

April 27

Scriptures: Read Leviticus 26

Key Verse: “But if they confess their iniquity... then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, ...Isaac and Abraham...” (Leviticus 26:40, 42)

Overview

In this chapter of magnificent promises and terrible warnings, the Lord God stresses two basic and important requirements that demanded obedience. Firstly, the second commandment is written, forbidding the making and worshipping of idols, or any carve images. The Lord God is a jealous God and will not share His Glory (Isa.42:8). Secondly, they were to be careful to observe the fourth commandment of keeping the Sabbath holy, meaning not only the day, but the Sabbath year, and the Sabbath Jubilee (Lev.25), as well as honoring and showing reverence for God’s holy sanctuary. If these were kept as God required, the other commandments would flow naturally, resulting in His granting the many beautiful blessings. But all these are conditional; the blessings for obedience (26:3), and the curses for disobedience (26:14).

The Lord God spoke clearly: “If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them: (26:3), then the results would be wonderful. He promised material blessings of rain, abundant harvests, much food, and much offspring (26:4-5, 9-10), peace, security, protection, victory over enemies (26:6-8), and, most importantly, spiritual blessings—His presence among them, for they would be His people (26:11-12).

As with the passages of Law, these verses are followed by God’s solemn words which serve to remind them of their covenant and obligation of obedience to Him: “I am the Lord your God” (26:13).

The total opposite of blessings, namely curses, would result if they were disobedient. Again the Lord speaks clearly and graphically: “If you despise My statutes” and “do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant” (26:15), then He would bring terrible calamities upon them. If these first few punishments (26:16-17) did not bring about repentance and obedience to Him, then four times God says, “I will punish you seven times more for your sins” (26:18, 21, 24, 28). After each time, the punishments would become successively more severe. This is because, in His Great love, God desired to see them come to repentance, but until then their punishment would be sickness, defeat and famine; then, after the fourth and final warning, the worst possible punishment would result: to be scattered among the heathen nations in captivity where many would perish, and their land would lie desolate (26:29-35). We find that all these things happened in the course of Israel’s history (e.g. Ezek.14:21), for sadly, they did not keep the covenant with their God. Along with the privileges of the covenant came responsibility and duty. These severe punishments were a result of the holy and just character of God, who cannot stand sin nor tolerate disobedience, especially among His covenant people. In times of obedience to God, His holy presence dwelt among them, but because He could not dwell with sinfulness, He would have to turn His face from them (26:17). We find in this chapter more spoken of curses than blessings, for the people were to fully understand the seriousness of God’s commands and their covenant obligations.

However, the Lord promised that if the Israelites would confess their iniquity with humble hearts, He would remember the covenant with their forefathers (26:40, 42; key verse; c.f. 2 Chron.7:14). Notice the reason given is not because of them, but because of the eternal covenant with Abraham, and God's word does not change. The covenant of Sinai was conditional, but the covenant with Abraham was one of grace, never to be nullified. Therefore God, in His love and mercy, said He would not totally destroy them all, but would leave a remnant, those few faithful ones. May we today be those faithful ones who follow in the ways of the lord and, though undeserving, receive His promised blessings provided through Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Grant today, O God of Grace, that we will be enabled to love You with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strengths, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Help us mightily because in keeping these, we also keep the whole Law.