

What Does God Require Of You?

Deuteronomy 10:12–22

by Felton Spraggins

“And 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, and to keep the Lord’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? . . .” (10:12–22)

Pleasing God is the most important goal in life. In order to be pleasing to Him, let us ask, “What does God require?” In 10:12–22, Moses answered this question by giving God’s requirements to Israel.

MEET YOUR SPIRITUAL OBLIGATIONS

Upon the basis of God’s mercy and grace in pardoning Israel’s past stubbornness, Moses summarized God’s total requirements:

And 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, and to keep the Lord’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? (10:12, 13).

The word “require” signifies to ask or request. God’s request involves five directives: fear Him, walk in all His ways, love Him, serve Him with one’s whole being, and keep His commandments and statutes. The verbs “fear,” “walk,” “love,” “serve,” and “keep” recur many times in Deuteronomy (6:13; 10:12, 20; 11:22; 13:4; etc.). These five verbs represent interrelated attitudes essential for a proper relationship with God.

First, we are to “fear the Lord.” What does it mean to fear God? It does not mean to feel like crawling away and hiding in a corner because you are uncomfortable in His presence. It does mean to have the highest respect for God. We will do everything possible to please Him and avoid anything that will displease Him. We will take Him into account whenever we make decisions.

Reverence and respect is due the Lord on the basis of what He is and what He has done. He is the foundation for confidence and joy. This fear awakens love and prompts one to active service. Reverential fear is the basic attitude toward God, the attitude of taking Him so seriously that it will lead to all the other actions mentioned in these verses.

Second, we are to “walk in all His ways.” A constant refrain of Scriptures calls the believer to walk in God’s ways. The word “walk” in the Old Testament almost always refers to walking either in the way of God or in the way of wicked men. Though God has set a pattern for us, we can move according to that standard or in the direction of wicked people. Christ pleaded for us to “enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14). God’s Son says, “This is the way; walk in it.”

Notice the word “all” in “walk in all His ways.” Some Christians try to mix Christianity and modern paganism of one kind or another. They do part of what they know God requires of them, but they also choose to walk in wickedness

like unbelievers. This displeases God. You cannot serve God and idols.

Third, we are to “love Him.” Notice how personal each of these demands is. The call is not to go through the motions of being religious; it is to fear the Lord, walk in His way, and love Him. Our relationship with God must involve our mind, soul, and strength.

The Hebrew word for “love” here is an attitude that is strengthened, not weakened, by the experiences of life. Only by walking with the proper respect for God can our love grow. This attitude expresses itself in action and leads to love of the proper behavior.

Basic to all obedience is reverence for and love of God (6:4–19). Those in whom these attitudes are found will walk in God’s ways, serving Him and keeping His laws.

Fourth, we are to “serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). “Mammon” refers to money and the things it can buy. Centuries before, Joshua had said, “. . . choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). It is all or none; there can be no half-hearted service to a great God.

Fifth, we are to “keep the Lord’s commandments and His statutes.” The same Hebrew word translated “keep” was used when Adam was called by God to keep the Garden of Eden. The same word is used concerning the cherub who stood guard at the entrance of the garden to keep Adam from returning after he sinned. To keep was to guard. We are to be on guard so His commandments are not broken. The word is used constantly in the Old Testament; God’s people were to keep the Sabbath, keep the commandments, keep the covenant, keep the ways of God.

Notice the results: “for your good” (10:13). Unbelievers resent God’s commandments. Believers recognize that God gives them for beneficial reasons.

PURIFY YOUR HEARTS

To challenge Israel to fulfill God’s require-

ment, Moses wisely pointed to His greatness and love:

Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. 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. Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more (10:14–16).

Moses began with the fact that the heavens and the earth and all that is within belong to Jehovah. God is the supreme ruler of heaven and earth. Yet His love for Israel is obvious: He “set His affection to love them” and “chose their descendants.”

The only appropriate response for Israel was to “circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more” (10:16). Israel was to purify the heart and life. Circumcision symbolized purity and consecration to God. The heart was to be renewed by crucifying the affections and lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:24).

A person with an “uncircumcised” heart is closed to the acceptance of God. His ear is closed to God’s Word (Jeremiah 6:10). His lips cannot open freely to speak (Exodus 6:12, 30).

If one’s heart is “circumcised,” then that which hinders is cut away. The heart becomes open and free from obstruction. The result is submission to God’s will and the end of stubbornness.

Christians have been circumcised with a circumcision made without hands. Paul wrote:

. . . in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions (Colossians 2:11–13).

LOVE OUR FELLOW MAN

While God is “the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe,” He is sympathetic toward the weak and undefended.

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. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt (10:17-19).

Before God's bar of justice, all men stand equal. With Him there will be no miscarriage of justice through bribery. He will become a shield around the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger.

Israel was to follow the example of God and "love the stranger" for a twofold reason: The love of God extended beyond Israel to include strangers, and they were to remember that in Egypt they, too, were strangers who lacked respect and love. Love for the stranger or the neighbor is basic to all other obligations in this life (Leviticus 19:9-18).

The vertical love relationship to God is a prerequisite for the horizontal involvement to man. Since God is love, He loves the strangers, the widows, and the orphans. Man, if he loves God, is under obligation to love his fellow man.

Since God embodies justice and righteousness, man must be concerned about just treatment of his neighbors. As God's children, we must defend the weak, be kind to strangers, impartial and compassionate to all.

CONCLUSION

The remarkable accumulation of titles for God in verse 17 emphasizes the uniqueness, supremacy, and sovereignty of Jehovah over every other power in the universe. Once this fact is accepted, polytheism is ruled out. If reason ruled with the Israelites, then Jehovah had to be the object of their praise, as the One who carried out mighty deeds of deliverance.

You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen. 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 (10:20-22).

His spiritual blessings are ours because of what Christ did for us. Sin is pardoned and the sinner accepted as righteous. The enmity between God and man is concluded.

Christ is our joy! Christ is our praise! God, through Christ, has done for us what we could not do for ourselves! We are not only saved from His wrath; we find joy knowing that Christ has drawn mankind back to Him. Let us ever fear and serve Him.