Dt. 10:12-13 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, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

I want to start speaking of this text by drawing your attention to the words the Lord spoke concerning the alien. He states, **“For the Lord…loves the alien.”** For that matter, the Lord even emphasizes the importance of this by reminding the Israelites that they had been aliens in Egypt.

So I did a quick search and read of all the passages that spoke of aliens, those who came as strangers to your land, those who were foreigners among your people and I learned a few interesting things. The alien who came in is described as someone who came in to be a part of the people of Israel. They were to obey the laws of Israel. They were to be treated kindly and helped in every way possible.

But again, note, that the aliens were to act and conduct themselves just like Israelites. If an alien disregarded the Sabbath day commands, he was put out. If the alien wanted to bring sacrifices to God he could, but was to do it just like the Israelites did. What I did find interesting is that if an Israelite found a dead animal he could not eat it, but the alien among them (I assume those not converted) could be given that dead animal to eat. It was just so interesting to read what God had to say about the alien.

What I also found interesting was the emphasis that the alien was to live by your laws and in your ways. So I wondered, what did you call the alien who came into your land and wanted to live their way or wanted to establish their laws or wanted to openly follow their gods? As far as I could tell those people where called invaders or the enemy. But that alien, the person who wanted to be among you and be you…they were to be treated just like your own people. I think the idea behind that was so that through you the alien could then become one of God’s people and no longer the alien.

That of course, means that you, dear Israelite, needed to show yourself as a child of God! How did you do that? Well, I think the Lord’s words lay it out quite nicely. Words not just for the child of God back in the Old Testament but I believe words that still apply to you and me today. Our theme will be: **FEAR THE LORD. 1st. Walk. 2nd. Love. 3rd. Observe.**

I think you might be aware of when these words were spoken by the Lord to his people. Deuteronomy is that book that kind of rehashes, reechoes, that’s right, repeats how the Israelites become the people of God. So here is Moses going over the history of God and his people. Deut. 9 reminds them of how stubborn they were with God. It reminds them of the fiasco that happened with the Golden Calf when Moses was called up on the mountain to receive in greater measure the law of God. Chapter 10 reminds the people of how God did give his Law to Moses and what it meant. That “what it meant” section is the one before us today. Here is Moses, with God’s directing Holy Spirit, reminding the people, the new generation who would enter into the promised land, of just what it meant to be God’s people.

I find his words informative and uplifting. Where does it all start? With these words, **“And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God.”** Let’s just start there and grasp the full intent of those words.

If you are a Lutheran, you are familiar with this word and the tremendous implication it has. You are familiar because from the time you learned the basics in Luther’s Small Catechism you know that as Luther explained each commandment it started…”We should fear and love God.” And then you were taught what this word “fear” meant. Fear in God’s word has two distinct meanings. The first is the most obvious. We should fear God in the sense of being afraid, yes, even terrified of the Lord our God. And why not? Is not God the Almighty Creator of all? Is not God the One, the only One who sets the standards and lays out the pillars of how this world is to be? After all, it is His world! We owe God everything! Since God sets the standards and tells us that to ignore his standard is to bring his wrath and anger…well, then, we should fear the Lord. Shake in our boots. Quiver in terror at the thought of disobeying or dishonoring Him.

But we humans are a bit horrid at this fear of God, you know, a stiff necked people. It is a part of the sinfulness that corrupts us. All too often we think we know better than God or are wiser than God. In our sinfulness we forget to be afraid but God has given an alternative. God has given us Jesus. In Jesus we see the grace, mercy and love of God. In Jesus we see God, in his Son, dying for our sins and atoning for us. In other words, God in His Son has forgiven us our sins, forgiven us our lack of terror, and has instead, showered his love on us. Did you get that? God has despite our sin showered his love on us. Why? Because He so loved us. Can you hear that and not go, WOW! That’s the second part of the word fear. It really means to have an awe and wonder for God. I don’t believe you can see that cross of Jesus and contemplate in that cross the empty tomb of Jesus and not be filled with awe and wonder for God. The people of Old had the promised Savior of God and we have the fulfilled Savior of God…WOW! God has so loved us that He gave His only Son to save us. That is fear for God in the sense of awe and wonder.

Here is God even in the Old Testament encouraging his people in what was good and right. It is good to fear the Lord, to be afraid to disobey or afraid to dishonor him. It is good to fear the Lord, to be filled with awe and wonder because he promised and has indeed saved our wretched souls. Here is where our life as God’s children begins. Where we can see his power and majesty and yet grasp that such things were and are used for our good and salvation. Yep, Israel and you and me, are to fear the Lord in the full meaning and scope of the word.

Now God is so practical that he goes on to help us grasp this all the more. So did you notice in our text how God goes about helping us to grasp what this fear means? So God gives his next practical guide. He says, **”to walk in all his ways.”** You could go back and reassemble that sentence and say, **“Now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you…to walk in all his ways.”** Now notice that I say this is our God helping us be practical in the way things are. If you are a follower, a believer, a child of God what is one of the most practical ways you demonstrate this truth? You walk in his ways!

I have used this illustration often, but it is worth the thought. If I said to you, “I am a banker,” what would you think? You would think, “Hey, he works at a bank.” But if you ask me what bank I worked at and I said, “Oh, I work stocking shelves at Wingerts,” what is your first thought? That’s right, I am not a banker! It doesn’t matter if Wingert’s has a branch of the bank in it, if I don’t work at the bank, if I don’t do banking stuff I am not a banker! So why do we think we ignore Christian stuff, fail to do God’s stuff, fail in even attempting to walk in the path of God and declare ourselves Christians or God’s children? God tells us that we are to walk in his ways. I don’t think that hard to grasp. It means we follow what God says and what God wants. It means first that we have to know what God’s ways are and then it most certainly means that we apply, we do, we act upon those ways of God.

By the way, if you are a banker and you determine on a regular basis, because it feels right to you, to put the money of others into your account, what is the result of that? You will no longer be a banker. For that matter, depending on the level of your taking money, you may find yourself a prisoner! It is no different in God’s realm. Insist on doing what is ungodly and you will find you really are a prisoner of Satan rather than a child of God. The child walks in God’s way.

And there is more. God now adds, **“What does the Lord your God ask of you…to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”** Notice how I put those two ideas together. I do that because in this way there is no doubt as to what love means and how it is applied. There are so many ideas of love out there and many of them horribly false. We’ve heard the stories. That parent who chains the kid in the closet and treats that child so horribly. I’ll bet you if you ask that parent if they loved their child they would tell you they do and that they act because they love that child. But it is sick love. It is a false love. If you want to grasp the full measure of love then I would suggest you put in the flavor that God gives to love…love is service. Not just partial service or occasional service. Love is whole hearted service…with all your heart and with all your soul.

Service. You do realize that to be involved in service there is not a selfish idea around. The person who serves, who takes care of, who watches over, who slave after, who gives of their time and talents for your good, that is the person who genuinely serves. Would you put your child in a day care that is going to slap them around, abuse them and degrade them? Nope, you want a day care that will love them, that will put the best interests of your child first. That is service. Service with love. Notice that God has this wonderful standard. He wants his children to serve. To show their love by serving with all their heart and all their soul.

Here is the cool part about love. Love, true love, God’s love never comes from us. God gives it to us. How did 1 John put it? **“We love because he first loved us.”** For that matter go and read 1 John 4:7-21 and you will see and grasp all the more what I am trying to tell you here. Our love is born of God’s love for us. Our love is to be an imitation of God’s love in us. Anything short of that is not really love.

One final direction of God yet. He says, **“observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?”** That word, “observe” has the force and meaning of “keep, watch over, guard, and yes, observe. God’s commands, his Words and ways are to be in your life. You are to know them, to think of them, to contemplate them and on and on. Again, it is not a matter of sitting back doing nothing, but being active in the ways and faith of God. For the Israelites this meant keeping the purpose and intent of God’s commands before you. Even for the Israelite the Law of God was not meant to save you but to condemn you and then direct you to the promised Savior who was to come. For us today, the Law of God still does not save but rather shows our sins that we might grasp what our Savior has done for us. He has atoned for us. He has brought us love and grace, mercy and salvation all free and sure in Him. But if we don’t “observe” that, if we don’t keep this in our hearts and minds it is all too easy to lose what God has done for us, to lose the good that God has given and supplied, to lose the benefit of His awesomeness for our good.

I hope you grasp the wonder of our words. Words directing us, as the New Testament would say, “to fight the good fight”, to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling”, and “to press on to the goal to win the prize for which God has called me.” It is all based on God’s love and grace for us. Amen.