

**DEUTERONOMY 10:12–22.** (EHV)

So now, Israel, what is the LORD your God asking of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD and his statutes that I am commanding you today for your own good. Indeed, the heavens and the heaven of heavens, the earth and everything that is on it—these belong to the LORD your God. Still, the LORD attached himself to your fathers, loved them, and he chose their descendants after them (that's you!) from all peoples, as it is today. So cut away the tough shell of your sinful nature, and do not be stubborn any longer. The LORD your God is God of Gods and Lord of Lords, the great God, the mighty one and the awesome one, who does not show favoritism and does not take a bribe. He carries out justice for the fatherless and widows. He loves the alien who dwells among you and gives him food and clothing. So you are to love the alien, because you were aliens in the land of Egypt. Fear the LORD your God, serve him, cling to him, and take your oaths in his name. He is your glory. He is your God, who performed for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen. When your fathers went down to Egypt, they numbered seventy people, but now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of the sky.

Dear friends in Jesus, there was a boy named Billy. He was a teenager that did not like to do chores. His parents loved him in every way possible. They provided food for him, picked him up from school, and worked hard to provide him a warm bed to sleep in at night. Billy, however, was stubborn and did not like it when he was told to do the dishes. This would have been a way to show love to his parents. Billy thought that he knew better than his parents.

Sometimes it is not just teenagers who act this way. Do we all sometimes act in similar ways? Especially since God does so much for us? Then we have much in common with the people Moses was addressing in our text for today. In his farewell address, Moses gave the children of Israel all kinds of commands, but at the top of the list, and Moses's encouragement for us today, is to **fear the LORD!** We can do this by holding on to his promises and by carrying out his commands.

**1. By Holding on to His Promises**

Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy, and in our text for today he had led the Israelites to the Jordan River and they were getting ready to enter the promise land. They had been wandering for almost forty years in the wilderness. In his farewell address, he told them to remember everything that had taken place up to that point. He reminded them: God chose the nation of Israel by grace, not because of their righteousness, not because of things they had said or done. No, it was by God's righteousness, because they were a stiff-necked people, a stubborn people that worshipped the golden calf. Moses threw the stone tablets on the ground, breaking them. They had sinned against the LORD! They did not deserve to be called God's people, but despite all this, God made things right with them even though they turned away from him.

God chose Israel. God is the creator of all things. That means everything on earth belongs to God. The highest of heavens belong to God. God could have chosen a different nation, but God chose the ancestors of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants.

The Israelites were stiff-necked and thought that it was by their own righteousness God chose them. Are your necks feeling a little stiff? Can you relate to the Israelites? Do you sometimes think you know better than God? Or even worse, can you remember a time when you knew right from wrong, and deliberately decided to do wrong? We are stiff-necked like Israel and turn to other things here on earth that seem nice. We think that we are great, and we rebel against God's commands. We think that we don't have to hold on to God's promises. We choose to go our own way and not God's way. Our way leads us to sin and the consequences that come with sin. If we think that way, we will be without God, separate from God. We are lost and need to be saved.

We are not saved by what we have done, but we *are* saved! How is that possible? How can that be? God chose *us*! By grace God saved us when we were lost and condemned creatures. By God's grace we are his people, chosen out of love. God loved us so much that he sent his Son to pay for our sins, even though we do not deserve it. Jesus kept all the commands of God perfectly for us. We can rejoice, knowing that God chose us by grace! Hold on to his promises because God chose you!

## **2. By Carrying Out His Commands**

God gives us so many reasons to hold on to his promises. God chose us by his grace to be his chosen people. So, fear the LORD, chosen people! We do this by faith, holding on to God's promises, which enables us and inspires us also to carry out his commands.

Moses gave the people multiple reasons to carry them out. One reason is that there is not a God like Israel's God; he is in a class by himself. He is the "God of Gods and Lord of Lords, the great God, the mighty one and the awesome one, who does not show favoritism and does not take a bribe." God is above all other gods that people worshipped. The Israelites got to see this with their own eyes as God sent plague after plague on the Egyptians. They got to see how mighty and awesome God was.

Another reason to carry out God's commands is that God stoops down to defend those who need help. He provides for those who need clothes and gives food to the hungry. He loves and cares for his people even when they do not love him back. God helps his people, which is very different compared to what other gods do. God loves the foreigner living among you. God loves his people, his chosen people.

Moses tells Israel that God wants them to obey his commands, to walk in all his ways. Love those who do not love you back. Care for those who need help. Help your neighbor keep his property. Honor those in authority. Do not harm your neighbor, but care for him. Dedicate yourselves to God completely. Make God number one in your life. God will take care of you; trust in him to provide.

Moses's words to the children of Israel continue to make an impression on children of God today. Serve God with all your heart and with all your soul. Serve him in every single thing you do in your life. Walk in obedience to him, showing through your actions that you serve God. Show love to the unlovable by being patient and caring. You can do this by listening to them and

showing kindness even when you are not being shown love, and by expecting nothing in return. Show compassion to the weak and vulnerable. Give them support and comfort when they are down. Spend time with them and tell them that you care about them and their problems. Take the time to listen to what they have to say.

Why do we do this? Because God loves us. God wants us to serve him only because he is our God, and we are his people. God wants us to fear him, to stand in awe of him. It is good to serve the LORD. God takes care of us like he took care of the Israelites. He knows what is best for us. He knows what we need in our lives and provides it for us. So serve him, because it is for our own good.

Moses speaks a lot about serving God in a general way, but in verse 19 he gets very specific. How can a believer fear God, serve God, walk in God's ways? By loving the foreigner, the outsider, the person who doesn't belong. Love those around you whether you know them really well or not at all. Jesus speaks in a similar way to Moses when he encourages his followers to "love your neighbor as yourself." This command was given to the Israelites from God in Deuteronomy. This command is timeless as God wants us to love our neighbors, foreigners, those around us no matter who it is.

What does "loving your neighbor as yourself" look like in your life? Help out your community by donating food to those who need it. Be a friend to someone who needs comfort and healing. You can help a neighbor by offering to help them with something they are working on outside the house. You can offer to comfort them in their time of distress. You can offer food and clothing to those who need it.

God calls us to fear and serve him in all aspects of life. We do this out of love because he chose us.

Dear friends in Jesus, we can be stubborn like Billy. We rebel against God's commands and think that we know better and are so special. He did so much for the Israelites and does so much for us today, even if we don't always realize it. Yet God loves us. In fact, he chose us. And now he calls us to fear him, to serve him, to dedicate our lives to him by doing good to others. My dear friends, hold on to his promises tightly and carry out his commands gladly. Amen.