

“What Now, Stubborn People?”

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

Series: *Loving God in Every Way*

Introduction: Take your Bibles and join me in Deuteronomy 10. As you are turning to Deuteronomy 10, do you remember that interaction between Jesus and one of the Pharisees named Simon? Luke 7 tells us that Jesus was invited by Simon to eat with him in his house. And while Jesus was there a woman who was known by everyone to be a very sinful woman came up to Jesus weeping before him. She brought an expensive flask of ointment and with her tears she washed Jesus' feet, dried them with her hair, and then anointed them with the ointment. Simon was appalled by this spectacle because he just couldn't believe that Jesus would allow such an expression of affection and kindness coming from such a woman of a sinful reputation. Jesus answered his appalled response by telling a story of a moneylender who had two debtors. One debtor owed a little and one owed a lot and when they couldn't pay, the moneylender decided to simply forgive their debts. And Jesus' simple question to Simon is, which one of the debtor's will love him more? The obvious answer is the one whose debt was larger. Jesus goes on to say that this woman has been forgiven much and therefore she loves much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little. Well, those who have been forgiven little are not those who have little to be forgiven, but those who in spiritual pride assume they have little to be forgiven.

This is very similar to the point being made in the section of Deuteronomy which Pastor Larry covered last week, and which continues on into our text for this week. The children of Israel were plagued by stubborn and rebellious hearts and yet they were given grace upon grace by their merciful Lord. Last week's text showed us the depths of sin which were met by the overflowing floods of grace from the Lord. And now, we come to the “now what?” of this text. This great grace of God beckons a response from God's people. So what should they do? What does God require of them? Let's read the answer starting in verse 12 and reading down through verse 1 of chapter 11.

This super-abounding grace from God to the children of Israel beckons them to a response. And as we have come to expect in Scripture, and particularly in Deuteronomy, it is not merely a response of outward religious observance, but rather a response of inward commitment to the one true God. This has been the core command throughout this book – to love the Lord your God with all of your heart with all of your soul and with all of your might. Our text this morning is a further exhortation of that central command. Because you have been so loved by God what must you do in response, Moses asks? And the answer given is in its essence – love God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your might.

In verses 12-13 the answer is given in 5 infinitives – to fear God, to walk in his ways, to love him, to serve Him, and to keep his commandments. Notice that the command sandwiched in the middle is to love God, which is a way of saying that this is the central command. The rest of these are the outworking of the core command – to love God. And so, the rest of this text is the

further explanation of the what and the why of loving God which is summarized once again in 11:1 with “You shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge.”

Within these verses there is a rhythm of listing the responsibility of God’s people followed quickly by the revelation of God’s character and kindness to them which should compel this response just listed. That gives us then three sets of command coupled with 3 different aspects of God’s character. Do this because this is true about the Lord your God – Moses is saying. And all three sets combine like instruments in a symphony to call them to love God in every way. And what is true of the children of Israel is certainly true of us as well. Jesus reiterated this greatest commandment when he was asked what the central responsibility was of His followers. He told them that they were to love God and to love one another. So, as God’s people today we lean into this text seeking to know more of how we ought to love God and why we ought to love God. The first command is that we are to love God comprehensively in verses 12-13.

I. Love God Comprehensively – vs. 12-13

- a. As Moses asks them what God now requires of them, we must remember that the context is their stubborn hearts in the past and the great grace shown to them by God. So, in light of this, what does God require of them? Well, the answer is a comprehensive love for God. It is a love for God that looks like fearing God. This is the attitude of reverence and awe for God that sees Him as He is and subsequently is humbled before God as God. This love for God looks like walking in God’s ways. As Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. Love is shown in its actions. When it comes to love talk is cheap and easy, but true love requires the sacrifice of action, and in relationship to God that action is obedience. This love for God also looks like serving the Lord with all you heart and with all your soul. This is the all-encompassing and whole-person investment in sacrificial service to the Lord. This is Hannah offering Samuel entirely to the Lord for His service. This is David who said he would rather spend one day in God’s house than thousands elsewhere. This is the prophet Jeremiah who spoke faithfully the words of God to the leaders of the nation of Judah when he knew it would cost him his freedom and potentially his life. This is John the Baptist giving himself entirely to the work of serving as the forerunner of the Messiah. This is Jesus serving the will of the Father to the point of death upon the Cross. But this is also Lydia, the seller of purple in the book of Acts who used her wealth and her home to advance the Gospel around the world. This is Barnabas who used his wealth and his words to encourage others in Gospel work. This is the early church deacons who served God by serving the widows who were being overlooked by others. This is loving God by serving Him with everything and in every way.
- b. This love for God also looks like keeping the commandments and statutes of God knowing that they are given for our good and not for our harm. This love for God takes by faith that when God speaks in His word about how life is to be lived it is the best way for life to be lived and following His way rather than leaning on my own understanding will prove to be right and good. This is a comprehensive love for God. It involves the will and the affections and the mind and the body. All of

you is to be engaged in this loving commitment to this God of super-abounding grace. But why?

- c. *Because He own everything – vs. 14-15*
 - i. This command is coupled with the explanation of God's revelation of himself in verses 14-15. Obviously they should love God with this comprehensive love because He has first loved them and called them unto himself. But that calling is placed within the context God's ownership of all things. Now when we talk about ownership, we are impressed by someone who owns a fancy new house or a shiny new car or the latest farm equipment. But when God talks about what God owns he has to talk in terms of Heaven and earth. In verse 14 he says that to God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. He doesn't just own heaven, but the heaven of heavens. Honestly, whatever that phrase means, it is so astronomically out of our league of understanding. This ever-expanding universe we call home is owned by God to its utmost extent. There is not one centimeter of anything that exists anywhere in the vast universe around us or in the small earth we call home over which God cannot say "mine"! He owns it all!
 - ii. **Psalm 24:1** The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,
 - iii. **IKings 8:27** "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!
 - iv. **Isaiah 66:1** Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?
 - v. And yet, this God who owns all things has set his loving commitment on His people to make them His own in a unique way. All things are his, but His people are uniquely bought by Him and owned by Him. So, Moses reminds them in verse 15 that they are recipients of this incalculable love of God even though He owns all things. In other words, he didn't choose to love them because he needed them in any way. His love for them was given freely and fully because God is love – end of story. And this is consistent with the revelation of God in the New Testament. In fact, it is right to say that this finds its clearest expression in the New Testament with the coming of Christ into the world. 1 John 4 says that we know God is love because he sent his only son into the world so that we might have life through Him. If we have been so loved by the God who owns all things, then we must love Him comprehensively. How could we do anything less?
- II. **Love God Submissively – vs. 16**
 - a. Then in verse 16 we learn more about this love for God. Not only are we to love God comprehensively, but Moses tells the people of Israel to love God submissively. That is the command of verse 16 – Circumcise therefore the foreskin

of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. Loving God and being stubborn against the authority of God cannot coexist. And so Moses uses this graphic language to paint a picture for them of the heart surgery that is needed so that they can love God as they should.

- b. Circumcision is the medical procedure in which a protective flap of skin is removed from the male reproductive organ. The procedure was commanded by God as part of the Abrahamic covenant and it was a way for God's people to be distinguished physically as God's people. There is medical benefit to the procedure, but it was commanded by God as a symbolic act of submission to Him and His truth. And this is what is at issue in our text. Moses has just reminded them of their stubborn ways, and so he tells them to circumcise their hearts and be no longer stubborn. And by the way, we will find out in Joshua 5 that this generation who is listening to Moses in Deuteronomy 10 has never been circumcised physically. But the generation before them, their parents, had been physically circumcised, but they were obviously not circumcised of heart. They were as stubborn as it gets! So, what does an uncircumcised heart look like? What does it mean to be stubborn before the Lord? Well, you rehearsed this last week, but let me remind you:
 - i. 9:7-8 – They were rebellious before the Lord provoking His wrath against them.
 - ii. 9:12, 16 – They quickly turned aside from God's commands, and in particular against His 10 words which he spoke directly to them.
 - iii. 9:22 – They complained about the details of God's deliverance at Taberah in that he gave them manna but not meat.
 - iv. 9:22 – They tested the Lord by doubting His word and his power at Massah as they complained about a lack of water.
 - v. 9:22 – they craved and demanded what God had not supplied at Kibroth-Hattaavah which literally means "graves of craving" because so many of them died from the plague of God's wrath.
 - vi. 9:23 – At Kadesh-Barnea they did not believe or obey the voice of the Lord when he told them to go into the land to conquer it because they thought the enemy was too great.
- c. Certainly this generation one of the most stubborn of all, but the Old Testament is filled with plenty of other examples.
 - i. Judges 2:19 – explains the pattern of stubbornness which would settle in after the conquest by saying – "they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways."
 - ii. 2 Kings 17:14 – in describing the fall of the 10 Northern Tribes much later in their history, the text says, "But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God."
 - iii. Nehemiah 9:16 – Nehemiah confesses in one of his prayers that their fathers "acted arrogantly; they became stubborn and would not listen to Your commandments."

- d. So, to have an uncircumcised heart is to have a stubborn heart. And to have a stubborn heart is to have a heart that does not believe God when He speaks, that questions God when He acts, and that refuses God when He commands. So, to circumcise the foreskin of your heart is to surgically remove the protective barrier we naturally have between us and God. We want to lean on our own understanding to make sense of life and to chart our own course. We want to be the captain of our own fate and the master of our own soul. But if we love God, we must love God submissively. We must humble ourselves completely before this thrice Holy High King of Heaven and let Him have complete authoritative access.
- e. So Moses is telling them, don't be like the previous generation that were circumcised physically, but not spiritually. Rather, even though you aren't yet circumcised physically you must be circumcised spiritually. You must humble yourself before God and hear and heed Him. You must willingly accept all of his kind and merciful providences, and the sticky and messy and difficult ones as well. You must hear and heed His voice. You must accept what He says as completely authoritative and you must follow Him and obey Him in all things. In other words, you must love him in such a way as to completely submit yourself to Him in every way.
- f. But in reality, this is not something that sinful man can do by himself. We will see as we go through the rest of the book of Deuteronomy that Moses anticipates a coming day when the nation of Israel will largely turn from following the Lord and loving the Lord. This will provoke the righteous wrath of the Lord and he will bring upon them the curses of chapter 28. But even that will not leave them without hope. Flip with me to chapter 30, Deuteronomy 30. After the judgment of God upon them for their ongoing stubbornness, He will bring them back to himself and back to this land, and look at what he promises He will do in verses 5-6.
- g. This supernatural act of God circumcising their hearts will produce an ability for them to love God as they are supposed to. So, the product of a circumcised heart is a heart that loves God through no longer rebelling against Him. The prophet Jeremiah, who spoke and wrote to a generation who were some of the most prolific rebels against God, told them that they needed to circumcise their hearts before the Lord in chapter 4. But then in chapter 31 of Jeremiah he prophesies of a coming day when this heart surgery will be perfected and completed in the New Covenant. This act of God will be a unilateral covenant that He makes with His people and it will be based upon the work of His Son. I believe that this promise is yet to be completely fulfilled for the nation of Israel. I believe the Scriptures teach a coming day when all Israel will be saved as they are supernaturally turned from their rebellion and given hearts of flesh which are soft and pliable and responsive to God rather than the hearts of stone that they currently have. This New Covenant will be cut after the day of Jacob's trouble, the Great Tribulation, awakens the nation of Israel to the righteous wrath of God which awaits them. They will see the Son of Man coming as their righteous Judge and they will wail

on account of Him and these will be tears of repentance granted them by God. And they will be given a new heart of faith in Jesus as their Messiah and they will be established on Earth as God's covenant people once again with Christ as their King during His Earthly reign in the Millennial Kingdom.

- h. But this heart circumcision is not just for the Jewish people. What is promised and is coming yet future to even our own day, is also something that God is doing right now in our day through faith in Jesus Christ. Turn with me to Colossians 2, Colossians chapter 2. Paul is writing to a church who had false teachers trying to deceive them into actions of tradition that had nothing to do with Christ. *Read Colossians 2:8-15.*
- i. So, beloved, if you are in Christ by grace through faith in Him you have been circumcised in your heart. He has taken your dead heart of resistance and He has made you alive together with Christ, forgiving all of your trespasses through nailing them to the cross of Christ. So, we who have been shown such great grace can ask the same question that Moses asks of the Israelites in Deuteronomy 10 – what now? What does God want from us after showing us such abounding and saving grace? He wants us to walk in this circumcision of heart through ongoing humble submission which shows our love for Him.
- j. *Because He Rules Supremely – vs. 17-18*
 - i. And now, back in Deuteronomy 10, why should you do this? What character quality of God compels this ongoing submission to God out of love for Him? We should love God submissively because He rules supremely. He is god of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. There is no other who is actually a god, but there are plenty who are elevated to that fake position by the vain imaginations of human minds. God is the supreme ruler of all. There is nothing he doesn't own, as we saw in verse 14, and there is nothing He doesn't rule over, as we see here in verse 17. And this rule is supremely great and awesome. He is not some okay ruler who does a fairly good job. His rule over all things is perfect and righteous. He is great and mighty and awesome – without flaw or misstep in overseeing His vast and everlasting Kingdom.
 - ii. Not only that, but this supreme rule over all thing is also marked by completely perfect justice. He is not partial and takes no bribe. The literal phrase in Hebrew is that he does not lift the head of someone who is accused to see who they are first before pronouncing His judgment. He is no respecter of persons in that way. He executes justice over all. This is seen explicitly in his concern for the fatherless and the widow and the sojourner. They are maligned and forgotten in society, but not in the eyes of God. He loves them in a unique way and will one day bring justice to bear upon their situation.
 - iii. So, all of this combines to communicate to the children of Israel that their God is not like any other god who can be supposedly bought off by the

religious rituals and sacrifices as acts of worship. So, Baal doesn't require this love of submission to him in all things, he simply demands an appeasing sacrifice which bribes him into showing kindness and favor to you and your family. But the Lord your God is not like that! Don't think that you can be stubborn to God and then buy him off later with some religious ritual or sacrifice. He is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and quick to forgive, but he will not play our manipulative games of religious chess. He will not be bought off and bribed. He calls us to love Him submissively because He rules supremely.

III. Love God Exclusively – vs. 19-20

- a. And then lastly we are called in this text to love God exclusively. We are to be like Him in that we are to love the sojourner as He loved us when we were sojourning in Egypt. To bring that into New Testament vernacular, we are to love those who are yet in bondage to sin because we were once dead in our sins and in need of the life-giving saving grace of God. So, part of our love for God is our exclusive and unique expressions of His love to others as we have been loved by Him. But we especially see this exclusive love explained in verse 20. We are to fear him, serve him, hold fast to him, and swear by his name alone. Another way to translate this would be to put the word “only” at the front of each of those phrases. Only God should you fear. Only God shall you serve. Only hold fast to him. Only swear by His name. This exclusive God, this one and only God, deserves exclusive commitment and love. He is to be exclusively worshiped.
- b. We have talked about all of those other commands – to fear God, and to serve God and to swear by his name only, but we haven't come across this idea of holding fast to him. It is the word often translated as cleaving to and refusing to let go of. It is what the man in Genesis 2:24 is to do to his wife. He is to leave his father and mother and he is to cleave to his wife as God makes them into one flesh. This is what Ruth did to Naomi in Ruth 1. She refused to leave her and return to Moab. She claved to her and told her that her people would not be Ruth's people and Naomi's God would now be Ruth's God. King Hezekiah was approved by the Lord because he held fast to the Lord. This is what one of David's mighty men did in battle. He held fast to his sword while he battled the Philistines, and the picture is that his hand became shaped around the handle of the sword so that he couldn't let it go.
- c. That is the kind of loving commitment that is being called for here in Deuteronomy 10. The children of Israel are to cling to God and hold fast to God with such fierce loyal love that their souls grip Him and become shaped to Him, unable to let Him go. This is the only logical response of love to the God who has loved them so. And this same truth goes for us. If we know Christ and are in Christ by faith, then how can we not cling to this God who has done so much to make us his own? This loving God must be loved with unending and fiercely loyal love.
- d. *Because He is God alone – vs. 21-22*

- i. And Moses again roots that exclusive love for God in truth about God in verses 21-22. He tells them that God is their God alone. He is your praise and He is your God. He has proved to them that He is their God alone by doing great and awesome things for them. Not the least of which is that He has taken them from 70 persons in Egypt and He has made them into a host as numerous as the stars. In other words, there was no way to number them just by looking at them. They were everywhere! God had kept that part of his promise to Abraham when he stood outside his tent and was told by God to look up at the stars in the sky. Now Abraham's descendants were like that – an overwhelming host too great to be numbered – and this was the Lord's doing. Therefore, they were to love God exclusively because He is exclusively their God!

Conclusion: As we close let me make some application about our love for this great and gracious God. The way Moses calls them to their primary responsibility here tells us that love for God is not a simple one-faceted concept or action. It is not merely an emotion drummed up where we feel love for God. Nor is it simply an action in which we show love for God. Nor is it a hear attitude which can be expressed here or there in response to God. Rather, our love for God must take on all the contours presented in this text. We must love God comprehensively, with all that we are and have and are. And we must love God submissively with circumcised hearts which are no longer stubborn and arrogant towards Him. And we must love God exclusively by holding fast to Him by faith and refusing to let go.

And we also learn from this text that love for God is fueled by the character of God. The more we know God the more we will love God. The more you sail your ship in the ocean of God's character the more your sails will be filled with the driving winds of love for God. Therefore beloved, in the words of Isaiah the prophet, seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon Him while he is near! Let's pray.