

Leviticus: Blessing
Leviticus 26:3-6, 12
9.1.2019

Series Intro - Leviticus 26 provides a series of blessings that God wants to give to His people. We talk a lot about blessing in our culture. In fact, if you go to Twitter and search #blessed, you'll find all kinds of things. <PICS: Twitter Blessings> Today, we're going to try to understand what it means to be blessed.

3 "If you follow My statutes and faithfully observe My commands, 4 I will give you rain at the right time, and the land will yield its produce, and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. 5 Your threshing will continue until grape harvest, and the grape harvest will continue until sowing time; you will have plenty of food to eat and live securely in your land. 6 I will give peace to the land, and you will lie down with nothing to frighten you. I will remove dangerous animals from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. 11 I will place My residence among you, and I will not reject you. 12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be My people."
Leviticus 26:3-6, 11-12

God is outlining blessings that roll into one another. That's pretty amazing ... to be constantly blessed! This morning, I want to share three thoughts with you about blessings from Leviticus 26.

1. Blessings and Obedience are related. The first word of our text for today is, "If."

3 "If you follow My statutes and faithfully observe My commands..."

Leviticus 26:3 Then God shares a series of blessings He will provide to His people.

- If you scrimp and save and wind up with a large amount of money, that blessing is related to the saving.
- If you intentionally spend time on your relationship with your spouse and the two of you grow closer together, that blessing is related to the intentionality.
- If you are careful about what you eat and exercise and become healthier, that blessing is related to the decisions you made.

<ILL: Natural consequences/natural blessings> There are always consequences. Often times, good things happen when we make good choices.

NB: What do you do when you do the right thing and still get a bad result? This is a frequent – and ancient – question. To gain a bit of insight, let's go the book of Job.

1 There was a man in the country of Uz named Job. He was a man of complete integrity, who feared God and turned away from evil. Job 1:1

Job did everything right thing and still got a bad result. This is a really tough reality! But there are a couple of things we can reflect on to gain some perspective.

- Obedience that leads to pain is due to brokenness. We live in a broken world! Sometimes, we add to the brokenness. Other times, we are on the receiving end of the brokenness. It is impossible to escape the brokenness – for NOW.
- Pain can be a blessing because it can warn us. "Without pain you could burn the stomach with a match, insert a needle through the lung, cut the brain with a knife, crush the kidney in a vise, or bore through bone, all without causing any discomfort ... Pain is not an afterthought, or God's great goof ... Without pain, our

lives would be fraught with danger.” (Philip Yancey, Where Is God When It Hurts? 29-31) When sin entered the world, God created an unusual blessing, “Pain.” Pain can warn us of problems!

- Pain can bless us with an education. We call this education, “The School of Hard Knocks.” Think about natural consequences. Embedded in the consequence is a blessing. <ILL: Touching the stove>

2. Blessings can come even when we are disobedient. After the blessings in Leviticus 26 comes a series of curses. And one of the curses is this...

18 “If you will not obey Me... 19 I will break down your strong pride. I will make your sky like iron and your land like bronze, 20 and your strength will be used up for nothing. Your land will not yield its produce, and the trees of the land will not bear their fruit.” Leviticus 26:18-20

Question: Is breaking down our pride a blessing or a curse? It may feel like a curse, but it’s really a blessing! It’s a blessing that comes despite of the fact that we deserve a curse. If complete obedience was necessary to be blessed, none of us would be blessed!

1 Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the treacherous live at ease? Jeremiah 12:1

Sometimes people who are disobedient receive blessings. Jesus puts it this way ...

45 The Father causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:45

Ultimately, blessings are a sign of God’s love. They are not just the second half of a transaction (do good – God blesses). Blessings are not some kind of mechanical reward for our obedience. We just said, “Ultimately, blessings are a sign of God’s LOVE!” Well, who does God love? This is why sometimes, when we do the right thing, we are blessed. Other times, when we do the right thing, things don’t go so well. Sometimes, we do the wrong thing, and we are cursed. Other times, we do the wrong thing, and we nevertheless are blessed. And God uses all this for our good, because He knows better than us what we need and when we need it. And this is why...

3. Knowing the “Blessor” is the greatest blessing! God’s ultimate goal for all of us and the greatest blessing we can ever receive is having a relationship with HIM! The final and greatest blessing in this chapter is this:

11 “I will place My residence among you, and I will not reject you. 12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be My people.” Leviticus 26:11-12

God says, “Here’s how I want to bless you: I want to be with you.”

<ILL: Southwest Companion Pass> Three kids in college at the same time, or three weddings in a year can make that happen! It is a tremendous blessing! God wants His people to be His companion. Here’s the problem: after all the blessings comes that series of curses. One of the curses is this...

31 I will not smell the pleasing aroma of your sacrifices. Leviticus 26:31

Pastor Ben (1st week) talked about the sacrificial system. The idea of the sacrificial system was that it focused the Israelites on God and God, out of His love, focused on the Israelites and accepted their sacrifices.

18 “Any man of the house of Israel or of the resident aliens in Israel who presents his offering... 19 must offer an unblemished male from the cattle,

sheep, or goats in order for you to be accepted. ²¹ When a man presents a fellowship sacrifice to the LORD to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering from the herd or flock, it has to be unblemished to be acceptable.”

Leviticus 22:18-19, 21

There's a big emphasis on what is acceptable! In Leviticus 26:31, God is saying to His people, "You're not acceptable because of your sin. I'm out of here. I'm not even going to smell the aroma of all these sacrifices that is supposed to bring us together. I'm out of here." That is crushing. The greatest blessing of all ... the presence of the Blesser, is gone. How do we get it back?

<ILL: Power of smell> Smell is the sense most closely related to memory and emotion! (among other things) You probably have certain aromas that bring back powerful memories. (What aromas are powerful to you?)

We need another sacrifice – a Super Sacrifice ... an AMAZING aroma to reunite us with God! Look at how Paul describes the result of the Super Sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ... 2 Corinthians 2:15 (NIV)

When Christ came to us and shed his blood for us and put His righteousness on us, that was the aroma that we needed to bring us back together. Our companion pass to fly with God looks like a cross. And there's no greater blessing than that!