



The Consequential God

Behold Our God! – Read the Bible for Life Series #09

Leviticus 26

Pastor David Sunday

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We've been led well in worship this morning with these songs. May we continue to bring our hearts before the Lord now as we worship Him through the hearing of His Word. Please turn in your Bibles to Leviticus, chapter 26—the third book in the Bible. If you've been following the Bible reading plan, we've read Leviticus this past week. Just a few observations:

- It's not the first book that most Christians go to for devotional reading.
- It's not one that I've done much preaching from.
- Leviticus brings us into a world that initially seems so foreign to us.
- We like stories; Leviticus only has two and in both, people drop dead.

We are fond of saying Christianity is not about rules, it's about a relationship—as if the two are mutually exclusive. The book of Leviticus is full of rules...rules...rules. But we too easily overlook the fact that these rules are set within the context of a beautiful covenantal relationship. Did you notice as you read the book, how many times God says, "I am the Lord your God." He reminds them of what He has done to redeem them.

The truth is, the more I thought about preaching on this book, the more it occurred to me the problem is not that there's so little that really grips me but that there's so much that demands our attention in this book. So much that would reward our further study because in this book, **we see how a holy God defines sin** and then **how He forgives sin** and **how He helps His people avoid sin**. We see **how He calls us—His people—to be holy** as He is holy and to reflect that holiness in our daily lives, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods and in our worship. We see most of all in this book **how this holy God has made a way for sinful people to experience the indwelling of His presence** in their midst. All of which can give us such a deeper appreciation for just what our Lord

Jesus Christ understood Himself to be doing when He made Himself the offering for our sins.

So we're brought into a world here that is infused with God's holiness. A world that is sustained by God's grace. Indeed, it's the same world that we have been brought into through the blood of Christ—the world of a holy God sustained by a gracious God

As we look at Leviticus this morning, I'd like us to come to the culmination of the book. Chapter 27, the last chapter, is in a way, an appendix and chapter 26 is really the climax of the book.

- Verses 1-2 — God reminds the people of what His law demands of them
- Verses 3-14 — God speaks to them of the consequences of obedience to that law
- Verses 14-39 — God speaks to them of the consequences of disobedience to that law
- Verses 40-46 — God does not leave us without hope

So this morning, I want to speak to you about the consequential God. If you need help spelling that, I give you permission to look at your neighbor's paper. The consequential God.

I was thinking about a book by David Wells that I read back in the 1990's in which he said, "The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is not inadequate technique; it's not insufficient organization or antiquated music. Those who want to squander the church's resources—bandage these scratches—will do nothing to staunch the flow of blood that is spilling from the church's true wounds. The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant. His grace is too ordinary. His judgment is too benign. His gospel is too easy. And His Christ is too common."

Leviticus presents us with a God whose holiness is all consuming. Whose grace is astonishing. Whose judgment is terrifying. Whose gospel is bloody. And whose Christ is altogether worthy and lovely and wonderful. When God rests inconsequentially upon His church, one of the consequences is that it's not uncommon for those who associate with His church to treat His commandments too carelessly. When God's truth is too distant, His grace too ordinary, His judgment too benign, His gospel too easy and His Christ too common, then His commandments are treated too carelessly. The attitude becomes, "Well,

you know, God has promised to forgive all our sins so it doesn't really matter whether or not we obey Him."

Leviticus 26 presents us with a consequential God and we find here that our response to Him matters. It matters. It matters now and for eternity whether or not you obey this consequential God.

1. The Consequences of Obedience

Let's look first of all at the consequences of obedience. We see in verses 1-13 that God will not let down those who follow Him. What does it mean to follow Him? Well, it is summarized for us in verses one and two. It means to worship Him alone. He says, "*You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the LORD your God.*"

We have here, in that one verse, a summary of the first three commandments:

- You shall have no other gods before Me
- You shall not worship an idol or make for yourself an idol
- You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

Right there, in one verse. In our day, the challenge is that Christian worship—true Christian worship—is counter-cultural. We believe there is only one God and only one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. There is only one way to approach this holy God and it is through Jesus Christ and those who come to the Father must come through Him. So there is a supremacy and a uniqueness to the Lord Jesus Christ that does not jive well with our pluralistic culture. God says, "If you want to worship Me, you must worship Me alone."

Then He says in verse two, "*You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.*" Here we have the fourth commandment. The sign of God's covenant with Israel was that one day in seven was to be devoted to rest and worship. It was designed to say to the Lord, "We surrender all to You, God. You are the Lord of our time. You are the Lord of our labor. You are the Lord of our provision. You are the One in whom we trust. So we rest in You."

God says, "These are my Sabbaths. This is what sets you apart as My people. You are to keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary." That is God's tabernacle, God's presence in the midst of the people. They are to worship this God, trust this God, fear this

God. And God says in verse three, “When you obey I will bless you. You will experience the blessings of My covenant.”

In verses 3-10, as these blessings are unfolded, remember they were not given to Israel in order that she might earn her redemption. These were given to a people who had already been brought out of Egypt. A people who had already been redeemed. His law was given as a way for them to walk in fellowship with their covenant God and to demonstrate their gratitude to Him for what He had done for them. Remember also, that these promises are spoken corporately—to a group of people. We can fall into some real errors when we take them too individualistically because the truth is that God was designing through this nation to show His glory to all the nations of the world that they would be a light to the nations. That as other nations saw the blessing and the prosperity and the presence of God in Israel, they would be drawn to this God.

The truth is, there were some individuals within Israel who experienced suffering and deprivation and hardship and it wasn't because they weren't faithful to God. Think of Hannah as an example of a woman who experienced barrenness. This does not mean that she wasn't under God's blessing.

These promises are corporate, not just individualistic. Remember, too, these blessings are spoken through a covenant with Israel, not a covenant with America. We can draw principles for all the nations of the world and God does care about the nations of the world and He does judge America but we must not make a one-to-one correspondence between God's covenant with Israel and our nation.

What are these blessings? Notice they are very physical. Let's look at them in verses three through five.

The Blessing of Plenty. *"If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then..."* If...then. If...then. Notice that's repeated a lot in this chapter.

Verse four:

"...then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely."

You will have an abundance of crops. You'll love your food. Your tummies will be full. Plenty.

The Blessing of Peace. Verses six through eight—peace with beasts and peace with your enemies— *“I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid.”* You’ll be out there in your tents where there will be lions and tigers and bears and you won’t be afraid because God says, *“I will remove harmful beasts from the land...”* And he will defend you against marauders, nations that would seek to destroy you. *“...and the sword shall not go through your land. You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.”* Imagine the cuts we could make in our defense budget if that was the case today.

God said to Israel through Gideon, that they needed to scale down their army because it needed to be clear that the battle belonged to the Lord—that He was the One who was giving them the victory. If they had too many warriors, it would not be clear who got the credit. *“So you’ve got too many. I’m the One who is going to give you the victory.”* That’s what God says. You will have peace.

Then in verses nine and ten, more **promises of prosperity.** *“I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you. You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new.”* God says, *“Get rid of all those leftovers in your refrigerator because you’re going to have fresh food teeming in your frig. You’re going to have great food to eat. I’m going to bless you and make you prosperous.”*

Now today, health, wealth and prosperity teachers rightfully notice how physical—how material—the blessings under the old covenant were. And what they fail to understand is that these blessings were designed to make Israel light to the nations and they were foreshadowing the much greater spiritual blessings that God would pour out on His people in Jesus Christ. Today, the focus is not on the physical blessings. God does promise, in Matthew 6:33, that if we *“...seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...”* then He will give us physically everything we need. But the physical provision is designed to put us in a position where we can focus on the spiritual priorities of God’s Kingdom.

There is coming a day when we will live in the land of plenty and prosperity and security and peace. That’s called the New Heaven and the New Earth. The problem with health, wealth and prosperity teachers is they obscure the vast spiritual blessings that are

ours in Christ. They miss the glory of the gospel. They put the focus on the materialistic blessings of this fallen world and they fail through their obscuring of the gospel to prepare people for the life of the world to come. Their problem is their timing is off. When Jesus returns in the New Heaven and the New Earth, we will enjoy a much greater measure than Israel ever could of the material prosperity and blessing. But that was never the point of God's blessing upon His people.

The point was always what we find in verses 11-12. This was the pinnacle of God's blessing. It was **the promise of His presence** in their midst. Verse 11: *"I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you."* God said, "I will be able to live in your midst and love you, not destroy you."

Furthermore, verse twelve: *"And I will walk among you..."* Like Adam and Eve enjoyed God's presence in the garden in the cool of the day, that would be restored in the land if the people would obey the God of the covenant. *"I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves."* "In obeying Me, there's freedom."

God's commandments to you are not designed to restrict you. They are designed to liberate your life. It is in walking in obedience to God's commands that you will experience the good life. The life of joy and peace, of love and hope—and of God's presence. God frees you from the bondage to sin and lawlessness so you can walk in the perfect liberty of obedience, not in slavery to sin and Satan.

I love the last phrase of verse twelve: *"And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect."* Or as the NIV says, I've made you *"walk with heads held high."* *"In My presence..."* That's blessing. The blessing of God's presence.

The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 6 quotes Leviticus 26:11-12: *"I will make my dwelling among you ...And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people."* Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6 that this promise ought to have the effect on our lives of making us purify ourselves from everything that defiles so we can enjoy the fullness of God's presence in our midst and so we can stand out in the world as a distinct people, a separated people. A people who are holy before God, so we can be the light to the nations.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:1, *"Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God."*

Believe that God will not let down those who follow Him. No one whose hope is in Him shall be put to shame. That's the message of verses one through thirteen.

2. The Consequences of Disobedience

Secondly, in verses 14 through 39, we find the consequences of disobedience and here we see that God will not let up in His judgment, His discipline of those who forsake Him. God will not let down those who follow Him and He will not let up in discipline of those who forsake Him.

Notice in verses 14 and 15 the repetition of the word "if." If you disobey, disobedience has devastating consequences. You can never escape the presence of God. God sees all and He sees our sin. He sees the sin of those who have been blessed by His redemption and when they spurn Him, God sees it. God takes the sins of those who are identified as His people very personally.

Now what does it look like to descend into the bondage of sin? I think we get a good anatomy of sin's descent in verses 14 and 15. **It starts with plugging your ears.** *"But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments..."* Sitting in church week after week, there's never any resonance, never any understanding, never any engagement with God's Word. Never any conviction. Never any personal application. You don't listen. You don't do anything with what you hear. That's step one of the descent.

Then it goes deeper. Verse 15: *"If you spurn my statutes..."* that's when you start saying, whether subconsciously or consciously, "I don't need this. I can get along fine without this teaching." And then, verse 15, *"...your soul abhors my rules..."* This becomes personal now because God's Word is never just neutral. God's Word penetrates. God's Word demands a response and you cannot just remain passive. You will either love His teaching or you will hate it. Here you start saying, "I don't need God to tell me what to do. God's not my boss. **I'm going to do it my way.**"

Then verse 15 continues, *"...you will not do all my commandments..."* Notice God expects us to obey all His commandments. Complete obedience—not just selective obedience. Then the descent into disobedience ends with these terrible words at the end of verse 15, *"...break my covenant."* To do that you have to forget all that God has done for you. You throw off His sovereign rules and authority over your life. It's a way of saying, "God I want a divorce from You. You offer to be My God. I don't want it. I don't want to be Your people." **You break His covenant.**

Now there are consequences to this kind of behavior. As we read these consequences, notice there is a lot more about the consequences here for disobedience than there is for obedience. I think it's because it was more necessary in the old covenant because of the condition of their hearts. In Exodus 32:9, God says of His old covenant people that they are "stiff necked." Here in this chapter, he says their hearts are uncircumcised. They belong to the old covenant people of God. Many of them have experienced the power of redemption. Externally they have gone through the Red Sea; they have come into the Promised Land; they've experienced it externally but they've never experienced the power of regeneration in their hearts.

Their hearts have never been made tender toward God. They've never been brought to love this God who has delivered them so powerfully and so they're hard-wired through sin to be disobedient and disloyal to God and God is warning them that, "If you do not have a change of heart—if you do not experience this regeneration of heart—the very fact that you've experienced so much goodness from Me is going to turn upon your hearts in discipline and in judgment."

We need to be careful as we start applying these consequences that we don't automatically assume that if something is going bad in our lives, it's because God has His thumb on us. God's out to get us. If your car breaks down this week, it must be a consequence for disobedience. No, don't assume that.

Job was a righteous man—a blameless man. It was precisely because he was righteous that he suffered because God could entrust suffering to Job. Jesus, when He encountered the man born blind, was careful to correct His disciples when they asked Him who sinned to cause this. Jesus said it was neither he nor his parents but so that the works of God could be put on display in his life (John 9:2-4).

If your heart is tender to God's Word and you know you fail but it is your heart's desire to obey Him, that is God's Spirit in you and you're a child of God and the discipline you experience in your life is not an expression of God's wrath or judgment. It is God purifying you. It's God preparing you to be predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. It's not God hating you—it's God loving you. So be careful.

I like the way Colin Smith puts it: "The Bible never suggests that all painful experiences are a result of sin but it is equally mistaken to think that no suffering is a consequence of personal sin."

I think that the closest equivalent to the type of people God is most directly addressing in this section would be people who are associated with the church, who are enjoying some of the benefits of being connected with the covenant people of God but their hearts are not born again. They are not regenerated to the Spirit and they are hardening their hearts in the face of all this blessing. That would be the most direct application.

Then for those who are true believers, we can see in God's dreadful consequences to Israel a warning about how God will discipline us if we begin to stray from Him. We should thank Him for His discipline; we should be grateful; we should welcome it in our lives.

Beginning in verse 16, we see five sets of curses. Five judgments, five disciplines, from God and these become five opportunities to repent. Leviticus 26:16-17:

"...then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you."

It is possible for God to be against us even when He is for us. It's like you as a parent can be against your kids when you're for them. If they turn against you and against what is best for them, you turn against them precisely because you are for them. You know that by turning against you and what is best for them, they are turning against themselves. So God, when He is for us, will turn against us if we turn against Him in order to turn us back to Him. That's what is happening here.

In verses 18-20, time has elapsed. There is no response; there's no restoration and the discipline intensifies. Verse 19 gives us insight into what is behind so much of our sinning.

"And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold [speaking not of the number of disciplines but the completeness of God's discipline] for your sins, and I will break the pride of your power [so much sin pours out of our pride and our power], and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit."

Verses 21-22, state a new set of disciplines. They still have not responded and notice how it keeps getting more and more intense.

“Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins. And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.”

It became dreadful. I heard Kevin DeYoung say, “Don’t make the Pharaoh-mistake. Don’t think, ‘I can outlast God.’ Don’t think, ‘I can wear God down.’ God has all means at His disposal, including wild beasts and He will triumph in His judgments. He will wear down the disobedient; they won’t wear Him down. We ought to be very thankful if God gives tastes of hell now if those tastes of hell save us from being immersed in hell forever.”

Then verses 23-26. Here we get to the heart of sin.

“And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant....”

There it is. This is why it’s so personal. God has been so good; He’s entered into a marriage with these people. He has covenanted to be their God. He has given of Himself fully to them and they are now saying, “We don’t want You.” They are divorcing God. They are turning their back on the God of love and mercy and grace. God says, “I will execute vengeance for the covenant.” God takes this very personally.

The rest you’ll have to read for yourself. But it gets more and more dreadful. Ten women can bake the bread for ten families in one oven because there’s so little food to go around. In verses 27 and 28, God says, “...walk contrary to me, then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.” And he speaks of cannibalism in verse 29.

We praise God for His faithfulness to His Word, right? But God is faithful to His dreadful words, too. All of this is played out in Israel’s history as exile came and they were under siege. The famine became so great; the deprivation was so dreadfully horrible that some ate their own children. It’s spoken of in 2 Kings 6 and Lamentation 2-4; in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

But the worst thing is verse 30: “*And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you.*” The God who has said in verses 11 and 12, “...My soul will not abhor you. *And I will walk among you...*” now finds His very soul abhorring these people. They’re

thrown out of the land—vomited out of the land—so the land can finally be relieved of these wicked people and enjoy its Sabbaths (verse 34) and have rest. The few who are left in that land (verse 36) are full of fear and panic. *“The sound of the driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall when none pursues.”*

All these curses—this dreadfulness—should make us long for a place where the glory dwells and the light of God fills the city and there is nothing accursed in it. How sweet this makes the description of the New Heaven and New Earth sound in Revelation 22:3: *“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.”*

As you look at this description of God’s judgment—retribution upon the sins of His old covenant people—notice that when people harden their hearts and spurn and rebel against and reject God, they cannot escape His wrath. You may wonder right now, ‘Why doesn’t it seem like this kind of judgment is widespread?’ The truth is because God is patient, *“not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). These very things that are spoken of in Leviticus are spoken of in the book of Revelation of the judgments that God will one day bring upon a world of unrepentant sinners. He will not withhold His wrath. And it can get worse and worse and worse if we do not respond to God’s warnings.

Matthew Henry said, “Note, if less judgments do not do their work, God will send greater. For when He judges, He will overcome those who are obstinate and incorrigible. When they have weathered one storm, they must expect another more violent. And howsoever severely they are punished, when they are in hell, they must still say, ‘There is worse to come.’”

I asked myself, is there anything in the New Testament that resembles this? Then I thought of Galatians 6:7-8: *“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”*

God will not let down those who follow Him nor will He let up on those who forsake Him but thankfully that’s not the end of Leviticus 26. What if God left us at verse 39? Thankfully He gives us hope in verses 40-46. We’ve seen the consequences of obedience and the consequences of disobedience; the disobedience seems a lot more pronounced in this chapter. But the last section, I call the...

3. The Consequences of Christ's Obedience

We start hearing words of mercy and forgiveness and of God remembering His covenant and not forgetting His people in these last six verses. The consequences of Christ's obedience. God will not let go of those who belong to Him.

- He will not let down those who follow Him.
- He will not let up in judgment on those who forsake Him.
- But because of Christ, God will not let go of those who belong to Him.

One of the commentaries I read titled Leviticus 26 as "Grace Has the Last Word." There's good news and there's a lot of bad news but then there's good news again. "Grace Has the Last Word." What we see in verses 40 and 41 is that God is still at work in this old covenant people to bring about repentance and restoration among some of them.

Verses 40-41:

"But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant..."

In verse 43, He reminds them of the iniquity they've done; how they've spurned His rules and their souls abhorred His statutes. But look at verse 44:

"Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, 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."

That's mercy. That's grace. What we see in these verses is that for some of these people, it's not too late to repent. But don't listen to that and say, "Oh, great! Well then I can just repent whenever I feel like it because it's a lot easier to talk about repenting than it is to truly take yourself off the throne and be broken and humbled before God."

In fact, if I read verse 41 correctly, I see that this humbling that takes place is something that is being done *to* them. It's spoken of in the passive voice. "...*their*

uncircumcised heart is humbled...” God is working on their hearts. He’s taking out their stony, uncircumcised hearts. He’s circumcising their hearts and giving them hearts of flesh. God is regenerating a people. God is bringing repentance to a people and that’s a beautiful mercy from God.

I remember a few years ago, Nate and I read *Robinson Caruso* together. The story begins with Robinson rebelling against his father and running from home to pursue a life of sin. But then he finds himself shipwrecked, full of misery with only himself to blame, facing the consequences of his rebellion. By God’s mercy, he began to read his Bible and repent of his sin. Then the misery lifted and joy filled his heart. Listen to what he writes:

“I threw down the book and with my heart as well as my hands lifted up to heaven, in a kind of ecstasy of joy, I cried aloud, ‘Jesus, Thou Son of David. Jesus, Thou exalted Prince and Savior. Give me repentance.’ This is the first time I could say, in the true sense of the words, that I prayed in all my life. For now I prayed with a sense of my condition and with a true Scriptural view of hope founded on the encouragement of the Word of God and from this time, I may say, ‘I began to have hope.’”

That’s what God’s people are going to experience when their uncircumcised heart is humbled. They make amends. They repent of their iniquity from that time forward. There will be hope that is grounded in something solid—in the character of God.

How can a holy God be merciful to a people who are full of treachery? A people whose hearts have been hardened? A people who have spurned His commandments and broken His covenant? How can this be? The answer is in Galatians 4:4-5: *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law...”* He delivered us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. *“Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”* (Galatians 3:13).

Now we who are in the new covenant can look back on these curses and we can say, “I see here a greater glimpse into what my Savior endured for me on the cross.”

“O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown...”

(O Sacred Head, Now Wounded; by Bernard of Clairvaux; 1153)

Thorns were the first judgment of God in Genesis 3. Jesus became my curse so that I may experience God’s blessing. That’s what makes the new covenant so much better than the old. Jesus fulfills its conditions. He obeys God’s law He stands in my place and takes the consequences of my disobedience so that I might be clothed in Him, standing in Christ

alone with “no guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me” (In Christ Alone by Allen Asbury). He has cleansed me of my sin and clothed me in His righteousness and has taken away the curse. He has born the consequences of my disobedience.

That’s what makes the new covenant so much better and not only that, God who sent His Son to redeem me from the curse of the law has also sent His Spirit into my heart and with His Holy Spirit, He has written His law upon my heart so that now I want to obey Him. I want to fulfill the requirements of the covenant. I don’t have an uncircumcised, hardened heart. I’ve been regenerated, born again. My heart has been circumcised through the putting off of the body through Christ’s death on the cross. I have been set free to obey God. That’s what makes the new covenant so much better than the old.

Praise God for the gospel! Some people look at that gospel—that announcement of sins forgiven, that promise that God will be merciful to my iniquities and remember my sins no more—and they say, “Okay, that’s a nice deal. Why not go on sinning if I’m forgiven? Will God bring consequences to me?”

The answer is, “Absolutely He will!”

If you are His child and you’re thinking like that, then God in “His love that will not let you go”, will make you miserable until you return. But really, if you are His child and if you love the Savior who bore the curse for you, you would not even ask such a question. You would not even think, “Can’t I just do whatever I want?” Love is the greatest motivator to obedience. Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will obey My commandments.” That’s what the gospel does—it makes us a people who love to obey.

So hear God’s Word this morning.

- God will not let down those who obey Him.
- God will not let up in judgment on those who forsake Him.
- God will not let go of those who belong to Him through Christ.

When you see the richness of God’s blessing and the rigor of God’s judgment and the resolution of God’s heart to love His people with an unfailing love, doesn’t that make you want to obey Him? Doesn’t that cause you to say, in the words of the song...?

“What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?
O make me Thine forever, and should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.”

(O Sacred Head, Now Wounded; by Bernard of Clairvaux; 1153)

Let's stand together.

Thank You Lord, for a new and better covenant in which You not only tell us, "I will bless you if you obey, I will discipline you if you disobey," but you actually give us a heart to obey You. Thank you that our hearts are continually warmed by the knowledge that "*we love because you first loved us and gave Your Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" Thank You, Father, for giving us Your Son. Thank You, Jesus, for becoming my curse so that I might live under Your blessing. Thank You for the gift of Your Spirit who writes Your law upon our hearts and makes us love Your Law. Lord, here we are. All of us. Take us. Use us for Your glory. Let us reflect Your holy character in this world this week, that people would see Your presence in our midst and be drawn to You. We pray. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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