

STUDY 22

Deuteronomy 10:20

You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.

Read the context: Deuteronomy 10:14-11:32

The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' last speech to the children of Israel before he dies. In this book we hear his heart. There is much repetition as he implores the people to remember and to obey. He longs for their blessing yet knows their propensities. Moses understands the correlation between obedience and blessing and disobedience and lack of blessing or cursing; being under God's favor or under His wrath. Moses also realizes the connection between the character of God and the works of God. God is not capricious in His actions; His actions are not disassociated from justice, mercy, and the rule of love.

These character qualities necessitate relationship or interplay with our actions and responses. How does one display justice except in the context of another person whose specific actions require a verdict? How does one show mercy without an object, a person who is undeserving? And there can be no love without an object upon which to convey that love. Therefore, our actions are inseparably linked with God's character and His works. In this sense (and in many other ways as well) God is not distant but near to us, not ambivalent or disinterested but intimately involved and concerned. His character can never be seen as an entity in and of itself, distinct and utterly separate; His character, by the very nature of it, demands relationship. (This, of course, is one apologetic for the Trinitarian nature of God.)

There are 4 different categories to look at in the context verses:

What kind of God we serve, Who He is

What mighty works God has done

What specific commands are given

What promises God gave, both positive and negative

By exploring these 4 categories, we get a fuller picture of why we should fear the Lord and how we should fear the Lord. So let's dig in and make a list for each category one by one.

In the first category, read verses 10:14-21 and list what is told to us about Who God is.

For the second category list the "great and awesome things" that God had done for them. There are 6 different examples of God's mighty works given in 10:22-11:6.

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Each of those 6 things has a longer, more complete story; they were whole life experiences that took place over real time in these people's lives. We read just a short verse, but each of those verses would bring to mind for the people who lived it a whole ream of memories, which would include wondrous events, major life upheavals, flurries of activity, and powerful emotions running the full gamut of life's experience from intense life-threatening fear to incredulous tambourine-dancing joy. [For a more complete understanding of the great and awesome works of the Lord that each of those 6 examples contain, see the Extra Study at the end of this study.]

Three times in these context verses Moses reminds the people that their own eyes have seen the mighty acts of God: in 10:21, 11:2, 11:7. Those to whom Moses is speaking are the children of the generation that died during the 40 years of wilderness wandering. They were young (under 20 – see Numbers 14:29-31) when they experienced all these things; that likely made the memories all the more impressionable, as we tend to remember most vividly the momentous events of our childhood; and it is those major life-changing events that shape who we are in such definitive ways.

These mighty acts of God, which they themselves experienced, were to have a deep and lasting effect on their understanding and knowledge of God, which, in turn, were to profoundly alter the way they lived. For the third category list the commands given in these context verses. Several of them will be redundant, but go ahead and write them as many times as they appear; the repetition will reveal some things about the fear of the Lord. In 11:19 we are even given some very practical ways to help us know how and when to fulfill that specific command. (For what it's worth, I found 23 commands – some being repeats.)

Notice especially verse 10:20, our Fear of the Lord verse for this study, and verses 11:13 and 11:22. The first "command" in those last two verses is an "if" clause. The commands that follow in those verses explain or define what it means to listen to, obey, and keep His commands. Notice the similarities with 11:1. Now compare those 3 verses in chapter 11 with the Fear of the Lord verse in 10:20. One command in 11:13 is exactly the same as 10:20 and one in 11:22 is exactly the same as 10:20.

Which command in 11:13 & 22 would be comparable or corresponding to the command in 10:20 to fear the Lord? Hmm. We've seen that before in previous Fear of the Lord studies. Fear and love: Can one truly exist without the other? Are they synonyms? Or two sides of the same coin? Think about it, pray over it, and write down your thoughts. Share your thoughts here on this blog and discuss it with others.

Lastly, write down the promises given in this passage. Some of the promises are positive ones (the ones we like to claim!) and others are negative warnings, but just as surely promises (the ones we like to avoid or skip over). But let us remember the truth about God in 10:17 and 18: He shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. In other words, we can't act contrary to His expressed will and ways and expect He will somehow look the other way, turn a blind eye, or be

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sweet-talked out of punishment; He administers justice. If we really think about it, we wouldn't want it any other way. Would you really want a god who is unjust? Or one who had favorites or could be bribed? No! Though it should strike a proper fear of the Lord in us, this attribute of God should also bring us great comfort. It means that God is the one Constant in our universe, the One with Whom, as James 1:17 says, there is no variation or shadow of turning (shifting shadows, one translation says).

Make 2 columns on your paper (or computer). Write "Positive Promises" over one column and "Negative Promises" over the other. Now list the promises. Granted, several of those promises and warnings are specific to the people of Israel and the physical land of promise, but still there are principles here we can learn from. In 11:14, 15, and 17 there are corollary promises or outcomes of the promise given. (Again, for what it's worth, I came up with 15 promises.)

These promises reveal the truth of Galatians 6:7-8. Write out those 2 verses on a card. Tape them to your mirror and memorize them! But do more than that: Meditate on them; for it is in meditation that the Truth of God makes its way from our head to our heart. Meditation causes the Word to soak in, to nourish our souls, take root and become a part of who we are, how we think, and how we act/respond. To use a digestive analogy, meditation takes the Word from the mouth and stomach to the cellular level, giving nutrients and energy to every part of us. Meditation enables us to think the very thoughts of God, which, in turn, causes us to walk in His ways (note Joshua 1:9 for the progression of meditation to obedience to blessing – another common theme we've seen in these Fear of the Lord studies).

One final thought to glean from these context verses: Moses (and God) knew the sinful leanings of the heart. These propensities were not just the problem of the people of Israel; they are our problem, too. List the common leanings of our hearts: 1 in 10:16, 3 in 11:16, 2 in 11:28. Take some time to pray over these, asking God to reveal any ways that these things are true of you. My husband used to say, "The nature of deception (11:16) is that you don't know when you are deceived!" So we need God to reveal our own hearts to us.

APPLICATION:

One of the ways we keep from being stiff-necked, deceived, turning aside, and following other gods – other priorities that take first place over God – is to remember the things OUR eyes have seen, the specific things God has done for us in our lifetime. It takes focused time and concentrated thought (i.e. diligent effort/hard work!) to remember these things. Life and trials have a way of pushing them out of our minds and making us forget; we get so caught up in the problems of the moment.

Set aside some time over the next few days to be quiet before the Lord; ask Him to bring to mind the wonders He has done for you, the answers to prayer, the ways He has shown you His tender

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and specific care. Write these things down and share them with your children. What great acts of the Lord which He has done have your eyes seen? (11:7) The memory of these will help to recalibrate your life, settle your soul in thankfulness, and return your heart to a proper fear of the Lord that delights in walking in His ways.

Add to your Fear of the Lord list what you have learned from this verse study.

Extra Study (This could be a whole week or more of study!):

Each one of those 6 examples of God's great and awesome works could be a whole study, or even set of studies, in and of themselves. For those who want to go deeper and spend more time, I'll list here the references for each of the 6 backstories. As you read through the actual story line, write down the "great and awesome things" God did during each of the 6 things or time periods (for that is what each of the 6 really is: a specific period of time during which God did some very amazing things) listed in Deuteronomy 10 and 11. Most of the following references are whole chapters.

1. 10:22: *Genesis chapters 37, 39-50 & Exodus chapters 1-3: List the ways God took them from 70 persons to an innumerable multitude.*
2. 11:2: *Exodus chapters 32-34, Leviticus chapter 10, Numbers chapters 11, 12, 14; 15:32-36; chapter 20; 21:1-9; chapters 22-25: List the chastenings of the Lord.*
3. 11:3: *Exodus chapters 4-12: List the signs and acts of God, His judgments against Egypt.*
4. 11:4: *Exodus 13:17-14:31: List all the things God did to the army of Egypt.*
5. 11:5: *Exodus 15:22-27, chapters 16-17, 19-20; Numbers 9:15-23, 11:16-30, chapter 13, 21:1-3 & 21:10-35, 31:1-11; Deuteronomy 1:31-33, 8:2-4, 29:5-8: List what God did for the Israelites in the wilderness.*
6. 11:6: *Numbers chapters 16-17: List what God did to Dathan and Abiram.*

Truly after studying those stories we can say, "AMAZING!" "GREAT!" "AWESOME!" even "FEARFUL!" And many other adjectives come to mind.