

16. If you do this...

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Idealists would say, "If God gives people enough chances and forgives their sins repeatedly, eventually people will get things done right with God." Or they would insist, "God's way is not the only way people have to follow. If they sincerely believe what they do is right, then who is God to stop them?"

There are two things these idealists don't include in their equation:

1) The sinful nature of humanity

Man will not and can not do anything right with the exception of sin. If God allows us to do whatever we want, we would destroy ourselves completely at no time.

2) God is sovereign and the Creator of the universe

We don't make rules, we are not capable to make rules that concern this universe and relationship with Him and others. Thus, we have to follow His rules. If anyone truly wants to make his or her case against God, they have to stand at the equal position as the Lord. But none of us can.

The bottom line of idealism is nothing more than a defiance to the One who created them and blessed them with their own lives.

Chapter 26 is 'iffy' chapter. The word 'If' was used nine times and it has to do with the conditions on what the Israelites do in the land which they were allowed to occupy. Obedience is the ground of blessings in the land. This chapter is not only the barometer for the Israelites' obedience and disobedience, but also our own. You cannot tell me that this Book, Leviticus which was written almost 3500 years ago is no longer relevant in our lives.

A. IF YOU OBEY THIS

Leviticus 26:1-13 'You shall not make idols for yourselves; neither a carved image nor a sacred pillar shall you rear up for yourselves; nor shall you set up an engraved stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I am the Lord your God. 2 You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord. 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. 5 Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. 6 I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land. 7 You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you. 8 Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you. 9 'For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you. 10 You shall eat the old harvest, and clear out the old because of the new. 11 I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. 12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. 13 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you walk upright.

When we study the Bible, it is important for us to get to the original words – Hebrew and Greek – from time to time. Because it gives such depth and riches to our understanding.

The word ‘idols’ is a case in point. In Hebrew, idol is ‘elilim’ and means a “nothing.” Wow, so when people make something or someone to their ‘idol’, they are making something to nothing. Nada. Then they worship this nothing. What a vivid picture for us! When we don’t worship our God and replace Him with this nothing, guess what? We have nothing.

If I am walking one direction and God is walking another, I am moving away from His presence. God is not going to change His direction because He is never wrong. I am walking contrary to Him. Even if I stand still while He is walking one direction, it is the same thing. In other words, either we walk with Him all the time or we don’t at all.

If the Israelites obeyed the Lord, He would provide them with His blessings for their harvests, prosperity, peace and the most of all His presence. Not a bad deal, but it was hard to follow because of their sinful nature just like us.

One thing we must notice is that the Israelites had learned that their pagan neighbors had this Baal god which supposedly controlled weather – especially rain. Rather than depending on the invisible God who created everything including clouds and rain, they wanted to believe in a tangible idol Baal which was nothing more than an evil spirit. It is so easy for us to depend on materialistic things than God who owns everything in the universe. We must worship the Creator instead of creatures.

B. IF YOU DON’T OBEY THIS # 1

Leviticus 26:14-17 ‘But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, 16 I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.

From v14 to 39, we find a progression of hard chastisements of the Lord because of the Israelites’ ever increasing disobedience. By the way, this was written by Moses before they even went into the Promised Land. God in His omniscient knowledge knew what they would do once they got into the land.

The chastisement starts with fear, diseases, sorrow, famine and attacks from enemies.

The purpose of chastisement is for just punishing, rather drawing the one who is disobedient back to the person who chastises.

Hebrews 12:6-9 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?

C. IF YOU DON'T OBEY THIS #2

Leviticus 26:18-22 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. 19 I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. 20 And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit. 21 'Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. 22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate.

God's aim was to break down their stubborn pride. It is like rain on Arizona ground. The ground is so hard that rain water does not stay and allow vegetation to grow from it. It just moves out of the area. When we have stubborn hearts, God's Word does not stay in our hearts.

You would think that all this suffering would bring the nation to its knees in repentance, but they refused to repent. It will be that way in the end times when God sends judgment upon the whole world as you already see in America and other countries.

D. IF YOU DON'T OBEY THIS #3

Leviticus 26:23-26 'And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, 24 then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. 25 And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. 26 When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

War, famine, and plague usually go together. When the enemy surrounded them in a walled city and cut off the food and water supply line, people would get sick and plaques begin to spread as it was prophesied by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and it happened.

This will take place again at the time of the Great Tribulation, as we find it in the sixth chapter of the Book of Revelation.

E. IF YOU DON'T OBEY THIS #4

Leviticus 26:27-30 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, 28 then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. 29 You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. 30 I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you.

Finally, it would come to the point a mother would kill and eat her own baby. We will find it recorded in 2 Kings 6. Israel historian Josephus also described cannibalism in Jerusalem when under siege by the Romans in A.D. 70 – a woman killed and ate her own baby son.

This section describes the climax of God's chastisements, made necessary because of the hardness of His people's hearts. Up to this point, He had chastened the people in their land, but now He removes them from the land. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians

took captive the Northern Kingdom of Israel; and then in 605 B.C., the Babylonians began their capture of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The seventy years of Babylonian Captivity left the land to rest and enjoy her sabbaths.

F. GOD'S MERCY STILL PREVAILS

Leviticus 26:40-46 'But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, 41 and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt-- 42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land. 43 The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes. 44 Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. 45 But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, 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.'" 46 These are the statutes and judgments and laws which the Lord made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.

Even in the worst situations, there is always hope in God. Because the Lord is merciful, gracious and patient with us. His covenant with His people never changes. And if we confess our sins and repent, He is ready to forgive us and bless us once again.

The cause of Israel's rebellion was "uncircumcised hearts," that is, hearts that had never been changed by the Lord. The Jews boasted that they were circumcised in body, but that wasn't enough to save them. The mark on the body was the outward seal of the covenant, but it took more than that to change the heart.

The promise of forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 should never be used as an excuse for sin, but it is certainly a wonderful encouragement to God's people when they have sinned.

God's faithfulness to His Word and to His covenant is a great assurance to the believer that there is forgiveness with the Lord, that He may be feared. Since the Word never changes and God's character never changes, we have every encouragement to come to Him and make a new beginning.

We are blessed not because of obedience, but because we are in Christ Jesus. And there is no more curse for us from God, because the entire curse was removed by Jesus. This does not deny the chastening hand of God. But the correction of a loving parent is good and desirable, though not pleasant at the time.

G. REMINDER

You and I are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. However there are some "ifs" connected to that also. God loves us and wants to shower us with His blessings. But if we disobey the Lord, because He loves us, He will discipline us to bring us back to Him and the sweet relationship we are meant to have with Him.