

# Draw Near: The Blessings of Faithfulness

## Leviticus 26:1-13

Scripture → Leviticus 26:1-13

Prayer

**Big Idea: If you follow his ways, He will give His presence**

Today we conclude our sermon series entitled “Draw Near,” a study in the book of Leviticus. Over and over we see the God of all grace drawing His people near. This morning, is the capstone of the Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26), A collection of blessings and curses that was the **usual way** to close a major legal text in biblical times. **Does God bless the faithfulness of His people? Absolutely!!**

Blessing is a concept that everyone wants to believe, but not many understand the eternal impacts of blessing. **Our vernacular reveals a lack of understanding about true blessing:** How often do you hear or say: I am blessed, I am blessed to be a blessing, I am too blessed to be stressed, we say the “blessing” before meals, it was a blessing in disguise, I am going to bless him out, and the big one: Bless your heart.

**Here is the gospel truth:** When God’s people live God’s way for His glory, you can expect God’s blessing. Why? Because God promises to bless those who seek after Him, and every promise of the Lord comes to pass.

**One word of caution: The Bible does not support Prosperity theology** (sometimes referred to as the **prosperity gospel**, the **health and wealth gospel**, or the **gospel of success**) is a religious **belief** among some Christians, who hold that *financial* blessing and *physical* well-being are **always** the will of **God** for them, and that **faith**, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one's **material wealth**. Prosperity theology views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, he will deliver security and prosperity. **The death of Christ, without health-wealth- or happiness, categorically destroys prosperity theology.**

Today we will look at the biblical blessing of the Lord for those who are called by His name.

### The Lord blesses His people through Provision (26:3)

In the HCSB the verse is as follows: If you follow my statutes and faithfully observe. *We lose the impact of obedience with this translation.* Notice the *Hebrew word order: “If by my laws you (plural) walk, and my commands you (plural) keep, and observe them.”* Again we are reminded of this profound truth: **The people of God live by the ways of God for the glory of God.**

**Don’t expect God’s blessing on your life if you refuse God’s direction in your life.** However, do expect God’s blessing if you accept and walk in His direction for your life. We are tempted to seek after the blessing more than the One who blesses and His way!

How does the Lord bless? God is very clear: He is the Jehovah Jireh our provider. This is the provider that **King David wrote: The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want. This is the same provider that Jesus taught us about: We pray give us today our daily bread.**

In the Land of Israel, as in adjacent areas, rainfall was a necessity for agricultural blessing and was limited to a fixed season of the year. At other times, there is no rain for months on end. If sufficient rain does not fall at the **expected time**, the results are more harmful than in temperate climates (JPS). **God provides for your needs in your time of need. God does not provide your wants when you want. Whatever need you have today, God knows and can provide.** Are you living by God's way?

Look at the bounty of God's promised blessing: the farmers will have to work non-stop to gather in all the crops. **Grain was usually gathered in early summer, then there was a gap of months until the grapes and olives were ready to pick. Once the rain would begin in late fall sowing could commence (NICOT).**

**How does the Lord provide? With abundance! Why does the Lord provide?.** God does not give so we can hoard. He generously gives so you can abundantly give to the Kingdom. There are **no self-made** men in the kingdom of God. **Surrendered men = saved men.** He gives/blesses to make gospel impact: tithe- and living in the margins to meet the needs of others? As God gives, are you regularly giving so the Kingdom will advance? Don't use your "wants" as an excuse not to give for gospel purposes.

**May the world see the hand of the Jehovah Jireh -Provider upon his people**

### **The Lord blesses His people with Peace (26:6)**

**Our world is consumed with finding peace, listen to our music: give peace a chance (Lennon), Peace train (Cat Stevens), Imagine "all the people living life in peace" (Lennon), one love (Bob Marley),** Buddha = "to enjoy good health, to bring **peace** to all one must first discipline and control one's mind. **Einstein** said, "peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding." **Jimi Hendrix**, "when the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know **peace**."

**We all long for peace. And the beautiful promise of Christ is that those who follow His ways will know and be peace. Our Lord is so powerful that he will not only bring you peace but bring peace to the land.**

Food without security is of limited value. **Provision without peace is fool's gold (Security system).** Safe from the attack of human and animal foe, the people would grow in numbers and see the promise to Abraham fulfilled (NICOT).

This is a fundamental promise of eternal and Spirit filled life, peace. **We recognize that heavenly peace is not earned it is given.** If it is given why are we still trying to earn it?

Think about the peace of Jesus Christ. When the Savior was born the **angels proclaimed Glory to God in the**

highest and **peace** on earth to people He favors (Luke 2:14). Our Savior said, “peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you (John 14:27). Rom. 5:1 Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6).

**When Christ comes into your life you have perfect peace.** Not because you gave peace a chance, or because you learned how to control your mind. *Isa 26:<sup>3</sup> You will keep the mind that is dependent on you in perfect peace, for it is trusting in you.* When Christ comes into your life you have peace. This is his blessing and promise!

**Are you living in peace?** God promised that “nothing will frighten you.” Is anything attacking the peace that Jesus has already given you? **Concern + unbelief = anxiety; Concern + faith = a biblical virtue (Bill Thrasher).**

Do you feel as though you try your best but you never have peace? Have you found the prince of peace? *God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing (CS Lewis).*

**Peace is the great blessing and promises of those who know Jesus Christ.**

### **The Lord blesses His people with His Presence (26:9)**

Verses 11–13 reiterate the essential nature of Israel’s relationship with God. This **special relationship** with God is the **goal** of the covenant, for the Lord takes up **residence** among the Israelites in the same way he does in the tabernacle. *What Israel longed for you have in Jesus Christ – the presence of the Lord.*

**In Christ we have the blessing of His presence.** The apostle Paul cites the language of 26:12 to describe the people of faith as the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:16). This intimate relationship with God is the **primary blessing of life** (Pss 4:8; 16:2, 5; 63:3).

**The presence of the Lord is not something you need, it is all you need.** Without the presence of the Lord, any “blessing” is worthless and temporary. Without the presence of the Lord, peace is fleeting. *When you have the presence of the Lord, you have everything you need! If I only had one prayer: would it be that the Lord would bring me into his presence.*

*To be filled with the Spirit is to live in the consciousness of the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, as if we were standing next to Him, and to let His mind dominate our life. It is to fill ourselves with God’s Word, so that His thoughts will be our thoughts, His standards our standards, His work our work, and His will our will (John MacArthur).*

**I will be your God...** This formal statement defines the covenantal relationship between God and Israel serves as the legal terms of adoption. See 2 Sam. 7:6-7 (JPS, 184). **Why can you experience the blessing of His presence?** Because in Christ we are adopted as sons and daughters. (Eph 1:5) Because of Christ, you never have to be denied the presence of the Almighty. **The Lord blesses his people with His Presence.**

## **The Lord blesses His people with Freedom (26:13)**

A final blessing found in Lev 26 is the promise of freedom. In the ANE, The bars of the yoke were tied to the neck of a work animal by means of thongs. **A person who is subjugated, upon whom a yoke is placed, is bent over.**

*This is what sin does, it makes you a slave and a servant to impulse and destruction.  
Today if you have walked in shackled by your sin the promise of Jesus is freedom.*

Maybe the burden of sin has been removed yet you are still carrying an invisible weight. **Have you ever carried a large backpack/weight? When the weight is removed, it feels as though it lingers.** Remember the promise: **So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36)**

Once the bars of the yoke are broken, he can stand at full stature, a position conveyed by the unique word komamiyyut “in an upright position.” (JPS, 184).

Jesus saves you to **stand upright.** **Jesus carried the weight of the cross to remove the weight of your sins.**

The Lord blesses His people with Freedom. **Never go back to bondage again!** This is the freedom to say: I can do nothing to make my Father love me more and nothing to make Him love me less.

## **Call**

**Leviticus: the reminder to draw near to God.** Why does God need to bless anyone? Because you and I are living under a curse: the serpent was cursed, the earth was cursed, land was cursed, work was cursed, man and women were cursed. Have you ever wondered why our world seems broken? It is!

It is often said that Freedom is never Free. Blessing is never free either. God blessed you by cursing His Son for your sake.

**Gal. 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.**

Will the Lord bless His people? YES

He is your provider

He is your peace

He gives you His presence

He gives you eternal freedom!

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## Leviticus 26

Leviticus 26 deals with the subject of blessings and cursings, a common feature of ancient Near Eastern treaty covenants. The blessings and cursings pertain to the realms of the city, the fields, fertility of the people, fertility of the land, fertility of the herds and flocks, and safe and successful journeys.

The occurrence of a section on blessings and cursings after the laws have been given plays a critical role in the structure of the entire book, since they occur at the end of the book as a promise and a warning. Deuteronomy 28, a parallel listing of cursings and blessings, plays the identical role in the Book of Deuteronomy, as may Exod 23:20–33 in Exodus 20–23. The blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience reflect the principle of the *lex talionis*, that a person should be justly recompensed for his actions. Moreover, appropriate compensation in 26:14–39 should be considered just based on the repeated formulaic expression “if you will not listen/accept correction” (26:14, 18, 21, 23, 27). This formula functions as an introduction to the subsections of the curse section in 26:14–39. Leviticus 26 is thus a unique chapter in the Book of Leviticus, for it is the only chapter that is neither legal nor ritualistic in nature (NAC).

A collection of such blessings and curses was the usual way to close a major legal text in biblical times. Two major principles of biblical religion find expression in these Epilogues: the concept of free will and the doctrine of reward and punishment (JPS).

**Lev. 26:3** “If you follow my statutes and faithfully observe my commands,

The Hebrew idiom literally “if you walk in My laws,” conceives of God’s laws and commandments as the right “path” of life, a frequent theme in biblical literature (JPS).

**26:3–10** The first major section of Leviticus 26 delineates the blessings the nation will experience if the Israelites remain faithful to the Lord’s commands. These blessings include agricultural prosperity (26:3–5, 10), victory in battle (26:6–8), and population expansion (26:9a). Since these results indicate the faithfulness of God on behalf of Israel, they may be seen to be summarized by the phrase “I will keep my covenant with you” (26:9b).

Notice the Hebrew word order: “If by my laws you (plural) walk, and my commands you (plural) keep, and observe them.”

**Don’t expect God’s blessing on your life if you refuse God’s direction in your life.**

**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.

In the Land of Israel, as in adjacent areas, rainfall is limited to a fixed season of the year. At other times, there is no rain for months on end. If sufficient rain does not fall at the expected time, the results are more harmful than in temperate climates (JPS).

For maximum effect the rains must come at the right season. Verse 4 promises this and the consequence is described in v.5 (NICOT).

The farmers will have to work non-stop to gather in all the crops. Grain was usually gathered in early summer, then there was a gap of months until the grapes and olives were ready to pick. Once the rain would begin in late fall sowing could commence (NICOT).

**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. **7** You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before you by the sword. **8** Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand; your enemies will fall before you by the sword.

Food without security is of limited value. Safe from the attack of human and animal foe, the people would grow in numbers and see the promise to Abraham fulfilled (NICOT).

No sword shall cross. The image of a sword ‘crossing’ (‘avar) is a rare way of depicting the ravages of war (JPS).

**Lev. 26:9** “I will turn to you, make you fruitful and multiply you, and confirm my covenant with you.

**10** You will eat the old grain of the previous year and will clear out the old to make room for the new. **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.

**26:11–13** Verses 11–13 reiterate the essential nature of Israel’s relationship with God. This special relationship with God is the goal of the covenant, for the Lord takes up residence among the Israelites in the same way he does in the tabernacle.

The apostle Paul cites the language of 26:12 to describe what it means for believers in the church to be marked as the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:16). This intimate relationship with God is the primary blessing of life (Pss 4:8; 16:2, 5; 63:3).

There will be so much old grain that it will still be there when the new is harvested (Fox, 635).

I will place my Dwelling in your midst, and I will not repel you (Fox, 635).

Literally: “I will give my tabernacle among you.” The tabernacle was designed to be the place where God dwelled among his people (Ex. 25:8), but Israel’s sins could make it an empty shrine (NICOT).

The blessings reach a great climax in reassuring the people that if they are faithful, all the promises included in the covenant will be fulfilled (NICOT).

I will be your God... This formal statement defines the covenantal relationship between God and Israel serves as the legal terms of adoption. See 2 Sam. 7:6-7 (JPS, 184).

**13** I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, so that you would no longer be their slaves. I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to live in freedom.

Here this reality is expressed in the imagery of enslavement: “I broke the bars of your yoke” (26:13). Bars were a symbol of oppression, as is illustrated by the fact that bars were often tied to the neck of work animals (Jer 5:5; 26:2; 28:10–13). Thus the text offers the image of a slave bowed by an enormous burden. He suddenly has the weight removed, which expresses the establishment of Israel’s special relationship with God. The promise is similar to Adam’s experience in the garden and is used of God’s relationship with Enoch (Gen 5:22–24) and Abraham (Gen 17; see Jer 30:22; Ezek 11:20; Hos 2:23; Rom 9:26).

These blessings of life will find their ultimate fulfillment in the age to come when people will be saved from savage beasts (Ezek 34:25), will experience abundant rain and plentiful harvests (Ezek 34:26–27), will not experience any oppression (Ezek 36:10–11), and will become God’s people (Ezek 36:28). Similarly, Jesus stated that those who seek first the kingdom will also not lack of any of life’s necessities (Matt 6:25–34).

The bars of the yoke were tied to the neck of a work animal by means of thongs. **A person who is subjugated, upon whom a yoke is placed, is bent over.** Once the bars of the yoke are broken, he can stand at full stature, a position conveyed by the unique word komamiyyut “in an upright position.” (JPS, 184).

# Illustrations

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A 2005 poll, conducted by *Newsweek* and *Beliefnet*, asked, "Why do you practice religion?"

**To forge a personal relationship with God—39 percent**

To help you be a better person and live a moral life—30 percent

**To find peace and happiness—17 percent**

To connect with something larger than yourself—10 percent

**To give your life meaning and structure—8 percent**

To be part of a community—3 percent

Other—13 percent

Researching your family tree can be a fun and rewarding hobby. For one Minnesota man, it was a life-changing experience.

Marty Johnson knew he was the product of two young college students who had a brief affair. Neither parent was prepared to deal with raising a child, so Johnson was given up for adoption and grew up in a loving home in Minnesota. Years later as an adult, he started digging through past records and got in contact with his birth-mother.

Then a letter arrived one day that said, “Welcome to the Ogike dynasty! You come from a noble and prestigious family.” The letter went on to explain that Johnson was the next in line to inherit the position of village chief from his biological father, John Ogike, the current chief of Aboh village in Nigeria.

Johnson flew to Nigeria to meet his new family. He went from having no knowledge about any blood relatives to a noisy celebration in the village. There he was united with brothers and sisters, numerous aunts and uncles, cousins, and of course, his father.

In a similar way, Jesus is God’s wonderful surprise letter declaring that we are his sons, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships so that you may live deep within your heart. May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may wish for justice, freedom, and peace. May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

( A Franciscan blessing)

# Application

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How does the Gospel change our lives?