

The Shema: The Law that is Love Deuteronomy 5:7 & 6:1-25

Deuteronomy 5:7

You shall have no other gods before me.

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

¹ "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, ² 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 b that your days may be long. ³ 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.

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.

¹⁶ "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. ¹⁷ You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you. ¹⁸ And you shall 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 ¹⁹ by thrusting out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has promised.

²⁰ "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?' ²¹ 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. ²² And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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.'

Introduction:

Hello, everyone. Today, I would like to start by asking you all to practice imagining something for a moment. Imagine that tomorrow, your life will end. Before you die tomorrow, you will have an opportunity to say goodbye to your family and friends. What will you say to them in your farewell speech? What kind of message, what kind of advice, what kind of things do you want to tell them?

The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' final farewell speech. The background of Deuteronomy is this: the generation of God's people, Israel, that was rescued from Egypt, has died, and the new generation of Israelites born in the wilderness is about to cross the Jordan River, and will finally enter the land that God promised to Abraham. But Moses, the leader of Israel, will die before they cross the river. The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' final words, or, you could say, his final sermon series, before he dies, in which he re-explains Israel's covenant with God and urges them to obey God's law.

Deuteronomy is organized as follows: in chapters 1-4, Moses recounts the history of Israel; in chapter 5, he recounts the Ten Commandments. Then, from chapter 6 to 26, there is a sermon-like teaching on the Ten Commandments. Today's passage, chapter 6, is about the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." This teaching continues through chapter 11, but, today, we'll only focus on 6:4-9.

The purpose of today's sermon is to urge you to love the LORD your God. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Why? Because "he first loved us."

The foundation for the first commandment is found in chapter 6, verses 4 through 9. This passage is referred to as the Shema. The word 'Shema' in Hebrew means 'Listen.' From ancient times, theologians have understood that the entirety of God's law flows out of this verse. Jesus said this about the Shema and the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves: "On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Even today, pious Jews recite the Shema twice a day. The Shema is very important, so let's read it again.

6:4 "Hear, Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

5 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

7 And you shall repeat them diligently to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you get up.

8 You shall also tie them as a sign to your hand, and they shall be as frontlets on your forehead.

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

Love Yahweh:

When we are commanded to love, I think it is important to ask *who* we are we commanded to love. In this passage, the answer is 'the LORD'. Who is 'the LORD your God'? The name we translate as 'LORD' in the original Hebrew is the name Yahweh. In Judaism, the name Yahweh is God's most holy name. It is so holy that Jews feared to say it aloud. So, when we see the word 'LORD' we can think 'Yahweh'.

So who is Yahweh? Yahweh, according to Genesis 2, is the Creator. In Genesis 6, Yahweh is the Savior who saved Noah while judging the evil of the world. He is the God who chose Abraham, the ancestor of the people of Israel, and made a covenant with him. Yahweh is the Savior who redeemed Israel through his great judgment when they were slaves in Egypt. He is the God who faithfully nourished them in the wilderness, even when Israel did not trust in Him and made their own gods. After Israelites cross the Jordan River, Yahweh will send judgment on far stronger nations and give their prosperous land to Israel, whom he loves.

Who are they commanded to love? They are commanded to love the LORD, who is all-knowing, all-powerful, faithful, and full of love for Israel. Through the rest of Deuteronomy, Moses will go on to explain God's law, but this law flows out of the character of God, who is always full of love.

The One and Only:

"Hear, Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" According to the books I read to prepare for this sermon, the Hebrew word, "alone" communicates various meanings. Today I would like to talk about one of them.

What commandment is Moses teaching about in chapter 6? The first commandment is, "You shall have no other gods before me." In chapter 6, verse 14 it says, "You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you". By chapter 11, this theme of obeying and worshipping the gods of the nations around you is repeated many times.

Nowadays, most of the countries around the State of Israel are Muslim countries. Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and so on. However, in the time of Moses, people in this region believed that there were many gods. The peoples around Israel were bigger, richer, and stronger than Israel. So the Israelites thought that the gods of those countries must be strong.

But Yahweh is not like the gods of the people around him.

In the surrounding religions, the gods were not the kind of beings that loved humans. They did not have a relationship with people, but treated them as slaves. The people believed that if they worshiped the gods, they would probably not be judged, and if they were lucky, they might even be blessed. Moreover, they didn't know exactly what the gods wanted, and it could change at any time or at any moment. Even those who faithfully and correctly worshiped these gods could never know whether the god liked them or not.

On the other hand, Yahweh chose to make a covenant with Abraham before Israel ever worshiped or served Him. He rescued Israel from Egypt before He gave Israel the Law. Like the surrounding gods, the Lord gives judgments and blessings, but unlike the gods around him, he gave his unchanging law and revealed his unchanging character. In addition to that, in the Bible, even in Deuteronomy, it says that the Lord wants to have a loving relationship with Israel. To his people, the Lord's judgments are like a parent's discipline. He may judge Israel for their sins, but if they repent, He will forgive and bless them. The Lord loves Israel and us too.

The Lord God does not need us, but He does desire to be in relationship with us. God the Almighty, God from everlasting to everlasting,, the God over all dominion, authority, power, and sovereignty, does not need anything from us. The 50th Psalm states:

I will not accept a bull from your house
or goats from your folds.
For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know all the birds of the hills,
and all that moves in the field is mine.

Yahweh's relationship with His people is not like a business relationship. All our possessions are given to us by God. Everything we can do is based on our God-given ability. The

Lord God does not need human beings like other gods do. He does not want to have a business relationship with us, but rather a loving relationship.

We are to be faithful to Him. This faithfulness is not the kind of faithfulness that is obligatory, but the kind of faithfulness that a bride has. It is a faithfulness that is full of affection. It is a faithfulness that trusts. In other words, it is love.

Yahweh had made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, and He wanted them to be faithful to him like a spouse. The God of Israel is a God who is jealous of his wife, like a husband who loves his wife dearly. The Lord is one! Just as I promised faithful love to my wife at our wedding, when we proclaim that "the Lord is the only God," the God we worship is not the gods of the Roman pantheon, or Hinduism, or Buddhism, or Shintoism, or even the gods we don't think of as gods, such as money, honor, jobs, children, partners, parents, and friends. When we proclaim that "the Lord is the one and only God," Christians are confessing that the Lord alone is our God. This is a pledge of allegiance.

Love the Lord Your God:

In verse 4 we looked at who the Lord is and that we are to be faithful to him. From here we want to consider, how we are to be faithful to Him? We find the answer in verse 5: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." This verse is the heart of the Shema. Love is the foundation of God's law. To be faithful to the Lord means to keep His commandments. So what is the commandment of the Lord? Love.

This pattern of loving with all our heart, soul, and might answers the question of how much we need to love the Lord. This pattern starts inside of us and moves outward. In the Hebrew way of thinking, the heart is the place where our emotions and thoughts are. So, love the Lord with your emotions and your thoughts. The Hebrew word "soul" means one's whole being- which also includes one's will. Lastly, love the Lord with all your might. This word "power" means physical power, and it is also related to one's possessions and position.

The Shema commands us to love God with all that we are, with all that we possess, and with all that we can do. This kind of love requires both affection and action.

The New Testament also emphasizes the centrality of love. In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, we read,

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

If we do not love the Lord, our church attendance, our service, all the good things we have done and all the bad things we have not done are meaningless. Christianity is a religion of love. We love because he first loved us. Everything we do as Christians is to be done with love.

Let us return to the Shema.

“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.

If we really observe all that the Shema commands, we will be thinking, talking and obeying God's commandments at all times and everywhere. bind them as a sign on your hand, and wear them as a frontlets between your eyes, they would remind us of the commandments throughout the day. If we wear these signs and decorate our houses with God's commandments, people will undoubtedly know that we love and serve God.

In American weddings, husbands and wives exchange rings. As a husband, my ring is a reminder of my love for my wife. When I look at the ring, it reminds me of my love, commitment and responsibility to my wife. At the same time, the ring tells others that I am married. It is a sign that I am faithful to my wife. Like the wedding ring, the Jews remembered their relationship with God when they tied God's Word on their hands and wrote it on the doors and gates of their homes, showing the world that they loved God. Even if we as Christians aren't bound by the law to tie the Word of God in our hands and to write the law on our doors, we should still remember our relationship with God and show the world that we are Yahweh's people from the time we wake up in the morning until the time we go to bed at night. Let us remember the love of Christ throughout the day and show the world the overflowing love of the Lord God.

Jesus:

I want to love the Lord so much, but in reality, I can't say that I always do. How about you? I don't love God all the time. I don't think about Him everywhere. I don't love him with all my heart and soul. I often think that my own interests and wants are more important than God. There are many times when I don't think about God's teachings at all. If you are like me, what should we do?

First, let's go before God. Confess and repent that you are a sinner who does not love God as the Shema commands. But, even though we do not love God, God does not change His sincere love for us and keeps His covenant with us. He loves us. God sent his son, Jesus, as a man. Jesus loved the Lord with all his being and lived a perfect life. When we failed to keep our covenant with God, Jesus kept it for us.

If Jesus perfectly kept the law of the Lord, Does God really expect us to keep it? Yes, He does. In the second chapter of the First Epistle of John, it says:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

The apostle John is writing this letter, in the hope that the recipients will not sin. Yet, in the very same verse, he continues with this.

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

If we confess our sins and trust in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, God is faithful to forgive us, and will give us the Holy Spirit. With The Holy Spirit our hearts can truly be changed. Thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit, we can truly love God. Unfortunately, until the resurrection, we will never perfectly love God. Even so, when we confess that we don't love Him, He is faithful to forgive us. This is the dance of Christian growth. The dance is that we confess our sins, God joyfully forgives us, and through the power of the Holy Spirit we grow to love God more and more. In other words, God is always close to us and supports us. And then the dance continues again and again.

Let us love our gracious and forgiving God.

Application/Conclusion :

In closing, I would like to consider Deuteronomy 6:20.

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?' 21 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. 22 And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. 23 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.

Honestly, I too have asked this son's question. Why do I have to love the Lord? I think Moses' answer is wonderful. I'm sure there are countless answers, but Moses' answer is to repeat the story of Israel. The story about how the Lord, out of His deep love, saved Israel. In other words, we love God, because God first loved us. The way the Lord loves us cannot be separated from the story of God. If we want to love Jesus, we need to learn and repeat God's story. Think about the story of God from morning to night, when you stand and when you sit.

You can hear God's story at church. You can hear God's story in your own home, on the train, or anytime and anywhere by reading the Bible. You can hear God's story by talking with other Christians or listening to their testimonies. There are many ways to listen to God, so please listen and consider the story of God.

Grace City Church, from this day forward, let us love the Lord, our one and only, with all our heart, soul, and strength. Let us be thankful for the grace that overflows from Jesus. Let's tell God's story over and over again to ourselves, to our fellow Christians, and to the world.

Let's pray.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father. Thank you for the opportunity to gather in church today. We have been sinners since we were children. We ignore you every day, and we don't love you the way you deserve. I'm sorry. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. We trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God. We will not forget the grace from Jesus. Thank you God for your overflowing grace.

When we go from church today, please, by the power of the Holy Spirit, remind us of your story. Please lead Grace City to your Word. May you make our hearts bloom with love for you.

In the name of our precious Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.