

The Good Life

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Date: 21 June 2026

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[0 : 00] When you hear the term, the good life, what do you think of? The good life. Typically, it's a life with maybe you've got enough money, you've earned enough money in your career to retire early and to get a nice house by the beach.

Maybe something that looks like that. Doesn't that look nice? Wouldn't you like to live in a house like that? And you've got enough to have a life without stress, you've got good relationships, and you can live the good life. That's typically what people think of when we talk about the good life. And to be honest, doesn't that sound nice? Doesn't that sound nice? To live a life like that? We would all like that if we could get it.

No matter how pious or non-materialistic we pretend to be as Christians, if we could get a life like that, we would probably take it. And any time we, in our lives, get the opportunity to get a little closer to a comfortable, good life like that, we would take that opportunity. Maybe moving into a better neighborhood or getting a better car, whatever it is. Because the truth is, we all want the good life. We all want the good life. Every human does. But what if I told you this morning that God actually wants you to have the good life too? Not just you. God wants that for you. And that's what he wants to convince his ancient people of in the first half of this chapter, Leviticus 26. He wants to convince them that he wants a really good life for them. And that by obeying everything that he's told them so far in Leviticus, that is actually the way to get the good life they want. That's what God is trying to convince his people of in this chapter. That obeying God is not going in a different direction to getting the good life. It's actually one in the same. And like them then, we today also need to be convinced of that truth if we're ever going to obey God fully with all our heart.

[2 : 19] And so there's two vital truths that we need to believe from this chapter that I think God is trying to tell us this morning. And so I hope you have your Bible open at Leviticus 26 because I will be drawing your attention to some important truths from these verses. The first truth is that God really does want to bless us. That's the first thing we need to get when we read this chapter. Again, it's written to his ancient people, the Israelites, but the truths in it, the principles in it are just as true for us today, his people today. God really does want to bless his people. Because look at how he describes his intentions for the Israelites in Leviticus 26. Look at how he describes what he wants for them.

Verse 4. I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops, and the trees their fruit. Your threshing will continue until grape harvest, and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land. Now this would be music to the ears of an agricultural society. I mean, it sounds pretty good even today. You will eat all the food you want and live in safety. Now this, as God is describing to his people what he wants to give them, this is actually showing us what God has always wanted for people that he's created in this world. It's in fact, this kind of life that is described in these verses is the kind of life God made humans to live, right? To live in a world that works properly. I will send you rain in its season, the ground will yield its crops. Everything works, a world that works properly. In other words, to put it in today's terms, an efficient and effective economy where everyone has enough without anything running out. That is in fact what God wants, the kind of life God wants people to live in. But not only that. Look at verse 6. I will grant peace in the land and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. Doesn't that sound good? Peace, lying down, no one will make us afraid. That's the life God actually wants for humans. Did you know that? A life where we're not afraid of other humans, where we don't have to have locks on our doors, we don't have to have the subscription to armed response. That shouldn't be. These things where we're afraid of other people, where there's crime, where there's wars, where there's stuff that can happen to us, where we don't have enough. God never actually intended for us to live that kind of life in that kind of world. And that's what we're

seeing here. He wants his people to have this kind of life that he's describing. And more than that, God wants us to have not just enough to get by, but way more than we need. Look at verse 10. You will still be eating last year's harvest when you will have to move it out to make room for the new. That is what God has always wanted for humans, to have abundance, to live with this abundance more than we ever needed. Not to have to live a life where we're skimping and saving and stressing about having enough, which is unfortunately the life we live in this world today. That is not what God intends and that is not what God wants for the people he's made.

And all of these things that we're reading about, right, abundance, security, stuff that works, this is actually all the things we really want in life. All the things we want every day. In fact, what this is describing is the good life. The good life. And it turns out God already wants that for us before we even wanted it. God wants the good life for us. But here's the thing, as we read on in this description of the good life God wants for his people, it turns out he wants even more than these things. Even more than everything we could list as the good life. God wants to add something, one thing that is in fact essential for the good life, which is the crowning blessing of the good life as described in these verses, because God wants to give us, along with all these other things, most importantly, he wants to give us himself. Look at how this description comes to a climax in verse 11 and 12. I will put my dwelling place among you and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people. That is the ultimate good life, actually.

Whatever you think is the good life, whatever in your brain is the definition of what the good life is, this is the ultimate description of the good life. Because it's not just a life with all the good things, but it's a life lived in real relationship with the one from whom all those good things come.

And maybe, maybe you're here or you're listening to this and maybe you have a lot and you're trying to get the good life, but you just, no matter how much you have, you still don't feel that you've arrived. It's because the ultimate good life is a life lived in relationship with the one who is the source of those good things. The best life comes not from having God's gifts, but having God himself. And we need to understand that. And yet we forget that. We forget that. Even as Christians, we forget that.

[8 : 32] But generally, we as humans tend to think we can have the good life without God. That is, in fact, that was Adam and Eve's problem in the garden. And it has been our problem ever since. In our hearts, we think there is a good life that we can have and that we can pursue and we can have that good life without God. You know what we're like?

We're like a dog that keeps trying to escape its best life with its owner. You know, dogs just want to escape their properties. That's why we have to make sure that our gates are like meshed up so that the dog can't escape. We've got to make sure that, you know, our fences around our property, if we've got pets, if you've got a dog, you need to make sure that you keep it in its property. Why? Because it'll always try to escape. Even though it's got a great life at home with its owner, it thinks being out there on the streets is going to be better. Our dogs are stupid, aren't they?

Because actually, if it manages to escape and live out there, it's going to have a rubbish life. And yet, despite that, despite it going to have a rubbish life without its owner, it still has this instinct to try escape, to try get away from its owner. And you know what? We're all like that stupid dog deep down. We all instinctively want to break free of God's ownership in our lives.

God's ownership of our lives. But what God wants to convince His people of here is that the good life is not available outside of relationship with Him. And we mustn't think that. And He wants to convince you and I, just as He wanted to convince His people then, He wants to convince you and I, which we need in this world, which is chasing after things, in which we get adverts every day telling us, you need this for the good life. Chase after this. You know, basically just the modern form of idolatry. If you worship this idol, then you'll be happy. You'll get this good life. In that world, we need to be convinced of this truth too. Despite what the world tells you, there is no good life out there apart from God. Don't be like that stupid dog that thinks there is. And if you think there is, if you think that there is a good life to be had out there apart from God, that you're not interested in this religious stuff, that you don't need God in your life, and you're going to find a good life without Him. If you think that, I'm telling you right now, you will waste your life trying to chase something that you will never attain. Because there is no good life apart from the God who gives all good things. But if you come to God, the way that God has made through Jesus to come into a right relationship with Him, because Jesus died for sins of all who believe in Him on the cross, so that we can enter into a real relationship with God. If you come through Jesus to God, you will find actually the life you've

always wanted and so much more. Because that God, whatever you think, actually really wants to bless you. He really wants to. He really wants to bless you more than you know. And that's the first thing we see He's telling His people in this chapter. But the second thing we see is that the only way to that life that God wants and desires for us to have is through obedience. [12:11] The second truth in this chapter is that God blesses us through obedience. And I've chosen those words carefully, just so you know. He doesn't bless us because we obey, so much as He blesses us through our obedience. Our obedience is actually the instrument God uses to give us good things and to give us the good life. Because look at what needs to happen in this chapter for the Israelites to experience the good life. Verse 3. Before He describes all of these good things He wants to give them, verse 3 says, If you follow My decrees and are careful to obey My commands, then I will give you all these things.

Not so much as a condition that He's kind of blackmailing us. Well, if you do this for me, I'll do this for you. No, He's saying this is the way. Your obedience is the way I will give you these things. I want to give you these things.

All you've got to do is listen to what I say. And you'll have them. But we don't like that. In fact, the moment we read that verse, just let me read it to you again. As I read it, just take note of how these words make you feel. If you follow My decrees and are careful to obey My commands.

Oh, we don't like that, do we? We don't like those words. Decrees and commands. There's something in us that goes, Oh, no. Even the word obedience leaves a kind of bad taste in our mouth. Obedience, obey. We don't like that stuff.

Why? Why do we have this natural revulsion towards these words obedience and decrees and commands? Well, I'll tell you why. And it's rooted right back in the garden. Adam and Eve, our ancestors, they had the same kind of instinctive revulsion to these ideas because we think that obedience limits our freedom. And freedom, we think, is the thing we need to give us joy. And so we loathe obedience obedience like the dog loads the fence around your house.

[14:35] But what we need to understand this morning, if we're going to take nothing else from this, we need to understand that obedience is not an obstacle to the good life. Okay? That's what we tend to think.

Obedience is preventing us from the freedom that will give us a good life that we enjoy. But actually, obedience is not an obstacle to the good life. It is the root to it.

That's what we need to understand here. Obedience is, in fact, the way to the good life. Not an obstacle from it. It's like when I'm driving and I need to get somewhere, I will use the technology we have available.

Now, some people are really good at directions and good for you. That's wonderful that you know your way around. I need GPS. Okay? And I'm not ashamed to admit it. That when I need to go somewhere, even if it's a place I know, I will put it into my phone.

And then Google Maps will find the route. And then Google Maps will make my drive super relaxing by telling me, turn left here, turn right here, take this exit. And I don't have to think about it.

[15:41] I just do what it says. And never at any point while I'm driving and it's telling me where to go, never at any point do I think it's trying to spoil my journey by telling me what to do.

No. Of course not. Because I know it is doing the best to get me most effectively to my destination. Well, that's what God is doing when He tells us to do stuff in His Word.

He's not trying to spoil our lives. He's trying He's telling us the best way to get to the destination. And the destination God wants for us is to live this good life, this amazing life.

And obeying Him is the route to that. And the only reason you and I have a problem obeying God is that we don't really believe that. We really don't.

We still think in our heart of hearts that we can have a better life obeying ourselves than obeying God. And sadly, that is exactly what these Israelites ended up believing as well.

[16:50] That's what they ended up thinking. Even after God told them all these things and He laid it out, listen, if you do this, this is what I'm going to do for you. This is what you'll get. And if you don't do it, which is the next half of chapter 26, this is the bad stuff that's going to happen.

Even after God laid it out, clearly, they still, the Israelites still ended up thinking they could have a better life by obeying themselves than obeying God.

Despite all that He had done for them. And as we read on in the Old Testament, we see what happened. They ignored most of His commands that He gives them here in Leviticus and Exodus.

even though they kind of keep a shell of external religion to tick the boxes, they didn't really keep these laws. Behind the scenes, they chased other gods, they worshipped idols, they ignored all of God's laws about the sanctuary and the Sabbaths and their neighbors and how to treat their neighbors.

All the things we've been learning in Leviticus so far. And so instead of these blessings that we read about, what happened is they experienced exactly the curses that God told them would happen to them if they disobeyed Him, which we read about in the rest of chapter 26.

[18 : 08] Which, if you look at them, we don't have time to look at all these curses, but they're the exact opposite of all the blessings. So instead of peace, they'll have war. Instead of abundance, they'll have scarcity.

And it's exactly what happened to them in history. But you know, it's so sad when we read the story of Israel because they should have known better, right?

Of all the people in the world, they were the ones who were the closest to God. They had experienced more than anyone else in all of history, they had experienced so much of His miraculous rescue and provision and even they ended up still not obeying Him.

What does that tell you? What does that tell you about us as humans? Well, what it tells us is that no matter how much we know about God, no matter how much we've experienced God, our human nature is always to turn away from obeying Him, even if it's in our best interest to obey Him, we'll always eventually not obey Him.

And the Bible explains why. The Bible explains it is because of sin inside us that is preventing us from obeying God consistently.

[19 : 28] Even if we know it's the best thing for us, our sin will prevent us from doing it. And that is pretty bad news, right? But you know what the good news is?

The good news is that Jesus came. Because Jesus came for the reason to break us free of that limitation and that slavery that sin has over us that makes it impossible for us to obey God like the Israelites couldn't obey God.

Jesus came to save us from sin. Okay? We need to realize what that means. We often think of that and we think, okay, yeah, He came to save us from the penalty of sin, which is absolutely right, by dying on the cross.

He saves us from God's wrath by taking that on Himself so that the penalty of sin is canceled. But that is not all. That is not the only way He saves us from sin.

The Bible also teaches that Jesus saves His people from the power of sin as well. The power of sin that keeps us from obeying God. He saves us both from the penalty of sin and the power of sin so that we can start obeying God properly and we can experience the life God wants us to have.

[20 : 54] But He wants us to have that through obedience to Him and we can actually start having that now because of what Jesus has done for His people, for those who trust in Him. We can now start obeying God if we trust in Christ and if we have His power in us.

And we've got to realize that because we tend to think, as Christians, evangelicals today especially, we tend to think, well, we're saved by grace and so obedience is not important anymore.

You know, of course we'll try to do the right things, but now we're saved by grace and we focus on that. We're saved by grace alone, not by works. So obedience is not that important. Let's take down the Ten Commandments.

We don't need that anymore. But that's not true, actually. That's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible actually teaches us that Jesus saved us so that we can obey God.

Okay? Not so that we can't or we don't have to. It's the opposite. It's a clear teaching in the Bible. We are saved for obedience. In fact, that is part of how Jesus saves us so that we can obey which is the best thing for us.

[22 : 09] we need to realize that. We need to realize that obedience to God is the best thing to live the best life.

And Jesus came so that you can. But that is why He saves us for obedience. Let me just read to you a couple of verses and there's so many more but Romans 1 verse 5 Paul is talking about the apostles whose job it is to share the gospel and make the gospel known in the world and he says through Him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for His name's sake.

Literally, it's the obedience of faith. True faith in Christ is something that unlocks and allows obedience in our lives. That's the purpose He came. And then Romans 6 we read some of it earlier. Let me just highlight some more verses from Romans 6 verse 6 it says For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with. That we should no longer be slaves to sin. And then verse 17 But thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves to sin you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

[23 : 34] See what He's saying about Christians? Is that they can now obey they're no longer slaves. God has freed them to obey. He has freed us.

You know at the end of our reading today Leviticus 26 17 he tells his people sorry verse 13 he says I brought you out of Egypt so that you no longer be slaves to the Egyptians I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high.

Isn't that wonderful? God freed his people from slavery why? So that they could now obey him. So obedience is not opposite to freedom.

God frees us to obey. Freedom allows obedience. You see the difference to how we think. And we can obey now because of what Jesus has done.

Now he died on the cross for the sins of all you trust in him so that we can have a right relationship with God and that is wonderful and we celebrate that truth but that is not the end of the gospel.

Jesus death for our sins wasn't the end because he rose again.

[24 : 54] He defeated death and then he ascended into heaven and then very importantly he sent his holy spirit into his people on the day of Pentecost to give us new life to break us free from the power of sin and to give us new desires and to give us the ability to obey God in a way that was not possible before and it's because we can do that now because Jesus his holy spirit is working through us to obey it's Jesus obedience working through us not our obedience or our works that do it it's through him in us it's a power that comes from heaven for Christians today that's the significance of him sending his holy spirit and we need that if we're ever going to obey God properly just like we were reminded this morning we need power if we're ever going to have a successful Sunday service we need electricity so we didn't have electricity last night maybe many of you had to

I don't know how you made breakfast without power boiled your water without power but it doesn't work properly if we don't have power right I mean look at this all these lights all the screen these nice lights at the back you being able to hear me all comes this only can happen because we get power through the power lines from outside our church coming in it's the same if we as human beings are going to obey God and live the life God wants us to and empowered life we need power from outside ourselves and that comes from the Holy Spirit that is what is available to God's people and so if that's true Christians we need to learn to delight in obeying God to actually delight into it to look forward to it every day to seek what does God want today every day to wake up and say Lord this is your day what do you want and then to open his word and pour over it and study it and work on actually doing what it says not just because you can now start to obey if you are in Christ but because it is the best thing for you okay so does that mean

Mr. Preacher are you telling me that if I become a Christian and obey God my life will be better my life will get better I will get everything I want well okay those are two different questions you won't get everything you want but yes your life will be better eventually it will be amazing when Jesus comes back and restores this world back to what God always intended for it to be a world that works like it should filled with people who perfectly obey God and then you if you've trusted in Christ will be part of that world of course your life will be better and that's when you will start to live the life you were made for and it will never end and God is longing to give us that life you've really got to know that God is longing in his deepest heart of hearts to give you the life that he's always created you for but there's a reason he's not going to give us everything right now and that reason is because sin is still in us and because of that because of the sin that still clings onto us in our hearts before

Jesus comes back to eradicate that once and for all because that sin is still in us the moment in this life we got everything we wanted that very moment we would stop obeying God because we still have that rebellious dog in us that wants to get away now that doesn't rule us anymore if we're Christians we're not slaves to it but it is still there and until that is completely eradicated God actually holds back from giving you everything but when that is gone and we are resurrected into new life then God will give his children all that he's ever planned to give them without limit so yes if

you become a Christian I guarantee you you will have a better life ultimately but even in the meantime it's true you will okay maybe not exactly the way you want it but obeying God will lead to a blessing a better life now a better life now than if you had not obeyed him

I can guarantee you that your marriage will be better when you do what God says okay your work will be better when you do it the way God says in his word to do it your health your mental health and even your physical health will be better when you do what God says in his word your relationships with the people around you will be better if you do what God says so obeying God will actually give you a better life right now and that is why the happiest saints are the most obedient saints you can look throughout history and in my experience they're really like when I've come across some people who just are so holy and obedient and I'm just like I want to be like that and I'm not but you know what strikes me about those people and maybe you've known people like that as well Christians who have just really come to live every day with God and obey what he says is that they're really happy as well they might not have the life that the world says you need to have but they're happy with what they do have the happiest saints are the most obedient saints life is better when we do what

[31 : 04] God says okay so how do we find out what that is how do we find out what to do well come to church okay I mean preaching to the choir you hear already but come every Sunday okay and and and study his word in the week not just at church give God the time and place in your life every day to speak open his word and then do what it says those are two different things there's one thing to read his word it's another to do what it says don't stop just by reading his word and feeling good do what it says and you'll realize it actually works give God the time and place in your life to speak every day and you'll know what to do in other words do the New Testament version of what God tells his people to do in verse 2 of Leviticus 26 observe my sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary now if you want to know what that means for us listen to last week's sermon on the sabbaths but these things doing what

God says and giving him the time and place to speak is that a delight for you yet to listen to God and to do what he says does that delight you yet or is it still a chore to obey God and to go to church and to read my Bible is it a chore or is it a delight well if it is still a chore to obey God and it's not something that actually excites you you just do it because maybe you're in a Christian family and your mom and dad tell you to do it and so you do it because you want to be good or you do it because you're part of a church and it's expected of you if it's still a chore well then you still need to come to believe this truth that God really wants to bless you and he deeply desires to give you the good life the best life but only and that can only be had through obedience to him so he wants you to obey you for your best the

God who made you obedience to the God who made you and really wants the best for you and the more you actually believe that truth and if you take nothing away today take away that truth that God wants the best for you and the way to get it is through listening and doing what he says and the more you believe that and the more you just internalize and embrace that truth in your life you know what happens well the more God becomes bigger and more central in your life the more the idols of the world become less important and lose their luster and the more God's word becomes your daily food and obeying what it says actually becomes a delight let's pray that that is true for us heavenly father we thank you for this time we could spend in this book of

Leviticus we thank you how much it unexpectedly spoke to us even though it is this ancient book written to the Israelites that you speak to us through it and you have spoken to us through it and we thank you Lord for all the ways that you have called us to obey you because it is for our best and Lord would you help us to believe that this morning would you help us to go out of this place and into this new week and believe!

really believe in our heart of hearts that obeying you is the best thing for us so that we would do it and delight in it and that you would be glorified and that your kingdom would grow and that we would look forward to when Jesus returns to make all things new Amen