DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 6

*Love the Lord Your God*

**These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ﻿2﻿ 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. ﻿3﻿ Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. ﻿4﻿ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ﻿ ﻿5﻿ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ﻿6﻿ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ﻿7﻿ 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. ﻿8﻿ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ﻿9﻿ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. ﻿10﻿ When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, ﻿11﻿ houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, ﻿12﻿ be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ﻿13﻿ Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. ﻿14﻿ Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; ﻿15﻿ for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. ﻿16﻿ Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah. ﻿17﻿ Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. ﻿18﻿ Do what is right and good in the LORD’s sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers, ﻿19﻿ thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the LORD said. ﻿20﻿ In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?” ﻿21﻿ tell him: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ﻿22﻿ Before our eyes the LORD sent miraculous signs and wonders—great and terrible—upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. ﻿23﻿ But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. ﻿24﻿ The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. ﻿25﻿ And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.”**

**6:2** *fear the Lord.* See note on Ge 20:11. (CSB)

 *enjoy long life.* See 4:40; 5:16, 33. By obeying the Lord and keeping his decrees, individual Israelites would enjoy long life in the land, and the people as a whole would enjoy a long national existence in the land. (CSB)

**6:3–4** *Hear, O Israel.* See note on 4:1. (CSB)

**6:3** *multiply greatly*. God promised to be Israel’s God (Ex 6:7) and bless with offspring those who followed His precepts. This promise takes us back to the Garden of Eden, where God blessed Adam and Eve and commanded them to be “fruitful and multiply” (Gn 1:28). God’s original desire was for a world filled with people who love and fear Him. This original love toward God and each other allowed God to commune with them in a very special way. (TLSB)

 *land flowing with milk and honey.* See note on Ex 3:8. The phrase is used 14 times from Exodus through Deuteronomy and 5 times elsewhere in the OT (see especially 32:13–14). (CSB)

**6:4–9** Known as the *Shema,* Hebrew for “Hear.” It has become the Jewish confession of faith, recited daily by the pious (see Mt 22:37–38; Mk 12:29–30; Lk 10:27). (CSB)

**6:4** This verse, known as the *Shema* (“Hear”) for the first word in Hbr, is an early creed of Israel’s faith in God. Observant Jews still say the *Shema* twice daily, during morning and evening prayers. The text includes Dt 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Nu 15:37–41. Ambr: “We must follow the ways of the Lord, and take heed to our own ways, lest they lead us into sin. One can take heed if one is not hasty in speaking.… Be silent therefore first of all, and hearken, that you fail not in your tongue” (*NPNF* 2 10:2). (TLSB)

 *he Lord is one.* A divinely revealed insight, especially important in view of the multiplicity of Baals and other gods of Canaan and elsewhere (see, e.g., Jdg 2:11–13). (CSB)

God is unique (Hbr *’echad*) and singular in His qualities. He alone is God. This is in contrast to the Canaanite Baals that represented various powers of nature. The oneness of God does not militate against the unity of the three persons in the Trinity. (E.g., “one” is also used in Gn 2:24 to describe the “one flesh” relationship of Adam and Eve.) “God is one divine essence who is eternal, without a body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. He is the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible [Nehemiah 9:6]. Yet there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (AC I 2–3). Ambr: “[He is] unchangeable, always abiding in unity of power, always the same, and not altered by any accession or diminution” (*NPNF* 2 10:150). (TLSB)

Observant Jews still say the Shema twice each day, as a part of their morning and evening prayers, yet is not so much a prayer as a statement of faith. (PBC)

God wanted education in the faith to be a sincere thing, carved into the hearts of His people. God wanted education in the faith to be a family thing. God didn’t want His people confining it to Sabbath days, leaving it to the religious professional to conduct. Transmitting the faith to our children is primarily the responsibility of father and mother. (PBC)

**6:5** *Love the Lord.* Love for God and neighbor (see Lev 19:18) is built on the love that the Lord has for his people (1Jn 4:19–21) and on his identification with them. Such love is to be total, involving one’s whole being (see notes on 4:29; Jos 22:5). (CSB)

Hbr *’aheb*; common term for affection. God commands His people to love Him above all else. Ter: “The primordial law was given to Adam and Eve in paradise, as a womb of all the precepts of God. In short, if they had loved the Lord their God, they would not have contravened His precept” (*ANF* 3:152). (TLSB)

 *heart* … *soul* … *might*. God’s desire is that His people love Him with total sincerity, without reservation, and with all their faculties. Ambr: “First stands faith, which is a sign of wisdom.… You should give to God the most precious thing you have, that is, your mind, for you have nothing better than that. When you have paid your debt to your Creator, then you may labor for men, to show them kindness, and to give help” (*NPNF* 2 10:42). Mel: “The corrupt nature of man in this life cannot produce this perfect obedience. Doubts concerning both the anger and mercy of God cling in his heart. No one fears God as he ought. No one is so on fire with love as he ought to be” (Chem, *LTh* 2:365). “What does it mean to have a god? Or, what is God? Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress. So, to have a God is nothing other than trusting and believing Him with the heart. I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust is right, then your god is also true. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God [Hebrews 11:6]. Now, I say that whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god” (LC I 1–3). (TLSB)

**6:6** *these words*. Some rabbis regarded this as a reference to vv 4–5, but likely refers to the 10 “words,” or Commandments (5:6–21). Here God presents a restatement of the First Tablet of the Law (Ex 20:3–11). (TLSB)

 *commandments … upon your hearts.* A feature that would especially characterize the “new covenant” (see Jer 31:33). (CSB)

Always remembered and inwardly treasured. The Mishnah describes the priests at the Jerusalem temple reciting the Ten Commandments (Dt 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Nu 15:37–41; Tamid 5:1). (TLSB)

**6:7** IMPRESS – The Hebrew word shaman is a verb for sharpening by repeatedly running the blade over a whetstone. Parents are to teach God’s Word faithfully to their offspring so that God will continually dwell with His people. (TLSB) (Some commentators have said the word means to inoculate.)

 SIT…WALK…LIE…RISE – Daily living presents numerous opportunities to talk to our children about what God has done – even the most mundane events. As Christians, we should take every opportunity to discuss what God has done through Christ, no matter where we are or what we are doing. (TLSB)

**6:8–9** Many Jews take these verses literally and tie phylacteries (see note on Mt 23:5) to their foreheads and left arms. They also attach mezuzot (small wooden or metal containers in which passages of Scripture are placed) to the doorframes of their houses. But a figurative interpretation is supported by 11:18–20; Ex 13:9, 16. See note on Ex 13:9. (CSB)

Crosses or pictures of Jesus serve a similar purpose in our homes. (PBC)

**6:8** *bind them as a sign* … *frontlets*. “It is so we might have our eyes constantly fixed on them. We should have them always in our memory. Then we might do them in all our actions and ways. Then everyone may make them his daily exercise in all cases, in every business and transaction, as though they were written in every place wherever he would look, indeed, wherever he walks or stands” (LC I 331–32). Although God uses the words here to emphasize the importance of remembering His Word continually in everything everything, many Jews later took the command literally and tied phylacteries to their foreheads and left arms. (TLSB)

**6:9** *write them*. Later, Jews fastened small capsulelike containers called “mezuzoth” to their doorposts. Inside were the words of Dt 6:4–9 and 11:13–21 as a continual reminder of God’s grace toward them. “He knows our danger and need, as well as the constant and furious assaults and temptations of devils. He wants to warn, equip, and preserve us against them, as with a good armor against their fiery darts [Ephesians 6:10–17] and with good medicine against their evil infection and temptation” (LC Longer Preface 14). (TLSB)

**6:10–12** Because the emphasis in Scripture is always on what God does and not on what his people achieve, they are never to forget what he has done for them. (CSB)

We easily forget the many blessings God has provided. Material blessings can even steal our hearts away from God. (TLSB)

**6:13** Quoted in part by Jesus in response to Satan’s temptation (Mt 4:10; Lk 4:8). Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy in response to the devil’s other two temptations as well (see notes on v. 16; 8:3). (CSB)

 *fear*. This command connects with v 5, which addresses a believer’s love for God. An awe-filled reverence for God is in keeping with the First Tablet of the Law (Ex 20:3–11; Dt 5:7–15). (TLSB)

**6:15** *in your midst*. In keeping with the promise He made in Ex 25:8, God dwells among His people. (TLSB)

 *jealous God.* See note on Ex 20:5. (CSB)

In His love, God will not tolerate any unfaithfulness or the worship of a rival god (Jsh 24:19). (TLSB)

**6:16** Quoted in part by Jesus in Mt 4:7; Lk 4:12 (see also note on v. 13). (CSB)

The Israelites had tested God by questioning whether or not He was with them. Jesus quoted this verse in response to Satan’s temptation. (TLSB)

 *as you did at Massah.* See 9:22; 33:8; see also note on Ex 17:7. (CSB)

**6:20–25** God’s people practiced catechesis. Luther used this same teaching technique in his Large and Small Catechisms by asking, “What does this mean? (TLSB)

**6:20** See Ex 12:26 and note. (CSB)

**6:23** *brought us out … to bring us in.* See note on Ex 6:7–8. (CSB)

**6:25** The faith God has worked in us causes us to obey God’s commands as an act of love. (TLSB)

 *righteousness.* Probably here refers to a true, personal relationship with the covenant Lord that manifests itself in the daily lives of God’s people (see 24:13). (CSB)

Chem: “This is not a statement of Law, but it is speaking of the mercy which God bestows on the godly in this life.… Moses calls it mercy [Vulg.] because it is not given out of merit but out of grace” (*LTh* 2:644). (TLSB)

 **Ch 6** God desires to shower His people with blessings, but their hearing and following of His Word is required for Him to dwell among them. He alone is God. There is no other. Thankfully, the Father sent His one and only Son as our atoning sacrifice. God’s Holy Spirit now dwells within all believers. Indeed, we become God’s dwelling place (1Co 3:16). • Lord, we thank You for parents, relatives, friends, and pastors who speak Your Word in purity and truth. Use us now as instruments for the salvation of others. Amen. (TLSB)