

CHAPTER 7

Moses in this chapter exhorts Israel,

I. In general, to keep God's commandments (v. 11, 12).

II. In particular, and in order to that, to keep themselves pure from all communion with idolaters.

1. They must utterly destroy the seven devoted nations, and not spare them, or make leagues with them (v. 1, 2, 16, 24).

2. They must by no means marry with the remainders of them (v. 3, 4).

3. They must deface and consume their altars and images, and not so much as take the silver and gold of them to their own use (v. 5, 25, 26). To enforce this charge, he shows that they were bound to do so,

(1.) In duty. Considering

[1.] Their election to God (v. 6).

[2.] The reason of that election (v. 7, 8).

[3.] The terms they stood upon with God (v. 9, 10).

(2.) In interest. It is here promised,

[1.] In general, that, if they would serve God, he would bless and prosper them (v. 12-15).

[2.] In particular, that if they would drive out the nations, that they might not be a temptation to them, God would drive them out, that they should not be any vexation to them (v. 17, etc.).

DEUTERONOMY 7:1-11

A CAUTION AGAINST IDOLATRY

Here is,

I. A very strict caution against all friendship and fellowship with idols and idolaters. Those that are taken into communion with God must have no communication with the unfruitful works of darkness. These things they are charged about for the preventing of this snare now before them.

1. They must *show them no mercy*, v. 1, 2. Bloody work is here appointed them, and yet it is God's work, and good work, and in its time and place needful, acceptable, and honourable.

(1.) God here engages to do his part. It is spoken of as a thing taken for granted that God would *bring them into the land of promise*, that he would cast out the nations before them, who were the present occupants of that land; no room was left to doubt of that. His power is irresistible, and therefore he can do it; his promise is inviolable, and therefore he will do it. Now,

[1.] These devoted nations are here named and numbered (v. 1), *seven* in all, and seven to one are great odds. They are specified, that Israel might know the bounds and limits of their commission: hitherto their severity must come, but no further; nor must they, under colour of this commission, kill all that came in their way; no, here must its waves be stayed. The confining of this commission to the nations here mentioned plainly intimates that after-ages were not to draw this into a precedent; this will not serve to justify those barbarous laws which give no quarter. How agreeable soever this method might be, when God himself prescribed it, to that dispensation under which such multitudes of beasts were killed and burned in sacrifice, now that all sacrifices of atonement are perfected in, and superseded by, the great propitiation made by the blood of Christ, human blood has become perhaps more precious than it was, and those that have most power yet must not be prodigal of it.

[2.] They are here owned to be greater and mightier than Israel. They had been long rooted in this land, to which Israel came strangers; they were more numerous, had men much more bulky and more expert in war than Israel had; yet all this shall not prevent their being cast out before Israel. The strength of Israel's enemies magnifies the power of Israel's God, who will certainly be too hard for them.

(2.) He engages them to do their part. Thou shalt *smite them, and utterly destroy them*, v. 2. If God cast them out, Israel must not take them in, no, not as tenants, nor tributaries, nor servants. Not covenant of any kind must be made with them, no mercy must be shown them. This severity was appointed,

[1.] By way of punishment for the wickedness they and their fathers had been guilty of. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full, and the longer it had been in the filling the sorer was the vengeance when it came at last.

[2.] In order to prevent the mischiefs they would do to God's Israel if they were left alive. The people of these abominations must not be mingled with the holy seed, lest they corrupt them. Better that all these lives should be lost from the earth than that religion and the true worship of God should be lost in Israel. Thus we must deal with our lusts that was against our souls; God has delivered them into our hands by that promise, *Sin shall not have dominion over you*, unless it be your own faults; let not us them make covenants with them, nor show them any mercy, but mortify and crucify them, and utterly destroy them.

2. They must make no marriages with those of them that escaped the sword, v. 3, 4. The families of the Canaanites were ancient, and it is probable that some of them were called *honourable*, which might be a temptation to the Israelites, especially those of them that were of least note in their tribes, to court an alliance with them, to ennoble their blood; and the rather because their acquaintance with the country might be serviceable to them in the improvement of it: but religion, and the fear of God, must overrule all these considerations. To intermarry with them was *therefore* unlawful, because it was dangerous; this very thing had proved of fatal consequence to the old world (~~xxx~~Genesis 6:2), and thousands in the world that now is have been undone by irreligious ungodly marriages; for there is more ground of fear in mixed marriages that the good will be perverted than of hope that the bad will be converted. The event proved the reasonableness of this warning: *They will turn away thy son from following me*. Solomon paid dearly for his folly herein. We find a national repentance for this sin of marrying strange wives, and care taken to reform (Ezra 9, 10; and Nehemiah 13), and a New-Testament caution not to be *unequally yoked with unbelievers*, ~~xxxiv~~2 Corinthians 6:14. Those that in choosing yokefellows keep not at least within the bounds of a justifiable profession of religion cannot promise themselves helps meet for them. One of the Chaldee paraphrases adds here, as a reason of this command (v. 3), *For he that marries with idolaters does in effect marry with their idols*.

3. They must destroy all the relics of their idolatry, v. 5. Their altars and pillars, their groves and graven images, all must be destroyed, both in a holy indignation against idolatry and to prevent infection. This command

was given before, ^{<0234>}Exodus 23:24; 34:13. A great deal of good work of this kind was done by the people, in their pious zeal (^{<4901>}2 Chronicles 31:1), and by good Josiah (^{<4408>}2 Chronicles 34:3, 7), and with this may be compared the burning of the conjuring books, ^{<4499>}Acts 19:19.

II. Here are very good reasons to enforce this caution.

1. The choice which God had made of this people for his own, v. 6. There was such a covenant and communion established between God and Israel as was not between him and any other people in the world. Shall they by their idolatries dishonour him who had thus honoured them? Shall they slight him who had thus testified his kindness for them? Shall they put themselves upon the level with other people, when God had thus dignified and advanced them above all people? Had God taken them to be a special people to him, and no other but them, and will not they take God to be a special God to them, and no other but him?

2. The freeness of that grace which made this choice.

(1.) There was nothing in them to recommend or entitle them to this favour. *In multitude of the people is the king's honour*, ^{<0148>}Proverbs 14:28. But their number was inconsiderable; they were only seventy souls when they went down into Egypt, and, though greatly increased there, yet there were many other nations more numerous: *You were the fewest of all people*, v. 7. The author of the Jerusalem Targum passes too great a compliment upon his nation in his reading this, *You were humble in spirit, and meek above all people*; quite contrary: they were rather stiff-necked and ill-natured above all people.

(2.) God fetched the reason of it purely from himself, v. 8.

[1.] He loved you *because he would love you*. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes. All that God loves he loves freely, ^{<3141>}Hosea 14:4. Those that perish perish by their own merits, but all that are saved are saved by prerogative.

[2.] He has done his work because he would keep his word. “He has brought you out of Egypt in pursuance of the oath sworn to your fathers.” Nothing in them, or done by them, did or could make God a debtor to them; but he had made himself a debtor to his own promise, which he would perform notwithstanding their unworthiness.

3. The tenour of the covenant into which they were taken; it was in short this, That as they were to God so God would be to them. They should certainly find him,

(1.) Kind to his friends, v. 9. “The Lord thy God is not like the gods of the nations, the creatures of fancy, subjects fit enough for loose poetry, but no proper objects of serious devotion; no, he is God, God indeed, God alone, the faithful God, able and ready not only to fulfil his own promises, but to answer all the just expectations of his worshippers, and he will certainly keep covenant and mercy,” that is, “show mercy according to covenant, to *those that love him and keep his commandments*” (and in vain do we pretend to love him if we do not make conscience of his commandments); “and this” (as is here added for the explication of the promise in the second commandment) “not only to thousands of persons, but to thousands of generations — so inexhaustible is the fountain, so constant are the streams!”

(2.) Just to his enemies: He *repays those that hate him*, v. 10. Note,

[1.] Wilful sinners are haters of God; for the carnal mind is enmity against him. Idolaters are so in a special manner, for they are in league with his rivals.

[2.] Those that hate God cannot hurt him, but certainly ruin themselves. He will repay them to their face, in defiance of them and all their impotent malice. His arrows are said to be *made ready against the face of them*, ^{<2112>}Psalm 21:12. Or, He will bring those judgments upon them which shall appear to themselves to be the just punishment of their idolatry. Compare ^{<2119>}Job 21:19, *He rewardeth him, and he shall know it*. Though vengeance seem to be slow, yet it is not slack. The wicked and sinner shall be *recompensed in the earth*, ^{<2131>}Proverbs 11:31. I cannot pass the gloss of the Jerusalem Targum upon this place, because it speaks the faith of the Jewish church concerning a future state: *He recompenses to those that hate him the reward of their good works in this world, that he may destroy them in the world to come*.

DEUTERONOMY 7:12-26

A CAUTION AGAINST IDOLATRY

Here,

I. The caution against idolatry is repeated, and against communion with idolaters: “Thou shalt consume the people, and not serve their gods.” v. 16. We are in danger of having fellowship with the works of darkness if we take pleasure in fellowship with those that do those works. Here is also a repetition of the charge to destroy the images, v. 25, 26. The idols which the heathen had worshipped were an abomination to God, and therefore must be so to them: all that truly love God hat what he hates. Observe how this is urged upon them: *Thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it*; such a holy indignation as this must we conceive against sin, that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*. They must not retain the images to gratify their covetousness: *Thou shalt not desire the silver nor gold that is on them*, nor think it a pity to have that destroyed. Achan paid dearly for converting that to his own use which was an anathema. Nor must they retain them to gratify their curiosity: “Neither shalt thou bring it into thy house, to be hung up as an ornament, or preserved as a monument of antiquity. No, to the fire with it, that is the fittest place for it.” Two reasons are given for this caution: —

1. *Lest thou be snared therein* (v. 25), that is, “Lest thou be drawn, ere thou art aware, to like it and love it, to fancy it and pay respect to it”

2. *Lest thou be a cursed thing like it*, v. 26. Those that make images are said to be like the, stupid and senseless; here they are said to be in a worse sense like them, accursed of God and devoted to destruction. Compare these two reasons together, and observe that whatever brings us into a snare brings us under a curse.

II. The promise of God's favour to them, if they would be obedient, is enlarged upon with a most affecting copiousness and fluency of expression, which intimates how much it is both God's desire and our own interest that we be religious. All possible assurance is here given them,

1. That, if they would sincerely endeavour to do their part of the covenant, God would certainly perform his part. He shall *keep the mercy which he*

swore to thy fathers, v. 12. Let us be constant in our duty, and we cannot question the constancy of God's mercy.

2. That if they would love God and serve him, and devote themselves and theirs to him, he would love them, and bless them, and multiply them greatly, v. 13, 14. What could they desire more to make them happy?

(1.) “*He will love thee.*” He began in love to us (^{<GOD>}1 John 4:10), and, if we return his love in filial duty, then, and then only, we may expect the continuance of it, ^{<GOD>}John 14:21.

(2.) “He will bless thee with the tokens of his love above all people.” If they would distinguish themselves from their neighbours by singular services, God would dignify them above their neighbours by singular blessings.

(3.) “He will *multiply thee.*” Increase was the ancient blessing for the peopling of the world, once and again (^{<GOD>}Genesis 1:28; 9:1), and here for the peopling of Canaan, that little world by itself. The increase both of their families and of their stock is promised: they should neither have estates without heirs nor heirs without estates, but should have the complete satisfaction of having many children and plentiful provisions and portions for them.

3. That, if they would keep themselves pure from the idolatries of Egypt, God would keep them clear from the *diseases of Egypt*, v. 15. It seems to refer not only to those plagues of Egypt by the force of which they were delivered, but to some other epidemical country disease (as we call it), which they remembered the prevalency of among the Egyptians, and by which God had chastised them for their national sins. Diseases are God's servants; they go where he sends them, and do what he bids them. It is therefore good for the health of our bodies to mortify the sin of our souls.

4. That, if they *would* cut off the devoted nations, they *should* cut them off, and none should be able to stand before them. Their duty in this matter would itself be their advantage: *Thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee* — this is the precept (v. 16); and *the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them* — this is the promise, v. 23. Thus we are commanded not to let sin reign, not to indulge ourselves in it nor give countenance to it, but to hate it and strive against it; and then God has promised that *sin shall not have dominion*

over us (Romans 6:12,14), but that we shall be more than conquerors over it. The difficulty and doubtfulness of the conquest of Canaan having been a stone of stumbling to their fathers, Moses here animates them against those things which were most likely to discourage them, bidding them not to be *afraid of them*, v. 18, and again, v. 21.

(1.) Let them not be disheartened by the number and strength of their enemies: *Say not, They are more than I, how can I dispossess them?* v. 17. We are apt to think that the most numerous must needs be victorious: but, to fortify Israel against this temptation, Moses reminds them of the destruction of Pharaoh and all the power of Egypt, v. 18, 19. They had seen the great *temptations*, or *miracles* (so the Chaldee reads it), the signs and wonders, wherewith God had brought them out of Egypt, in order to his bringing them into Canaan, and thence might easily infer that God *could* dispossess the Canaanites (who, though formidable enough, had not such advantages against Israel as the Egyptians had; he that had done the greater could do the less), and that he *would* dispossess them, otherwise his bringing Israel out of Egypt had been no kindness to them. He that begun would finish. Thou shalt therefore *well remember* this, v. 18. The word and works of God are well remembered when they are improved as helps to our faith and obedience. That is well laid up which is ready to us when we have occasion to use it.

(2.) Let them not be disheartened by the weakness and deficiency of their own forces; for God will send them in auxiliary troops of *hornets*, or *wasps*, as some read it (v. 20), probably larger than ordinary, which would so terrify and molest their enemies (and perhaps be the death of many to them) that their most numerous armies would become an easy prey to Israel. God plagued the Egyptians with flies, but the Canaanites with hornets. Those who take not warning by less judgments on others may expect greater on themselves. But the great encouragement of Israel was that they had God among them, a *mighty God and terrible*, v. 21. And if God be for us, if God be with us, we need not fear the power of any creature against us.

(3.) Let them not be disheartened by the slow progress of their arms, nor think that the Canaanites would never be subdued if they were not expelled the first year; no, they must be *put out by little and little*, and not *all at once*, v. 22. Note, We must not think that, because the deliverance of the church and the destruction of its enemies are not effected immediately,

therefore they will never be effected. God will do his own work in his own method and time, and we may be sure that they are always the best. Thus corruption is driven out of the hearts of believers *by little and little*. The work of sanctification is carried on gradually; but that judgment will at length be brought forth into a complete victory. The reason here given (as before, ^{<233>}Exodus 23:29, 30) is, *Lest the beast of the field increase upon thee*. The earth God has given to the children of men; and therefore there shall rather be a remainder of Canaanites to keep possession till Israel become numerous enough to replenish it than that it should be a habitation of dragons, and a court for *the wild beasts of the desert*, ^{<234>}Isaiah 34:13, 14. Yet God could have prevented this mischief from the beasts, ^{<235>}Leviticus 26:6. But pride and security, and other sins that are the common effects of a settled prosperity, were enemies more dangerous than the beasts of the field, and these would be apt to increase upon them. See ^{<236>}Judges 3:1, 4.