

The Greatest Commandment

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

April 19, 2009

Intro

At this point in the book of Deuteronomy, Israel has gathered together before Moses to hear the messages that God has given to them to prepare them to enter the promised land of Canaan. They are on the other side of the Jordan River and are just completing 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

In Deuteronomy chapter six, Moses is giving the second of five messages to the nation of Israel. These verses we are studying today are some of the most important words in the entire bible and they are also some of the most important words for our church.

What God wants them to understand is that they are not just any people, and the land across the Jordan is not just any land. This is God's land and he is giving it to them because they are God's people.

Therefore, God is preparing them by reminding them of the words of the Law that they received at Mount Sinai, but more than that, he is preparing their hearts. And these words we are studying today are some of the most powerful words they will ever hear.

Jesus himself quoted these words more than once and therefore they applied directly to us as well.

I. God Wants it to be Well with You

- 1 Notice what Moses said to them in verse 3. "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you."
- 2 These words hold a very important key to a fulfilling and satisfied life because if we do not listen, then it will not be well with us.
 - A. These are promises that come with mature faith
 - 3 There is a very important analogy here to the life of the believer in Jesus Christ.
 - 4 Israel being drawn out of Egypt is a picture of our being drawn out of the oppression and slavery of the world.

- 5 Israel's time in the wilderness is a picture of our spiritual immaturity. The manna they ate is a picture of the milk of the Word that a young believer receives while they are immature in their faith.
- 6 When Israel entered into the land across the Jordan, the land which he had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they entered into a land flowing with milk and honey. The great promises of God were connected to them being in the land.
- 7 This is a picture of Christians who are growing in their faith, who are becoming spiritually mature.
- 8 There are many promises we receive from God simply by receiving him as Lord and Savior, but there are still many more promises that we receive when we begin to mature in our relationship to Jesus Christ and these verses we are studying today give us tremendous insight into these very principles.
- 9 Paul gave great insight into this when he wrote to the church at Galatia...

Galatians 3:22, But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

2 Peter 1:4, For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

- 1 The writer to the Hebrews wrote something similar...

Hebrews 6:12, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- 2 He then went on further to describe the one who is immature in their faith...

Galatians 4:9, But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

B. Faith and love are part of each other

- 3 Moses is calling Israel to believe that these words are true and to take them to heart.

- 4 In other words, he is calling them to a maturity of faith. They must believe these words are true. They must believe that blessings will come from trusting God.
- 5 But what follows is absolutely essential to understand because he then connects that faith with the utmost love.
- 6 In other words, faith and love are intimately connected to each other.

Galatians 5:6, For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

- 7 In fact, Paul even said that if I have great faith, yet without love, it is nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:2, If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

C. God knows how to make it well

- 8 The key here is in believing that God wants your life to go well. “I have come that you may have life and life abundantly,” Jesus said.
- 9 And that He knows how to make it well. He gives the principles and the wisdom to direct our lives.

Psalms 37:23, The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way.

App – Our problem is that too often we have a very short-sighted view of what God is doing. If God isn't doing what we think he should just when we want, then we wonder if God is really working in our behalf.

- 1 Do you want to be happy? Or do you want to be satisfied? I suggest it's better to be satisfied in God.

Illus- It's the same with our own children, we want the best for them, that's why we bring direction and instruction and even correction into their lives.

II. Loving God is the Most Important Thing

- 1 You no doubt have heard the expression, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” I heard that first when I was in bible school and it has stuck with me ever since.
- 2 But what exactly is the main thing in our Christian walk? The answer is found in

these very verses.

- 3 It's about love because love changes us – we become like that which we love.
- 4 We need to love God or we will love something else. It takes a passion to kill a wrong passion.

A. Love is the highest commandment

- 1 In Jesus' day, the Law of Moses became a great burden because of the way it was being applied.
- 2 There were 248 obligations in the Law, and there were 365 prohibitions, thus making 613 commandments. These were then expounded on by Jewish leaders so that the average Jew had the impossible task of simply trying to remember what these were.
- 3 Some became ridiculous: You couldn't spit on the Sabbath because it could roll in the dirt, thus making a furrow.
- 4 Then you had the division of lighter versus heavier laws. You could break a lighter law in order to keep a heavier law. We have that principle in our modern laws today.

Illus- When Jordi was pregnant with Chelsea and woke up with a terrible pain in her pelvis... I had to run through several red lights to get to the hospital.

- 1 So when Jesus began teaching in Israel he was asked which of all these commandments was the highest of them all. He answered from Deuteronomy 6.

Matthew 22:35-40 The greatest commandment

- 2 But can you command love?

B. Love God with all you are

- 5 It's very important to see that God gave this as a commandment to them that they should love with all their heart.
- 6 If they did something for God without love, did they really do it?

Illus – It's like our own earthly relationships, if we bring flowers to our wives on Valentine's Day (it's required after all), toss them onto the counter and say, "Here's your stinking flowers," did we really honor her?

- 1 This is what God meant when he said through the prophet Isaiah...

Isaiah 29:13, Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote...”

App – That’s why it’s so important that we reach the heart of our children. Amos 3:3, “Unless two are in agreement, how can they have fellowship?”

- 7 Jesus said that out of this commandment (and the second which is like it), flow all of the commandments. In other words, if you love God, then you will want to honor Him in your life.

1 John 5:3, For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Illus – I read a story in Farm and Ranch magazine about an old farmer who used to plow with two horses, but when one died, he decided to retire the other and buy a tractor. The horse would walk alongside the tractor every day as if to say, “Plowing was what I loved to do.”

- 8 So here we understand that we love God with all our heart, as well as with all our soul, as well as with all of our mind, as well as with all our strength.

Illus – on the back of the bulletin we describe the way this truth is applied in our church.

App- We should not be one-dimensional in our relationship to God. Some emphasize only the heart, others only emphasize the mind, and still others emphasize strength – the good works they do.

C. We love because He first loved us

- 9 We are given this commandment that we should love God with all our heart.
- 10 But we love God because He first loved us.
- 11 How do we know that God loves us?
- 12 Because He answers our prayers?

Illus – Someone may say, God loved me because he answered my prayer and gave me a spouse, then ten years later they say, “If God loved me, why did he give me this one?”

- 1 God has already shown His great love.

Romans 5:8, But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet

sinners, Christ died for us.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 How much God loves us