

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 26: 3-13

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue to read Leviticus 26: 3-13.

Yesterday, we read that God's most fundamental requirement for His people is to put God first, to obey Him in all things, and not to make gods for themselves. Second, to keep God's Sabbath, which is to observe God's works in rest. Third, to honor God's sanctuary, which means to approach it with a heart of worship and praise, cherishing the fruits of God's work, which is the church. This leads to the fivefold blessings that God promised to the Israelites.

Verse 3: "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them,"

To receive God's blessings, there is a condition: to listen to God's words and carefully observe His commandments, statutes, and ordinances. God's grace has two aspects. Common grace extends to all creation, but special grace is reserved for God's people—in the Old Testament, this was Israel, and in the New Testament, it is the church. Among God's people, He has special blessings for those who diligently obey His Word. These blessings are divided into five levels, the first being abundant harvest, as recorded in verses 4 and 5.

Verse 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."

If the Israelites obeyed God's commandments, He would send rain in its season, meaning rain would come at the right time. The water source for the land of Canaan primarily depended on rainfall. Crops such as barley and wheat were sown in

October to November and harvested between March and April for barley, and in May for wheat. Grapes, which are perennial crops, began to be harvested around July each year. Seasonal rains meant that at the times when the crops needed water most, the heavens would send rain, resulting in the land yielding abundant produce, and the trees in the fields bearing plenty of fruit. This is akin to the Chinese saying of "favorable weather," which leads to abundant harvests.

Verse 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."

Barley is harvested in March, and wheat in May. After harvesting, the grain must be threshed, which involves removing the husks and storing the grain in barns. Due to the abundance of the harvest, the threshing of grain would continue without pause—from barley to wheat—until July when the grape harvest began. Because of God's timely rains, the grapes would also be abundant. From July, the grape harvest would last until October, which was also the time to sow barley and wheat for the next year. This means that from March, when the barley harvest began in early spring, until late autumn when sowing took place, there was continuous reaping of harvests.

You might say that this seems exhausting, but this labor is one of joy. Similarly, in the church, if every season brings new converts being baptized, the saints who serve would certainly be busy, but every servant would long for baptisms every month. Joyful labor fills people with hope and greater happiness. Because of the abundant harvest, everyone would eat to their full and live safely in the land God gave them. This is the first level of blessing.

Dear brothers and sisters, we know that diligent work is necessary for a harvest, but hard work alone is not enough; timely rains are also needed for an abundant yield. Here, it tells us that the condition for timely rains is obedience to God's Word. Are you often experiencing inefficiency at work, where you put in great effort but see little result? The issue might lie in the "rain of opportunity" not arriving on time.

The reason for the lack of timely rain might be a deviation from God's Word. May God help us to frequently examine ourselves to see if we are observing His commandments, statutes, and ordinances.

The second level of blessing is to enjoy peace under God's protection, recorded in verses 6 to 8.

Verse 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."

Peace is connected to the land. If we obey God's commandments, God will grant peace to the land where we dwell, so that we can lie down in peace and not be afraid. We will be able to sleep soundly at night, without being startled by nightmares. In the peace God gives, there will be no wild beasts disturbing us, and no sword will pass through the land where we live. The wild beasts refer to those that would come from the land where Israel resides. When all the people of Israel obey God's commandments, fear His word, and follow His statutes and ordinances, there will naturally be no evil among them. Everyone will live in harmony and enjoy peace.

The sword refers to the neighboring nations of Israel. In the land of Canaan, to the north are the Assyrians and Babylonians; to the east are the Moabites and Ammonites; to the southeast are the Edomites, and to the south are the Egyptians. When these neighboring nations went to war, they often passed through Canaan, dragging Israel into their conflicts. However, if Israel obeys God's commandments, He promises that they will not encounter wars.

We must understand that human history is in God's hands. Particularly in the history of Israel in the Old Testament, it is only when the people of Israel harden their hearts and refuse to obey God's commandments that God raises up neighboring nations to discipline them. The same is true today in the Church. If the Church obeys God's word and follows the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Church and

the surrounding community will be able to live in peace because God will grant peace to the land.

Verses 7-8: "You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you. 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."

If enemies come to invade Israel, God will fight for them, and they will pursue the enemies, causing them to fall by their sword. The adjectives used in the Bible are very interesting: "Five shall chase a hundred," meaning each person will be like twenty, which does not mean that each Israelite is a skilled warrior, but rather that God will fight for them. "A hundred shall chase ten thousand," which is even more impressive, one against one hundred. This means that those who come to attack Israel, God will cause them to collapse and flee without a battle.

When Joshua led the Israelites into the land of Canaan, we see that it was God who fought for Israel. For example, in Joshua 6, the first battle after entering Canaan was at the city of Jericho. The Israelites were able to capture Jericho not with chariots or horses, but simply by listening to God's command. The priests blew the trumpets, and the Israelites marched around the city for seven days. On the first six days, they marched once around the city; on the seventh day, they marched around seven times. Then, with a loud shout, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites gained victory. Indeed, this is what is meant by "five shall chase a hundred, and a hundred shall chase ten thousand," because God caused the enemies to fall before the Israelites' sword.

The third layer of blessings is to be fruitful and multiply, as recorded in verses 9 and 10.

Verse 9: "For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you, and confirm My covenant with you."

After enjoying abundant harvests and peace granted by God, the next blessing is His favor, which enables the Israelites to be fruitful and multiply. When God first called Abraham to the land of Canaan in Genesis 12:2, He promised to make him a great nation. Later, in Genesis 13:16, God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth. By Genesis 17, God further established a covenant with Abraham, saying: "I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also, I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:6-8). Now, God promises to look favorably upon the Israelites, affirming the covenant He made with Abraham. God will bless Israel with fruitfulness, enabling them to multiply greatly.

Verse 10: "You shall eat the old harvest, and clear out the old because of the new."

As Israel became fruitful and their families flourished, a natural concern might arise: would there be enough food for everyone? God's promise addressed this fear. The Israelites would eat from the old harvest, meaning their supplies would be so abundant that even the previous year's stored food would remain uneaten. By the time they began to consume the old grain, a new harvest would already be coming in. They would have to make room for the new by clearing out the old—evidence of God's overflowing blessings, ensuring they never experienced lack.

The first three levels of blessings (abundant harvests, peace, and fruitfulness) are external, tangible blessings. These physical provisions pave the way for a higher, spiritual blessing: God's presence among His people. This brings us to the fourth level of blessing.

Verse 11: "I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you."

The tabernacle is God's dwelling place on earth, and God intended to set His tabernacle among the Israelites. Initially, through the revelation on Mount Sinai, God instructed Moses to lead the Israelites in constructing the tabernacle, so that God could dwell in it, and the Israelites would camp around the tabernacle, allowing God to be among them.

Moreover, God promised that His heart would not despise the Israelites. God knew that the Israelites would stumble and even rebel, but He promised that His heart would not loathe or reject them. Although God is righteous and cannot regard the guilty as innocent, He still offers abundant mercy and grace, allowing the Israelites the opportunity for repentance. Through sacrifices, they could be accepted by God once again, because His heart does not despise them.

Finally, this brings about the fifth layer of blessing.

Verse 12: "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people."

God not only dwells with the Israelites, but He also intends to walk among them. Dwelling is static, referring to God's presence, whereas walking is dynamic, referring to God's care, protection, and governance over the Israelites. When the Israelites face difficulties, God will resolve them; when enemies come to invade, God will fight for them. God will be the God of the Israelites, and the Israelites will be His people. When God walks among people, what is there for them to fear?

Verse 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."

The five layers of blessings mentioned earlier have a prerequisite: the Israelites must obey God's commandments, statutes, and judgments. After speaking of these

blessings, God declares again, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." At that time, the Israelites had fallen into slavery under the Egyptians, and God sent Moses to deliver them so that they would no longer be slaves. God broke the yoke the Egyptians had placed upon them, allowing each Israelite to be free from the heavy burden of the yoke and to walk with their heads held up high.

For New Testament believers, it is the same. We were once in the slavery of sin, with a future full of darkness and without hope. But Jesus Christ came to save us, freeing us from the yoke of sin, so that we are no longer bound by sin, but can stand tall and live as righteous people. Moreover, in us, we are able to live out the beautiful character of Christ and bear witness for Him. If we continually obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will also experience these five layers of blessings: abundant harvest, the peace given by God, the blessings of multiplication and nourishment, and most importantly, God's presence and His walking with us. What a great blessing this is.

Let us pray: Lord, thank You for Your grace and deliverance. You not only saved us but also promised abundant blessings. Teach us to walk in step with Your Spirit, with humble and responsive hearts. Give us discernment to recognize Your leading and the courage to follow it faithfully. May we experience the fullness of Your blessings in our lives—Your provision, peace, fruitfulness, presence, and companionship. Most importantly, help us to live lives that honor You, reflecting the freedom and dignity we have in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.