

5. Not because of us, but of Him

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Not only any particular prideful person, but all of us have that tendency to do it very easily. What am I talking about? When things go well; when your life is smooth sailing with a gentle wind on your back; when you don't see any pitfall anywhere around you; when your family is doing well, it is easy for us to think that all these fine things have something to do with us. We might even think that because we are such great Christians, so our God has no choice but to reward us richly.

However, if the things start to fall apart around us, it is a quick and common response in our hearts to think that God is against us for no reason. Don't tell me that you've never thought about that. We all have one time or another.

In chapter 7, we get to hear what the Israel leader Moses reminds them about God and themselves. He tells them that they are blessed to possess the rich land that has everything ahead not because they are special, but because of God's faithfulness to His own promise that was given to their ancestors.

Like chapter 6, this one also has another rich content that we must pay attention.

A. INSULATION, NOT ISOLATION

Deuteronomy 7:1-5 "When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, 2 and when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. 3 Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. 4 For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. 5 But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

In the OT, it is described as 'separation,' but in the NT it is known as 'sanctification.' But neither one of them tells us to be isolated from everyone in the world. Because if the believers of Jesus Christ think that we should not be with the rest of the world in order to keep ourselves pure like the old fashioned monks thought, how can we be the salt of the earth and the light of the world? We can not.

Speaking of isolation, living like monks doesn't help us be pure and sanctified. Why? Because a monk still has his own carnal desire to deal with in his heart. If he can, somehow, remove his carnal desire out of his life, he might be successful in only one portion. But since he cannot, he still has to struggle with sins in spite of isolation.

Jesus lived on earth just like the rest of us, but He didn't sway by carnal desire. You might argue, "He is God, He doesn't get tempted like us." You are right about 'not like us' part, but wrong about 'doesn't get tempted.' I am sure that you remember that no human was tempted like Jesus was for forty days and forty nights by satan himself in the wilderness when His physical condition was extremely low out of hunger and thirst.

Abraham was allied with some of his neighbors in Canaan and together they defeated the invaders and rescued the people of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 14. Yet Abraham never lived or worshiped as his neighbors did. Jesus was the “friend of tax collectors and sinners” as it was mentioned in Matthew 11, and yet He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Jesus had contact with the real world and its people but He wasn’t contaminated from that contact.

True biblical separation is contact without contamination. We’re different from the world but not odd or weird. When you’re different, you attract people and have opportunities to share the Good News of Christ; but when you’re weird, you push people away and they slam the door on your witness.

In v2, we find that the Lord commanded the Israelites to show no mercy to these pagan carnal nations. A person who has no knowledge of the Bible would think that God is vicious and not merciful. That is not true. He was kind enough to give these nations to repent from their sins for over 400 years while the Israelites were in Egypt. Now He is using the Jews as an instrument of His judgment to clean them out of the land where His people are going to settle.

The Lord told them not to make political treaties, intermarriage, or any toleration or interest in these nations’ pagan religions. The reason is obvious – any type of contact or link with the godless Canaanite religion could lead Israel into idol worship. Guess what? That is exactly what happened to them.

About ‘not having any link,’ I probably am going to step on someone’s toes. It never stopped me before, so why stop now, right?

When I came to the United States with my wife and infant daughter in 1981, I was not a Christian as you all know. I brought some of my dad’s wooden sculptures as remembrances of him. Even though he was a medical doctor, he was very artistic and talented in sculpture. He carved many ancient Korean palace buildings out of cedar woods. After I became a Christian, the decorations of those building sculptures started to bother me. You see, the ancient Korean architecture was deeply interwoven with their pagan religion.

I didn’t want any of these pagan pieces to be in my home continuously even though those were the only physical links with my dad. My love for the Lord was far greater than the love for my dad. I can love and remember my dad without the physical links. So I threw them out without thinking twice about them.

Let me put this in your circumstance. Since we all are living in the southwestern part of the United States, many home decorations are influenced by the Southwestern motives, such as kokopelli and kachina stuff.

These are the definitions of them:

Kokopelli is a deity prehistoric Indian tribe of the Navajo. Often called “Cocopelli”. This divine figure is drawn as a stylized man with a pronounced curvature of his back while dancing around a fire and playing his flute.

A kachina is a spirit being in western Pueblo Indian’s cosmology and religious practices.

My wife Karen also had some collections of these and indian potteries. They went to the same place where my dad’s sculptures went.

You might think, "Hey, I paid a lot of money for those things. Are you telling me that I should throw them out? I don't worship those things. They are just silly decorations in my house." Until now, you may have not known what those silly decorations meant, but you do now. Ask yourself if those things really represent silly decorations or spirit beings in your home. You be the judge of that. If you are truthful to the Lord, you would come up with the same conclusion as mine. That is being radical for following the Lord.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

B. CHOSEN NOT BECAUSE OF YOU, BUT HIM

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. 7 The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

The Lord promised a nation to a couple of old people – Abraham and Sarah. Though the Lord started with two people, but by the time the Israelites left Egypt, they were a nation of over two million strong. Indeed, the Lord was faithful to keep His promise to Abraham, and He is to all of us.

He doesn't choose us because we are so special. Let apostle Paul reminds us about this:

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-- 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

Like Israel, the church is God's chosen people and His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and we are called to be a light to the lost world.

C. PRIVILEGE ALWAYS COMES WITH RESPONSIBILITY

Deuteronomy 7:9-16 Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; 10 and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. 11 Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. 12 "Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. 13 And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your

womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you. 14 You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your livestock. 15 And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay them on all those who hate you. 16 And you shall destroy all the peoples whom the Lord your God delivers over to you; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.

God's covenant was a covenant of love, and He would show His love by blessing them if they obeyed and chastening them if they disobeyed. All these blessings on Israel would bring glory to the Lord. The other nations would see the fruitfulness of the land and the people and ask, "What is the reason for this?" The Israelites would then reply, "This is the blessing of the Lord on His people!" It would give the Israelites opportunities to share the truth about Jehovah with unbelievers and perhaps persuade them to trust the true and living God. Their national blessings would also give parents the opportunity to teach their children the importance of obeying God's Word.

Privilege always comes with responsibility. You can not have one without the other. Freedom is a good example. Having freedom accompanies the responsibility to respect other's freedom as well. Just because one person has freedom, it doesn't mean that that person can do whatever he or she wants, because it affects the other people's freedom one way or another.

If we, the born-again Christians, separate ourselves from sin and the world by having sanctified living, the Lord will bless us as His obedient children. He will commune with us and bless us and be with us. By doing so, He brings glory to Himself.

D. CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD

Deuteronomy 7:17-26 "If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?'-- 18 you shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: 19 the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the Lord your God brought you out. So shall the Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. 20 Moreover the Lord your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed. 21 You shall not be terrified of them; for the Lord your God, the great and awesome God, is among you. 22 And the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. 23 But the Lord your God will deliver them over to you, and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed. 24 And He will deliver their kings into your hand, and you will destroy their name from under heaven; no one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them. 25 You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. 26 Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.

As I have stated this before, the most frequent word in the Book of Deuteronomy is "Remember".

How easy for us to fall into complacency and start to believe in our own strength! That will lead us to see the problems and circumstances rather than our mighty and faithful Lord. Once we look at the problems and situations, all we can see is the overwhelming power of the enemy.

As Moses reminds his people, we need to remind ourselves to take our eyes off our problems, keep our eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His Glory and Grace, Amen?

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Being selected by the Lord has nothing to do with us, but it has everything to do with the Lord's love, grace, and mercy for us.
- 2) Obeying the Lord means doing the right thing in the right way at the right time for the right reason, which is to the glory of God.
- 3) Our love for the Lord makes obedience to Him a blessing, not a burden.