the case with one who has faith in Jesus Christ. We are instructed that faith comes by hearing “the word of God” (Rom. 10:17) and that the word of God makes man “fully furnished” with nothing lacking (2 Tim. 3:16-17). John noted that one who has faith in Jesus has “the power to become” a child of God (John 1:12) and that faith is not simply verbal ascent but doing (John 3:36, cf. ASV). A deep, abiding faith in Jesus furnishes man with all he needs both to live a life pleasing to God now and to dwell with God in the life to come.

MERCY

“Selected”

On at least two different occasions, Jesus said, “Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice’” (Matthew 9.13; Matthew 12.7). It’s quoted from Hosea 6.6, but in multiple other passages God tells us that He prefers obedience over going through the motions of worship (Isaiah 1.11ff; Amos 5.21; Micah 6; Mark 7).

This is NOT saying that worship is less important than obedience, since obedience causes us to worship. It does show God’s attitude toward those who claim to follow Him, but whose actions say otherwise. Listen to the force behind His words in Amos 5.21, “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.” Israel had adopted some religious and social misconduct.

Do our actions cause God to wince at our worship? Israel was God’s chosen nation, but when they neglected to show mercy, justice, compassion, or faithfulness, God rejected their worship and sent them into captivity. So what kind of worship does God love? Obedience, mercy, pursuing

Finally, we learn that faith in Jesus Christ will cause us to fulfill His commands that we may be ready: *“they made ready the passover”* (13). Following the will and words of Jesus, Peter and John were able to “make ready” for the purposes and works of Christ. Faith alone will not save man (James 2:14-26), but faith together with fulfilling the commands of Jesus (obedience!) will make us ready, not only for judgment (Acts 17:30-31; Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31-46) but also living the Christian life and being fruitful in the works of God (Eph. 2:10; Col. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:18 2 Tim. 2:21; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Pet. 1:18; et al).

Three tremendous lessons are learned from Luke’s record of preparations being made for the final Passover in Jesus’ earthly ministry. As Christians, are we maintaining a faith that *follows* Jesus in all things; *furnishes* us for a life that is pleasing to God and that *fulfills* the work of Christ? May we always have the mind of Jesus’ disciples: “Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5).

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## From the Director's desk



Steven Lloyd  
Director SWSBS

One of the more important lessons I have learned in reading the Bible is that each book should be read from beginning to end as a whole. Another lesson I have learned in reading the Bible is to read each part of a book in light of the whole book. A third lesson I have learned in reading the Bible is to read each book in light of the entire Bible.

These three lessons have revolutionized the way I read. And yet, is this not how a book should be read? Does not common-sense dictate that we should read a book from beginning to end—unless it is an encyclopedia or dictionary or such like. And yet, my experience over the span of 50 years is that this is not how the Bible is read by some. Many tend to ‘atomize’ the Bible, meaning they break it up into bits and pieces. Eventually, texts are hijacked—taken out of context to be used for some other purpose than the one the author had in mind.

If you are already on track with what I outlined above, keep up the good work. If you need a recommendation, get a note pad and begin reading. Find someone to read the book with you—someone with which you can discuss the book. Read the book from beginning to end, and ask yourself questions like 1) what kind of book is this? (Narrative, poetry, letter, etc.) 2) what is the purpose of the book? (Look for purpose statements like John 20:30, 31.) 3) how does this book break down? (Outline the book.)

Hopefully these few suggestions will help to enhance your reading of the word of God.

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