



Deuteronomy 13:6-11
"Hell is No Place for a Family Reunion"

6 " If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers,

7 "of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth,

8 "you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him;

9 "but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.

10 "And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

11 "So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you.

One of the things people often comment on is that they look forward to seeing departed friends and relatives. And indeed that is a happy thought, that we should be reunited with those we have loved most on earth. But would we look forward to seeing them if we knew the reunion was going to be in hell and not heaven?

If we don't want that to be the case, then we will have ears to hear what God is warning us about in these verses.

We have already been warned about the dangers of being tempted by false prophets and religious leaders to stop worshipping God and follow false idols and religions, and now we are being warned of an even greater and more insidious danger. One that draws on our heartstrings. And that is the danger of being tempted to stop following god and become followers of false idols by family members and close friends.

The bible is obviously full of examples of this phenomenon, Eve was the instrument by which Satan successfully tempted Adam, Solomon, the wisest man on earth, became an idolater because of his wives, Satan used Christ's brothers and even his beloved apostles to try to get Him to turn away from doing the will of the Lord. You see the tempter knows all too well that it is more effective to come at us through someone we love, than to come at us directly.

Here Moses warns the people, when the people you love most, your beloved wife, your children, your "best friend forever" secretly tempt you to go and follow other gods, gods who have not loved you,

who have not redeemed you, who have no ability to help you, whether those gods are local or far off you must not listen to them.

Now that was hard enough, obviously to rebuke and ignore those whom you love is difficult, but Moses goes further. He says, though they tempted you secretly, you must not seek to draw a covering over their wicked speech, rather it is your duty to expose their misdeeds, to testify against them and even to be the first to cast a stone at them. ***Your hand*** shall be the first against Him.

Now this was for a number of reasons. First because while others might not know what was going on in the family, there was one before whom nothing is concealed and who would know that they disobeyed, but that you had disobeyed His commandment. And while there is no end to the things we should be willing to do for wife or family or friends, breaking God's laws is not one of them. Achan's family concealed his sin, there was no way after he had coveted and then stolen booty from Jericho that his family would not have known about his burying it under the family tent, and yet none of them came forward to expose them, and in the end it was their own doing. We are told in Acts 5:1-2 that Sapphira was aware that her husband Annanias was keeping back part of the proceeds from their sale and planning to lie to the Holy Spirit, and yet rather than exposing the sin, she went along with it. Ultimately, it was the cause of her death as well.

Second, because left unchecked it one inevitably have a disastrous effect on your household and then the community and the nation. You might have resisted your spouse, or friends, or child's call to idolatry, but what of others? Will they all be as able to resist as you? What happens when the sinful leaven of idolatry begins to spread and the Lord's wrath is provoked and you are complicit in that evil?

The God who has redeemed them at such a cost, has to be number one in our hearts, and as much as we love them, our wives must be number 2, our children number 3 and so on. As Calvin put it, ***"It is pious and praiseworthy to love our wives and children as our own bowels; nor is there any reason which forbids us from regarding our brother and our friend with similar love; only let God be preferred to all for it is too preposterous to betray His glory for the sake of man."***

God knows that what Moses is instructing them to do will be hard, but have you ever noticed how doing the right thing *is* usually harder than doing the wrong thing, but ultimately has the best effects?

Friends those of you who have seen *Old Yeller* know how it ends, and what Travis has to do. Now he loved Yeller, but there was no way he could allow him to live after he had become a great danger to others, and so he did the right thing himself even though it was hardest thing to do.

So while we no longer live in a time when idolaters are stoned to death for enticing others to idolatry, we are still called to understand that following Christ involves loving Him more than anything else on earth and being willing to part with anything else, including friends and family, and to take up the cross of suffering or persecution in order to follow Him on the road to heaven. Christ, explicitly made that point more than once.

Matthew 10:34 " Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

35 "For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law';

36 "and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'

37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

And as we know, more than once, Christ himself had to set His own duty to carry out the will of the the Father ahead of His own feelings. Jesus loved Peter, but when he tried to turn Him aside from doing the Father's will by going to the cross, Jesus instantly says to Him "***Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.***" (Matthew 16:23)

So what are some of the practical applications of this to us?

1) In the family,

Now the funny thing is, most people would immediately see that if their loved one was plotting treason against the country, or conspiracy to commit murder, they would need to be exposed. But while those crimes are heinous, they are actually lesser acts than rebelling against God and encouraging others to idolatry and apostasy. Plotting to kill men's bodies is bad, but plotting to kill their souls is worse.

"Those are certainly our worst enemies that would thrust us from God, our best friend; and whatever draws us to sin, separates between us and God, is a design upon our life, and to be resented accordingly" – Matthew Henry

If your loved ones begin to worship false gods or follow false religions, you **MUST** not follow them. This means that wives, when your husband says to you let us go to this Mormon church, or this liberal or Unitarian church, you must say, not so, my husband. Kids your duty is to obey your parents, but not if that involves disobeying God. Your parents can never lawfully command to violate his commandments, and Jesus tells us that is most important and that we need to be most mindful of is

Matthew 22:37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

38 "This is the first and great commandment.

Now often spouses in particular will use your love for them wrongly in this regard: If you love me, you'll do this. But turn it around, Honey if I were to say to you "***if you love me, you'll spend eternity in hell with me***" how would that strike you? True love does not lead to the destruction of its object neither, as Paul puts it does Love "rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth"

Remember as Calvin warns - ***God declares that all our tenderest affections, which are implanted in us by nature, and in which all the best persons sometimes indulge, are sinful, if they hinder us from vindicating His glory.***

2) In the church,

"We must not, in compassion to our friends, obstruct the course of God's justice."

Far too often, I have seen friends protecting friends in the ministry, and instead of exposing the wolf, they shield them from charges. In doing so, they allow the flocks to be ravaged and the honor of Christ to be trampled.

Pastor Mark Herzer is a great friend of mine. You begin teaching false doctrines, I'll be the first one to file charges.

Paul says 1 Tim. 5:19 "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear."

Smite the scorner that sins presumptuously, and the simple, that is in danger of sinning carelessly, will beware.

3) Far from letting our relatives tempt us to follow false gods and go to hell, the time for warning our relatives away from hell is now!

The rich man in Hell begged that Lazarus be sent to his brothers who were apparently living the same way he had saying, Luke 16:27 "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 28 'for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'"

If you love them, you will remind them – "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

I am about to go on holiday with my parents, I pray that you would pray that I would be zealous to tell them about the Gospel.