

**Deuteronomy 11:1-7**  
**“How Do I Love Thee?”**

**NKJ Deuteronomy 11:1 "Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always.**

**2 "Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the LORD your God, His greatness and His mighty hand and His outstretched arm --**

**3 "His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land;**

**4 "what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how the LORD has destroyed them to this day;**

**5 "what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place;**

**6 "and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel --**

**7 "but your eyes have seen every great act of the LORD which He did.**

*“How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight”* so begins the famous poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. There of course we have a declaration of deep human love, but throughout the bible God declares His invincible love for his people, and again and again strives to remind them of the ways in which he has expressed his Love towards them.

One of the greatest expressions of this love was in their redemption from bondage in Egypt. He did not redeem them out of duty, or because it was somehow His job. He redeemed His people because He Loves them, and as great as the love poetry of mere men and women, nothing exceeds the love poetry of God to His people in the word. For instance, turn if you would, to Is. 43:1

***NKJ Isaiah 43:1 But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.***

***2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.***

***3 For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.***

***4 Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you; Therefore I will give men for you, And people for your life.***

It is this great love of God for His elect people in every age, that should be the basis of their love and obedience to Him. I hope that you are seeing that throughout Deuteronomy, the command is not obey me or I will crush you, but *“love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always.”* Because it has never been the Lord’s desire to act as Pharaoh, and a long line of human dictators and anti-christs who strive to create a people who were no more than cowering slaves. Rather the History of Redemption, from beginning to finish is the story of How God chose for Himself a People, transforming them from a race of slaves sunk in sin and misery into His own Sons and Daughters, that they might glorify and enjoy Him for ever.

Moses is speaking to those who had been born in Egypt, but who were 20 years old or younger at the time of the rebellion of their parents at Kadesh Barnea when they had refused to go into the land for fear of the inhabitants. They had seen the work of the Lord in freeing them from Egypt, they had seen the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea, and his care of them in the wilderness.

The destruction of the Egyptian army was so complete that *to this day* the Egyptians were still not strong enough to pursue them. The importance of this is that the redemption that God worked for them was not temporary. They were not freed from bondage for a little while and then later recaptured, they were freed to this day.

When God sets us free from our bondage to sin, when He redeems us, it is forever. He has delivered us and wed us to Himself. There is no chance that our old enemies death, and hell, and sin should come and recapture us and drag us back to bondage in Egypt.

***John 8:35 "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.  
36 "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.***

Once we were slaves, but no longer now we have the Lord's testimony that we are now His Sons and Daughters. Our status has changed forever.

***Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,  
39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

God had first rescued them from an external enemy, the Egyptians and was still protecting them to this day, but he had also protected them from an even more insidious enemy the rebels in their midst. Dathan and Abiram and Korah.

How often has God rescued us from the rebellion within us that would have been our ruin? Sometimes His crushing of our insurrection has been through his chastening, and we have not enjoyed it, but we remember that even that chastening is a sign of the Lord's Love.

***Heb. 12:5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;  
6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."***

We live in an age that **has** largely forgotten this lesson. We believe that chastening or punishing rebellion is "unloving." We see that children raised without discipline are ruined, and we see that churches that do not exercise church discipline are quickly turned out of the way by rebellion.

In 1924 a group of about 1274 PCUSA ministers signed a document called the Auburn Affirmation, it was in essence a declaration of apostasy and rebellion against the Lord and His Word. They repudiated the inerrancy of the bible, and declared that it was not necessary to believe in doctrines like the virgin birth and the miracles of Jesus in order to be a Christian. The church should have immediately begun to discipline these men, but it did not, and eventually their rebellion overcame the church, and it was the orthodox who were driven out of the camp.

A PCUSA minister I know was speaking to another PCUSA about why they do not exercise church discipline, and his friend laughed and said “because we’d have to discipline everyone at this point.” Discipline is that which maintains the separation between the church and the world and maintains the purity of the gospel, when it disappears, the church inevitably becomes part of the world and as that minister understood after a while it becomes impossible to exercise.

*At an ordination of elders, Robert Murray M'Cheyne of Dundee made the following statement.*

*'When I first entered upon the work of the ministry among you, I was exceedingly ignorant of the vast importance of church discipline. I thought that my great and almost only work was to pray and preach. I saw your souls to be so precious, and the time so short, that I devoted all my time and care and strength, to labour in word and doctrine. When cases of discipline were brought before me and the elders, I regarded them with something like abhorrence. It was a duty I shrank from; and I may truly say it nearly drove me from the work of the ministry among you altogether. But it pleased God, who teaches His servants in another way than man teaches, to bless some of the cases of discipline to the manifest and undeniable conversion of the souls of those under our care; and from that hour a new light broke in upon my mind, and I saw that if preaching be an ordinance of Christ, so is church discipline. I now feel very deeply persuaded that both are of God—that two keys are committed to us by Christ, the one the key of doctrine, by means of which we unlock the treasures of the Bible, the other the key of discipline, by which we open or shut the way to the sealing ordinances of the faith. Both are Christ's gift, and neither is to be resigned without sin.'*

Are you therefore this day, Sons or Slaves? Rebels or Children? One certain you can tell is in asking do you love and express that love by obedience to His Commands. The reasonableness of this service is set before God’s people again and again, as it is in these verses by Moses. Remember our obedience is not a work by which we obtain our redemption. It is not Love and Obey god God that He reward you with His Love, but rather Love and Obey God because He has Loved You and Redeemed You. We cannot keep his commandments, indeed we will not desire to do so, *unless we have obeyed the command to Love God.*

Calvin explains the basis of our obedience to his commandments this way.

*“On this account also, he requires them to love God, before he exhorts them to obey the Law itself. For, although he might have imperiously and menacingly commanded them, he preferred to lead them gently to obedience, by setting before them the sweetness of His grace. In sum, he exhorts them that, being invited by God’s love, they should love him in return. Meanwhile, it is well to observe that free affection is the foundation and beginning of duly obeying the Law, for what is drawn forth by constraint, or servile fear, cannot please God.”*

Brothers and sisters, also remember this, there are many who claim that they while they cannot love God, they love people well enough. A quick review of their actions usually shows that is not the case, but please understand, what the bible tells us, is that it is only if we truly love God and put Him first in our lives, that we will be able to love our spouse, our children, our fellow man. And both the word and my own experience in counseling have taught me that if our vertical relationship with God is not right, then our horizontal relationships with people will not be right either. If we do not have peace with God, and have not been reconciled to Him through faith in Christ, all our other relationships will be marred by our ongoing sin and rebellion.

Abigail Mott in her 1826 book of anecdotes of slaves recalls the story of the child of a freedman called Abraham who realized that, she writes ***“he not quite four years old, was not only remarkably patient and resigned during his last illness, but his conversation proved an abiding blessing to his father, who happened then to be in an unhappy state of mind. On the day before he died he asked him, 'Father, do you love me?' The father replied, 'Yes, I do.' Upon repeating his question, he received the same answer. 'But then,' added he, 'do you love our Saviour?' 'No,' replied the father, 'I am just now very poor and miserable.' 'Ah!' said the child, 'if you do not love our Saviour, you cannot love me as you ought.’”***

That is one of the reasons why Christ did not ask Peter “do you love my sheep” but rather, asked do you love me. Christ knew that if Peter Loved Him with All His Heart, Mind, and Soul then and then alone would he love and serve Christ’s sheep with all his might.

Brothers and sisters, as much as we might want to deny it, the root of the crisis of failure amongst husbands and fathers and pastors that is spreading throughout this nation is rooted in our rebellion against God, and it will never be resolved until we turn to Christ in faith.

Husbands, you will never be able to obey the command to love your wives, until you have obeyed the command to Love Christ.

Kids, you are like that generation that Moses was addressing and imploring them to serve the Lord. You have seen God’s miraculous work all around you as you have been growing up. But you too must choose to love and obey Him.