

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 15**

**LEVITICUS**

**CHAPTER 26**

**INTRODUCTION**

The last two chapters of Leviticus aptly conclude the Code of Holiness, which was introduced in chapter 17. They summarize the benefits and the accompanying obligations of God's covenantal relationship with the children of Israel. God promised to bless the Israelites if they obeyed His laws, statutes and commandments. God warned the Israelites of His wrath and chastisement if they disobeyed Him

The present study focuses on Leviticus 26. The chapter divides naturally into four sections: (1) The fundamental requirement of the laws; (2) God's promises of His blessings to the children of Israel if they obey Him; (3) God's warnings of curses and punishments upon the children of Israel if they rebel against Him; (4) God's unchangeable covenant of grace with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Our study will reap valuable insights into the knowledge of God and His will. It will guide us in our life as Christians, bought by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and delivered from darkness into His marvellous light.

**OUTLINE**

- A. God Reminded Israel of the Fundamental Requirements of Worship and Conduct (26:1-2).
  - 1. The children of Israel must not make or erect any idols nor bow to them because the LORD (Yahweh) is their God (v.1).
  - 2. The children of Israel must keep the sabbaths (v.2a).
  - 3. The children of Israel must have reverence for God's sanctuary (v.2b).
  - 4. The basis of obedience is that God is LORD (v.2c).
- B. God's Promises of Blessings to the Children of Israel (26:3-13).
  - 1. The conditions that the children of Israel must observe (v.3).
  - 2. The list of blessings (vv.4-12).
    - a. The blessing of rain and good harvests (vv.4, 5).
    - b. The blessing of peace in the land (vv.6-8).
    - c. The blessing of increase in people and prosperity (vv.9, 10).
    - d. The blessing of God's presence in their midst (vv.11, 12).
  - 3. A reminder that the LORD is their God who delivered them from Egypt (vv.13).
- C. God's Warning of Curses upon the Children of Israel (26:14-39).
  - 1. The warning if the children of Israel would not obey God (vv.14, 15).
  - 2. The list of curses (vv.16-39).

- a. The first curse: physical and mental sorrows, and defeat in battles (vv.16, 17).
  - b. The second curse: humiliation, drought and crop failure if they persisted in their disobedience (vv.18-20).
  - c. The third curse: plagues, wild animals and population decimated if they still continued to disobey God (vv.21, 22).
  - d. The fourth curse: war, pestilence and famine if they refused to reform (vv.23-26).
  - e. The fifth curse: cannibalism, destruction of cities and land, and dispersion among the heathen if they would not hear the LORD (vv.27-39).
- D. God Remembered His Covenantal Promises and would Restore the Children of Israel (26:40-46).
1. The condition for restoration: be humble and repent of their sins against God (vv.40, 41).
  2. God remembered His covenantal promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (vv.42, 43).
  3. God would not break His covenant and would show mercy to the children of Israel (vv.44, 45).
  4. God confirmed His laws with the children of Israel (v.46).

## COMMENTARY

### The Fundamental Requirements of Worship

God singled out three important laws and reminded the children of Israel to keep them.

The first law was that they should make no idols or any graven image, or erect any pillar to “bow down” to them (v.1). The verb is a reflexive. It means that a person *himself bow down* to the idols. The person is not coerced to do so. The action is self-motivated. The word for “bow down” literally means worship. The act of bowing down to an idol or an image is to worship the object. God did not permit the children of Israel to do this.

The second law was that they must keep all the sabbaths of the LORD. This means not only the weekly sabbath on the seventh day when they were forbidden to do any servile work but also the sabbatical year of the land (25:2-4), and the year of jubilee (every 50 years, 25:8-10).

The third law was that they must have “reverence” for the sanctuary or tabernacle. “Reverence” for the tabernacle means to accord honour and respect to the place where God would be present to meet His people.

The fact that God singled out these three requirements indicates that the children of Israel were prone to forget them or to succumb to temptations to break these laws. When the children of Israel entered the land, they would be surrounded by idolatrous people whose ways were abominable in the sight of God. Israel would be tempted to follow their sinful ways. The command to honour and respect the sanctuary was significant. Israel was reminded in

advance to make the pilgrimage journey to Jerusalem for the celebration of the feasts of the LORD. In Acts 2, many Jews who had lived in other countries made the trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of weeks (Pentecost).

Today these laws are no less important for Christians bought by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to worship the only one true and living God who is none other than Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (divinely and permanently recorded in the Scriptures).<sup>1</sup> Idols are what we usually understand as objects made of metal, stone or wood. But idols can be of many different forms. Anything that usurps the place of God in a person's heart and mind is an idol. Some are easily distracted and drawn away on Sundays to perform other pastimes or work instead of going to church to worship Him. Many Christians do not honour and respect the place that God has given to them to congregate and worship Him. There is a lack of a sense of belonging and caring for the church especially in the spiritual sense for the Body of Christ! The failure to observe these laws normally starts the downward spiritual spiral for many Christians. Andrew Bonar aptly remarks, "All declension and decay may be said to be begun wherever we see these two ordinances despised—the *Sabbath* and the *Sanctuary*. They are the *outward* fence around the *inward love* commanded by verse 1."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Scripture is the Bible that comprises 66 books—39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Bonar, *Leviticus* (Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1846), 478.

### The blessings of obedience

God promised that if the children of Israel obeyed Him by keeping His commandments and laws, He would bless them. God promised that He would send rain in due season so that their land would yield an abundance of fruit and food for them (vv.4, 5). He would bless them with peace and prosperity in the land. They would not be afraid of anyone. There would be no war. God promised them victory over their enemies, "five will chase a hundred, and a hundred will chase ten thousand". The land would be rid of dangerous and ferocious animals (vv.6-8). God promised that he would have "respect" for the children of Israel. The word "respect" means that God would turn His face towards those who cried to Him in prayer. He would hear and favour them. God promised that He would multiply and prosper them. They would have to remove last year's store in order to make room for the new one (v.10). And the supreme blessing of all was that God would be "tabernacled" among them. God would walk among them and He would be their God and they would be His people (vv.11, 12). God reminded them that He their LORD and their God had brought them out of the land of Egypt and out of slavery so that they might walk upright.

God's blessings to Israel were conditional. So long as Israel resolved to observe and obey His statutes and commandments, Israel would enjoy great blessings. God impressed upon them that only He could bless them. Six times God began His blessing by saying "I will . . ." (vv. 4, 6, 9, 11, 12). He is the Sovereign God Almighty. He had delivered them out of bondage in Egypt. He wanted to bless them, to provide for them, to prosper them in all their

endeavours, to make them a strong nation and to live in their midst. The children of Israel could have asked for nothing more. All that they needed to do was to obey God.

We take comfort from the fact that God is the same yesterday, today and forever. The principle of God's blessings applies to us today. God too had delivered us from the bondage of sin and Satan. Today we can walk upright because of the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who had died for us. God wants to bless us too but we must obey Him and do the things that honour, glorify, and please Him. We must hear His Word and do His will. Then He would grant us the desires of our hearts.

#### **The curses of disobedience**

God warned the children of Israel in no uncertain terms that if they disobeyed Him despise His statutes, judgments and commandments (vv.14-15), they must face the dire consequences. These consequences were progressively introduced by the negative phrase, "And if ye will not . . ." (vv. 15, 18, 21, 23, 27). Each subsequent curse increased in intensity and severity. The initial curse was physical and mental sorrows and they would be defeated by their enemies (vv.16-17).

If they still disobeyed Him, God would punish them "seven times more" for their sins (v.18). They would be brought down from their pride of strength. There would be droughts and the land would not yield any fruits (vv. 19, 20).

If they continued to go against the will of God, He would send seven times more plagues to afflict them. Wild

animals would kill the Israelite children and destroy their animals (vv.21, 22).

And if they still would not reform, God would be against them and would punish them seven times for their sins. The threats of the covenant would descend upon them (v.25). Pestilence would come upon them. Bread, which was their staple food, would be scarce. It would be so scarce that the grain portion for 10 women could be baked in an oven (v.26).

Now if the children of Israel still would not hear God, then God would chastise them seven times. They would eat their own children. God would destroy all their idols and images. God would loathe them. Their cities would be laid to waste. Their sanctuaries and land would be desolate (vv.29-32).

And in a final curse upon them, God would disperse them throughout the other nations. They would be oppressed. They would be weary as they lived in the other nations. They would be helpless before their enemies (vv. 33-39).

God could not be mocked. The children of Israel belonged to God. And if they disobeyed God, they would be severely punished. Israel could not escape the judgment and chastisement of God. God said, "I will set my face against you" (v.17); "I will break the pride of your power" (v.19); "I will bring seven more times plagues upon you" (v.21); "I will also send wild beasts among you" (v.22); "I will also walk contrary unto you" (v.24); "I will bring a sword upon you" (v.25); "I will destroy your high places" (v.30); "I will make your cities waste" (v.31); "I will bring the land into desolation" (v.32); and "I will scatter you among the nations" (v.33).

God said that He would do all these if they disobeyed Him.

After each series of curses, God expected them to repent and return to Him (v.18). In other words, the purpose of these bad happenings was to cause the children of Israel to realise their sins and return to Him. God showed that He loved His people. These plagues and pestilence were intended to cause them to return to Him. God did this in order that He could continue to bless His people.

How can we apply this in our life today? Does every evil thing that happens in our life come as a punishment from God? The answer is a definite "No". Job was a righteous man but he was severely afflicted. It was not because of his sins. God was testing and trying his faith. In the New Testament, we are told that those who live for Christ would suffer much. Paul warned us that those who live for Christ would also have to suffer for Him (Philippians 1:29).<sup>3</sup> The servant is no greater than his Master (John 15:20).<sup>4</sup> However, it is true that sometimes bad things happen to us in order to awaken us from our spiritual slumber. Many Christians have repented and turned back to God because of some calamities or troubles in their lives. Nothing happens to a child of God by chance.

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<sup>3</sup>Philippians 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

<sup>4</sup>John 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not **greater** than his **lord**. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

### **God's unchangeable covenantal promises**

God said that if the children of Israel would confess their iniquity and trespasses, humble themselves and accept the punishment of their sins, He would remember His covenantal promises made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (vv.40-42). They would be returned to their land. When they lived in a foreign land, God would not cast them away nor loathe them nor utterly destroy them. God would not break His covenant with them (vv.43-45).<sup>5</sup> These were the laws, judgments and statutes that God gave to the children of Israel.

There is always a second chance with God as long as we are on this earth. Israel is given that chance to repent and return to God. It is open to them as long as they exist on earth. God always have mercy on those who humble themselves and repent of their sins. If we have backslided and have been wandering in the wilderness of the world, we should remember God's goodness and mercy. He wants to bless us but we must repent of our sins, walk in His ways and humble ourselves. God remembers His covenantal promise that He will be with us when we accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

We learnt much about the LORD our God in this chapter. He does not

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<sup>5</sup> There is a distinction between the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant. The former is a covenant of grace. Abraham played no part. The latter is an extension of the Abrahamic covenant in that the specific national blessings of Israel were dependent on their loyalty and obedience to God.

tolerate sin. The sinner must be accountable for his sin. While God is love, He is also holy and just. He takes delight in our obedience to His commandments and laws which are, in the first place, meant for our good and well-being. Just as king Solomon concluded in Ecclesiastes, “Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (12:13).

God blesses those who obey Him and punishes those who disobey Him. But this is not like a mathematical formula where two plus two equals four. God knows what is best for His people, and if hard times do fall on us although we have been walking uprightly before God, rest assured that God has a good plan for us. The history of the Christian church is replete with godly men and women who have gone through troubled and trying times but emerged with glowing testimonies.

God is ever faithful to His covenantal promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. His covenant is irrevocable. If God breaks His covenant with Israel, then we have no guarantee that God will not break the promise of John 3:16 – *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* Our certainty of God’s promise of sins forgiven and the gift of eternal life rest on the unchangeable truth that God will never break His covenantal promises with Israel! God reiterated His covenant (Leviticus 26:44-45): *“And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God. 45 But I will, for their sakes, remember*

*the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.”*

The LORD our God be praised. Let us honour and glorify Him.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**Monday:** Leviticus 26:1-2; Mark 12:28-34.

**Tuesday:** Leviticus 26:3-13; Matthew 5:1-12; 6:33.

**Wednesday:** Leviticus 26:14-26; Romans 2:1-11.

**Thursday:** Leviticus 26:27-39; Hebrews 12:5-11.

**Friday:** Leviticus 26:40-46; Matthew 18:4; James 4:6; 2 Chronicles 7:13-14.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Which commandments did God single out to remind the Israelites?

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2. Why did God single out these commandments to remind the children of Israel?

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3. What was the basis of worship and conduct of the children of Israel?

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4. What were the blessings that God promised the children of Israel?

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5. In your opinion, what was the greatest of all these blessings?

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6. What was the condition that God imposed on them?

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7. The severity of God's judgment on Israel increased in intensity as they continued to disobey Him. Broadly categorise these judgments (vv.14-20; 21-26; 27-38)?

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8. What was the purpose of His judgments against the disobedient children of Israel?

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9. What is the condition of Israel today? Have these judgments been fulfilled (vv. 29-37)?

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10. What was the basis for the restoration of Israel?

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11. How biblical is the teaching of the gospel of prosperity by some preachers?

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12. What impacts you most about God in this chapter?

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## TEACHING LESSON

1. The fundamental laws reiterated.
2. God's covenant of grace.
  - a. Obedience results in benefits.
  - b. Disobedience brings perils.
  - c. A common misconception corrected - the terms of blessings and curses should not be understood as a mechanical formula. God's covenant is always of grace. Quote Tidball (209): "It is possible to read these verses as though they offered a mechanical way to earn God's favour: you obey God and he will automatically dispense blessings. But that would be wrong. This chapter is not saying that Israel must earn God's blessing through obedience and will merit God's punishment by their disobedience. The covenant is founded on grace, and these clauses do not override it, as verse 13 emphasizes. Nor is it saying that we must obey for the sake of gaining a reward and avoiding punishment. What it is saying is that we can experience the full benefits of God's grace by obeying him, and that we will experience God's discipline with a view to restoring the broken covenant when we disobey him."
3. He hopes that His people will repent of their sins and reform (vv.18, 23, 27).
4. The faithfulness of God in regard to His covenant is reassuring and comforting (vv. 42, 44-45).
5. The supreme blessing is the presence of God in our lives.