

# The Greatest Commandment: Holistic Love

Deuteronomy 6:4-15

Clément Tendo, pastoral intern

Today we will be looking at the ninth question from the New City Catechism. I will read the question, and then let us read the answer together.

## **Question 9: What does God require in the first, second, and third commandments?**

Answer: First, that we know and trust God as the only true and living God.

Second, that we avoid all idolatry and do not worship God improperly.

Third, that we treat God's name with fear and reverence, honoring also his Word and works.

This question focuses on the first three commandments. The passage we will be looking at today contains a summary of all the ten commandments. Before we look at our text, a few things are worth mentioning concerning the book in which it is found.

Deuteronomy is the fifth of the five books of Moses. God has already brought Israel from Egypt, where they were slaves for 430 years. When they cried out to God for mercy, He heard their cry and sent Moses to be their deliverer and redeemer.

This was a physical redemption with spiritual significance. Yes, they had been physically enslaved and needed rescue from bondage. But they also needed a spiritual deliverance that only God could give them. That's why God told them how they should live before Him. This is the context in which the ten commandments were first given in Exodus 20:1-17. Now, decades after that event at Mount Sinai, the next generation is preparing to enter the Promised Land. Before they do, they need to hear the law again. That's why "Deuteronomy" is the title of the book in which our text is found. Deuteronomy means "second law." Let's now focus on our passage.

## **Text: Deuteronomy 6:4-15**

4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

7 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.

8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

10 "And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you--with great and good cities that you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant--and when you eat and are full,

12 then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

13 It is the Lord your God you shall fear.

Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.

14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you—

15 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.

Let's read together Isaiah 40:8.

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

## **Let us Pray.**

Gracious LORD, we thank you for Your Word and work of redemption throughout history. LORD, we pray that through this preaching, you would speak and I would listen. From what I hear, may I speak to your people what you want them to know. We pray that Your Word would warm our hearts and cause us to love you, obey you, serve you and worship you the only true God. And it is in Jesus's precious name we pray. Amen.

## **Point One: The Greatest Commandment is Holistic Love**

Verses 4-5:

4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

When Moses spoke these words to God's people, he knew that he would die soon. Before he dies, Moses asks the people to listen carefully because their destiny depends on this great and first commandment.

I want you to think of an elderly father who is about to die. When he tells his children his last words, do you think the children listen carefully? Yes, because whatever he says is very important. In verse 4, Moses uses the verb translated "hear." This is a serious business. The people must hear what God is saying, or they will lose the blessings God has promised.

Verse 4 contains this simple but profound statement: "The LORD our God, the LORD is one." The name "LORD" in capital letters is YAHWEH in Hebrew. This is God's covenant name. He is the King of kings. He is the only LORD, there is no other God in time or in space (Isaiah 44:6). Israel saw God and heard his terrifying voice on Mount Sinai. But they survived. They have experienced God's mercy and favor. And that is why they call Him their "LORD." It is a name of reverence for God.

Verse 4 says, "the LORD is one." God is unique and united. You can also translate this phrase, "only the LORD is one." We know that this one God also exists in three persons, united in the Trinity. In the Old Testament, the Trinity is taught implicitly. The New Testament explicitly teaches the Trinity, in passages such as Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22; 1 Corinthians 13:14, and others.

Now let's look at verse 5: "5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

Because God has first loved them, now his people can love Him, as 1 John 4:19 says. Our love for God should match the depth and width of his love for us. Therefore we are to love God with a united self: with all of our heart; with all our soul, and with all our might, strength, and power. God is telling the people that there is no one else who should receive this level of united devotion and commitment.

The marriage bond illustrates this kind of commitment very well. God's plan is that one husband gives all of himself to one wife in a permanent loving relationship. Is that the kind of marriage you want? Of course, yes. And this is the level of commitment God also expects from his people, His bride. A husband must not have another wife, or the wife

another husband. If they chase after other lovers, the result is jealousy, anger, and pain.

God does not want to share us with other lovers. Therefore, we must be careful to prevent anything from drawing our hearts away from Him. Because He alone is God, and he has proven his loyalty to us. Therefore, those who worship idols will be consumed with his jealous fierce anger. But those who commit their lives in total trust and obedience to Him will be blessed as long as they shall live.

## **Point two: What must Israel do with the words in the greatest commandment?**

Here are four things they and we must do.

1. Keep these words in your heart.

Verse 6 says: "6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart." This is a call to think of God's word as a precious treasure. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the author of Psalm 119:11 said something similar: "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."

2. Teach them to the next generation.

Verse 7a says: "You shall teach them diligently to your children..." God invites us to participate in raising the next generation of believers, by teaching them the word of the Lord.

3. Talk of them all the time and everywhere.

Verse 7b: "...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." This greatest commandment was to be their guide everywhere they went. As we read in Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path."

4. Make them portable and memorable.

Verses 8-9 say: "8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

When I read this instruction to bind God's words on their hands, I think of learning vocabulary for new languages. I have formally learned 4 languages. To learn new vocabulary, I have always required flashcards. They are portable, so I can study them anywhere and saturate my mind with the words.

God wants us to be saturated with His word. Today, we don't wrap scripture around our hands or wear it on our foreheads. But what can we do to help our hearts to remember God's Word? Where can you put verses of scripture, so that it is always present in your life? I hope you have found something that works for you. If you need ideas, let me or Pastor Chris know, and we can help you!

## **Point Three: What the words of the greatest commandment imply for Israel**

When the people arrived in the Promised Land, they inherited many blessings they did not work for. God warns them in verse 12: "take care lest you forget the Lord." God always wants us to focus on the LORD of the blessings, rather than on the blessings themselves.

The blessings of God are enjoyable if our loving commitment to God is taken seriously. Plus, Moses warned the people that if they forget the Lord and run after other gods, the Lord will put them out of the land. That is why the next verse reminds God's people to have a healthy fear of the Lord.

verse 13a: "It is the Lord your God you shall fear."

This reminded me of the second verse of the song Amazing Grace:

*"It was grace that taught my heart to fear.*

*And grace my fears relieved.*

*How precious did that grace appear.*

*The hour I first believed."*

Israel had lived in terror and fear for 430 years in Egypt. After God relieved them of the fear of slavery, He called them to the only right fear: the Fear of the Lord. This is the only fear that can remove all other fears, and provide the wisdom needed to serve and worship God.

Therefore, the rest of verse 13 says: "Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear." Because God is always truthful, His people must love and speak the truth. Their "yes" must be YES, and their "no" must be NO (Matthew 5:37). That is how one must swear by God's name. To do anything else would be taking God's name in vain and thus breaking the third commandment.

Now let's look together at verses 14-15:

"14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you—

15 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."

In marriage, a wife is to be faithful or there are severe consequences. God's redeemed people are His chosen bride,

therefore they must not go after other gods or there are severe consequences This jealousy in God is not a sinful emotion, of course. It refers to the passion God has for His holy name and His zeal that demands our devotion to him alone. His glory cannot be shared with other gods (Exodus 20:5; Joshua 24:19). He alone must be worshiped, for His glory and our good.

Conclusion and Gospel Application In this passage, we see that Israel is the redeemed people of God. God has accomplished their redemption through Moses His servant. But this is not the end of the story.

Friends, God used Moses to lead His people from Egypt to the Promised Land. But Moses only saw the Promised Land from a distance. He never entered it himself. After Moses, Joshua became the leader of Israel. By God's grace, they crossed the Jordan River. And then Joshua also died. After Joshua, the people were led by the Judges, the priests, the kings, and the prophets. And they all died as Moses did. Friends, all of these people had to come and go. Because they were only shadows of the reality. Their leadership pointed to the ultimate king and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Moses and all other heroes in the Old Testament were sinful men and so they died. They never rose from the dead. They could lead and rescue God's people in a physical sense. But because of their sinfulness, they themselves needed a redeemer. Only Christ, fully God and fully man, could save people in an eternal and spiritual sense. It is through Christ's obedience that we sinful people are able to love, obey, serve, and worship the One True and Living God.

My friends, if you are here and are wondering how you could begin to love God with your whole being, I want you to know that you cannot! Israel could not love and obey God in Egypt. And by yourself, you cannot truly love and obey God. You are still in Egypt, and lost in your sin, until you trust in Christ. This message should terrify you, my unsaved friend. But because you have heard this message, do not despair. God is merciful and abounding in steadfast love so that through the better Moses that He provided, Jesus Christ, you may be saved. Jesus is a perfect Redeemer who will bring you into the presence of God. Jesus is your only hope and help. What you must do is cry out to God for mercy in faith as the people of God did in Egypt. Repent of your sin, and trust in Christ as your Savior. Then can you joyfully and wholeheartedly love and obey God.

To those who already know the Lord, those who believe in Him, we have an opportunity to give thanks to God for what Christ Jesus has accomplished for us by his life, death, and resurrection. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, now we are to love Him and obey Him out of thankfulness and joy.

That kind of love is contagious. It must spread to others, to the next generation of believers. Just as Israel told their children what God had done, we must do the same. We show the next generation how to love God with all our heart, soul, and might, and love our neighbors as ourselves.


Let us also remember that this love is not just for those who are closest to us or those who look like us. This love extends to strangers, and even those we might consider to be our enemies.

Friends, we can only love that way because God first loved us in Christ Jesus, our Redeemer. May God's Spirit empower you and I to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, all our mind, and all our might. May He help us to truthfully, honestly, and sincerely love others as ourselves. And may He also empower us to worship and serve Him alone for as long as we shall live.

## **Let us pray together**

Thank you, Father, for speaking to us through Your Word. LORD, we pray that Your Spirit will continue to use Your Word in and through us as He causes us to see Christ and the glory of the Father. Father, help us to love Your Word as it points us to You. Help us to love our neighbors with the truth of Your Word. Lord, kindly help parents, children, single people, young and old. May we all treasure Your Word as we seek to live for you, now and forevermore. And it is in Christ's name, our Savior and Lord, we pray and believe.

Amen.

 One Voice Fellowship