

Deuteronomy 7:7-11
Dr. Steven R. Cook

The LORD did not set His love on you [Israel] nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples [i.e., least significant],⁸ but because the LORD loved you [i.e., selected them by sovereign choice] and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers [Gen 17:7-8; 26:24; 28:13-14; cf. Deut 4:37; 10:15], the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand [as the divine warrior] and redeemed you from the house of slavery [effected their liberation], from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt [the world superpower of that day].⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God [the One who can effect change; Isa 45:5-7], the faithful God [who upholds His word, just He did with their forefathers], who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness [חֶסֶד *chesed* – goodness, kindness, loyal-love] to a thousandth generation [i.e., for a long time] with those who love Him [i.e., choose Him] and keep His commandments [to love God is to obey Him; cf. John 14:15, 24];¹⁰ but repays those who hate Him [i.e., reject Him] to their faces, to destroy them [i.e., punish them for their disloyalty and disobedience]; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face [i.e., will punish the individual directly].¹¹ Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them [so that good may come].

Summary:

The main point of this pericope is that God chose and redeemed Israel because of the promise He made to their forefathers, which promise resulted in the nation's liberation and covenant relationship. Moses opens this section, saying, "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples" (Deut 7:7). Here, God's love for Israel is seen in His choosing them to be His people; which love was in no way influenced by their greatness as a nation. In fact, they are said to be "the fewest of all people", which implies their insignificance by human standards. But God did love them, and His love was in no way predicated on their worthiness (cf. Deut 9:4-6). God's love is that inherent characteristic that motivates Him to act, not for self-interest, but wholly for the benefit of others. And this love can be tied from one person or generation to the next, as Moses states, "but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut 7:8). God's liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt was a sign of His love for them. Some have questioned why God loved and chose Israel for Himself, and one liberal scholar states, "Maybe it was pure chance. Maybe God just tossed a coin. For whatever reason,

God ‘chose’ Israel.”¹ Such flippant and dismissive comments portray God as one who acts randomly and arbitrarily rather than thoughtfully and intentionally. God’s selection of Israel was based on the oath He swore to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut 4:37; 10:15). The Lord promised their descendants would become a great nation and possess the land of Canaan (Gen 17:7-8; 26:24; 28:13-14), so He brought them out of Egypt to fulfill His word (Deut 5:6; 6:12; 8:14), and thus He brought the nation into existence (Isa 43:15; cf. 45:11). Warren Wiersbe writes:

The Lord’s choice of Abraham and Sarah was an act of sovereign grace. They were idol-worshippers in Ur of the Chaldees when “the God of glory” appeared (Acts 7:1–3; Josh. 24:1–3). They had no children and yet were promised descendants as numerous as the sands of the seashore and the stars of the heavens. They later had one son, Isaac, and he had two sons, Esau and Jacob; and from Jacob’s twelve sons came the twelve tribes of Israel. When Jacob’s family gathered in Egypt, there were seventy people (Gen. 46), but by the time they were delivered from Egypt, they had become a great nation. Why did this happen? Because God loved them and kept the promises that He made to their ancestors.²

God keeps His word, and His actions speak volumes. Based on this, Moses said to those Israelites before him, “Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deut 7:9). As the only God that is, Israel was to know that He is able to accomplish His will (Isa 45:5-7), and to be faithful and keep His covenant promises indefinitely from one generation to the next with those who love/choose Him and keep His commandments. Moses used the Hebrew word *חֶסֶד* *chesed*—translated *lovingkindness*—to refer to God’s loyalty to the covenant and those in relationship with Him.

Not only does God promise to bless Israel when they are faithful to Him, but He is also identified as One who “repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face” (Deut 7:10). Here, the judgment falls solely on the Israelite who is in a bilateral covenant relationship with God and is obligated to live according to His commandments. Those who hate God have rejected His authority, and He will judge them individually for their disloyalty and disobedience. To enjoy God’s blessings and avoid His judgments, Moses

¹ John Goldingay, *Numbers and Deuteronomy for Everyone* (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 123.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Equipped*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1999), 52.

told his hearers, “Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them” (Deut 7:11). God had done everything necessary for the nation to be victorious and blessed. All Israel had to do was keep their part of the covenant agreement.

As Christians, when we think about our relationship with God, we realize there is nothing special about us that would motivate Him to love, redeem, and reconcile us to Himself, which He accomplished by the death of Christ. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, saying:

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. (1 Cor 1:26-29)

Before being saved, we were helpless sinners who were enemies of God (Rom 5:6-10), dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-2), completely unable to save ourselves (Rom 4:1-5; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9; Tit 3:5). But Paul reveals God’s sovereign grace, saying, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, ‘let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” (1 Cor 1:30-31). And elsewhere he states, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4-6). And we were selected not just for a relationship, but “that we would be holy and blameless before Him” (Eph 1:4), “a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (Tit 2:14; cf. 3:8, 14; Heb 10:24).

As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. (Col 3:12-15)