

May 17, 2015 by Steve Brandon



A Family Meeting

Leviticus 26

- 1. If you obey ... (verses 1-13)**
- 2. If you rebel ... (verses 14-39)**
- 3. If you repent ... (verses 40-46)**

Our oldest two children came home from college this past week. It's a great joy to have them at home. This is the first time in three years that we have had all seven of our children home for the summer. For the past three years, one or the other of our oldest two have been serving Christ in other countries.

We are excited to have them home this summer. We have been praying that we really enjoy our time together, because it may be our last all together in our home. With the possibilities of jobs and internships and summer school and missions trips and marriage (possibly) someday, there's just a lot in the lives of our older children that can pull them away from our home in future summers. So, we are trying to treasure our time together.

My wife and I are aware enough about kids coming home from college, that we know conflict is often the inevitable result. The fact is that our children are different now than when they went away to college. They have matured. They have experienced a great amount of freedom in school. Nobody was telling them when to go to bed or what time to come home at night or when to get up in the morning or what they have to do that day or what household chores are required of them. And now, they have to re-orient themselves back into our home, where some of these things are a reality.

Yet it's not all on them. We are different than when they left. Rather than five children at home, we have three children. And a house of three runs differently than a house of five. Furthermore, these children are older than when they left. They have different abilities and responsibilities. And there are things that we do differently than when they left. So, they aren't even coming back into the same home that they left! Now, much is the same, but not all is the same.

For instance, our three youngest children are used to their bathroom being a certain way. But, within twenty-four hours of them being home, our younger children complained about messy towels and "man smell" in the bathroom. And when our older two came home, their rooms were initially a mess. So, we had a family meeting to set forth expectations for us and for them. We wanted to lay out a bit of how we envisioned the summer. We spoke with them about the need for jobs. We spoke about the need to save money. We spoke about working around the house. We encouraged our children to be servants in the home, making their bed each morning and keeping a clean room.

And we explained a bit about the consequences if some of these things didn't happen. There would be less money to pay for college; more conflict within the home; frustration all around; and less joy. By God's grace, we are hoping for a summer with lots of joy and with lots of happiness. We are praying that our children would enjoy their time at home. We are praying that we would enjoy our time with them at home. We are praying for minimal conflict in the home. We are praying for servants hearts for all of us. Our hope is that our children would know a home filled with love.

As we come to our text this morning, this is exactly what we see. We see a family meeting. We see a family meeting between God and the nation of Israel, where God is putting forth His expectations for the people of Israel. The title of my message this morning is, "A Family Meeting."

Today, our text will be Leviticus, chapter 26. This family meeting that we see in this chapter is much like our family meeting this past week. And His message was a bit similar to the message we had with our children.

If you listen to what we say, and work hard, and have the heart of a servant, then things will go well for you and all in the household. But, if you spurn our counsel, sleep in every morning and live like a slob, then things won't go quite so well for you and for everyone else in the home. And know this, that the well of grace is deep in our home. If you find yourself on the wrong path and want to turn things around, then simply confess your sin and pledge your heart to follow in the counsel of your parents.

This is almost exactly the message that God brought the nation of Israel in this family meeting. As you come into the land, be careful to do according to all that I say. If you listen to my words, then things will go well for you. If you refuse my counsel, then things will go poorly for you. And there is always room for repentance.

Now, as similar as these meetings are, there are some obvious differences. Rather than a meeting of fathers and sons, it's a meeting between God and the nation of Israel. Rather than a meeting with some give and take, it's a meeting of all give. God is giving His instructions to the nation of Israel as they prepare to enter the land of Canaan. There's not much room for feedback and discussion. It was a one-way conversation.

Well, let's look at our first point this morning. It's simply this, ...

1. If you obey ... (verses 1-13)

Let's read, beginning in verse 1, ...

Leviticus 26:1-13

"You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the LORD your God. You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

"If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.

I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land.

You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.

Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.

I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you.

You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new.

I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you.

And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

The crucial word comes in verse 3. It is the word, "If." Though it occurs but one time in this section, it governs the entire section. Everything in the first 13 verses hinges on this word. In fact, Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary on this chapter entitled it, "The Big Word, 'If.'"

Leviticus 26:3

"If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them,

Then, abundant blessings will follow.

Now, the statutes and commandments here have direct reference to the entire book of Leviticus. From chapters 1-7, which talk about sacrifices; to chapters 8-10, which talk about priests; from chapters 11-15, which talk about the need for ritual cleanliness; to chapters 17-25, which talk about walking with God. But, the phraseology here is such that it has reference to more than simply Leviticus. It would include everything that precedes it in the book of Exodus. It would include everything that follows in Numbers and Deuteronomy.

When God commands, His people are called to obey. It's as simple as that.

Now, particularly here, we see two commands: In verse 1, we see a repetition of the second commandment, which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai: "You shall not make idols" In verse 2, we see a command pertaining to the ritual festivals given in Leviticus 23, "Keep my Sabbaths." Both of these commands pertain to worship. God should be our only object of affection. God should be worshiped in His way, by observing days given to Him.

In verse 1, we see the reason, "for I am the LORD." In verse 2, we see the same reason, "I am the LORD." The LORD is the sovereign one who has all authority. The LORD is the gracious one who had redeemed Israel from slavery. This is a fact mentioned in verse 45. His words are to be followed.

And the application comes straight to us. When God commands, His people are called to obey. Anything less is unimaginable. That's why Jesus asked the multitudes, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46). It doesn't make any sense. This is the reality of many in our land. Many claim Christ; few follow Christ. If Jesus is Lord, He is to be obeyed. End of argument. And anything less is a farce. Your profession is meaningless. Your profession makes no sense.

Is this your heart? Is your heart to obey the Lord? When He commands, do you obey? "If you do, ... then blessings will come your way."

Note the "then" in verse 4. This governs all of verses 4-13. We have 10 verses of blessings for those who obey. I count 25 promises of blessings for those who obey. Here's my list:

1. I will give you your rains (verse 4).
2. The land shall yield its increase (verse 4).
3. The trees shall yield their fruit (verse 4).
4. Your threshing shall last to the grape harvest (verse 5).
5. Your grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing (verse 5).
6. I will give peace in the land (verse 6).
7. You shall lie down with no fear (verse 6).

8. I will remove the harmful beasts (verse 6).
9. The sword shall not go through your land (verse 6).
10. You shall chase your enemies (verse 7).
11. Your enemies shall fall before you (verse 7).
12. Five shall chase a hundred (verse 8).
13. A hundred shall chase ten thousand (verse 8).
14. Your enemies shall fall before you (verse 8).
15. I will turn to you (verse 9).
16. I will make you fruitful (verse 9).
17. I will multiply you (verse 9).
18. I will confirm my covenant with you (verse 9).
19. You shall eat the old (verse 10).
20. You shall clear the old for the new (verse 10).
21. I will dwell among you (verse 11).
22. My soul shall not abhor you (verse 11).
23. I will walk among you (verse 12).
24. I will be your God (verse 12).
25. You shall be my people (verse 12).

By this, the LORD was telling Israel of His kind intentions toward His people. The simple fact of the matter is this: "When God's people obey, blessings come from the LORD." And these verses lay out 25 blessings that Israel would experience if they would obey the LORD.

Now, when it comes to us, the blessings will look differently. God hasn't promised to give the land to us. God hasn't promised victory in battle to us. Yet, throughout the Scripture, the principle is true, "When God's people obey, blessings come from the LORD."

This principle is set forth countless times in Scripture. It is modeled throughout the history of the Bible. God blessed the righteous. Abraham; Moses; Joshua; David; Hezekiah; Josiah. Now, if you read the Bible about these men, you know that they weren't "sinless." Rather, they were "righteous." That is, they had a heart for God. They sought to walk in His ways. As a result, they knew God's blessing in their lives. It is the theme of Proverbs.

Proverbs 11:8
The righteous is delivered from trouble

Proverbs 11:19
Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live

Proverbs 12:21
No ill befalls the righteous

Proverbs 13:25
The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite

I only pulled out four verses from Proverbs. I could easily have pulled out a dozen more that say the same thing.

You simply need to have your eyes open to see this reality in life. This past week, Grandma and Grandpa have been in town from California. On several occasions, David spent the night with them. And the report that came back was a good one. Lola took me aside and said, "I just wanted to let you know that David was a delight. He was fully obedient to what we told him to do." And so, I went to David and encouraged him in his obedience. I spoke to him of my joy in hearing this. I spoke to him of how this sort of attitude will only lead to blessings in his life. Because, "When God's people obey, blessings come from the LORD."

And you all know this in the lives of your children. They are most happy when they obey. You are most happy when they obey. John wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 4). And what is true on the human level is true on the divine level as well.

And when they disobey, it pains them. And when they disobey, it pains you. God's greatest joy in us comes when we are walking in the truth, delightfully obedient to Him. That's when He delights to pour out his blessing in our lives.

And I would contend that the New Testament contains the same message. Is this not what Jesus meant in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (verse 8). "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). Paul promised "encouragement in Christ," and "comfort from love" for those who follow the Lord (Philippians 2:1). And if we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28), then it means that His hand of blessing will come our way in life. Perhaps none is clearer than 1 Peter 3:8-9,

1 Peter 3:8-9
Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for

evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that **you may obtain a blessing**.

Now, to be sure, following the Lord in obedience will not always bring about pleasant things in our lives. We may be hated. We may be persecuted. We will certainly go through tribulation. But, in the norm, God's blessing comes upon the righteous.

Show me ten faithful followers of Christ, and show me ten people, who have no fear of the Lord. And I will show you more joy and blessing in the Christ-followers than those who follow after their own lusts. Because, their lusts will lead them into sin. And their sin will lead them into trouble just as God promised Israel. In general, their lives will be difficult. God will make it hard.

Which leads me to my second point, ...

2. If you rebel ... (verses 14-39)

If you obey, blessings will come. If you rebel, you will experience curses in your life. This is what God promised to Israel. Look at verse 14. And as I read these verses, I want for you to notice all of the "if's" and all of the "then's."

Leviticus 26:14-17

"But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.

Bottom line is this: God says, "If you disobey, I will curse you." You will have panic in your life (verse 16). You will have disease (verse 16). You will have fever (verse 16). God's face will be against you (verse 17). You will be struck down (verse 17). Others will rule over you (verse 17). You will fear for your lives (verse 17).

Seven curses in verses 16 and 17. Again, these are directly applicable to Israel. But, the principle remains. "When people rebel, curses come from the LORD." The way of sin is hard. God will oppose you in your sin. And your sin will make it hard on you.

Remember the four Proverbs I quoted earlier that show God's blessing upon the righteous? I only quoted half of the verses. Look at the second half of the verses. They all deal with the difficulties of the wicked.

Proverbs 11:8

The righteous is delivered from trouble,
and the wicked walks into it instead.

Proverbs 11:19

Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live,
but he who pursues evil will die.

Proverbs 12:21

No ill befalls the righteous,
but the wicked are filled with trouble.

Proverbs 13:25

The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite,
but the belly of the wicked suffers want.

It's because of the way that God has made life work. It's because of God's hand against the way of the sinner. But, that's only a start. It only gets worse throughout the rest of the chapter.

Leviticus 26:18-20

And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.

God promises here an increase in curses "sevenfold" (verse 18). It's seven times worse than panic and disease and fever and fear (verses 16-17). This time, God promised to hit at their livelihood their crops. The heavens and earth will be like hard metals (verse 19). Their labors in the field would bear little fruit (verse 20). But, it only gets worse.

Leviticus 26:21-22

"Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins. And I will let

loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.

Again, we see another "sevenfold" retribution for sins. This time, it's not merely disease or famine. It's destruction. You will lose your children. You will lose your livestock. And it only gets worse.

Leviticus 26:23-26

"And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. When I break your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

You will die in war. You will be given into the hands of your enemies. You shall starve.

It works like this: the more that you will continue in your sin, the more the curses will come. If you rebel, you will be cursed. If you continue, you will be cursed. If you continue, you will be cursed some more. If you continue, you will be cursed even more. If you continue, you will be cursed much more.

This is true of life. If you walk in the ways of your sin, life will only get tougher. It's God's grace upon your life, calling you back. It's like disciplining a child. You give a verbal warning. Then, you warn of discipline. Then, you execute the discipline. Then, your discipline increases, until you get through. And if a child continues in rebellion, it's simply a sign of the hardness of the heart.

An example of this comes late in the book of Revelation, when the Lord is pouring out his bowl judgments.

Revelation 16:8-11

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

Though the wrath of the Lord came upon these people, they refused to repent. Although they knew that God was angry with them, they refused to give God glory. Why? Because they had a hard heart. And Israel had a hard heart as well.

The last round of curses begins in verse 27, ...

Leviticus 26:27-39

"But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you. And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas. And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.

"Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it. And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. The sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall when none pursues. They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though none pursues. And you shall have no power to stand before your enemies. And you shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. And those of you who are left shall rot away in your enemies' lands because of their iniquity, and also because of the iniquities of their fathers they shall rot away like them.

All of this was fulfilled in the exile, when Israel rebelled against the LORD. Their city was surrounded and they resorted to cannibalism to survive (2 Kings 6) (verse 29). The idols of the land were destroyed and many died (verse 30). Jerusalem (and the temple) was made desolate (Lamentations) (verse 31). Israel was brought to Babylon (verse 33). And as we spoke of last week, finally, in the exile, the land was able to enjoy its Sabbaths.

So accurate are these words that some think that they were certainly written after the exile took place. But, Moses certainly wrote these words. Such was clarified in verse 46 at the end of the chapter.

Now, all is not doom and gloom here this morning. There is hope. The hope comes in repentance.

3. If you repent ... (verses 40-46)

Leviticus 26:40-46

"But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes. Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD."

These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between himself and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.

The promise here is of restoration. If Israel would simply confess her sin, by humbling their hearts, then God would remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (verse 42). He would bring them back into the land (verse 42).

Now, as it comes to us this morning, there's no promise of land for us today, as we are not Jews. Yet, the promises to Abraham indeed are applicable in measure to all believers in Christ. When the Lord said, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Galatians 3:8), it was an announcement that the gospel would come to the gentiles. And we know that "those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham" (Galatians 3:9). Through faith, then, we can come into the blessings of the covenant.

Here's how it works. If there is some sin in your life that you have been entrapped, carried away in it for years. And you come to the point where you repent and say, "God, I confess this sin. And I'm turning to you." The promise of the Scripture is that God will restore us and bring us in through the New Covenant. There is restoration and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

It's not that our obedience to God is gaining us any merit before God. It's God's grace to extend His forgiving hand to us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Do you want to come to God? Then confess your sins. Simply say to Him, "I am a sinner. I am in need of grace. I have messed up. But, Christ, I come to you. I'm not coming on my own merits. I'm coming, O Lord, because this is who I am, a sinner. And I need help." And the promise of 1 John 1:9 is that He will forgive us our sins. He will cleanse us of our unrighteousness, because He will give us the righteousness of His Son, who died for us.

This is the gospel, that Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). It is by grace that we are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8). It is God's give to us. It doesn't come to us through works (Ephesians 2:9). God is the one who saves, because we all are like sheep who have gone astray. We have turned to our own way, but the Lord has laid upon Jesus the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). It is only through the name of Jesus that salvation can be found (Acts 4:12).

It comes through repentance, which is the message of the Old Testament that we see here in Leviticus 26. But, it is also the message of the New Testament. John the Baptist preached repentance (Matthew 3:2). Jesus preached repentance (Matthew 4:17). Peter and all of the apostles preached repentance (Acts 2:38, 3:19; 17:30-31). Repentance is a turning from your sin and to God.

This is what we see here in verses 40-46. When repentance comes, restoration with God follows.

I entitled my message, "A Family Meeting." This text is similar to another family meeting that took place when Israel conquered the land of Canaan. In Deuteronomy 27-28, we have a similar message of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. God told the Israelites that in taking the land, they should communicate such blessings and cursings before the people of Israel in vivid detail.

In taking the land, they were to come to Shechem, which is blanketed by two mountains, Mount Gerazim on the south and Mount Ebal on the north. Six of the twelve tribes were to be placed on Mount Gerazim and six of the tribes were to be placed on Mount Ebal. With a loud voice, they were to proclaim these blessings and curses to all of Israel. Israel followed in obedience to this command (see Joshua 8:30-35). Israel was without excuse.

In many ways, you are likewise without excuse. You have heard the ways of God. You know the ways of God. How will you respond? If you obey, you will experience blessings from the LORD. If you rebel, you will experience curses from the LORD. So, if needed, I encourage you to repent. For, if you repent, you will know the restoration that God brings to those who submit to Him.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 17, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
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