

## Deuteronomy 10:12-22

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“Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you [concerning attitude and conduct], but to fear the LORD your God [reverence Him], to walk in all His ways [His prescribed path of laws] and love Him [i.e., be committed to Him], and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul [i.e., all your inner being],<sup>13</sup> and to keep the LORD’S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? [which guide into righteous living and protection]<sup>14</sup> “Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it [God owns everything; cf. Psa 24:1].<sup>15</sup> “Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this day.<sup>16</sup> “So circumcise your heart [cut away the hard attitude], and stiffen your neck no longer [i.e., submit to His leading and live righteously].<sup>17</sup> “For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe [i.e., He will always rule justly, to bless or punish].<sup>18</sup> “He executes justice for the orphan and the widow [the helpless and vulnerable in society], and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing [the foreigner who has left his/her country and family and taken up residence in Israel].<sup>19</sup> “So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt [Israel was to remember their former days of slavery and vulnerability].<sup>20</sup> “You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name [i.e., be loyal to Him].<sup>21</sup> “He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen.<sup>22</sup> “Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons *in all*, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven [fulfilled His word; cf. Gen 15:1-6; Ex 1:5-7].

### Observations:

After Moses revealed God had spared the nation from destruction, he educated them about how to avoid being in that place again. Israel had a choice concerning the quality of their lives, and it was based on their relationship with God. Moses desired their success and informed them about God’s expectation. Moses said: “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,<sup>13</sup> and to keep the LORD’S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?” (Deut 10:12-13). Moses, having shown that Israel could not survive without God (Deut 8:1-20), and that her history revealed a tendency to be prideful and rebellious (Deut 9:1—10:11), called the nation to be committed to the Lord and walk in His will. God’s requirement of His people was set forth in a series of commands: 1) to fear Him, 2) to walk in all His ways, 3) to love Him, 4) to serve Him with all their heart

and soul, and 5) to keep His commandments. All these were intended for their good. The central theme of these commands is *love*; for if Israel would love God, they would keep His commands. Warren Wiersbe states:

The sequence of these five imperatives is significant: fear, walk, love, serve, and keep. The fear of the Lord is that reverential awe that we owe Him simply because He is the Lord. Both in the Old Testament and the New, the life of faith is compared to a walk (Eph 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). It starts with a step of faith in trusting Christ and yielding ourselves to Him, but this leads to a daily fellowship with Him as we walk together in the way that He has planned. The Christian walk implies progress, and it also implies balance: faith and works, character and conduct, worship and service, solitude and fellowship, separation from the world and ministry and witness to the world. Obeying Him is “for our own good” (Deut 10:13), for when we obey Him, we share His fellowship, enjoy His blessings, and avoid the sad consequences of disobedience.<sup>1</sup>

What God *required* of Israel was a right attitude and conduct that conformed to His will. This started with an attitude of fear, in which they properly revered God. By fearing the Lord, they would be inclined to “walk in all His ways and love Him” as they should. Walking in God’s ways meant walking in the prescribed path He set for them, a path He would journey with them. As they walked with God, they would come to know and love Him. They were commanded to serve the Lord with all their being. This included all their abilities and resources. And they were to keep God’s laws which guided them into right-living as they conformed to His standards of expectations.

The God who called them to walk with Him could meet all their needs, as Moses said, “Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it” (Deut 10:14). And Israel was special to God, as they were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who had received the promises of God’s blessing upon their children. Moses revealed, “Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this day” (Deut 10:15). God had initiated His love toward Israel, a rebellious nation, and this should have motivated them to love Him in return and to love others as well. God’s love toward us is the same (Rom 5:8; 1 John 4:10). Because Israel was in a special relationship with God, they were to live righteous lives, and not in conformity with the fallen world around them. In this way, they were to have a right attitude and a humble heart that was willing to do His will. Moses wrote, “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Equipped*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1999), 70.

longer” (Deut 10:16). A circumcised heart meant they would no longer be stiff-necked, but responsive to the Lord, submitting themselves to His will. Jack Deere comments:

Thus the command to circumcise their hearts assumes that human hearts are naturally rebellious and need correction. Though human hearts are slow to change, Moses warned the nation that no bribe or anything less than an inward transformation could satisfy the LORD, who is the great God. God’s treatment of the helpless (the fatherless ... the widow, and the alien) further illustrates His absolutely just character (showing no partiality) and highlights His requirement for Israel to be just.<sup>2</sup>

Warren Wiersbe adds:

Circumcision wasn’t a guarantee that every Jewish man was going to heaven (Matt 3:7–12). Unless there was a change in the heart, wrought by God in response to faith, the person didn’t belong to the Lord in a vital way. That’s why Moses exhorted them to let God “operate” on their hearts and do a lasting spiritual work (see Deut 30:6), a message that was repeated by the prophets (Jer. 4:4; Ezek 44:7, 9) and the Apostle Paul (Rom 4:9–12; see Acts 7:51).<sup>3</sup>

God is a righteous Ruler and He always acts justly. “For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe” (Deut 10:17). When Moses describes God as the “God of gods and the Lord of lords”, he’s using Hebrew superlatives to say He’s sovereign over all. Though God is *mighty* and *awesome*, He is no tyrant; rather, He is just in all His ways and will not “show partiality or take a bribe.” God’s actions are seen in how He regards the needy, as “He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing” (Deut 10:18). Eugene Merrill states:

Such a description does not admit to the reality of other gods but simply emphasizes the absolute uniqueness and incomparability of the Lord and his exclusive right to sovereignty over his people (cf. Deut 3:24; 4:35, 39). As Lord over all he cannot be enticed or coerced into any kind of partiality through influence peddling (v. 17) and, in fact, is the special advocate of defenseless persons who are so often victims of such unscrupulous behavior (v. 18).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 281.

<sup>3</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Equipped*, “Be” Commentary Series, 71–72.

<sup>4</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 204.

Daniel Block writes:

Having declared in principle Yahweh's absolute justice, in verse 18 Moses explains how this is implemented to the advantage of the vulnerable in society: the fatherless, the widow, and the alien. All three classes of people are easily preyed upon and subject to abuse because they lack a father or husband or older brother to protect and care for them.<sup>5</sup>

As God's people, Israel was to model His love for others. This love was also to be born out of their own experience, as Moses reminds them that they were previously aliens and slaves in a foreign land, saying, "So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Deut 10:19). The alien (Heb גֵר *ger*) was the foreigner who migrated to Israel because they saw something good in their God and the law code He'd given. There was a place for the stranger to be welcomed, protected, and provided for under the legal system. And Israel was to remember that they were formerly aliens in Egypt and knew what it meant to be the vulnerable class. Daniel Block states:

The term *gēr* ("alien") refers to an outsider who has chosen to leave the security of family and homeland to try to make a living in a foreign context. Remarkably Yahweh, the God of Israel, is not so ethnocentric as to be blinded to the plight of the non-Israelites in their midst. Going beyond the privileges granted to resident aliens in Exodus 12:48, Moses declares that Yahweh extends to the alien the same covenant commitment ("love") he had demonstrated toward their ancestors (4:37; 10:15). He does so not with mere words but in action, providing them with "food and clothing."<sup>6</sup>

All Moses set forth could be accomplished if the people would reverence God and walk closely with Him. Moses said, "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name" (Deut 10:20). Here, again, is a call to loyalty to the Lord, which loyalty would manifest itself in obedience to the Lord's commands. Moses then points to God's worthiness because He has done great things for the nation, saying, "He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen" (Deut 10:21). By recognizing God's love and blessings upon them, they would naturally praise Him. One of the greatest of God's acts was the preservation and multiplication of His people when they went into captivity in Egypt, as Moses revealed, "Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons *in all*, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven"

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel I. Block, *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 273.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

(Deut 10:22). Israel's existence and great size were themselves a display of God's power and goodness.

In summary, Moses is providing historical and theological context to Israel's existence and present state of opportunity. They were the fortunate recipients of God's sovereign grace and goodness. Furthermore, the Lord who made them numerous and positioned them for blessing is a righteous God who requires they live by His righteous commandments. To accomplish this, they must remove their pride and submit themselves to His will. And they were to show sympathy and regard for the vulnerable in society, namely the orphan, widow, and alien, and their love was to be tangible, in the form of food and clothing, just as God had provided food and clothing for them. God called for His people to care for the vulnerable, not only because it reflected His heart, but because Israel could identify with them, for they were formerly vulnerable aliens living in the land of Egypt. All of God's commands were intended to lead to blessing His people, but Israel had a role to play in their relationship with Him and must abide by His laws. Blessing or cursing hung in the balance (Deut 11:26-28).