

## Our Great and Terrible God – Deuteronomy 10:12-22

**Introduction** – Filled with pathos, Moses begins to finish this extended commentary on the first commandment. He preaches a revival sermon and he directs it particularly to the next generation, the up and coming generation in the covenant. This sermon simply follows in the same context.

**And Now...** (vv12-13) – God graciously established and renewed his covenant with your fathers, in spite of their covenant breaking (9:1 – 10:11). Turning to the next generation, Moses exhorts, “*So therefore*”, Israel, “*what does the LORD your God require of you...*” Five things are mentioned and they culminate in the center: fear, walk, love, serve, and keep. The first commandment, stated negatively, is “*you shall have no other gods before me,*” and this may be seen as expressing the same in positive and broader terms. Knowledge and outward obedience, even miraculous powers, are empty, if there is not love (1 Cor 13:1-3).

**God Over All Creation** (vv14-16) – A superlative praise (v14), a surprising revelation (v15), and a charge to respond (v16). The heavens of the heavens belong to Yahweh and the earth and every molecule in it. And yet, Yahweh delighted only and specially in your fathers, including their seed – and this includes you. This is the promise of this marvelous and gracious covenant. Only grace can make sense of this, and only faith can embrace it as true and a delight. God is immeasurably and eternally transcendent over all creation AND God is personally delighting in life in and with you. The charge: circumcise your hearts and no longer be stiff-necked! This is delivered to covenant children. God has never been and never will be interested in simple outward conformity; true Jews are Jews who have been inwardly circumcised and seek the praise of God, not men (Rom 2:29). The charge is to repent, to be born again, and to soften your stiff necks.

**Our Great and Terrible God** (vv17-19) – A superlative praise (v17), a surprising revelation (v18), and a charge to respond (v19). Yahweh, your God, is sovereign over everything in His creation. His works are mighty (like His salvation of Israel out of Egypt) and terrible (not simply “awesome,” as when the ground opened up and swallowed thousands of grumbling Israelites). God didn’t need your friendship, your money, your skills or good looks. He has no deficiency in Himself. He metes out judgment for sin (Rom 6:23) and when calamity befalls a city, Yahweh has done it (Amos 3:6). He gives life and He takes it, measuring out the days for each of us (Psalm 139:16, 90:7-12).

And yet, He stoops to care for the weakest and most vulnerable, even those who have become so because of His hard providence. “*He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing*” (v18). In the midst of hard providences, many Christians sound like the foolish women in Job’s day (Job 2:9-10). The fact of destructions, catastrophes, genocide, rape, pillage, and torture are realities in a world where God’s decreative will is exhaustive in its sovereignty. The world is a mess and our God is the God of it. And in His sovereignty, He is making good from all the sin, all the injustice, all the treachery that man can muster (Acts 2:27-28, Rom 8:28). This can only be understood in the context of worship. Look around you. We are a cursed race but God has stooped to save us. The world should be condemned, but God has sent His Son (John 3:16-17) and so, by faith, we live accordingly. The charge: be like God, stoop and choose to give mercy and grace to the outcast, the weakest, the most desperate, even the unworthy (James 1:26-2:4).

**You Shall...** (v20) – This time four things are listed and the reasons follow: fear Yahweh, serve Him, cleave to Him (not simply “hold fast”), and swear by His name. The image of “cleaving” harkens back to Gen 2:24) which is a picture of Christ and the church (Eph 5:31). Are you tempted to stand away (like Israel when Moses was on the mountain)? Are you tempted to only be found “in the vicinity?” The call of repentance and faith is to love God with all your heart, to be unreasonable in your zealous devotion to Him, for you are joined to Him by His Spirit.

**He Is Your Praise** (vv21-22) – He is *your* praise and He is *your* God. You find yourself in covenant with Him. You are not ignorant, you know the stories. You know the Story. You know the great things He has done. You know the terrible (again, not simply “awesome”) things He has done. He is not playing games. And when it seems that you are small or that you are part of the outcast group when you follow Yahweh – when there are only “seventy” who went down to Egypt, remember what has come forth. You know where this story is going. You know you would be worse than an idiot to walk away from this.

You have no choice in the matter: it would have been better if you had not known if you now refuse to repent (2 Pet 2:20-22). Elect members are repent-ing members, believe-ing members, renew-ing members, and cleav-ing members.

There is an ongoing work of salvation, sanctification; you are not done and God is not finished with you either. drh 01/30/11