



God's Love and our Obedience (Deuteronomy 10:12-22)

Caleb Collins

June 11, 2023

KingsWay Community Church

"Deuteronomy 10:12–22 is unquestionably one of the richest texts in the Hebrew Bible, exalted and poetic in its language, comprehensive and challenging in its message. It purposely tries to "boil down" the whole theological and ethical content of the book into memorable phraseology, packed and pregnant, rich and resonant of all the surrounding preaching. Indeed, there are not many dimensions of "OT theology," that are not directly expressed or indirectly echoed in this mini-symphony of faith and life." – Christopher Wright

Intro to the Passage

The passage before us contains the bare essence of the covenantal demands on God's people. We see that the Shema is clearly alluded to in this passage and the heart of our obedience is addressed and summarized.

Not only does this passage plainly lay out in both large and general terms and specific terms how we are to obey the Lord that we are in covenant with, this passage clearly gives us the grounding and the reasoning and foundation for why we obey the Lord.

There are two large categories that Moses is addressing this morning for us: the unmerited choice of God to love a people out of all peoples of the earth, and **secondly**, of our active participation in being set apart from the world.

Our unmerited election involves nothing that we bring to the table. There is no other reason that we were chosen than by God's good grace and pleasure. And yet we see in this passage on the other side that we are called to holiness, to being set apart, to obedience and that this worship is our *active* participation with God.

Christian spirituality is not something passive; its all of grace through faith, but it is not passive. Our faith is actively labored in by grace through faith by the Holy Spirit given to us because of the sacrificial, substitutionary work of Jesus Christ.

So as we dive into this passage, I want you to keep those two ideas in mind: God loves you and chose you, dear Christian, not because of anything you have ever done or will ever do. And Christian, God has demands for your life that you would love him through obedience and the exclusive privileged trust in him for all of life, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, you forsake all other spiritual mistresses for the Lord.

The main point for today's sermon is this:

God's people pursue holiness because of God's faithfulness and unmerited affection for his people

Logic of the Passage

As I said, active participation and holiness and God's unsolicited love for people are the two main themes we see in this passage. The logic of the passage before us is that Moses starts off with a question and in a rather circular fashion, Circling the same idea from different angles, he makes his point in the center of this passage.

Moses answers this question several times and in several ways and he gives what seems to be the same answer with the same reasoning several times but he gives a different angle every turn he makes.

Outline of the Passage

And so today's outline will look like this:

1. Respond to God's grace with obedience
2. Cherish God and his unmerited choice of you
3. Actively participate with God in your pursuit of holiness

1. Respond to God's Grace with Obedience

Let's start with the first two verses of this passage. The two verses that seem to be echoing the Shema that we studied just a couple weeks ago.

Look with me at the first two words of this passage "and now." this glorious passage that we're studying is following a story that was just told. What Josh Jr. preached last week was the story in reference by these two words.

Chapter 9 was the story of the golden calf episode and of how Israel was completely unfaithful to God as Moses was on the mountain receiving revelation from God and writing it on two tablets of stone. Moses comes down with these two tablets and in the face of this idolatry he broke the tablets. When Moses broke these tablets, it was not that the covenant was voided. That it was done away with. No, the covenant was violated. Just how Moses broke the tablets, God's law was broken by Israel.

You must remember the covenant with Abraham. In Genesis 15 God makes a covenant with Abraham by sacrificing animals and taking the pieces of those animals and walking in between them. Signifying that if you break the covenant just like these dead animals may that also be my end. But what makes the covenant with Abraham so unique and grace-filled, was that it was not Abraham *and* God that walked through the pieces of the animal, but God alone walks through it. So that it is only God that is held accountable for keeping that covenant.

There was no period of time in which God rejected his people. There is no time in redemptive history where he forsook his people.

So in Deuteronomy Chapter 9, when Moses breaks the 10 commandments, he is giving a real painful physical illustration of what was happening before him spiritually in the hearts of the people of Israel. That's what Chapter 9 is about:

The people sin, Moses breaks the tablets, Aaron is nearly destroyed by God for making that golden calf, and God in his judgment tells Moses that he is willing to start over with him to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant. Chapter 9 paints a grim picture, but then chapter 10 we see the exact opposite: we see restoration in what happened in chapter nine. We see that a new pair of tablets is made and furthermore the ark of the covenant is made, we see that rather than Aaron being destroyed, he dies of natural causes and that his son takes up his mantle, his son takes his place. Furthermore, the Levites are instituted as priests and thus symbolizing that there are representatives and mediators between sinful man and holy God.

Chapter 9 paints a picture of our sinfulness, but chapter 10 shows the redemptive grace of God and of his electing special, covenant love for his people. Where sin increased, grace abounded.

It makes me think of Romans 5 and 6, where Paul says that where sin had abounded the sacrifice and the gift of grace found in Jesus Christ abounds all the more. So, the very next verse, starting with Romans 6:1 asks the question **shall we sin that grace may abound?**

If God's grace is greater than our sin, should we continue sinning so that we can continue reaping in more grace? If God chose me and Christ covers all sins, does it matter how I live? Doesn't God get more glory if I sin more because it just shows the depths of God's grace?

And here we are in Deuteronomy 10:22, "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you?" Generation 2, your parents sinned and God was gracious and upheld the covenant unilaterally. Should you follow in their footsteps and sin so that grace may abound to you?

We see that Moses calls God's people in light of the abundant grace and mercy and his electing love *to holiness*. Grace is not to be abused, it is to empower you, dear Christian, for a life fully devoted to the glory of God through being a new creation by the blood of Jesus.

We receive an abundance of grace in the cross of Jesus Christ, and that grace is given to you so that you might be in awe of your need before an awesome, beautiful, gracious and loving God. And that awe-struck love that we have for God *shows itself in a life of holiness*.

How often do we justify our sin by saying Christ paid it all, God is the faithful one in this relationship, so it really does not matter one bit if I sin or if I obey. Once saved, always saved.



Deuteronomy 10:12-14 paints a picture that God's election is confirmed and assures God's people *through perseverance, the pursuit of holiness.*

The nature of God's grace is that it is deeper than any sin that you could commit, but that it is also ethically compelling. Rather than seeing the abundance of God's grace as license, a biblical stance of God's grace empowers us for the task of setting ourselves apart from the world. When you are confronted by brothers and sisters in this church multiple times and they show you with scripture and they fight for the well-being of your soul and you say I'm in process just give it time, is that license or the pursuit of holiness?

Daniel Block in his commentary on Deuteronomy speaks to the empowering nature of grace in these first two verses when he writes,

“The list consists of responses that involve fundamental dispositions (fear, love) and active expressions (walk, serve, keep). Attitude and action are interrelated. Fear is primary and love (covenant commitment) is at the core. Without these, the actions are legalistic efforts to gain the favor of God. Without the actions, fear and love are useless and dead.” – Block

Grace as license to do whatever you want, because Jesus died for your sins, is a grievous misreading and misunderstanding of the gospel. But cold obedience without a fear and love of God is deadly legalism. Lord, keep us from both of these faults.

True Christian worship is an awareness of our need, of God's grace in Christ, and love for God through obedience. **We are not saved by good works, but we are saved to good works.**

What Moses describes in v12-14 is a life that is obsessed with God and exclusively set apart for God. But I want you to note one last thing before we move forward is the last phrase that Moses uses in relation to why we are to obey God: because it is for our good. When we obey God, and live under his rule and reign, when we're set apart from the world and we delight in the things that are heavenly versus worldly, when we stop loving ourselves and we love God and others we are functioning as we were created to function. Being set apart, to be holy, is like moving from a diet of only fast food to a perfectly devised diet of healthy nutrition that includes a lot of red meat and the like.

The law is good for several reasons: it represents God's character, what he prioritizes, what he's like, the law humbles us because it shows that we actually aren't that great, it teaches us that we need a savior, it teaches us about the gospel because it shows the lengths in which Christ went to obey God, it shows the kind of scrutiny and suffering and standard that Christ lived to and lived under in order to save us. Christ didn't come to abolish the law; he came to fulfill it. The law of God is a good thing. For Christians, we relate to the Old Testament laws differently because they are fulfilled in Christ, but we do not disdain the law, we respect it, we revere it, because there are great things, though different things, that we learn from it, having now seen the full revelation of God's redemptive plan in Jesus Christ.

Matthew Henry and his famous commentary on the whole Bible says this about the goodness of the law regarding this text,

“Having given up ourselves to his service, we must make his revealed will our rule in everything, perform all he prescribes, forbear all [that he] forbids, firmly believing that all the statutes he commands us are *for our good*. Besides the reward of obedience, which will be our unspeakable gain, there are true honour and pleasure in obedience. It is really for our present good to be meek and humble, chaste and sober, just and charitable, patient and contented; these make us easy, and safe, and pleasant, and truly great.” – Matthew Henry

How can we apply this text today?

- Delight in God's rule over our lives and light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- God's grace and mercy move us to submission, not anarchy.
- Grace isn't license nor is it legalism.
- Grace empowers us to worship for our good to the glory of God and for the sake of our neighbor.

But obedience isn't the endgame, it's the response to a prize won. We obey because we have God in Christ. We run to holiness because we have been given eternal life in place of the sin that causes us to stand condemned before God. We respond to God's grace with obedience because he is worthy of that obedience, and because of his unmerited love for us.

2. Cherish God and his Unmerited Choice of You

This text has some of the richest statements in the book of Deuteronomy regarding the glorious supremacy and grandeur of God. If you are looking for more text to memorize in your life, to store in your heart, look no further than v14-19.

Look with me at v.14:

“Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.”

Our God is not competing for space, he did not just create order, he owns it, all of everything belongs to our God. There is no one higher, he isn't competing equally with the devil or other spiritual powers, he has no competition. He is the Lord and he owns it all.

Moses continues this thought in v.17-18:



“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. ¹⁸ He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.”

Our God is supreme not only when compared to other powers that could potentially compete with him, regarding his dominion, and **there's nothing that could persuade him of something better.** He is supreme in every facet. There is no one more powerful, there is no one more just, no one more faithful to keep his promises than our God. This is our God.

No golden calf, no pursuit of power and money, no mistress, no material item, or college degree can do what our God does.

When we are beholden to this reality, the fears of this world grow strangely dim, sin becomes less appealing, the gospel becomes all satisfying.

But this is the start of the good news within this passage. This passage is cram packed with the grace of God for you, dear Christian, this morning. For the dear member in this Church who is suffering I want you to be encouraged by the descriptions and the character and the actions and the promises fulfilled by God of this text. Because the God of this text is your God. Having turned from your sins and placed faith in Christ you have been transferred from a world where you were an enemy of God to now being an adopted child of God through the Holy Spirit because of the mediating work of Jesus Christ brought about through the Father's unmerited election of you.

Do you feel weak and feeble this morning? Do you sense that you lack control over the problems and fears of your life? Who is the great, the mighty, and the powerful? Who perfectly executes justice? Who owns heaven and the heaven of heavens? Who out of all people in the world, as you are this day, chose you? Our God.

I love what Moses starts verse 14 with. He tells the people, “behold.” That word has been a comfort to me this week. Are you low needing to be lifted high, “behold.” Are you discouraged by your sin this morning? Behold, cherish the God of your salvation.

But not only do we behold his supremacy, and his beauty, we behold his special eye for us. We cherish the secret recipe of Israel and Yahweh: their election. Chapter 9 and the golden calf episode and the restorative grace of God in chapter 10 make no sense apart from the sovereign unmerited election of Israel. Apart from God's good will and pleasure to choose Israel the story of their sinfulness and of God's faithfulness make no sense.

What I love about what we heard last week and what we see in the text we are studying this morning, election has nothing to do with some foreknowledge of faith placed in Jesus Christ, it's not some kind of foreknowledge of well I know that so and so will be a good person, so they're



good enough for my love. Election is unmerited. God loves us because of nothing that we bring to the table. It's a gift of God. True grace: getting what we do not deserve.

Look with me at verse 15. Moses just told us that God owns everything in heaven and everything on earth. There's no want, there's no restraint, there's no period to the sentence for God, but notice how Moses starts v. 15: "Yet."

When Moses says yet, it is a statement that stands against or contrary to the statement he just said.

"¹⁵ 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."

Why is God gracious to you dear Christian? Because he loves you. Notice the progression of this verse.

If you like circling your Bible, circle that last phrase. As you are this day. This people that had just made a golden calf and violated the covenant, that people God chose to love. He didn't choose you for a job position, he chose you for relationship. He delights in you.

Whenever we talk about election in the Bible it's not used as a sharp sword of apologetics and of arrogance and of cutting down members or other denominational viewpoints and doctrinal positions and ivory tower discussions at denominational schools. Election is spoken in the Bible often and regularly with the pastoral affection for comforting your soul.

God choosing us because of his good pleasure grants us assurance and a safe place to fall, and a love that causes worship and empowers us to go and to set apart every corner of our lives to this God.

As you are this day. Are you aware of your need this morning? Do you feel the frailty of your body? Do you see the rope of your life fraying and of your control slipping away? Do you feel small? Do you feel like the oxygen has been sucked out of the room? Vitality in your affections for the Lord, have they dwindled? Has your affection for Christ become tarnished and it's not as bright as in seasons past?

Look to your God and be comforted in his unmerited election of love of you.

Because of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the sins that you repented of and the life that you entrusted to your gracious king, are now seen through the lens of Jesus Christ. This the gospel we always remind ourselves of and never move past. There is now therefore no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. Christ took our ruin, he took our sin, and he traded that sin for his righteousness, not because of your merit or because of your charisma, your gifting, your ability to be awesome and do anything, he did that because he elected you. To put

it more warmly, he did it because he loved you and he's not backing out of that commitment of love to you. That's what election is.

The last verse of this passage speaks of God's power displayed in leading 70 people into Egypt and then coming out with a people as numerous as the stars of heaven...does that sound familiar?

God made a unilateral promise to Abraham to do three things, one of which was to make a people as numerous as the stars of heaven. This text testifies that God saved for himself a people, that God is faithful to his word. Why is the supremacy and the grandeur of God and of his electing love so important? Because anything that God promises to do will be done.

That's the hope for you discouraged Christian. God will bring justice to the situations that you are in, he is faithfully with you because he has said in his word that he is. You don't live by feelings, we listen to the words of God. It doesn't matter what the storm feels like. It doesn't matter what your optic is of your trial, our supreme and all-satisfying God who has promised to never back out of his relationship with you has said that he will never forsake you nor leave you because of Jesus Christ. (Let us never think it's cool or trendy or raw or honest or real life to doubt or question or speak against what our God has promised to do.)

The grounding for our obedience in temptation, or in our suffering, or in our persecution, is the grace of God, specifically his power and his election of you. We obey because there is no one and no thing more worthy of our trust. No one has the power that our God has, no one has the ability to fulfill their promises like our God, no one can save us from our sins but God. The only place where goodness, true goodness, can be found is in the display of God's special love for his people in the cross of Christ.

This is why Moses says in verse 21, he is your praise. God is the object of our praise because it is all because of him, that we stand in good grace today. We have been saved from ruin to life.

Regardless of the week, or months or years you've had, you, dear Christian, are better off than you deserve because of Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And it is because of this grace provided by this awesome God that brings us from a passive receiving of God's special eye for us, to an active participation with God in our pursuit of holiness.

3. Actively Participate with God in your Pursuit of Holiness

The central imperative of this passage is v.16: "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn."



Moses has, with great pastoral clarity, shown us that our election has nothing to do with us, and in this verse, he shows us that the Christian life very much includes our active participation with God in the removal of worldliness and the putting on of Christ-likeness.

Legalism is to say we work to be saved, Biblical Christianity is to say we have been saved through no merit of our own, so let us now live out the good works by faith God has prepared for us.

And now Kingsway, what does the Lord require of you: set yourself apart from the world and devote yourself fully to God. Be holy, which just means to be set apart for a particular purpose and task.

Circumcision was given as the sign of the Abrahamic covenant. It made Israel distinct from the nations and was to remind Israel that their covenant commitment was to be generational. And what Moses does is that he gets to the root of the matter, to truly be set apart to God is not to have some physical alteration to your body, but to your soul.

Congratulations for going to church, congratulations for not cussing, congratulations for not watching Game of Thrones, congratulations on your baptism, Congratulations for taking the Lord's supper. Where is your heart?

God has always in the Old and in New Testament declared in the clearest of terms that external obedience, but internal idolatry is nothing short of the rebellion that kicked Adam and Eve out of the garden.

This verse also is echoed in Jeremiah when he foretells of a new covenant where the law of God will be written on the hearts of man. God's redemptive plan has always been to restore a people to himself.

And when Christ came, and he died in your place, the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to indwell those who have repented of their sins and turned in faith to Jesus Christ, who have bent the knee of their hearts to God.

The truth of the matter is that the law was calling Israel to do something they could not do because it required God to do it. But the good news of the gospel, is that we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, our hearts can be circumcised and set apart because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Our old dead stone hearts were replaced with hearts of flesh, we have become new creations, we have a living conscience, we have God dwelling in our hearts.

And because of this grace, we can obey. It's not legalism, it's biblical holiness. Because grace goes before us, surrounds us, was behind us, and we don't work to gain merit or salvation because salvation was an unmerited election by God. Our pursuit of holiness is the proper response to grace.

In view of all the mercies of God in your life, his testimony after testimony to faithfulness to redeem you, and to restore you, and to comfort you, and to guide you, how then should we live?

Have you set yourself fully apart and not been stubborn towards your job, or your career? Yet, your arm has to be yanked in order to be with God's people? You have no problem putting forth discipline to finish a report, but to jump into a quiet time, there's grace for that. You've had a slew of really hard weeks; do you value the Sunday gathering of believers as the Lord your God does? Do you believe that your life is to be set apart for his worship? When family is in town for the weekend, do you take that as license not to attend church on Sunday? May it be easy to bend our necks to the things of God.

Look with me at how this setting apart of our life manifests itself in this text: We love the sojourner, we love to love people despite their merit or position, because God loved us despite our merit and position, and he executed justice on the cross by sending his Son to die, and giving you something you did not deserve. This isn't a statement about reversing power structures. It is obedience that provides a living illustration of your relationship with God. That's why we love our neighbor, that's why we love the fatherless and the widow because it is just a retelling of the greatest story and testimony of God in your life, because you were a sojourner, enslaved until God looked upon you with his special eye. We have a special eye for our neighbor because out of all people, God has a special eye for you.

Our obedience mirrors the great God that serves us. It is his grace and power that captivates us, it is his character that we imitate, and to the world who does not know Christ, God's power in the cross is our testimony.

V.20-22 functions as a conclusion and a recapping of verses 12 and 13. But I want to highlight one thing, in particular, as we close.

Moses urges Israel to hold fast, to persevere, to fight the good fight of faith. And Moses gives his reasoning for it by retelling the end of the book of Genesis in the story of Joseph and how his family was saved to Egypt, and how God was faithful to Abraham to make a people as numerous as the stars of heaven, thus fulfilling his promise.

I want to encourage those who are in a place where they feel tempted to give up and your head feels too heavy to behold the God of this text. God is planting oak trees in your life, if you are a believer. But in order to plant oak trees he has to first start with acorns and it takes time but just because we don't see it and especially because we don't feel it, don't lose heart, persevere in the faith for God loves you. Hold fast to the Lord God who delights in you, because he loved you so that he sent his Son to die so that you might be his special and cherished possession. Fragile and bare we come and his strong mighty right arm holds us and will bring perfect justice.



Persevere in the good works God has prepared for you. Remember,

You pursue holiness because of God's faithfulness and His unmerited affection for you.

Hear these words from Matthew Henry and be encouraged to hold fast to your savior:

“Cleave to him as one we love and delight in, trust and confide in, and from whom we have great expectations.” – Matthew Henry