

Sunday School Lesson for November 2, 2025
Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and 20-25

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this first Sunday in November, we're tracing the steps of the Israelites as they make their way to the Promised Land after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. In our last series of lessons in this quarter from the Book of Deuteronomy, we're looking at a few of Moses' final words to the children of Israel before they enter the Promised Land. Our focal texts for today come from chapter six, verses one through nine and twenty through 25.

As the Israelites reached the end of their forty years of judgment for refusing to trust the Lord to seize the land He was giving them, a new generation has made a long bypass around Edom, coming to Moab, east of the Jordan River, where they awaited final instructions from God about entering and possessing the land that He had promised their forefathers. As they prepared to see God's promise revealed, Moses took the opportunity to deliver three messages to the Israelites. These were farewell addresses because God was not going to allow Moses to enter the promised land because he had acted presumptuously in striking the rock instead of speaking to it in order to provide water for the people, and, in so doing, did not give the glory to God.

In Moses' first address to the people, found in the first three chapters of Deuteronomy, he recounted their recent history and reminded them of the absolute necessity of remembering everything the Lord had done, that they "may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of [their] fathers, [was] giving [them]," accompanied by a series of warnings for failing to obey His laws of life. As he continues to remind them of the covenant obligations of those who would be the people of God in the first chapter of his second address--chapter five--, we find a restatement of the Ten Commandments found earlier in chapter twenty of the Book of Exodus. In chapter six we find that there is one commandment that could well be called

the summary commandment--the greatest commandment--, a commandment that brings together all the others so that if you would obey this one commandment, you would fulfill all the rest.

Moses begins his unveiling of this one commandment in the first three verses of chapter six: “Now this is the commandment--the statutes and the rules--that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Although many translations begin the first verse with, “These are the commandments,” the actual word is singular: “This is the commandment,” and this commandment--or you could say, “This compilation of the Law”--is revealed in the statutes and rules that make up the Law of God. It’s important to remember, as we’ve said before, that, very often, when we hear the word “Law,” “commandment,” or “rules,” we immediately think of burdensome restrictions that limit our freedom. But the Law of God is much different from that. Since God created us, since He designed us and He knows what makes us succeed in life and what makes us fail to achieve the very best He has for us, it’s only reasonable that the instructions that He gives to us are given so that we might enjoy life as He, our Creator, meant it to be. So, God’s Law is really an owner’s manual for a happy and fulfilling life. Now, as they prepare to seize a land inhabited by people who worshiped idols and whose religious practices were abhorrent to God, His chosen people had to be fully prepared for the challenges that lay before them.

The reason for communicating His law to them was to awaken their fear of Him--a fear that would show itself in their steadfast observance of every

commandment He laid down for them. We often downplay this word “fear” to limit it to an adoring reverence for God, but there is good reason to be afraid of God. Isaiah, for example, records the Word of the Lord in chapter eight, verse thirteen, of the book that bears his name where the Lord told him, “But the LORD of hosts, him you shall regard as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.”

Because He is holy, holiness is His standard for His creation. Anything else is an offense to God. However, for the believer in Jesus Christ--for the one who has fully entrusted his or her life to God--the perfect love we experience in Him because of our love for Him and His love for us--His perfect love casts out all fear--First John, chapter four, verse eighteen, and, “since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” as Paul reminds us in the first verse of Romans, chapter five.

These statutes and rules were being explained to them so that they might--verse two--“fear the Lord your God”--that they might know the greatness of His being, the vastness of His thoughts, and the perfection of His will, and respond with a worship lifestyle that is appropriate and pleasing to the Lord. This worship would be displayed in their obedience to the Law of the Lord. Moses said, “this is the commandment--the statutes and the rules--that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them.” Reverential obedience was the only appropriate response to God’s holiness and His lovingkindness that He had and would continue to so extravagantly lavish upon the children of Israel.

Of course, the responsibility of following these commandments of God does not fall on the nation as a whole alone, but it specifically falls on the shoulders of each individual Israelite. Each one who heard Moses' words that day was to instruct his son and that son was to pass this teaching on to his son--“you and your son and your son’s son”-- is what we read in the second verse. This habitual rehearsing and passing on the stories of God’s mighty work and His instructions for life in their personal history was absolutely essential.

How much of the Law were they to keep? “All his statutes and his commandments.” When were they to keep them? “All the days of your life.” Why were they to do this? So “that your days may be long.” The formula for their success was simple. The consequences for failure were disastrous.

It wasn’t part of our study of chapter four last week, but Moses told them what would happen if they were to fail to do what he has told them to do. Beginning in verse 25 of chapter four, Moses said, “If you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, so as to provoke him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.”

Moses’ words were fervent, impassioned, grave, earnest--“Don’t fail to do everything the Lord has told you to do, so “that your days may be long,” meaning that they would live a long life. A long life was seen to be a mark of God’s blessing in a person’s life.

Moses repeats his plea in verse three, almost pleading with them to hear and heed his words: “Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.” This good life that the Lord was placing before them had two distinct aspects. First, things would go well for them as they obeyed God's commands. He's already mentioned a long life, and he adds the bounty of the land as a second blessing at the end of the verse--the “land flowing with milk and honey.”

Second, they would increase greatly. The idea of the multiplication of the people was seen as God’s blessing as we find in many places in our Old Testaments, beginning with God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis, chapter fifteen, verse five when God “brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward

heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’”

But the fulfillment of all these promises was contingent on their continuing to be a people who feared God and demonstrated their fear of the Lord by their continued adherence to His Law. So, Moses reminds them once again that their God is the God of their fathers--the God known and worshiped by the great patriarchs of the Israelite nation--Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob--whose stories had been told and retold for generations so that the children knew them by heart. Their relationship with God was the very foundation of who they were as a people, and they should never forget that.

What follows in verses four through nine is the greatest confession of faith in the Old Testament. You may have heard it called the “Shema,” which is the first word in the Hebrew in verse four. The Shema is the centerpiece of Jewish, daily morning and evening prayer services and is considered by some the most essential prayer in all of Judaism today. Its daily recitation is regarded by traditional Jews as a biblical commandment, so central are these verses to their faith: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Shema means “Hear.” As Moses repeats his earnest plea in verse three for the people to hear, the word “hear” doesn’t mean just listening to what’s being said, but hearing in such a way that you take the words to heart and instantly, diligently, and consistently put them into practice in your daily life.

What they are to hear, understand, and allow their lives to be molded by / is that the Lord God of Israel is absolutely God, and none other. He, and He alone, is Yahweh, the absolute, uncaused God; the One who had, by His election of them, made Himself and His purpose known to the children of Abraham. This declaration is far more than an affirmation about the unity of God or a statement about the sole authority of the revelation He had made to Israel in contrast to the polytheism of other nations and peoples. Although it's certainly both of these, the significance of these few words goes far beyond them.

First, they are to know and allow their lives to be shaped and directed by the unalterable fact that "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." It's a difficult phrase to translate into English, which is why it's variously interpreted as "The LORD our God *is* one LORD" in the King James Version, "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah" in the American Standard Version, and "The LORD is our God, the LORD alone" in the New American Bible.

The essence of the phrase is that / to God alone the name Yahweh rightfully belongs, and that He is the one absolute God, to whom no other little "g" god can be compared. This declaration not only excludes the existence of any other god or gods, it also **excludes** limiting God to that of a national deity as other nations claimed as well as every form of theism or deism that creates for itself a supreme being according to its own philosophical ideas. God is the absolutely, unconditionally, unequivocally, undeniably true and living God, as He made Himself known in His deeds to the children of Israel for the salvation of the whole world.

This was an essential statement of faith for the children of Israel who were about to enter a land filled with idols of all kinds and categories and with people who placed their eternal hopes on these images made by human hands. God is exclusively God--no one and no thing could make a similar claim and no one could attribute divinity to anything else. In contrast to the religions of the Canaanites, there can be only one eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent,

infinite being Who is originally and of Himself good; one all sufficient and perfect Being Who alone is the First Cause of all things, and Who alone can be the King, ruler, governor, and lawgiver for His chosen people and, in fact, all people of the world.

Just as the Lord is One, His requirement for the response His chosen people must make to Him is also singular. To the One, indivisible God, undivided devotion and love are due: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Those whom He has created, chosen, and entered into a covenant relationship with / are to have a singular commitment to Him. In other words, their devotion then and our devotion now is not to be distributed among many things, but is to be focused on the one God. This devotion is to be so singular in commitment and so intense in affection that it would be described as nothing less than “love.”

Although it's extremely difficult for us to see anything remarkably new in this requirement, it would have been a dramatic revelation to any people of that day and age. In all of the Old Testament, there are only thirteen passages outside the Book of Deuteronomy that speak of our love for God--one in Exodus, Joshua, First Kings, and Nehemiah; six in the Psalms, and one in Daniel. Of those thirteen, only one clearly belongs to a time before the events of Deuteronomy, chapter six--only once in the Bible to this point do we hear of a bold and decisive demand to love God as the basis of our relationship with Him that we find here in this verse, and that's in the first appearance of the Ten Commandments in Exodus, chapter twenty, verse six. From this point on in the Book of Deuteronomy, there are almost as many passages speaking of our love for God as there are in the rest of the Old Testament, and it's not until we open our New Testaments that we find anything close to what we find here in Deuteronomy, and there we find it on almost every page as the test of genuine faith and success in the Christian life.

Moses has been telling the people over and over again that they are to fear the Lord. Now he's telling them to love the Lord. Don't miss this remarkable

revelation in salvation history. Up to this point, there was reverence, awe, but mostly fear as they had remembered the devastation and ruin God had sent upon the people of Egypt; the deaths of Nadab and Abihu / and Korah, Dathan, and Abihu along with 14,700 others; and the incident with Baal of Peor that we talked about last week when 24,000 were killed because the people had intermarried with the Amalekites. There was good reason to fear God--but to love Him?

God had proven His selection of them through their deliverance from Egypt and preparing to finally fulfill the promise He had made to Abraham, but it seems that Israel as a whole was the object of God's favor, not the individual. But this declaration clarifies this misunderstanding. It's individual love and trust that's the foundation for a personal / as opposed to a national faith and relationship with God. With this singular focus on loving God, the Israelites' relations with God began to be more personal and intimate, beginning with Deborah's song in Judges, chapter five, verse 31, and the psalms of David, including Psalm eighteen where David begins by exclaiming, "I love you, O LORD, my strength."

Unlike the language of the New Testament where we find three different words translated as love, there is only one word in Hebrew that is used to express the full range of affectionate commitment between individuals, between God and humanity, and toward material things and ideals. It's more like our word "love" that's more generic in its use. So, Moses clarifies the love we are to have for God in three particular aspects.

First, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." The heart is the inner core of a person--the place where impressions, intuition, desires, intentions, conscience, and emotion all meet in what one word study says is the "decisive arena where covenant faithfulness or rebellion is settled." To love God with all your heart excludes half-heartedness--all the focus, devotion, loyalty, fidelity, steadfastness, and attachment are to be dedicated and reserved for God alone. Jesus told His disciples in Luke, chapter sixteen, verse thirteen:

“No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” Our love for God is to be singular and exclusive, just as He Himself is the singular and exclusive God.

Second, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul.” Appearing more than 750 times in our Old Testaments, the word we have translated “soul” is used to refer to the whole range of the life of humans and other creatures--the living being itself, the animating life-force, and the inner self with its thoughts, emotions, and desires. Everything that makes us human is to be dedicated to loving the Lord.

Third, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your might” or “your strength”--all the energies of our physical power and abilities are to be invested in loving God.

In reality, Moses doesn’t intend to provide a clear distinction between heart, soul, and strength; instead, he provides us with an exhaustive idea of the whole individual--every part of us, all of our effort, and all of us are to be completely, totally, and exclusively dedicated, reserved, and devoted to loving God, fully yielded to Him in holy and devout affection.

And notice that all this is prefaced with the words, “You shall love the Lord your God.” This love naturally and spontaneously flows from a personal commitment to and relationship with God. One commentator writes, those who are “justified by faith have peace with God, and do good with passionate fervor without hope or possibility of further reward, just because of their love and gratitude to God, who is the source of all good.”

Because of this all-inclusive, singular focus on loving God because He is the only One worthy of being called God, Moses continues in verse six with some practical instructions, beginning with verse six: “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” It would take more than just a head knowledge about God's commands for them to live well in the land.

Their undivided love for God must originate from the deep within / so that every part of their lives would be dedicated to lovingly following God's instructions for life. The words that Moses is sharing with them are to be committed to memory with a steadfast conscientiousness to do them and always at the forefront of their thoughts and meditations.

So, the Book of Psalms opens with these two verses: "Blessed is the one who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." Meditating on Him and His word, again, is the natural response to our love for God, for as John says in First John, chapter five, verse three: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." "These words that I command you today," Moses says, "shall always and forever be on your heart."

How do we do that? Verse seven: "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

As individual Israelites loved the Lord their God with such intense devotion of the entire person, it would only be natural that they would pass on that desire to love God so completely to the next generation. They would not rely upon Moses or Joshua to do that work for them, each and every parent would seize the opportunity to personally reproduce their love for God in their children.

Parents would seize every teachable moment--"when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise"--every moment of every day would be an opportunity to pass on their

love of God to their children. After all, if they truly loved God with all of their being--heart, soul, and strength--could they do really anything less?

The most important thing parents can do for their children is not get them into a great college, help them make it on a certain sports team, or train them to make a lot of money. The most important thing parents can do for their children is to get them into heaven. And there's much we could add here by way of personal application.

As far as their own lives are concerned, each child of Abraham would "bind them as a sign on [their] hand, and they [would] be as frontlets between [their] eyes." In ancient Israel, "frontlets" were small strips or cases hanging or fastened between the eyes that later became the phylacteries that we read about in the New Testament. By the time of the first century, they held passages from the Torah and were worn by devout Jews during prayer. By placing them between their eyes, their physical sight and mental thought would be focused on God's Law, and, with similar passages bound on their hands or their wrists, their hands would carry out the instructions contained in the Law.

Although it's doubtful that Moses ever intended anyone to physically do this--only intending to emphasize the importance of always keeping one's heart and mind focused on carrying out the Law of God--some Israelites took this literally, but often for the wrong reason, as we hear the Lord Jesus address those who did it for show in Matthew, chapter 23, verse five. Using an overstatement to illustrate the importance of centering one's vision and actions on the loving Law of the Lord would focus their mind's attention and their heart's affection toward those things that enhance their love for God.

Teach the loving law of the Lord to your children, seize every moment to impress upon them the truths about God and His Word, center your own thoughts and actions on loving God, and keep the commandments of God constantly before your eyes--verse nine--: "You shall write them on the

doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Once again, this was probably not intended to become a literal practice, however, many Jews today have affixed a small cylinder of wood or metal called a mezuzah to the jamb or trim on the right side of their entry doors containing a piece of parchment inscribed with Deuteronomy, chapter six, verses four through nine and chapter eleven, verses thirteen through 21, that they touch with their finger and then kiss their finger or recite Psalm 121, verse eight, every time they pass through that door.

Here again, it wasn't so much the physical placement of signs on the hands or frontlets between the eyes or mezuzahs nailed to a door frame as much as it was doing whatever you could to make sure the Law of the Lord was ever before your face, on your mind, and in your heart, directing everything you think, do, and say, so that you might--in every way and always--“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

Even though God had announced His instructions so clearly and simply, Moses knew that there was a very real likelihood that the Israelites would fail to obey all that the Lord had commanded them; so, in verses ten through nineteen, he warns the people not to forget the Lord when they enter the land the Lord is giving to them, reminding them in verse thirteen that “It is the Lord your God you shall fear. ... You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you--for the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God--lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.”

He then urges them once again to “diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you,” and “do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers by thrusting out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has promised.” A great future awaits

them, but only insofar as they love the Lord and demonstrate that love by keeping His commandments.

In verses twenty through 25, the teaching of the commandments of God to the children / that's only hinted at in verse seven is more fully explained, and this is where we find our second focal text for the day: "When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us.'"

Jewish religious instruction wasn't to be limited to an empty, rote repetition of God's Law. There was a deep, defining, personal interest in the story. When a child came to his or her parents and asked why they loved the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength and why their lives demonstrated such a profound devotion to Him, they were to tell their story. It didn't matter if it was a first-hand story; in fact, for almost all of them there on the eastern side of the Jordan River waiting to cross over into the Promised Land, very few could tell the story from a first-hand perspective. But, for each and every child of Abraham then and even today, this was **their** story to embrace and publish to the generations following that they also would love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and strength.

This story doesn't have anything to say about abstract definitions of God's character, His omniscience, His omnipresence, or His omnipotence. It doesn't even include an argument to prove His existence. All this is implied and

accepted as true within the story. Since God can't be limited by any kind of definition, He is what He proves Himself to be, and, throughout the Old Testament, the wondrous acts of God and the prophetic promises made by God represent everything that was known about God, and this story about God's dealings with His chosen people that included oppression, kings, frogs, gnats, darkness, death, freedom, miracles, seas opening, an army drowning, clouds and fire, mysteries, good choices and bad choices, and above all--love--the love the Creator of the universe has for everyone--was a perfect medium for transmitting the deep truths of God and His Law to children.

Notice that this passage begins with the word, "when," not "if." There is assumed a compelling demonstration of love for God on the part of the parents such that a child naturally wants to know, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?" So, when a future generation asks about the meaning of God's Laws, the answer won't come in the form of "do this" and "don't do that," the answer will always begin with the relationship between the parents and God and how God demonstrated His love to them, beginning with the Lord's deliverance of the nation from bondage in Egypt, His leading them to the land He promised to give them, and how He now preserves the nation and the individual through the Laws that He commands them to follow.

"Many years ago, we were slaves of the king of Egypt, and the Lord rescued us by his great power. With our own eyes we saw him work miracles, signs, and wonders and do terrifying things to the Egyptians and to their king and to all his officials. Finally, the king let us go, but then changed his mind, and sent his army after us. But God parted the waters of the Red Sea. We walked across on dry ground, but when the Egyptian army started to chase us, God let the waters return. The Lord brought us here and give us this land, just as he had promised our ancestors he would. Then the Lord our God commanded us to obey all these laws and to honor him. If we do, he will always watch over us and our nation. So the right thing for us to do is to obey

faithfully everything that God has commanded us.” And that’s the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules “that the Lord our God has commanded us so that He might preserve us alive, as we are to this very day.”

If we trust Him to do everything He’s told us to do, God will consider us righteous and will deal with us accordingly. The righteousness he speaks of here is not based upon the exacting compliance and fulfillment of every aspect of the letter of the Law, but to obey the first and greatest commandment: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength; and as always, that love is altogether impossible without a living faith.

In chapter twelve of the gospel of Mark, Jesus was approached by a man with a most important question. The conversation began in verse 28: “One of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that [Jesus] answered them well, asked him, ‘Which commandment is the most important of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The most important is, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’ And the scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’”

Augustine is credited with having boldly said, “Love God, and do as you please.” If each and every one of us were to love God supremely, loving Him with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind and all our strength, then truly what we would be pleased to do would be what He would be pleased for us to do. As we focus our mind's attention, our heart's affection, and our physical intention on serving God and Him alone, then we will be well on our

way to loving God in a manner that's appropriate to Who He is and what He's done.

This greatest commandment certainly needs to be taught and lived today by believing fathers and mothers. The greatest need in the Church today is for Christian parents to train up their children in the ways of the Lord. Moses' instructions were quite clear about who, what, when, and how this training was to take place. If believers today took seriously the importance of training children in the things of God, beginning with their own, personal example, / our families, our nation, and our world would be a much better place. "And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us."

Thank you for being part of our brief look at the journey of faith the Israelites followed as they made their way to the homeland God promised to them through Abraham. Next week, we continue to consider Moses' final message to the children of Israel, this time turning to the first eleven verses of chapter twelve and verses 29 through 32 where we'll learn about their primary objective in taking the land the Lord is about to give them.

As always, as it's still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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