As we come to Deut 7, God is preparing Israel for how He is going to deal with the wickedness of those who are currently inhabiting the promised land. God is going to do a work of cleansing to maintain the distinctiveness (holiness) of His own people. This will include judgment on nations that have utterly forsaken Him.

We must know the severity of God’s holiness and the awe of His underserved grace to pursue holy lives unpolluted by anything God hates.

What does God hate? He hates anything that despises the ultimate good of the glory of who He is. (that which is contrary to His character and honor)

1. Holy lives are a response to the severity of God’s holiness.

I Peter 1:16 (Lev 11:44-45)

These opening verses of chapter 7 are extremely sobering. In verse 2 God orders the complete destruction of entire populations. And though God will use the nation of Israel as His instrument, notice that this is God’s doing, not man’s: [vs. 1-2: "When the Lord your God…clears away many nations before you…and when the Lord your God delivers them before you…You shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.]

This command to utterly destroy the Canaanites goes beyond the normal guidelines of war. This is a unique kind of war called the herem or the ban. Herem is the Hebrew word which basically means “to devote to complete destruction.” The Herem was only to be practiced in the Canaanite cities that God was giving to Is as an inheritance and it was an act of God’s judgment on the wickedness of those cities.

Deut 20 describes the difference between the normal rules of war and the herem. Deut 20:10-15 lays out the normal rules of war that they are to practice in the case of distant enemies. [Deut. 20:10-15] If a city is willing to make peace; in other words, if they are willing to accept terms of surrender, then make them your servants. If they don’t surrender, but war against you, you are to kill the men but spare the women, children, and animals.

But God has different rules for the cities which they are going to inhabit. [Deut 20:16-18] describe the herem, the ban, which is the means of God’s full judgment on those cities for their wicked rejection of God. This is not a racial matter (genocide). It is a judgment against sin.

The Scriptures give us at least 3 reasons for this herem:

a. 9:5: “It is because of the wickedness of these nations, that the Lord your God is driving them out before you.”
   --7:10 describes them as haters of God
   --12:31: “every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.”

b. God was protecting the vulnerable hearts of His children from the same destructive sin. This is the reason for the herem in [Deut. 7:16].
   Again in 20:18: “so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the Lord.”

c. Israel was to be set apart as the distinctive people of God. 7:6:
   “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God.” They belong to God and they are to be a reflection of His holiness. God had chosen Israel to be the instrument through which He would reveal Himself so that all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

So God is bringing a total devotion to destruction upon these nations as judgment for their own wicked sin, to protect Israel from succumbing to the same sin, and to uphold His glory though His people.

Then in vs. 3 He says [vs. 3]. Why does God tell them not to make covenants and intermarry if they are supposed to leave no one alive? I believe God is not only giving them an order to carry out His judgment, but showing them what will happen if they don’t. God knows that if they don’t utterly destroy them, they will be tempted to make covenants with them to live at peace with them, which is just one step away from intermarriage—becoming one with them causing them to abandon God and experience His judgment themselves.

Appl: The issue of intermarriage here is not prohibited on the basis of race, but on the basis of spiritual incompatibility which still stands today. [2 Cor. 6:14-16]. You will not serve God freely if you marry to an unbeliever. If
Christ is in you, don’t just settle for a bride or groom who makes a profession of faith. Look for a heart of obedience that’s motivated by love for God.

Vs. 5: The herem/ban does not just include people. It includes anything associated with their idolatrous/demonic worship. [Vs. 5] Vs. 25-26 add yet a further warning: [vs. 25-26] To keep for their own benefit anything that God had banned was to bring God’s judgment upon themselves.

Appl: We are to detest what God detests and abhor what God abhors—regardless of its earthly value. This is one of the signs of whole-hearted love for God.

So what should we take into our lives from this portion Deut 7? Certainly it’s not a license for holy wars—the herem is exceptional, not a norm. What we should take away from Deut. 7 is a sober sense of the severity of God’s holiness. His wrath against sin should reveal the seriousness of our own sin.

And yet there is a sense in which we should rejoice in the wrath of God—not rejoicing in the plight of anyone under His wrath or regarding it lightly, but rejoicing that our God will passionately crush anything and everything that is evil and wars against His glory which is the source of our joy. God is so glorious in His goodness and uncompromising in His holiness that He will defeat evil.

**Sanctity of Human Life:**
How ironic that today is the Sanctity of Human Life Sunday and we are looking at Deut. 7 where God takes away life in vast measures—men, women, children, young and old. And yet this is precisely what this Sunday is about—that God alone has the right to exercise authority over death.

- The sanctity of human life goes beyond just preserving life. It’s about honoring the God-given purpose for life—that all of life is meant to honor Him and fulfill His purposes as the giver of life.
- The sanctity of human life is not just about protecting and caring for the vulnerable members of our society—it’s about our attitude toward all people who are image bearers of God. (James 3:9)

**2. Holy lives are a result of the sweetness of God’s grace.**

There could be no greater contrast to the dreadful herem in Deut. 7, than the sweetness of God’s gracious love toward Israel in 6-8. [vs. 6]. God, in His sovereign wisdom and mercy, chose Israel to be His own people; holy, set apart for Himself as a treasured possession. The word translated here as “own possession” (or NIV “treasured possession”) is a word that was used of kings who although they owned everything, had a most treasured possession that they regarded with utmost delight.

So what was it about Israel that out of all the people on the face of the earth, would qualify her to receive such affection from God? What was so attractive about Israel?

- Was it because of Israel’s greatness? No. [vs. 7]
- Was it her outstanding righteousness? No. In Deut. 9:5 the Lord says, It was not for your righteousness or your uprightness of heart” that you will receive my inheritance.

The answer is found in vs. 8. It has nothing to do with Israel’s characteristics, but with God’s character. [vs. 8]
The only answer we can give is that He loved them because He chose to love them. This is confirmed in [Deut. 10:14-15]. He loved them because He chose to set His affection on them—it was God’s sovereign choice.

God chose to love Israel not on the basis of Israel’s loveliness, but on the basis of God’s character of love. God is so deliberate about this that He does it in the form of a promise, a covenant—which He established by grace. [vs. 8]

God made a promise, a covenant, with Abraham that He would make his descendants a great nation for Himself. But the basis of this promise was not Abram’s godliness. He was an idolater until God revealed Himself to Abram. Only after God made a promise to Abraham was he able to believe and be counted righteous by his faith. Later, when God came and delivered his descendants (Israelites) from slavery in Egypt, it was not because of their seeking after God. It was because of God’s sovereign and gracious intervention.

These verses about God’s undeserved grace and love are what we call election.

**Election is God’s sovereign choice, on basis of sheer grace, to set His love on undeserving sinners for His glory.** And this good news is ultimately made available to us in Jesus Christ.

2 Tim 1:9-10—God “has saved us and called us to a holy life-- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the
Now, let’s step back for a moment and see the big picture. God’s undeserved grace and love toward sinners is so much more amazing in light of the severity of His holiness and wrath against sin. In other words, the best place to display the diamond of grace is against the black backdrop of our sin under the cloud of God’s judgment. These two realities have a major impact on the life of obedience.

Remember, at the very beginning I began with this summary: **We must know the severity of God’s holiness and the awe of His underserved grace to pursue holy lives unpolluted by anything God hates.** This is a summary of verses 9-11 which are the key verses in chapter 7. [9-11]

Why should they keep the commandments? Because God is holy and His holiness is severe. But they must also obey because He is overwhelmingly glorious in the sweetness of His grace. If fact look at how generous God will be with His kindness: [vs. 12-15].

This life of obedience (vs. 11) would require faith, which leads us to our final point.

**3. Holy lives are manifested in the obedience of faith.**

Take for instance the faith that would be required for them to carry out the herem and utterly destroy their enemies in the land of Canaan. From human perspective this could be pretty intimidating—“7 nations greater and stronger” than Israel (vs. 1).

So Moses instructs them to overcome their fear with overcoming faith in vs. 17-21. They are going to do this in two ways:

- **Remember the great things God has done** [17-20]

  Moses exhorts the people to “remember well.” They are to relive in their minds what God had done: Nile River turned to blood; Plague of Frogs, the Plagues of gnats and flies; Plague of death over the cattle; hail; locusts; darkness; and the death of firstborn children of Egypt. Don’t forget the parting of the Red Sea; manna and quail in the wilderness, water from the rock, the defeat of the Amalekites, and Sihon and Og.

  We would do well to learn from Moses as well. When we remember/rehearse the great things that God has done both in the Scriptures and in our own lives it encourage our faith to trust Him in our present circumstances.

- **Remember the greatness of God:** not only what He has done, but who He is [vs. 21]

  Overcoming faith is grounded in the character of God. We must never let what we think is true about our circumstances override what we know to be true about God.

  We must continually preach to ourselves who God is in the face of our circumstances—that Almighty God is infinite in His wisdom, and power, grace, and provision. There is nothing He cannot perform and His grace is sufficient for the extreme depths of every trial.

  **Case in point:** We are working on a plan to present to the congregation for building expansion and we are believe that God would have us build in phases, debt free, as we pray and trust God to provide each phase.

  Now, to do a major expansion debt free, is only impossible if we factor God out of the equation. So every time you begin to think, “this is crazy,” go back and remind yourself of what great things God has done in the Bible, in the history of TEFC when we have prayed and trusted God for extraordinary things, and how You have seen Him at work in your own life. And then begin to preach to yourself the greatness of God who is all-powerful and delights in our trust when we pray for extraordinary things to advance His kingdom and bring Him glory.
Conclusion

How does Deuteronomy 7 prepare us for the Gospel—the good news of Jesus?

God’s wrath that is portrayed in the herem—repaying those who hate Him to their face—is what our sin deserves. But God in His grace has laid the severity of His wrath for our sin on Christ so that God’s undeserved love may be lavished on us in all the sweetness of His blessing.

Just & justifier

1. Has the severity of God’s holiness overtaken your heart with the fear of God? I pray that God will open your eyes of your heart to see Him and turn from your sin with urgency.

2. Has your heart been awakened to the awe of God’s undeserved grace; that though you deserve to bear the eternal wrath of God for your sin, He has poured out the full cup of His judgment on Christ. I pray that your heart will be awakened to the hopelessness of yourself apart from Christ and that you will turn to Him as your only hope.