

Introduction:

Leviticus begins with the phrase "Then the Lord called..." His calling to his people follows His rescue of them out of the land of slavery. In Exodus we learn the importance of following God's guidance for deliverance and for living. He reveals the patterns and designs for life as He intends it to be lived.

This same theme continues in Leviticus. The Tent of Meeting -- where Moses speaks to God face to face -- has been filled with the glory of the Lord at the end of Exodus. Now at the beginning of Leviticus, God calls to His people and gives them instruction on how to draw near to and stay close to Him.

God's call might be a more appropriate title for this book. He calls us to *holiness*. He calls us to live life according to His pattern, not according to the patterns of the other peoples of the earth. In every area of life -- spiritual, social, civil and physical -- God calls us to separate ourselves from what is unclean, defiled and profane.

The passage we will study today summarize the benefits of living life God's way. It follows all the instructions about sacrifices, and offerings, priestly responsibilities, acceptable and unacceptable living practices, warnings about and cleansing of leprosy, Holy days and celebrations, and the nature of immorality.

Context:

God's people have been delivered from their bondage, not because of their intrinsic goodness, but because of God's covenant choice of and promise to them. They are anything but holy -- having lived for hundreds of years intermingling with pagan cultures. Prior to their deliverance they, as a people, have been defined by their ancestry -- being the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob -- and by a physical marking -- circumcision.

Now God wants them to be distinguished from all other peoples by how they worship and how they live. Because He is their God, they should stay focused on their relationship with Him. It is one thing to claim relationship with the Lord when we need to be delivered from Egypt, it is another thing to manifest that relationship in our day to day living.

vs.1-2 1) "Billy's folks let him watch R-rated movies. How come you won't let me?"
There are probably as many ways of living and definitions of right and wrong as there are people. But there is only one God, and His way of living, His definitions of right and wrong are the only ones that count. (see 20:23)

vs.2-5 2) It isn't so much that God chooses to bless or reward us if we live His way. It is more that His way of life is filled with abundance, good, plenty, peace and essential well-being. The land yields its produce as a built-in consequence of obedience.

vs.6-8 3) In a broken and terrified world, God offers us peace instead of fear, security rather than threats, victory instead of defeat. Though death reigns in this physical life, our inner self can experience a fullness of life not available any other way than through obedience.

v.9 4) God loves to confirm His covenant with us.

v.10-11 5) God will not reject us.

vs.12-13' 6) God is single-minded in His purpose toward us. The whole reason He wants to deliver us from our "bars of yoke" is so that we will be free to walk erect with dignity and freedom *with* Him.