

## Covenant Blessings

### Leviticus 26

The covenant of grace began immediately after the fall of mankind, recorded in Genesis 3. God imposed the curse of death he had promised to Adam and Eve, as the punishment for their disobedience of sin. But even as that previous covenant was broken, even as that so-called covenant of works was ended, even as God condemned mankind to suffer death, he gave us a promise. A promise of grace.

Specifically, God gave that promise in his condemnation of the serpent, who was Satan,

Gen. 3:15 “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

Yes, there would be death, but not forever. Death itself would be destroyed, what Paul would call “the last enemy to be destroyed.” The seed of the woman would be Jesus, and he would crush the head of the Devil, thus inflicting a mortal wound. That’s when the covenant of grace was inaugurated, with that promise. That’s when the covenant of grace began. And it continued throughout the Old Testament, increasingly revealing the person of and work of Jesus. The promise was that death itself would end, So when Jesus came to inaugurate the new covenant, it wasn’t a different covenant, but one and the same. Yet it was new because now Jesus was here in the flesh, and the promises of the covenant were now being fulfilled in Jesus.

A covenant, by definition, includes both blessings and curses. Blessings promised for covenant faithfulness. And curses pronounced as a warning against those who would break the terms of the covenant. And that’s what we have here in Leviticus

26, blessings and curses, covenant blessings and curses.

And those blessings and curses are built into that covenant we rightly call the covenant of grace. Because we come to realize that by faith in Jesus, we are actually promised a remedy to escape the curse. We are promised a way to be freed from that curse of death, and that, of course, is the gospel of Jesus Christ which we are called to believe. And by that faith, we gain life.

But both the blessings and the curses which God announces here in Leviticus 26 are profitable for us to study today. The warning remains to those who will not believe, that the curse of the covenant will be inflicted upon them, the curse of death. Spiritual death. Eternal death. Separation from God, in hell. That warning remains valid.

And even to God’s covenant people, even to those who believe, there are conditional promises, blessings promised upon the evidence of faithfulness and curses or discipline promised to those who ignore the warnings and persist in their sinful rebelliousness. And those conditional blessings and curses remain beneficial in the same context as any good mother or father would speak to their own beloved children. The threat of condemnation is removed, but the conditional elements of the covenant relationship between parent and child remain.

So it is with God. There is no danger nor threat of God removing our salvation from us. There is no threat of eternal condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. But the warnings of the curses and the promises of the blessings remain valuable and useful for us today, as God’s covenant people. In that context, we will study Leviticus 26, as we have studied the whole of this book. I will start with the negative in order to end with the blessings. So we have,

## **I. WARNINGS AGAINST DISOBEDIENCE.**

I'll emphasize again that Moses is addressing the covenant people of God, those people whom God has redeemed to be his own special people, those people whom he delivered out of Egypt.

v.46

This is very important, and necessary in order to understand the relationship between,

### **A. God's covenant people and the law.**

v.14-16a

Please notice that he still speaks of "my covenant." And "my statutes." It was a covenant of grace. Thus the God of grace who redeemed his people instructs them how to live as his people the children of Israel, with statutes, judgments and laws.

Disobedience to those laws is to break the covenant!

House rules, we might say today. Family rules. The expression of acceptable behavior for all the family members. With a warning.

### **B. Consequences of breaking the covenant.**

These consequences are divided up into five sections, each beginning with a warning, "If you do not obey me..." First general curses, such as illness, famine or defeat. Then drought and bad harvest. Third, wild animals. Fourth, war leading to plague and famine. Then fifth, war, leading to cannibalism and ultimately deportation from the land.

All that begins in,  
v.16b-17

Then, v.18-20

Even as we go through these, please notice how appropriate the warnings are for us, too. Especially the words in verse 19, "the pride of your power." That's us! That's 21st century America. The pride of our power. Individually, and nationally. We can do anything. Or so we think. Prosperity often leads to such pride and self-confidence. God's judgment cuts a man down to size and reminds him on whom he really depends!

And that idea is explicitly repeated in the New Covenant.

James 4:6 "He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

God says in verse 20, "Your strength shall be spent in vain." Such is his curse upon the proud. Then and now.

The third curse of wild animals is found in verse 21, followed by the curse of a famine resulting from war, and then the more horrific consequences of cannibalism, beginning in verse 29. And actually, these events are not merely the unhappy side effects of war, but the denial of all the hopes enshrined in the covenant with Abraham. The promised blessing upon the land, and the promised blessing of a multitude of descendants who would become a great nation. Those blessings reversed, due to disobedience.

Notice how these curses are introduced, too. For example,  
v.21

Seven times is a round number for repeated punishments. The seven-fold judgments of the book of Revelation follow the very same pattern.

That threat is given even more specifically in,  
v.27-28

If you walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to you. With that warning, is, of course,

**C. The need for repentance.**

And that call is certainly prominent here.  
v.40-43

Here is where this fits so clearly under the covenant of grace. For in the covenant of works, as God established that covenant with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, there was no provision for repentance and restoration. That covenant was simple. If you obey you will continue to live. If you disobey, you will die. Period. There was no provision for the blessings of the covenant in the event of that disobedience.

Here, in Leviticus, there is such a provision! That's grace. These curses are threatened, but if you repent, if you confess your iniquity, God says, I will "remember my covenant." And he will restore you.

Notice that these judgments are described as discipline, as chastisement, as we read in verse 28. Judgment does not prove that God has rejected his people. Rather, he punishes them because they are his own. If you humble yourselves, or as it says in verse 41, "if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt," then God will again pour out the promised blessings of the covenant.

That principle of God's chastisement is still valid today! Never is that clearer than in,  
Heb. 12:5 "And you have forgotten the exhortation which

speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. 14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled."

That's the same principle of God's paternal discipline as what we read about in Leviticus 26! With one final point regarding these warnings against disobedience. It is,

**D. Grace abounding.**

In other words, even in this passage of covenant curses, of warnings and judgments, there is grace! We haven't even looked at the section on blessings yet! But here is God's grace, when he is called upon to discipline his wayward children,

v.44

Do you see the point? God will judge his people, Israel of the Old Testament. He will judge his new covenant people, too. But never would he utterly destroy them or break his covenant with them!

And why? Because he is a God of grace! God will remember his promise.

2 Tim. 2:13 “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”

Here is our confidence. And our sure and certain hope. Both as individuals and as part of the church of Jesus Christ. God will remember his covenant promise, and he will be faithful. It is the promise we read about in Psalm 89, speaking of the descendants of King David,

Ps. 89:30 “If his sons forsake My law And do not walk in My judgments, 31 If they break My statutes And do not keep My commandments, 32 Then I will punish their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes. 33 Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, Nor allow My faithfulness to fail. 34 My covenant I will not break, Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. 35 Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: 36 His seed shall endure forever, And his throne as the sun before Me; 37 It shall be established forever like the moon, Even like the faithful witness in the sky.”

Now we come to the blessings!

## **II. BLESSINGS FOR OBEDIENCE.**

Enough of the warnings against disobedience. Here is the good stuff.

What happens when you are faithful? Let me read all the verses,

v.3-13

These blessings begin with a description of what is most important when it comes to our obedience. First and foremost, as the summary of the whole law, we find the requirements for the holy worship of God alone. It is,

### **A. The obedience of honor to God.**

v.1

There are to be no idols, no graven images. God alone is to receive our worship. Sanctuary worship. The Lord alone must be worshipped, and he must be worshipped as He requires. So his praise is to be our occupation in the sanctuary on the sabbath day.

v.2

Sabbath worship is the identification of God’s people. Thus the sabbath day is to be a sign, a sign that the Lord is our God and that we are his people. We read in,

Ex. 31:13 “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.’”

The importance of corporate worship is not merely an Old Testament priority.

Heb. 10:19 “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without

wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

The basis of that exhortation is our text in Leviticus 26! And the context is of God’s covenant blessings to his faithful people! In Leviticus 26, we then find these,

**B. External blessings as the confirmation of God’s favor.**

In other words, what is important is not so much the blessing itself, but what it represents. And the greatest blessing is, then, of course, that blessing of God’s favor.

Here is how it is shown,

v.3-4

v.6

v.9

Now, let me ask you a question? Do you want to know and experience the blessings of God’s favor upon your life? I’m not referring to justification, where the reference is to the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ through which we are received and accepted by God as perfect. In Christ. Rather, I am asking those who are received and accepted in Christ, by faith, do you now want to live so that you would be able to experience these temporal blessings? Do you want to live so that God will be pleased with your life? That he would be honored and glorified by how you live?

If the answer is no, then I really need to help you search your own heart, for if you don’t care what God thinks of you, I can hardly consider that you are born again.

But if the answer is yes, and if you fully realize that your ultimate standing before God is based upon the work of Jesus Christ alone, and because of that you want to know his pleasure and favor upon the way you live your life, then I would ask, how should you then live?

How should you conduct yourself, if you heart genuinely wishes for God to look upon your life favorably, that God would be please. That’s easy. You obey the law!

God pours out the favor of his blessings upon those of his children who most faithfully obey the law! And what is the greatest of those blessings?

**C. The blessing of communion.**

Dear ones, there is nothing in this sermon that has anything in common with what is commonly called legalism. Legalism is either adding the obligations of human tradition to the requirements of God’s laws, or it is seeking to use the law in order to earn or merit God’s acceptance.

In Christ, you have God’s acceptance. By faith. Now, as Christians, what is it that should be your greatest goal in life? Communion with God. Fellowship with God. The warmth and security of God’s presence with you, known and experienced in the depth of your heart and soul.

That blessing is promised to the obedient, and it is described in,

v.11-13

Now, we all look forward to that blessing in eternity, don’t we? I hope you see a connection between those verses and

Revelation 21, where we read this,

Rev. 21:2 “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.”

Again, though, I ask the question this way. If you are looking for that great blessing in the new heavens and new earth, if you are looking for that blessed awareness of the Lord’s presence in eternity, do want to experience a taste of it now? For the moment, I will assume the answer is yes. How is it, then, that you can gain such an experience? How is it that you can come to know a fuller measure of this temporal blessing of you God, even as you wait for the final, future fulfillment of it?

v.3 “If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, 4 then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.”

v.9 “I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you.”

That’s not an automatic answer to all of our prayers. That’s not an assurance or even a promise of many things that are associated with this world. God, in his providence, often withholds things which we seek, and that can be a very painful experience to endure. But here is the blessing of the Covenant, the blessing of Leviticus 26, the blessing for all of you this afternoon, in the comforting words of Jesus,

Mat. 5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”