

Immediately after giving the Ten Commandments

Moses says, this is THE commandment.

In other words,

all the Law may be summarized in one commandment.

If you keep this one commandment,

then all the others will fall into place.

And what is that commandment?

Dt 6:4-5

So when Jesus is asked what is the greatest commandment in Mark 12:28-31,  
there is no dispute.

When Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6,

the scribe replies,

“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.”

Everyone knew what Moses taught.

He has understood the Torah--the direction, the instruction--of God.

The Law—God’s Torah--points us in the direction that we should go.

It cannot bring us into the kingdom.

But it can tell us what life in the kingdom should look like.

This scribe is different from most of the scribes in the gospels;

this scribe has understood the Law,

this scribe has learned humility and wisdom.

You can see and hear the tenderness in Jesus’ voice when he looks at this man,

this man who has sought so diligently to understand the things of God,

and says to him,

"You are not far from the kingdom of God"

Those who have truly understood what Moses teaches,

MUST seek for Christ.

But what does Moses teach?

Deuteronomy 6-11 reflect on the Great Commandment (6:4),

This is, in effect, the positive statement of the first commandment:

you shall have no other gods besides Yahweh.

What does it mean to have no other gods besides him?

It means that our whole heart, soul and strength is to be devoted to God alone.

It means that we are to love him with everything we have;

our love must not be divided between God and others.

Because if we truly love God with everything,  
that love will overflow into everything we do.

Do you love God with ALL your heart?

Does your love for him use up ALL your strength?

Is your whole soul consumed with the desire to know Christ?

--not just to know about him--

but to **know** him.

Dt. 11:22 talks about holding fast to Yahweh

as a description of the sort of love we should have for him.

This is the same word that is used of marriage in Gen. 2:24,

where Adam says that a husband,

"shall leave his father and mother and HOLD FAST (or cling) to his wife,  
and they shall become one flesh."

Our love for God should be the most passionate and whole-hearted love in our life.

Because, after all,

God loves YOU in this way.

God's love for YOU is more beautiful and lovely  
than any other love you've ever experienced.

As Paul puts it,

Christ loved the church so much that

"he gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her  
with the washing of water by the word,

that he might present her to himself a glorious church,  
not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing,

but that she should be holy and without blemish."

God's love comes with the power to change us,

to transform us into the sort of lover that we ought to be.

Too often, all we want is a God who just loves us and accepts us just the way we are!

But *there's a problem with the way we are!*

If God simply accepted us the way we are,

he wouldn't be much of a God.

But God's love takes our hateful and spiteful hearts,

and gently, but firmly transforms us.

God doesn't merely accept us the way we are.

God has an agenda--he wants to change us!

And in Jesus Christ--he has!

But if God's love for us is a love which seeks to change us,

what should our love for God be like?

What does it mean to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength?

It means to be changed.

If God loves us so that he can change us,  
then our love for God should reflect that change.

The Great Commandment, like the 10 Com, starts with who God is and what he has done  
6:4

Who is God?

Yahweh our God, Yahweh is ONE.

There is no other god besides him--therefore we are to worship him only.

All the other nations had many gods.

Israel alone had ONE God.

So Moses declares that Israel has ONE God

and ONE Commandment.

And that ONE Commandment is to love the ONE God.

But who is God?

When Moses wants to tell them who God is,

he turns to what God has done.

God has been present with his people, leading them into the Promised Land.

He is the one who has redeemed you from Egypt--from slavery to sin.

He is the one who loves you as a father loves his children.

As Moses says in chapter 4,

"what other nation is there that has God so near to it,  
as the Lord our God is to us"

The nations have many gods,

but they have no fellowship with their gods.

We have ONE God,

but we may draw near to him because he has drawn near to us.

Isn't it amazing.

Because God had spoken from Sinai,

and revealed his glory and his presence in the cloud of fire,

Moses and the Israelites think that God is near.

They Israelites tremble and fear God because he comes within a few miles,

or a few yards of them.

And yet we have been united with Christ;

and his Holy Spirit dwells in us;

but do we tremble at the thought?

are we amazed at his nearness to us?

We have a gift that Moses could only dream of--

how dare we treat it so lightly!

But notice something else:

not only is God present with us,

but he also gives his people a home.

cities you did not build

houses full of good things you did not fill

wells you did not dig

vineyards and olive trees you did not plant (6:10-11).  
That is the blessing of the Promised Land:  
to receive gifts which are undeserved.  
These blessings that God promised to the Israelites in the Promised Land,  
are fulfilled for us, first in the comfort of being accepted in the beloved,  
accepted in the body of Christ,  
and then finally, in the New Creation,  
where we will receive a City which God has built,  
houses prepared by Christ,  
not just wells, but a whole river of Living Water  
and we will come to Christ's vineyard,  
and share with him the cup of blessing  
in the Great Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

But if these blessings are ours in Christ,  
then so also the warning of verse 12 is for us:

*take care lest you forget the LORD,  
who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery*

What does this mean?

You may say,

How could we "forget" what God has done?  
We all know that Christ died on the cross for our sins.  
We all know that he has saved us by his grace.

See, we haven't forgotten.

But forgetting is not an intellectual process.

Forgetting is about worship.  
Forgetting is about love.

Have any of you guys ever forgotten your anniversary or an important birthday?

You hadn't really forgotten.

If anyone asked you when your anniversary was, you still know the date!

But for whatever reason,

as that date drew closer, other things crowded that date out of your mind,  
and you "forgot".

That's what Moses is talking about.

I won't ever "forget" that Christ died for me,  
but I can live as though I've forgotten.

Other things can crowd out Christ,  
until I act as though God is distant and irrelevant.

And THAT is idolatry.

As the Israelites get comfy in the Promised Land.

As they get used to their new homes and vineyards,

they will be tempted to worship other gods--to forget the Lord their God.

But God will not tolerate that.

He will destroy those who forget him.

He is jealous.

He doesn't like it when you forget how near and how good he is.

Loving God means remembering him,

putting him in the front of your mind,

setting your heart upon Jesus Christ,

where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Don't forget that.

In chapters 7-10, Moses sets forth three idols which Israel will face:

7:1-26            Militarism and worship of strength/power

8:1-20            Materialism and worship of wealth

9:1-10:11        Moralism and worship of self-righteousness

(“if you say in your heart”—7:17)

(“beware lest you say in your heart”—8:17)

(“do not say in your heart”—9:4)

Moses understands that idolatry begins in the heart.

Moses does not view idolatry as purely an outward feature.

Idolatry is a turning away from the true God to worship false gods.

But these false gods are not just made of wood and stone.

Chasing gods of wood and stone is rooted in an idolatrous disposition.

### **1. Militarism and the Worship of Strength/Power (7:1-26)**

In chapter 7 Moses warns against worshiping strength or power.

Moses starts by promising that God will go before them

against the seven nations of the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites,  
the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

These nations are more numerous and mightier than Israel.

God did not choose Israel because they were so powerful.

“It was not because you were more in number than any other people  
that the LORD set his love on you and chose you,  
for you were the fewest of all peoples.

God promises that he will hand these nations over to Israel,

but insists that Israel must utterly destroy these nations.

The reason for this is given in verses 3-4.

These nations must be completely destroyed

because otherwise they will turn you to idolatry.

Israel is called to be holy: they may not intermingle with idolaters.

And Israel is to destroy the power of sin in the Land.

*The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire.  
You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves,  
lest you be ensnared by it,  
for it is an abomination to the LORD your God.  
And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house  
and become devoted to destruction like it.*

God warns Israel against two equal and opposite dangers.

The first is arrogance—the idea that God chose us because we are powerful. (Verses 7-8)

It would be easy to get cocky when you win all your battles.

The history of the church is full of this one!

God blessed the early church with triumph over the Roman Empire.

And the church became too impressed with her own power.

God blessed the medieval churches with triumph over the Germanic tribes

God blessed the reformed churches with triumph over much of Europe.

And God blessed the evangelical churches with triumph over much of America,  
and indeed, through the missions movement, much of the world.

In every instance the temptation has been to rely upon our own strength,  
and to glory in the power that the church had.

And in every case the church has forgotten that God has done this because (v8).

The proper response to such triumphs is verse 9-11.

God has fulfilled his covenant in Jesus Christ.

He has seated his Son at his right hand.

His kingdom has been established in Jesus.

And now he calls you to live faithfully before him.

And when his people live faithfully—when the church trusts in his strength,  
and not in our own power,

then the blessings of verses 12-16 come true.

When it says that none shall be barren,

watch how that image of fruitfulness is used in scripture.

It starts with the literal usage of bearing children.

Isaiah 54 speaks of a fruitfulness beyond the physical bearing of children.

Paul cites Isaiah 54 in Galatians 4:27.

The promise of fruitfulness is a promise to the church.

And Paul will go on in chapter 5 to speak of the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-24)

So verses 12-16 are not a promise to Christians as individuals

(indeed, there was never a time when every Israelite experienced this),

It is a promise to the church.

It is a promise to Christ—that his people will never receive the plagues of Egypt.

And while you must not worship your own strength, or fear the power of others,  
it is also important that you don't underestimate the power of God.

And in the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

the powers have all been subdued.

Therefore you need not fear failure.

You may wage war against idolatry with confidence that you will triumph.

Both pride and arrogance AND fear and cowardice

have the same problem:

both look to the self as the source of power.

The solution for both is to forsake self.

You who struggle with spiritual pride—

you do not have the power to defeat your enemies.

Beware lest God allow you to find that out the hard way!

And you who struggle with spiritual cowardice—

Christ does have the power to defeat your enemies.

Beware lest God leave you to your fears!

The solution for both is to believe in the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead,

## **2. Materialism and worship of wealth (8:1-20)**

Chapter 8 speaks of the second of the “gods of death”

when Moses says "beware lest you say in your heart,

My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth." (8:17)

There are two parts to chapter 8:

First, Remember;

Second, Do not forget!

In verses 2-6 Moses says remember the wilderness journey.

Remember God's provision in the past.

He humbled you and let you hunger.

And then he fed you with manna,

so that you might know that man does not live by bread alone.

And in verses 7-10 Moses says remember also the future:

the promised land--echoes of Eden

Israel's hope is not simply a remembrance of the past, but it is eschatological.

Israel's hope is in what God is going to do in the establishment of his kingdom  
in the Promised Land (v7-9).

So that you may bless the LORD your God.

Remember what God has done in the past.

Remember what God has promised to do in the future.

But then, in verses 11-17 Moses says, “Do not forget.”

1. When you are in the promised land (starts with their eschatology) (11-13)

do not get complacent,

lest “your heart be lifted up and you forget the LORD your God.”

2. And then you will forget the wilderness journey in the past (v15-16)  
and the final result of forgetting (v17)  
is that you say in your heart,  
*My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.*

And then what will happen?

*And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods  
and serve them and worship them,*

*I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.*

*Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you,*

*so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.*

Parents,

what are you teaching your children about “things”?

First, how do you think about the “good things” you possess?

How do you use them?

Do you bless God for them and use them to further his kingdom?

Or do you act as though they are simply for the furtherance of your own pleasure?

How do you use your TV?

Your computer?

Your car?

Your golf clubs?

Are these things about you? Or about seeking first the kingdom of God?

If you are not sure how you are doing –  
watch your children.

They have learned from you.

How do they use their things?

Materialism is perhaps the most powerful of the gods of death in our own day.

All that you have has been given to you by God,

so that you might use it as his steward over the creation.

And even more,

so that you might embody his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

The kingdom of Christ is to be exhibited to the nations through how YOU  
conduct your economic affairs.

### **3. Moralism and worship of self-righteousness (9:1-10:11)**

Deuteronomy 9-10 then deal with moralism.

Moses warns in 9:4

*Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you,  
'It is because of my righteousness  
that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land...'*



Did God choose you because you are morally superior?

NO!!

They are being driven out because of their wickedness, it is true, (v5)

but you are a stiff-necked people! (v6) --you are no better than they

The only reason God is giving you the land is because of his promise.

The rest of the chapter outlines Israel's faults

You have been rebellious: 9:7, 24

God threatens to destroy Israel and make Moses into a great nation;

Moses denies himself, and pleads on behalf of Israel.

Don't look at these people, God, look at your promises!

Whenever you start thinking that you are doing pretty well –  
think again.

Think back to Israel in the wilderness –

think back to your own rebellion and pride.

These temptations of militarism, materialism and moralism–

power, wealth, and self-righteousness are echoed in the temptations of Christ

As Israel was tempted in the wilderness,

so also Jesus was tempted in the wilderness with these same temptations.

He is tempted to turn stones into bread.

This is not just to fulfill his own hunger,

but to feed Israel as the new Moses.

Will he turn to the idol of materialism to provide miraculous bread from heaven?

Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8

–the very passage that warns against putting ones' hope in material things

“Man shall not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”

He is tempted to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple,

in order to demonstrate to all Israel that he is indeed the Son of God.

Will he turn to the idol of power–militarism–

to impressively establish the kingdom of God

Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6

“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test”

He is tempted with the kingdoms of the world if he will only worship Satan.

Will you turn aside from the promises of God?

Will you rely upon your own righteousness (of course Jesus really was righteous!)

or will you rely upon the promises of God?

Jesus returns to Deuteronomy 6

“You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”

Jesus did not appeal to his deity.

He did not say, “Satan, I'm God, why are you even trying?!”

He did not appeal to his own righteousness.  
As the true Israel, He had to endure the temptations of Israel.  
And as the true Israel he had to entrust himself to the God of Israel.  
He had to believe the promises to his fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In other words,  
the work of Christ must be seen both in terms of Israel and of Adam.  
If you see the work of Christ in terms of Israel,  
you see how Jesus is the new Israel—the Son of God who succeeds where Israel failed.  
In this sense, he trusts his Father and believes the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But as we've seen,  
because Israel is the Son of God,  
Israel is viewed as the second Adam  
(Or more precisely, as a picture of the Second Adam)  
And so we need to see that Jesus succeeds where Adam fails.  
The temptations in the wilderness do in fact echo Deuteronomy 6-10,  
but Deuteronomy 6-10 itself echoes Genesis 3.

No, it never mentions Adam and Eve,  
but Adam and Eve were the first to “say in their heart” that the word of God  
was not necessary for life.  
They trusted their own power and righteousness,  
and did not believe that God would really judge them...

Jesus is the one who does not trust in his own power and righteousness.  
Rather, He entrusted himself to him who judges justly.  
There is no place in the Christian life for putting confidence in yourself.  
Remember your past—including the past of your ancestors.  
Remember your history—how your fathers have failed time after time.  
And how God has been gracious—time after time.

And therefore *love the LORD your God, walk in all his ways and hold fast to him.*  
Cling to him – let him be your joy and delight.

**94. Q. What does the LORD require in the first commandment?**

A. That for the sake of my very salvation I avoid and flee all idolatry, witchcraft, superstition, and prayer to saints or to other creatures. Further, that I rightly come to know the only true God, trust in Him alone, submit to Him with all humility and patience, expect all good from Him only, and love, fear, and honor Him with all my heart. In short, that I forsake all creatures rather than do the least thing against His will.

**95. Q. What is idolatry?**

A. Idolatry is having or inventing something in which to put our trust instead of, or in addition to, the only true God who has revealed Himself in His Word.