

Deuteronomy 10:12-22 ¹² And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? ¹⁴ To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. ¹⁵ Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. ¹⁶ Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. ¹⁷ For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. ¹⁸ He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt. ²⁰ Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. ²¹ He is your praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. ²² Your forefathers who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Introduction: how do you say thank-you? How do you thank your spouse when they cook dinner for you? You get up and do the dishes. Children, how do you thank your parents? If you are part of a team how do you thank your coaches? If you have a job, how do you express thanks to your boss?

Everyone likes to be thanked. In fact it's one of the manners that parents instill in their children from little on. For many, it's just a habit that when someone does something for you, you tell them thank-you. No matter how big the deed or the gift, we have been taught to say thank-you.

So just think what the thanks might be like for God. Here he is the one who took away all your sins. That's huge. It's not just a little thing. He is the one that saved you from hell and has bought your life back from the devil. If you have any kind of manners, you will want to thank him. Even with the smallest amount of faith, we will want to express our gratitude to God.

Today as we look at God's Word we will see how to say thank-you to God. It's to love the Lord with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Imagine that you are like a little child caught with all those flames around you just waiting to be overcome by the smoke never to awake again. Such was your peril with sin. You were going to be consumed yet God drew you out and saved you. He could ask you for anything. Anything at all and you would be obligated to give it to him. **what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.** God wants you to walk after him. He wants you to follow his lead that you might be safe. He wants you to be with him completely, heart and soul.

After all, there is nothing you could give God that he doesn't already have. **To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.** ¹⁵ **Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants...as it is today.** Remember it was neither your ability nor your innate goodness that moved God to make you his own: "The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were better than other peoples, for you were just like them the hardest to save. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore that he redeemed you. It is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God loves you.

God knows about how stiff-necked you are. He knows that you don't like having to admit that you are under someone. That by nature, you are like one who refuses to carry any burden.

God never meant your thanks to him to be a mere outward badge of membership. An uncircumcised heart is closed to God's coming and entering there, and uncircumcised ears are covered over and refuse to hear (Jer 6:10). While the outward sign remain part of our thank-you to God, mere outward compliance was never enough. Trusting in this outward love thrown at God without the inward "circumcision" of faith lead to stubborn rejection. A person is not a Christian if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Christian if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit. Such a person's praise is not from men, but from God.

¹⁷ **For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.** ¹⁸ **He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.** Yet God stoops to love and care for all his creatures, no matter how insignificant they may consider themselves or may be regarded by others. He "accepts no bribes". He doesn't favor the famous or affluent or influential. He can't be bribed. You can't get into God's good graces with all your outward worship of him. God doesn't smile on you because you gave to your church or because you come faithfully to church. He doesn't look at you as more special because you served on a board or amongst a certain group than someone who doesn't. And he surely doesn't think you are more special because you got your name in the bulletin for something you gave to his use.

Instead of trying to be great or win God's favor, take comfort in how he treats all with the same love. He brings up the poor and needy with his richest. He doesn't stoop as the corrupt society and take advantage of the less fortunate and the outsiders. The Savior-God loves them and cares for them. No jockeying for position is needed.

Transition: So don't think that all the thank-yous that you give to God are to gain you a place in heaven. Then you would be the rich ruler. He told Jesus, "I give to the God of my treasures. I pray when I need to. I come to worship. You don't have to come encourage me to come to church because I do so well at serving God. I do all of those things gladly." Yet when Jesus brought up how he was to help those around him he went away sad.

When you look at how to say thank-you to God you can't just say God here I have done my part. Because God saved your life, he also asks you to love your neighbor as yourself. God says, **you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens.** God said those words first to the Israelites. They knew what it was like to live away from their homes. They had been in Egypt where they didn't belong. They didn't have rights or freedoms. They were treated poorly. They suffered just longing to be in a place of their own. They were **sojourners** just wandering around. It would have been the sweetest sound for people to tell them that they could stay or that they belonged. God wanted them to be the helping and caring neighbors. They were to be kind and compassionate to all those around them.

That's one of the moral tests of a people, how they love their neighbors. How they treat their children, the aged, and those "in the shadows of life"—the sick, the needy, and the handicapped. When the Lord called Israel to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6), he wanted them to be a faithful reflection of his love and concern to the nations around them. He called them not just to belong to him but to behave like him too. "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (Eph 5:1, 2).

That's one powerful reason for us to love the unlovable: "We love because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). Here's another: the Israelites could remember what it was like to be enslaved by a hostile foreign power. They too had been lonely and powerless as strangers in a strange land. Although this generation of Israelites had been only little children when they left Egypt and although future generations would have no personal memory of being enslaved, Israel's stay in Egypt would become part of her national consciousness. Each year at Passover, when children would ask their fathers, "What does this mean?" their fathers were to answer, "With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex 13:14). They were to say thank-you to God by sharing their faith in God. To continue to be there to encourage other people in the same faith.

Just think of the people God has placed in your life whom you get to love as yourself. Think about your children whom you have been able to bring to the baptismal font where you promised to God that you would raise them under God's guidance. How you promised to keep Jesus at the center of their upbringing.

Just think how much of an honor it was to have a family member or a friend ask you to be a sponsor for their child. They asked you to love their child and take an oath before God that you would encourage that child in their faith in Jesus.

Just think how many of you have taken that oath before God standing next to your spouse to always cling to them and love them with the uttermost care. That you would put your benefit before your own and cherish them for as long as you both shall live.

Just think about all the people God places in your life from family members, to in-laws, to friends, to co-workers. They are right in front of you so you are able to say thank-you to God.

God has placed them in your life as opportunities for you to say thank-you to him. Instead of seeing a relationship as something you need to win, it becomes a place to help. You have all these places to show love to God by showing love to others.

Have you ever thought about how you act as towards others as saying, “Thank-you, God. Thank-you for this opportunity to serve you.” This worship of God seems a lot harder than the normal coming to church or saying God you are my God. But this is part of the thank-you of which God trains you to give to him. With your good spiritual manners, God tells you to say thanks to him by loving others.

God doesn't want you to walk away **with** sadness but thanks for him. Although such a life might seem impossible with God all things are possible.