

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT OF ALL: LOVE THE LORD DEUTERONOMY 06:01–09

Introduction

What is the greatest force on earth? Some military weapon? The authority of some world leader? The power of some machine? Technology? Economic power? Enormous wealth?

All these possess a dynamic force, enormous power. But they are not the greatest force on earth. The greatest force known to man is *love, true love*. If need be, *true love* drives a person to make the ultimate sacrifice, that of giving his life on behalf of the person or thing loved. Love is defined as affection, admiration, warm attachment, devotion, unselfish concern and loyalty that seeks the good of another person or cause. It means to hold dear and cherish, to be tender and affectionate toward some person, thing or cause.

No better description of love has ever been given than the one spelled out by Holy Scripture (1 Cor 13:4-8). In the words of Scripture...

- Love suffers long, and is kind.
- Love does not envy.
- Love does not vaunt itself and is not puffed up.
- Love does not behave itself unseemly, does not seek her own, is not easily provoked and thinks no evil.
- Love does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in the truth.
- Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- Love never fails.

The greatest commandment ever given by God is the commandment dealing with love. This is the great subject of the present passage: *The Greatest Commandment of All: Love the LORD*, Deuteronomy 6:1-25.

- I. The primary charge of God given to families: to teach children to obey His commandments (vv. 1-3).
- II. The greatest commandment (vv. 4-5).
- III. The duty of the parent (vv. 6-9).
- IV. The blessings promised to the faithful parent: Prosperity (vv. 10-11).
- V. The danger of prosperity: comfort — ease — satisfaction (vv. 11-19).
- VI. The duty to teach the truth of salvation and of the commandments to children (vv. 20-25).

I. Deuteronomy 06:01–03 The Primary Charge Given to Families

There was the primary charge of God given to families: to teach children to obey His commandments. The commandments were the very foundation of life, telling man exactly how to live. God is the great Creator, the Giver of all life; therefore,

He knows exactly how life should be lived. This was the very reason He had given the commandments to man, to show man how to live a full and victorious life. If a person obeys God, he will experience the fullness of life and conquer all the enemies who oppose life, seeking to drag him down into the pit of death. This is clearly seen in the Scripture and outline:

1. The commandments will teach you to fear the LORD: you, your children, your grandchildren — all generations (v. 2). The word *fear* means to honour and reverence God to such a point that a person worships Him. The person who truly fears God surrenders his life to serve God, to obey God just as He commands. But the word means more than just reverence and honour: it means to respect the justice and judgment of God, to fear what God can do to a person if he disobeys the commandments of God. Thus the very purpose for teaching the commandments to God's people is just this: to teach the fear of God. Believers are to fear God:
=> reverence and worship Him, surrendering their lives to Him, obeying His commandments and living exactly as He says
=> respect His holiness and justice, lest their disobedience arouse the judgment of God
2. The commandments will prolong your days, give you the enjoyment of a long life (v. 2). God has established the very laws of life to make the truth of this statement a reality. A person who obeys God will experience far less guilt, pressure and tension. These are things that eat away at life, that cause ulcers and all kinds of other emotional and physical problems. Guilt, pressure and tension sap the strength out of life and shorten life. One of the wisest things a person can do is to obey God, eliminating the guilt, pressure and tension that disobedience brings into his life. Not only will obeying God prolong your days, but also it will give you a more enjoyable or abundant life.
3. The commandments will cause all things to go well for you, give you a victorious life (v. 3). Just think for a moment: breaking the commandments of God causes all kinds of problems for a person. For example, lying, stealing, adultery and murder cause all kinds of disturbed relationships and wreck human life. Breaking any of the commandments of God causes all kinds of problems...
 - broken relationships
 - disease
 - poverty
 - wrecked lives
 - homelessness
 - divorce
 - accidents
 - bankruptcy
 - unemployment
 - death

The results of disobedience are terrible. The ravages of sin, of disobeying God, are seen within every community in the broken lives and families all around us. But this is the glorious message of this point: obeying God will cause all things to go far better. If people obey the commandments, there will be no lying, stealing, adultery or murder. There will be far fewer broken lives and families. Things will go well,

and people will live a far more victorious life, conquering all the enemies and evil of this world. A life of conquest and victory is solely dependent upon obeying God. This is the reason God gave His commandments, to show man how to live so that he could live a victorious life. Obeying God simply makes things go better. In fact, all things will go well if a person obeys God.

4. The commandments will make you increase and assure a full, satisfying life (v. 3). This was a specific promise made to the Israelites, but it is also common sense for any people. As has already been seen, obeying the commandments extends life and improves the quality of that life. Just these facts alone would increase the population of a people, make them far more fruitful. Moreover, God blesses His people, assures them of a full, satisfying life. If a person obeys God, he walks throughout life conquering the temptation to lie, steal, commit adultery and react in anger and violence when wronged by people. The point is he lives a victorious life over the temptations and trials of life. Therefore, God gives him a sense of confidence, assurance, satisfaction and fulfilment in life. He grows in love for God and for people, experiencing the fullness of joy, peace and strength of life.

***Exo 19:5** Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine.*

***Deut 5:29** Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!*

***1 Kng 3:14** “And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.”*

***James 1:25** But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.*

***Rev 22:14** “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city”*

***Mat 6:33** “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

***Mat 7:24-27** “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

DEUTERONOMY 06:02 REVERENCE AND FEAR OF GOD

“So that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.”

Deuteronomy 06:02

The word “fear” (yare) means to be afraid; to stand in awe; to revere or reverence; to dread; to be frightened or intimidated; to be stricken with a deep sense of honour, reverence, awe and worship. The word means recognizing the exalted position of a person and standing in reverence and awe of him, acknowledging the honour due the person. The word, also means the psychological reaction of fear; to be afraid of something or of some person. (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Edited by W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), p. 19). □

II. Deuteronomy 06:04–05 The Greatest Commandment

What is the greatest commandment in the law? Remember that Jesus Christ Himself was asked this question, and He answered without hesitation or equivocation. He answered with all the authority of God Himself, and His answer was an eye-opener: He quoted this passage in Deuteronomy. (See notes, Mat 22:37-38; Mark 12:29-31) The greatest commandment is this:

1. Know that “the LORD our God is One LORD” (v. 4).
 - a. He is *the LORD* (Jehovah, Yahweh). God is the great Creator, the Sovereign Majesty of the universe. Therefore, He is the Lord of all. There is not one god of the Jew (religionist) and another god of the Gentile. There are not different gods of the races and nations of the world, not a different god of Africa and a different god of India, and a different god for Arabs, and a different god for Americans and on and on. Imagine the foolishness of such an idea! Yet how common the idea is! There is only one God who created the universe and only one God who is the God of all mankind.
=> There is only one God who created all things: “One God, the Father of whom are all things and we in Him” (1 Cor 8:6).
=> There is only one God who has made all men alike: “Who made of one blood every nation of men” (Acts 17:26).
=> There is only one God “in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Mat 23:9 “And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.”

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Heb 12:9 *Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!*

Mal 2:10 *Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?*

Note this fact: as the LORD, God is the only living and true God, the God of salvation, deliverance and redemption. This means a most wonderful thing: as the LORD — the only living and true God — all people are saved, redeemed in the same way. God does not play favourites or show partiality. God does not make it more difficult for some to be saved. God is the LORD — the only One — therefore He treats all equally and justly. All people can approach God and be saved in the same way.

⇒ There “is [only] one God, who shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith” (Rom 3:30).

⇒ “There is [only] one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5).

Acts 10:34 *Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism.”*

Acts 15:9 *He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.*

Rom 2:11 *For God does not show favouritism.*

Rom 10:12-13 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same LORD is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.*

- b. The Lord is *our* God (v. 4). This is a personal relationship between a worshipper and the LORD. It is a daily experience. We are related to Him; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Therefore, we should love, adore and worship Him.
- c. The Lord is *one* LORD (v. 4). There is no other. Monotheism (one God) is the truth of God, of the true and living God. Polytheism (many gods) is a false belief created in the imaginations of people.

1 Cor 8:4 *There is no God but one.*

Eph 4:6 *One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

1 Tim 2:5 *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

1 John 5:7 *For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.*

2 Sam 7:22 *“How great you are, Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears.”*

Psa 86:10 *For you are great and do marvellous deeds; you alone are God.*

Isa 43:10 “You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no saviour.”

Isa 44:6 “This is what the LORD says — Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.

Isa 45:18 For this is what the LORD says — he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited — he says: “I am the LORD, and there is no other.”

2. Love the LORD *your* God with your whole being: your heart, soul and strength (v. 5). Love God as *your* very own God. This is a personal relationship, not a distant relationship. God is not impersonal, far out in space someplace, distant and removed. God is personal, ever so close, and we are to be personally involved with God on a face-to-face basis. The command is to “*love the LORD your God.*” Loving God is alive and active, not dead and inactive. Therefore, we are to maintain a personal relationship with God that is alive and active.

Note that Jesus Christ says to love God with all your being. Christ breaks our being down into three parts: the heart, the soul and strength.

- a. The *heart* (lebab) is the inner part, the *inner man* of a person. The heart is the seat of man’s affection and will (devotion). The heart attaches and focuses our will and devotion. The heart causes us to give either good things or bad things. The heart causes us to devote ourselves to either good or bad. Therefore, Christ says we are to love God “with all our heart.” We are to focus our heart, our affection and our will (devotion) upon God. We are to love God supremely.

Mat 6:21 “For where your treasure [object of affection] is, there your heart will be also.”

Mat 12:34-35 “...For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.” (see Mt. 15:18-19).

- b. The *soul* (nephesh) is the seat of man’s breath and life or consciousness. The soul is the life of a man, the consciousness, the breath, the essence, the being of a man. The soul is the *animal life* of a man. The soul is the breath and consciousness that distinguishes man and other animals from vegetation. The world of vegetation lives and man and animals live, but there is a difference in their living. Man and animals are *breathing* and *conscious* beings. The essence of their being is breath and consciousness. They are living souls. This is clearly pointed out in the Hebrew language of Gen 1:20: “Let the waters bring forth abundantly *living souls* [nephesh] that has life. The living souls that God created were different from the vegetation He had just created. The *living souls* were creatures (fish) that breathed and possessed consciousness.

Christ said we are to love God with *all our soul*, that is, with all our life, our breath, our consciousness. We are to love God with all the breath and consciousness, all the life and awareness we have.

- c. The word *strength* (meod) means the full strength, all the strength of a person. It means to use up one's strength thoroughly, to the point of exhaustion. We are to love God with all our strength — fully, thoroughly, to the point of exhaustion.

Thought 1. The greatest commandment is clear: we must love God with all our hearts, souls and strength.

Mark 12:29-30 *“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’”*

2 Th 3:5 *May the LORD direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*

Jude 1:21 *Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our LORD Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*

Deut 10:12 *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.*

Deut 11:1 *Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always.*

Josh 22:5 *“But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul.”*

Psa 31:23 *Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.*

III. Deuteronomy 06:06–09 The Duty of the Parent

The duty of the parent is stated by Moses in clear, descriptive terms. He laid three important duties upon every believer:

1. The believer is to place the commandments in his heart (v. 6). The commandments are to be pre-eminent in the believer's life. He is to cherish the commandments, cradle them in his heart. Simply stated, the believer is to be totally committed, wholeheartedly committed to the commandments. He is to hold them ever so near and dear to his heart.

Deut 6:6 *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.*

Deut 11:18 *Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.*

Psa 119:11 *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

Rom 10:8-10 *But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming. That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

Job 23:12 *I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.*

Psa. 119:47 *For I delight in your command because I love them.*

Psa. 119:72 *The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.*

Psa 119:97 *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.*

Psa 119:140 *Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.*

2. The believer is to diligently teach the commandments to his children (v. 7). The commandments are not automatically taught to children. Educating children is an absolute necessity. And note: education is not just teaching facts and principles, not just passing along information. Teaching is experiencing the truth personally, living out the truth before the children. It is applying the truth of the commandments to one's heart and experiencing the truths within one's own life. The children then see the truth of the commandments lived before their very eyes, and they absorb the truth, pick it up automatically. The truth becomes a part of their lives. This is exactly what Moses was preaching: the believer was constantly to talk about the commandments when he sat at home, when he walked along the road throughout the day, when he laid down and when he got up. The whole thrust is that he was to live by the commandments, experience them, obey them and set the dynamic example before his children.

John 5:39 *"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me."*

John 20:31 *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

1 Cor 10:11 *These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come.*

Eph 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

Titus 2:4 *Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children.*

1 John 5:13 *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

Deut 6:6-7 *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

3. The believer is to use the commandments as a strong witness and testimony before the public (vv. 8-9). When an Israelite was out in public, he was to bind the commandments on his hands and forehead. Within the home, he was to write them on his doorposts and on his gates. This particular charge has been literally practiced by orthodox Jews down through the centuries. They have copied four sections from the law and put these passages in leather cases and tied them to their arms and on their foreheads during morning prayers (Exo 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21). Some have also put two passages of Scripture in a metal or glass case and attached it to the right doorpost of every entrance to their homes (Deut 6:4-5; 11:13-20). (John Maxwell. *The Preacher's Commentary on Deuteronomy*, p. 128).

The thrust of Moses' preaching was that the home was to be the centre for bearing testimony to the truth of the commandments. Very simply, the believer was to place the commandments in the very core of his heart and diligently teach them to his children both by example and word. Moreover, he was to bear strong testimony to the commandments both outside and inside his home. His home was to be known as a righteous home, a home where the commandments of God were taught and lived.

Acts 4:20 *For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*

2 Tim 1:8 *So do not be ashamed to testify about our LORD, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*

1 Pet 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as LORD. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

Psa 66:16 *Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.*

Psa 145:11 *They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.*

Mal 3:16 *Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured. ■*