

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

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That's quite all right. You can turn there. If you don't know where Deuteronomy is, that's okay too. Just open it up and start going. You'll hit Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and then you'll finally land at Deuteronomy. We're going to look at chapter 10 this morning, verses 12 through 22. We've been looking at some pretty big chunks over the last few weeks. We're going to look at a small section this morning. Deuteronomy 10, verses 12 through 22. As we've turned there, let me pray for us as we come to God's Word.

Father, we pray this morning that you would help us to attend to what your Spirit is saying to us through your Word. God, we thank you for the gift that it is to be able to gather together on Sundays and to be in your presence and to gather with your people, Lord, and to hear your Word read and proclaimed.

And God, to know that our hearts are filled and satisfied as you speak to us. So God, we ask that you would do so this morning. Teach us more about the great salvation that we have in Christ and teach us more about what it means to follow Him.

[1 : 3 8] And God, we pray all this in Christ's name. Amen. So Deuteronomy 10, verses 12 through 22. Let me read this passage for us. And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord which I am commanding you today for your good.

Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and a heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the Lord set His heart and love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples as you are this day.

Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who is not partial and takes no bribe.

He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the sojourner giving Him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

You shall fear the Lord your God, you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him, and by His name you shall swear. He is your praise. He is your God who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.

[3 : 0 3] Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven. Well, one of the things about the Bible that's always surprising to me is that it's always dismantling what we think religion is supposed to be about.

Our passage starts with Moses addressing the people of Israel and saying, and now Israel, what does the Lord require of you? And that's a pretty good question, isn't it? After all, what does the Lord require of us?

I think the constant temptation we face is to see our relationship with God as just one spoke on the wheel of our life. I've got work and family and friends and hobbies and, yeah, church.

The God stuff is just one slice of the pie. And what we call religion ends up being like the optional chrome that you can get on your new car, right?

It's not essential to the running of the machine, but it will add a little sparkle here and there and it will make you feel a little more special than the other cars that are plodding along the highway of life. So when we think about what God requires, we might fill out the rest of this passage that sounds something like this.

[4 : 20] And now what does the Lord your God require of you? But to go to church about once a week. Give to charity, especially around Christmas and in general be a nice person.

Of course, that sounds a little soft once we say it out loud, doesn't it? So we better add some more to it. After all, this is God, right? Okay, let's try it again. And now, what does the Lord your God require of you but to go to church at least once a week, especially when it's hot?

And to go to small group too and to give a full 10% of your income to charity and in general to be a nice person even when people aren't being nice in return. Now don't get me wrong, these are all wonderful things.

But is that what God requires? A couple of meetings during the week, a cut of my paycheck, and in general be a nice person. Is God just meant to be one more spoke on the wheel, one more addition to my ever-crowded eye calendar?

Or does God require something qualitatively different and more? And this is a crucial question, is it not? After all, if there is a God and if He's created each one of us in His image and He's made us to live in a certain way, just like He's made horses to run and fish to swim in a certain way, then by all means, all of us should be asking, what does God require?

[5 : 48] the very point of our being is at stake in this question after all. But notice that this passage isn't merely addressing humanity in general.

Moses is talking to Israel, to God's own people. And now Israel, Moses says. So this question of what God requires is not just for those outside the church, but even more importantly for those inside the church.

Christians, too, need to think clearly and deeply about what it is God requires. And the word now in this verse points us back to all that Moses has been telling Israel over the last five and a half chapters.

Now, Israel, that is, now in light of all that we've rehearsed about your history, about all your failures, and all God's faithfulness, about the future that God has planned for you, now, what does God require?

And for us, too, that now applies. Now that you're a Christian, whether for five months or five decades, now that you're a member of His body, the church, now that you've been welcomed into His family and into His future, what does the Lord require of you?

[7 : 11] And the brilliance of this passage is that it identifies two ways that we can actually fool ourselves into thinking that we're doing what God requires when, in fact, we couldn't be further from it.

It shows us two different ways that we think we can sufficiently give God His due when, in reality, we're doing nothing of the sort. So, simply this morning, I want to look at those two ways and then draw it to a conclusion as we go to the Lord's Supper.

So, the first way is found in verses 14 through 16, and the second in verses 17 through 19. So, as we think about what God requires, we see in this first section that God requires so much more from His people than mere external identification.

Look in particular at verse 16. Moses tells the people, circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart. Now, circumcision, you'll remember, was something God commanded to Abraham in Genesis chapter 17.

God had already promised that He would rescue and renew the world through Abraham's family. And circumcision was meant to be the sign of that binding promise of that covenant that God had made. For men in Israel, circumcision showed that you were a part of the covenant people and a recipient of this great promise of God.

[8 : 28] And if anyone wasn't born into the people of Israel, they too had to be circumcised if they wanted to participate in the religious life of the nation and do things like Passover festival and participate in temple worship.

So you see, circumcision was the external mark saying that you belonged to God's people. But the danger that Moses foresaw was that people would start to think that all God required was the outward mark.

The danger was that people would think, well, as long as you had that, you're fine, you're okay. You've done what God asked, you got circumcised, so relax, live your life, do what you want to do. You've met God's requirements. And of course, we can fall into that same way of thinking today, can't we? For some people, it's baptism. For some people, it's being member of a church.

For others, it's attending public worship like we're doing today. For some people, it's wearing a cross on their necklace. For some people, it's thanking my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when you win a Grammy.

[9 : 36] right? All of these things are ways of externally and publicly identifying with Christ. And they're all fine and good things, right?

In fact, apart from the necklace and the thank you speech, they're all things that the New Testament presents as normative for Christians. And not just normative, but vital for Christians. If you're a Christian this morning, by all means, you should get baptized.

And you should become a member of a church. And you should attend public worship regularly. However, if you treat baptism or church membership or attending a service as a box to check so that you can be good with God and then get back to your life, then, friend, you are in a dangerous, dangerous place.

Because, you see, these outer acts have no real meaning unless there's an inner spiritual reality attached to it. At the end of the day, it wasn't circumcision that put someone right with God.

And neither is it baptism or church membership or any of those other external ways that we identify with Christ. What puts someone right with God is living and personal faith in Christ.

[10 : 58] Christ. And what God really requires, as Moses tells us, is circumcision of the heart. Now, what does that mean, circumcision of the heart?

Well, looking at the rest of verse 16, at the very least, it means being no longer stubborn before God. The word stubborn here literally is stiff-necked. It's like an obstinate beast of burden that won't take a yoke and won't take the commands of its owner.

Stiff-necked. So circumcision of the heart means basically the opposite. It means being humble and pliable before God, willing to take His lead, glad to follow His directions.

But even more than that, the metaphor actually goes a little bit deeper. In the Bible, the heart, you see, is the very core of who you are. It's the thing that directs your life.

It's the wellspring of your actions. It's the wellspring of who you are. So to have your heart circumcised is to have the very thing that makes you who you are permanently altered and identified and transformed for God.

[12 : 17] It's to be cut to the heart in a transformative way. But what could possibly cut us to the heart like that? How does that interchange happen?

Well, the answer is found in verses 14 and 15, the preceding verses that lead up to this command of Moses to circumcise your heart. First, we're told a truth about God. Moses says, Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.

God, you see, owns absolutely everything this verse is telling us. Everything we can and cannot see is already His from the greatest galaxy down to the smallest particle.

The things that you and I will work our whole life to achieve combined is just a speck to what God already has. in His possession.

He owns it all. Which is to say that God has no needs. God has no lack. You and I are creatures of need and lack, aren't we?

[13 : 31] We need food or we starve. We need water or we thirst. We lack wisdom and we lack love and we lack peace. But you see, God, even before He created the world was utterly and completely full.

The triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit dwelt in eternity, giving and receiving mutual glory and love in God's self. You see, there was nothing missing.

There was no pang of longing. There was no desire for something more. God was utterly full of deep and abiding satisfaction and happiness like a spring of fresh water that never runs dry.

So when God creates, He does so not because He's lonely or because He's bored or because He's missing something, but as an overflow of the love and glory that exists within Himself, within the three persons of His very nature.

God creates to share that eternal, triune delight with all that He brings into being. Now that truth about God in verse 14 is enough to make us stand in awe of God, is it not?

[14 : 45] It's enough to make us step back and praise God for His utter and infinite perfection in and of Himself. But what truly cuts to the heart, what truly pierces our very self is verse 15.

we've been told that God owns everything and has no lack and yet, yet the Lord set His heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them.

You, above all peoples, as you are this day. Do you see what Moses is saying here, friends? The God who has absolutely everything wants you and chooses you and sets His heart in love on you. Stubborn, rebellious, wavering, doubtful, me and you. the word translated set His heart in love is actually one word in Hebrew.

It's not a very common word in the Old Testament but it's a word that really carries with it the intense desire that lovers share.

[16:13] It's a bit of a scandalous word actually. In the Bible when it's used, it's typically used for when a man sees a woman and no matter what the circumstances He wants to take her as His wife.

Do you see, friends, that the way God views His people both in the Old Testament and in the New is with a burning heart of a lover. With a kind of desire that we only experience in short and small and fleeting ways in this life.

Christian, this morning, do you realize this morning not just that God is sovereign over all but that He loves you with this kind of love.

A love that burns so intensely that He's willing to overcome any obstacle to win you. And don't you see that's exactly what He's done in Christ.

He's taken on flesh. He's stooped from heaven and become one of us. And He's born our death for us.

[17:28] And He's risen again so that we can be His forever. He loves you. Does that sound cheap in your ears?

Sometimes I think that we say it so much that we forget how astounding it is. God actually loves you. And if this God already owns everything then His love must be out of sheer and utter grace.

His love must not be dependent on my goodness or my works or what I can offer to God in return.

God doesn't choose you because He finds you suitable for His purposes.

God doesn't love you for what you can give to Him or provide to Him. He doesn't love you because He's under any compulsion or constraint or need to do so.

He loves you because He loves you. And isn't that the love that all of us really want? That someone would look at us and freely say, I want you.

[18:38] He doesn't love us because we're lovely. His love makes us lovely. And when you see that, it cuts you to the heart.

That God's love for you in Christ that isn't held back by your failures, that God's love for you in Christ isn't dependent or fluctuating with your performance, confidence, that God's love for you in Christ comes from the one who sovereignly owns it all and yet still chooses you.

You know, it's interesting that here in this passage, Moses actually commands the people to circumcise their hearts. It's an imperative. Circumcise your hearts.

But you know, later in Deuteronomy in chapter 30, Moses will tell them that when God brings them back after exile, after their long history of rebellion, it will actually be God who circumcises their hearts.

God will be the one who brings the spiritual knife and changes the core of who they are. God will be the one who makes that inner spiritual transformation a reality.

[19:58] And of course, if you're an Israelite, sitting on the plains of Moab, listening to Moses' speech, you're thinking, how in the world can I circumcise my own heart? What knife could I wield to do such inner spiritual surgery?

But finally, when we get to the New Testament over and over again, especially in Paul, we read a passage this morning, we find this same theme, that true circumcision is circumcision of the heart, and we're told that it's something that God does by His Holy Spirit within us, as a result of hearing and believing the gospel, what Christ has done for us.

That true circumcision comes when we're united to Christ, when our sins are taken away, and when we're filled with His Spirit. So friends, what does God require of you?

Christian, what does God require of you? more than mere external identification, more than just membership, more than just baptism, more than just saying you're a believer, He wants your heart. And He doesn't just want your heart, He wants to take your heart and transform it. That's what God requires, a heart that's been humbled and transformed by His sovereign love.

[21:25] And that's basically what Moses is getting at in the opening of this passage, when he says, fear God, walk in all His ways, love Him, serve Him with all your heart.

He's saying, I want the very core of who you are. So let me ask you, friends, has the gospel, has the good news of God's love for you in Christ, has it gone in, in this way?

Does something in you resonate and move when you hear this message? does it prick your heart? Or is Christianity just a matter of externals?

Just some boxes to check in the religious column of life, just one more spoke on your wheel that you try to keep spinning around a hub that at the end of the day doesn't hold.

God's love for you to keep God's love for you in Christ. The only short antidote to a mere external religious life is to remember how God set His heart and love on you in Christ.

[22 : 28] And when you see God's love for you with fresh eyes, then you will be soft and humble in His hands. That's what God requires. But we don't just face the temptation to mere external identification.

That's not the only way we can fail. That's not the only way we can fall short of what God requires. That's not the only way we can trick ourselves into think that we're actually doing what God requires.

There's a second danger that we can fall into. As we think about what God requires in verses 17 through 19, we see that God requires from His people more than mere internal piety.

After talking about circumcision of the heart, we might be led to believe, oh, well, that's what it's about. It's just about an internal feeling. It's about an internal move. It's about an emotion I might have. But in verse 19, Moses commands Israel to love the sojourner.

And that command shatters any thought that what God requires is a mere private and inward devotion. You see, Moses is warning Israel against a relationship to God that seemed to warm their hearts but concretely didn't change their lives.

[23 : 36] That didn't concretely change how they treated those who lived around them. So he says, love the sojourner. Now, a sojourner is a person who's passing through, right?

It's a temporary resident in your midst. It's a stranger who's far from home who happens to be residing alongside of you. And of course, the natural response to sojourners is often, well, suspicion and fear and exclusion.

After all, they're different, right? They're not like you. They're not from around here. And often this suspicion can grow into hatred and scapegoating and even outright oppression and violence.

But that is not the way it is meant to be with God's people. You see, God's people are to do the counter-cultural thing, not of excluding, not of fearing, but of loving the sojourner.

Have you considered that New Haven is a city full of sojourners? Think about it. Some sojourn here because they're privileged.

[24 : 48] They've come here for college or for a job and they sojourn for three to five years and then move on. On the other hand, some sojourn here in New Haven because they've hit bottom.

They're homeless and they need a place to stay to put their life back together and New Haven provides a place to do that. Or again, some people sojourn here because they've been forced to flee their home country.

Hundreds of international refugees from all around the world are settled here in New Haven every single year. So from all walks of life, New Haven is a city of sojourners.

And many of us here at Trinity fall into one of these categories or one of the hundreds of other sojourning categories that make up this place. And as a church, this is part of our calling.

This is part of what God is asking of us to be the kind of place that shows love even and especially to the sojourner.

[25 : 54] Student sojourners, homeless sojourners, refugee sojourners, each and every one. Now, of course, that's not easy, right?

They often have nothing to repay you with, these sojourners, especially those student sojourners. They face all sorts of challenges and problems, many of them chronic, many of them that don't simply go away with a little bit of help.

And then when you build friendships with them, it seems that before you know it, they're moving on, moving on to the next station of their sojourn. So you see, to love the sojourner as God requires means a total reshaping of our priorities.

Because it takes time and it takes money and it takes sacrifice. It means letting go of a lot of comfort. It means letting go of a lot of self-protection.

It means letting go of a lot of, well, a lot of things. It means investing in people who will probably move away. And if you're a sojourner yourself, as many of us are, it means investing in those who are right here around you intentionally and with commitment, even though you think you'll only be here for a few months or a few years.

[27 : 17] Even though you think you know that your time is temporary. Of course, watch out if you think your time here is temporary. God might just have other plans for you. There's no doubt that loving the sojourner is hard.

It's uncomfortable. It's inconvenient. It might even make you unpopular. But that is what God requires. And the temptation is to pull away from the concrete needs of those around us and simply be concerned with ourselves.

To think that our relationship with God is just a private thing that's meant to get me through my day and my relationships and my goals and my plans and my dreams and my priorities.

But again, our text gladly doesn't just identify this problem that we have, but it also points us to the solution.

How do we break out of our tendency to treat our relationship with God as some kind of privatized, personal, internal pietism? And how do we become people that will actually love the sojourner?

[28 : 20] The answer is twofold in these verses. First, Moses says, consider who God is and then consider who you once were. So first, who God is. Look at verses 17 and 18.

The Lord, your God, is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who's not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.

We see here that God is utterly supreme. God's power is without peer. His majesty and his might have no equal. In other words, God has no competitors.

There's no close second when it comes to God. He's not always looking over his shoulder, wondering which up-and-coming hot shot is eventually going to steal his corner office with a view when he grows old and incompetent.

And we also see here that God is utterly impartial. God doesn't play favorites. And he's not swayed by our status or our prestige or anything we think that we can hold up to make ourselves better than other people.

[29 : 27] But we also see here that God is utterly compassionate. He cares for the most vulnerable people in society. The fatherless, the widow, the sojourner.

The God who has all power and is perfectly just in his reign, stoops in love and compassion to help those who are helpless.

And if that is who our God is, then surely following him can't simply be a matter of having nice, warm, private feelings and then going about our day.

God extends his care and protection to those who are weak and defenseless. And surely, too, we should extend our care for those who are weak and defenseless.

God goes out to act on behalf of the fatherless and the widow and the sojourner. And so, too, he's calling us to go out on behalf of those who are helpless and hopeless.

[30 : 35] But you see, what moves us to love the sojourner isn't just who God is. It's much deeper than that. It's related to who we, too, once were. Did you notice that Moses makes it a point to remind Israel here that they, too, were once sojourners in the land of Egypt?

They know what it's like to be homeless and to wander and to be subject to a foreign power. And, friend, every Christian knows what it's like, too.

Because, you see, spiritually, we know what it's like to be far from home. We have lived in a far country distant from God.

And we have lived under the domain of a foreign power, the power of sin. We had lost our way. And we had lost our home.

We were vulnerable. And we were powerless. And yet, God came to find us. The God of God, the Lord of Lords, the great, the mighty, and awesome God sent His own Son to bring us home.

[31 : 50] Jesus died and rose again so that all who trust in Him can finally enter their true home with God. No matter where they live and no matter where they're from.

So, you see, friends, since we, too, were once sojourners, we can now show compassion to those who sojourn among us. We have no place to be uncompassionate or unsympathetic.

Even if you've lived in New Eve and all your life, you can spiritually relate to those who are passing through. And God is calling all of us to love others just like He has loved us because He has loved us like this.

So, these are the two ways. These are the two dangers that Moses says, watch out as you think about what God requires. These are going to be false ways that you will fall into.

When in reality, what does God require to be the very center of your existence? To be the absolute center of your life?

[33 : 03] You know, one way to sum up verses 14 through 19 is to say that the gospel goes in and then the gospel flows out. The gospel goes into our hearts and then the gospel flows out into the world.

So, is your relationship with God just inward piety or does it flow out, friends? Does it redirect your priorities? Does it propel you to love those around you, the sojourners of all types that are in our midst?

Today, let me call you to consider the ways God is calling you to love the sojourners right here.

Who has God placed in your path? Who seems to you to just be passing through?

Who seems to you someone who would be kind of difficult to show practical love and care for? And ask yourself, what practical ways can you start showing them love and care?

Because you too know what it's like to be passing through, to be a sojourner, to be wandering, to be homeless. You see, doing so is only natural for those who have been sojourners ourselves and those who know the love of our great and mighty and awesome God.

[34 : 11] So to conclude, let me just say, imagine what our church would be like if this twin reality that Moses describes here were more and more the reality among us.

On the one hand, what if all of our relationships with God was something that grabbed our hearts, not something that just shaped the externals, but something that went in and more and more transformed us from the inside out?

And on the other hand, what if our relationship with God was something that sent us out in love, that more and more propelled us to love these sojourners of all kinds that live here in New Haven?

Can you see what that would be like? That would be the community that people are longing for, don't you think? A community of authenticity, a community of love, a community where God is real.

Friends, in a moment we're going to partake in the Lord's Supper. And the Lord's Supper is a time for us Christians to remember and to take hold of all these things that we've been talking about once again.

[35 : 25] It's to remember that God has come in Christ to love us with a burning desire and to bring us back from our wandering. The Lord's Supper is an act of renewal.

It's a time to confess that our hearts have often been stubborn and that our lives have often been insensitive and judgmental towards the sojourner. But at the Lord's table, it's also a time to remember and to receive God's grace afresh.

You see, when we partake of the bread and the cup, we're proclaiming what Jesus has done for us. And in that proclamation, the Spirit does His work to draw us nearer to Christ, to soften our hearts and to kindle our love for those around us.

So let's pray together. And let's ask God that He would do just that as we gather around His table. Let's pray. Amen. Father, thank You for this passage that is on the one hand so challenging, but at the same time so illuminating and so rich with the reality of who You are.

God, we don't want to be a people that are just merely going through external rights. And we don't want to be a people who are merely just privatizing the glory of who You are and the glory of the Gospel.

[36 : 53] God, we want to be a people who are inwardly changed and outwardly sent. And Father, we know that it's only Your grace that can do this.

So we thank You for the table. We thank You for the Lord's Supper where You've told us to gather time and time again to remember Your grace shown for us in the death of Your Son.

The cross that wipes away our sin and opens up the gate so that Your Spirit might dwell within us and so that we might dwell secure in Your acceptance.

God, as we move to the table, would You meet with us and speak through these signs? In Christ's name, Amen. Well, as we come to the table, let me read Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 11.

Paul says, For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night He was betrayed took bread. And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you.

[38 : 02] Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also, He took the cup after supper saying, This cup is a new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Friends, the Lord's Supper is for the fatherless and for the widow and for the sojourner.

It's for those who know they need to be rescued. It's for those who have admitted that they're sinners. And it's for those who've turned and trusted in Christ to forgive their sins and to rescue them.

You know, Christ promised to be present with us when we gather in His name. And He gave us this act of communion as we just read and said, When you do it, remember me. Remember that my body was broken for you just like this bread has been broken and served to you.

And He says, Remember that my blood was shed for you just like this cup was poured out. And He says, When you eat it and when you drink it, remember and know that my death has atoned for you and that your penalty is taken away and that you are forgiven and you are free.

[39 : 21] So we come to the table to be renewed. And spiritual renewal always involves honest introspection, doesn't it? So if you're a Christian here this morning, if you've placed your trust in Christ, let me encourage you that during this time you search your heart and you confess your sins and you use this time to be honest with God and then receive this bread and receive this cup with joy, knowing that your sins are completely forgiven.

If you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, if you haven't crossed the line in your heart to place your trust in Christ, we'd ask that you wouldn't take the bread and the cup as it comes around. Just pass it by to the next person. It's quite all right. But instead of taking the bread and taking the cup, let me encourage you to use this time to do some spiritual searching. As we partake these symbols that point us to Christ, let me encourage you to come to terms with Christ himself and to consider what it would mean for you to take him, to take him as your Lord, to take him as your Savior.

Let me ask those who are helping to serve this morning to come up.