

*Let us pray: Heavenly Father, far too often we have not obeyed Your laws and Your commands; too quickly we turn against the stranger and do not love him; too readily we follow our sinful flesh and not our spirit, forgive us Lord. For the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who lived and died for us, remove our stain and our guilt and accept us as Your dear children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy the tenth chapter beginning at the twelfth verse:

***"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***

***and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,<sup>13</sup> "and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?<sup>14</sup> "Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it.<sup>15</sup> "The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.<sup>16</sup> "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.<sup>17</sup> "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.<sup>18</sup> "He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.<sup>19</sup> "Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.<sup>20</sup> "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and***

***take oaths in His name. <sup>21</sup> "He is your praise, and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen.***

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

While our text does not contain the two great commandments that Jesus expounded on in the Gospel word for word, the ideas and notions are indeed carried in our text. We are to fear, walk in the ways, and serve God with all our heart and with all of our soul; we are to keep His commandments and His statutes; and we are to love the strangers because we too were once strangers.

The command of God does not change and, in a picturesque way, the scenarios do not change either. In Deuteronomy, Moses is preparing to die and gives some final commands to the people of Israel before they cross over the Jordan to inherit God's Promised Land. In our own midst, we hear from pastors and teachers, who in their own time and right will die, and they are preaching and teaching us while we are on this side of the Jordan just waiting to cross over into God's Promised Land, heaven. And it is with this in mind that we must remember: ***God is our God.***

What is the first commandment? You shall have no other gods. What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

This is how the law starts for us and this is the ultimate point that we break every time that we sin. When we sin, we are making

other things, other people, something else into God. When I look at those dirty pictures, God is not my God, pornography is. When I continue to spread rumors and speak falsely against another person, God is not my God, lying and deceit are. When I put my job, my family, or my hobbies first, God is not my God, they are.

You shall have no other gods... and we cannot even follow this one simple command. Put nothing else before God but we can't do that. I have to look at those pictures, I like what I see... though God is watching over me and does not like them. I have to spread rumors and besmirch another's name because it makes me look like a better person... but God does not besmirch your name nor does He find it "okay" that you would do that to your fellow man. I have to put family, job, or hobby first they are what get me through this life... but it is God who has given them to you for you

to have and enjoy, but most importantly, for you to praise and thank God for.

Far too often we put any and everything in the way of God. We come into His house and all we can think about is getting home to watch the game or to go hunting or to play golf or to watch television. We come up to His altar to receive the very body and blood of Christ and all we can think about is how we look from behind, is there a hair out of place, is the wine better this week, is the bread stale? We receive the forgiveness of sins that only God can offer to us and we think, "I'm not that bad," "Maybe Tom and Jane should be here, they really need forgiveness," "Are we past this part yet, I want to sing again."

And so we neglect God. We turn our backs on God. We spit in His face because He is worth less to us... worth less than my family, worth less than my television, worth

less than my house; God is worth less than everything else, thus God is not my God.

In fact, we came in this morning and we sang a familiar song... do you remember the second verse? ***“I am your only God and Lord / No other gods shall be adored / But you shall fully trust in Me / with all your heart, loving Me / Have mercy Lord.”*** Who did you think about when you sang that? Was your mind on the Triune God or were you wandering? Did we have the love and peace of God within us or was the baby cooing just too important to miss? Yes, even in His own house God is ignored and abandoned... what a sad lot we are.

Now imagine if God treated us as we treat Him. Just imagine if God were to abandon us for every time that we have abandoned Him. How secure would you feel? How loved would you feel? How worried and

alone should you feel... if God acted like us?

Yet, thanks be to God that He does not act like us. Thanks be to God that He is love, He is compassion, He is justice, and He is peace. Thanks be to God that He does not abandon us but rather He is always there for us and with us.

And in His love He sent His One and Only Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to be our Savior. Jesus did not come to be the Savior because we are so perfect and holy; no, it is for the complete opposite reason that Jesus Christ came into this world. It is for your sin that Jesus Christ came into this world. Jesus came into this world to live the perfect life, in perfect obedience to God, always loving the Father, fulfilling every law, command, and statute of the Father; He came to be the perfect child and for His perfection He was killed.

Yes, in being God and in living the perfect life, Jesus Christ came into this world to die for you also. He came to die for all the times that God is placed second, third, fourth, and later in your life; He came to die for all the times that you do not heed God's commands and His statutes; Jesus came to be your Savior from sin... and thank God that He did.

Without Jesus' coming into this world we would have been born in sin, lived in sin, and died in sin. Yet, because of Christ... well because of our first parents we are still born in sin, but through faith in Him we can live as both saint and sinner, and through faith in Jesus Christ we will die and yet we will live.

Yes, through faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and in all that He has done for us, we now know that our sins are forgiven. They are forgiven because Christ has borne our

burden and He has suffered our punishment as He was hanging on the cross and died. But Jesus rose from the dead. He rose to proclaim that death could not hold Him down; He rose to proclaim that through faith we too will be in heaven; He rose to show His faithful that He has redeemed them and He has assured them a spot in His heavenly home.

As Moses tells us, ***“Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it. <sup>15</sup> “The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. <sup>16</sup> “Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.”*** Everything is God's... but most importantly, God has chosen us to be His children. God has chosen His faithful, which includes me and it includes you, God has chosen us to be His

children who will be with Him for all eternity. God has given us our faith through the waters of baptism and through His word. God strengthens that faith through His word and through the Lord's Supper. And God calls us into His heavenly home because of the faith that He has given to us and that He continues to strengthen.

And now He asks us to ***“circumcise the foreskin of our heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.”*** We are to conform our hearts and our lives to Him and to His word. We are to realize that this life is not all about us, it is about Him, it is about Jesus Christ who came to live, die, and rise again for us. We are to admit that we are sinners, and thus soften our necks as we bow them before God, and confess that we need His help and guidance.

But this does not earn us heaven. No, humbleness and gentleness do not earn

heaven; only Christ has earned heaven for us. And now through faith we live to and for Him. We recognize who our true God is and we give Him the full attention and praise that He deserves... and we give it to no one else.

Dear friends in Christ, hear again the final two verses of our hymn:

***“To us God gave these Ten Commands / that you might learn, O child of man / Your sinfulness and also know / To live for God, as you go / Have mercy Lord!”***

***“Lord Jesus Christ, now help us all / Our Mediator from the Fall / Our works are all so full of sin / But You for us heav'n did win / Have mercy Lord!”***

The Law and the Gospel. Commands and Promises. God has commanded us to keep all of His commands... and we haven't

ventured from number one. Yet, God promises us that we will be in His Promised Land through faith in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God that He has promised us eternity with Him through faith in His Son. Thanks be to God for sending His Son to live, die, and rise again for my justification. And thanks be to God that God is my God!

Dear friends, thanks be to God. Amen.