

Deuteronomy 7:12-16
Dr. Steven R. Cook

“Then [if God’s people keep His commands; see vs. 11] it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them [the following will happen], that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. ¹³ “He will love you and bless you and multiply you [reward for obedience]; He will also bless the fruit of your womb [i.e., bless their descendants] and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil [fertile crops], the increase of your herd and the young of your flock [fertile herds], in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you [Gen 17:7-8; 26:24; 28:13-14]. ¹⁴ “You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle [cf. Deut 28:3-4, 11; 30:9-10]. ¹⁵ “The LORD will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you [God will deal with Israel’s enemies]. ¹⁶ “You shall consume all the peoples whom the LORD your God will deliver to you [i.e., the Canaanites who are in the land]; your eye shall not pity them [i.e., don’t have misplaced compassion], nor shall you serve their gods [which promised prosperity, but could never fulfill], for that *would be* a snare to you [a warning of what would be a trap].

Summary:

The main point of this pericope is that God promised to bless Israel if they would obey His commands. The blessing would include children, productive crops and herds, good health, and the defeat of their enemies. Moses opens with the statement, saying, “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers” (Deut 7:12). God’s covenant belonged to the nation of Israel, and blessing or cursing was theirs, depending on whether they obeyed or disobeyed His commands. The bilateral Mosaic covenant continued from one generation to the next, as each Israelite was beholden to the eternal God who enforced it. God is their good King and He desires only their best; however, they must walk in obedience to His commands in order to secure His blessings (Deut 5:33; 12:28). If the Israelites were disobedient to God’s directions, it did not destroy the covenant-relationship with the Lord (i.e., they did not cease to be His people), but resulted in forfeiture of covenant-blessings and the addition of covenant-curses.

If each Israelite would follow the Lord’s commands, they could expect His blessing, as Moses stated of God, “He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine

and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you” (Deut 7:13). God’s love would be displayed in the form of blessings He desired to give His people, which would spill over to their children, as well as their crops and herds (blessing by association). And this would occur in the land where God was taking them, the land which God had promised to their forefathers and their offspring (Gen 17:7-8; 26:24; 28:13-14). And Moses continued saying, “You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle” (Deut 7:14). God’s blessing was tangible.

Part of the blessing included no sickness or disease, which the Lord would place on Israel’s enemies. Moses said, “The LORD will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you” (Deut 7:15). Israel could know these blessings, but they had to be faithful and completely destroy the residents of Canaan, as Moses said, “You shall consume all the peoples whom the LORD your God will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that *would be* a snare to you” (Deut 7:16). Israel was not to have misplaced compassion on the wicked Canaanites who had sinned terribly, and who had sinned away their day of grace. Furthermore, Israel was not to serve their gods, for that would ensnare them in the same sins that God was bringing on their enemies. Earl Kalland writes:

To secure these advantages, the Israelites were to destroy without pity the Canaanites the Lord would give over to them. The Canaanite gods were not to be worshiped, for that would be a snare to the Israelites. In Exodus 23:33, Judges 2:3, and Psalm 106:36, the gods (idols) of Canaan are said to be snares, while in Exodus 34:12 and Joshua 23:13 the Canaanites themselves are snares.¹

Warren Wiersbe adds:

Privilege always brings responsibility, and Israel’s responsibility was to obey God’s commandments, for then He could bless them as He promised. 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. The Lord would bless them with children and grandchildren and increase their numbers greatly. He would also increase their crops and livestock so they would have enough to eat and a surplus to sell. Because of their obedience, Israel would escape the terrible diseases they saw in Egypt as well as the plagues that God sent to the land.²

¹ Earl S. Kalland, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 73.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Equipped*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1999), 52–53.

As Christians, our salvation cannot be lost (John 10:28), but failure to know and walk with the Lord can result in forfeiture of blessings and also bring divine discipline. As those who have trusted in Christ as our Savior, we have become “children of God” (John 1:12), and the Lord expects us to live virtuous lives. God instructs us “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love” (Eph 4:1-2), and to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10), and to “walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Th 2:12). As Christians, we look forward to future rewards for our life of faithfulness, knowing we do our work “for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve” (Col 3:23-24).

As Christians, we do not live in a theocracy and should not seek to form one. We find ourselves, for the most part, living in pagan societies that promote values contrary to Scripture. Though most of the people we encounter are indifferent to God, we are to love them, pray for them, and share God’s truth when we have opportunity. Jesus said, “love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men” (Luke 6:35). Though we are to love others, we must also guard ourselves from being polluted by worldly values that can injure our walk with the Lord. David wrote, “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers” (Psa 1:1-3). Warren Wiersbe adds:

Separation is simply living up to what we are in Christ. If we separate ourselves from sin, God will be able to deal with us as obedient children. He will commune with us and bless us. “Let us cleanse ourselves” is the negative part of godly living, but “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” is the positive part, and the two go together (Deut 7:1). We aren’t supposed to isolate ourselves from the world (1 Cor 5:9–13) because the world needs our witness and service. We cooperate with different people at different times for different reasons, but we’re careful not to compromise our witness for Christ. We do some things because it’s for the good of humanity and other things because we’re citizens or employees. But whatever we do, we seek to do it to the glory of God (vv. 19–20).³

³ Ibid., 53–54.