

CONTEXTS FOR LOVING YAHWEH OUR ONE GOD:
A SERMON ON DEUTERONOMY 6:6–9

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Introduction

Tuesday we looked at the focus of covenant love in Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one.” Yesterday we looked at the locus of covenant love in v. 5: “And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your being and with all your substance.” Today we are going to look at vv. 6–9, which address the various contexts where covenant love is to be operative. This sermon seeks to unpack each of the four verses independently and as a unit. We are going to walk through each verse, one at a time, drawing from them a series of God-saturated, flesh-destroying, Christ-exalting Gospel-nuggets. Are you ready?

The unit in vv. 6–9 is directly linked to what precedes by the statement “And these words that I am commanding you today.” Which words? At the very least the words are what we read in vv. 4–5, which summarize the message of the entire book: “Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one. And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” You will recall the intriguing fact that in Mark 12:29–30 Jesus quotes vv. 4–5 declaring that they together form “*the most important commandment*”—not commandments. That is, in Jesus mind, vv. 4–5 are so intimately linked that there is no real love for God unless you have grasped the significance of his oneness, and there is no real affirmation of his oneness unless your life overflows in God-saturated loyalty. The two commandments “Hear!” and “Love!” are so bound together that they can be regarded as a single, Supreme Command.

(1) Love for God starts from within me (v. 6)

Now, back in 6:6: “These words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” The NIV misses Moses here, for it translates the statement, “These commandments that I give you today.” But Moses didn’t give commandments here; he gave a commandment, as anticipated in 6:1, which is also missed by the NIV, which calls Israel to keep “this commandment”—singular! “These words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” Moses’ point is this: Somehow, someday you and I need to internalize the conviction that Yahweh our God is one and that he deserves love with all our heart, being, and substance. Stated differently, Yahweh is sovereign, the only King of the universe (he is one in quantity), and Yahweh is unique in all his perfections—supremely valuable (he is one in quality), and because of this, he

deserves our wholehearted, life-encompassing, community embracing, exclusive commitment. We have to get these truths into our hearts, for as the sage said in Proverbs 4:23, “From [the heart] flow the springs of life.” It is what is inside that comes out, and if our hearts remain dead—unimpassioned, with no awakening to the greatness of God—we will not have different behavior. But if our hearts get changed, everything else changes!

Yesterday we saw that such internalization is not possible with us but is possible with God. Yahweh, the causer of all things, can do heart surgery, building within us new capacities to see and savor him, new capacities to say, “No,” to sin and yes to purity, yes to self-control, yes to honesty, yes to love. So the first point is that *love for God starts from within me*.

(2) Love for God is to be impressed upon my children in every setting (v. 7)

Intriguingly, my responsibility as it relates to loving God is bigger than just me. This was anticipated yesterday by my understanding of “might” in v. 5 to point to everything identified with me—this would include my kids. The call to love God with all my might (or as I preferred, substance) is only fulfilled when I am intentional to let my love for God impact my relationships with others—in this verse, specifically those under my care. I have heard Christian parents say, “I don’t want to indoctrinate my children but want to let them discover truth for themselves.” This is not what Moses said. He said, “Dad and Mom, teach diligently these truths about loving the one and only God.” I like the NIV here: “Impress them” upon your kids. Most of you in this room are not yet parents of biological or adopted children, but all of you are called to the task of spiritual parenting, and the same principles are directly relevant. There is no neutral zone in parenting. There is a battle being fought every day for the souls of your kids, and their worldviews are always being shaped. They will either grow up with a vision of reality that has God as the great sun in the universe of their lives around which everything else orbits, or they themselves will be in the center and God possibly one of the planets. With this in mind, Moses says, “Teach these truths diligently to your children.... Not just once; not just at Easter; but in all times and in every context.” Look back at the second half of verse 7: “And [you] shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and why you rise.”

Listen to me, if Yahweh is indeed the causer of all things and if indeed he deserves all our affections at all times, then that means *all of life* is about God—every moment of every day. Orange juice is about God. Hot fudge sundaes are about God. Sunrises are about God. “For from him and through him and *to him* are all things” (Rom. 11:36). Or as Paul says in Colossians 1:16: “For by [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or

authorities—all things were created through him and *for him*.” When you see a spring flower, it is there to draw us back to Jesus. It was created by Jesus and for Jesus. When you enjoy a volleyball game on the island, the delight you feel is a gift of God and is to result in worship. When you complete a sculpture or come to the end of a recital, pause and thank God, for it was from him and is designed to direct you back to him. He gave you the strength. He gave you the endurance. He gave you the creativity. The fact that you woke up this morning was not something you deserved; it was a gift from God. My point is this: Our goal in passionately seeking to love God with *all* should be to make every moment worship. How? When we enjoy the good of this world, whether it be a walk in the park with a special other or defeating our roommate in a video game, don’t let your joy remain at the level of this world, but raise your joy up one octave to the point of praise. All of life is about God, and as a Dad, this is what I hope to teach my kids.

And this includes the hard times. Stubbed toes are about God. Slivers are about God. Lost assignments are about God. Car accidents and cancer are about God. I could point to Deuteronomy 32:39 like I did the last two days, but I want to draw our attention today to Isaiah 45:5, 7: “I am Yahweh and there is no other, besides me there is no God.... I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity. I am Yahweh, who does all these things.” What does loving our one true God look like in the midst of pain, if indeed it is from him and through him and to him? How does worship happen when we are distressed. Here it is: Look to Jesus! “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5). It is a gift of God if he puts us in a position where we stop finding hope in things that can’t help and instead find him, who alone can meet our need. Isaiah 43:10–11: “Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am Yahweh, and besides me there is no savior.” God is exalted, and we are helped when in our distresses we look to him. There is no other place to go, and as a Dad, this is what I hope to teach my kids. Point (2): *Love for God is to be impressed upon my children in every setting.*

(3) Love for God Impacts both Action & Perception/Gaze (v. 8)

Verse 8: “And you shall bind [the words that I command you today] as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” Many of you have seen pictures of orthodox Jews in worship with small boxes strapped to their hands and on their foreheads. There are little scrolls in those boxes, and what do you think is on those scrolls? Most commonly, it’s the Shema—Deuteronomy 6:4–5. What exactly is Moses’ point in saying, “The truths of God’s oneness and of his deserving all of our lives should be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes”?

Elsewhere, when hands and eyes are brought together, the point is always action and perception. For example, in Deuteronomy 21:6–7, a man is slain, and the community

gathers and declares, “Our hand did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed.” What’s the point? “Hands” deal with actions, and “eyes” deal with perceptions or gaze. “Our hand didn’t hurt this man, and our eyes didn’t see him get hurt.” So now go back to our passage. You do things with your hands; may what you do be impacted by the truths of vv. 4–5. You see things with your eyes. You have perceptions about what is true, and you choose to look at certain things and not at others. May your perceptions about reality, and may your gaze declare you love the one true God. Scientists and historians, psychologists and educators, artists and businessmen—all who shape beliefs about reality need to do so through the lens of Deuteronomy 6:4–5. If the one supreme God who demands our allegiance is not *the* governing lens through which you to determine what is true and what is right and what is praiseworthy, then you do not see correctly. And if the one all-satisfying God, who wants to be your treasure, is not influencing what you look at, what you dream about, what you long for through your eyes, then you do not see correctly.

Turn with me to Revelation 22, and while you do, as a bridge to that text, I am going to read from Zechariah 14:9. At this point in Zechariah’s message, he is depicting the end of history, when God will set all things right, destroying evil and establishing the good. He says, “And Yahweh will be king over all the earth. *On that day Yahweh will be one and his name one.*” Here Zechariah envisions a day, when all in the world will recognize the oneness of God. God will not have changed; he is one now and will be one forever. So I think this verse is talking about how all people will one day understand him rightly, see him properly, and hear him correctly. In people’s behavior and in their perception, Yahweh will be one and his name one. No more will hearts be divided; no more will there be a battle with impurity; no more will we question whether God is really for us. I long for that day, when we will know Yahweh as one all the time and in every way.

Now Revelation 22:3–5, which portrays the fulfillment of Zechariah’s vision. We begin reading in v. 1: “No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴*They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads* (lit. between their eyes). ⁵There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”

Remember Zechariah 14:9: “On that day Yahweh will be one and his name one.” We see fulfillment. Revelation 22:4: “They will see his face, and his name (Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one) will be between their eyes.” In that day, we will no longer battle sin. Our eyes will only be God-honoring. We will not look at a guy or a gal in the wrong way. Lust will be no more. Bitterness will be no more. “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

Go back to Deuteronomy 6 with me. God is here calling us to a life where every action and every look declares his sovereignty and our joy in it. It will not happen by our striving. Only through dependence. “For from him and through him and to him are all things.” Hear point (3): *Love for God impacts both action & perception or gaze.*

(4) Love for God impacts all I do in my home & community (v. 9)

One final point. Love for the one true God is to impact where we live and where we work. Moses put it this way in v. 9: “And you shall write them [i.e., these truths of God’s oneness and our call to love] on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Loving God with our heart; loving God with our being; and yes, loving God with our substance—all that is identified with us. Etch these truths on the doorposts of your dorm room. What would this look like? Remember that what goes on within here is about God, what departs from here is to display his love. What you do in the bed, in the shower, at your desk, before the television, on the couch—all is to proclaim you love Yahweh. Private conversations and emails are to declare you love for God. Your music and movies are to declare you treasure Christ. The internet sites you look at and the Facebook posts you make are all to declare that you are mastered by no one other than the Lord. You are not a slave to sin but are mastered by righteousness. May God help us make everything about our homes declare that he is one in our affections and that our loyalty is not divided.

But also in your gates.... My ESV uses the same preposition for door posts and gates, but they are different. “Write them *on* the doorposts of your house and *in* your gates.” Don’t picture a picket fence. Instead picture what Proverbs 31:23 tells us of the man who surrounds himself with an excellent wife: “Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.” The gate of the city was the place of commerce and trade, the place of politics and policy; the place of leadership and influence. This verse is all about worship in the workplace, about what you do when you leave the security of this campus and enter the world. Whatever your vocation, be it medicine or mechanics, computer systems or human resources, government or education, every business dealing is to declare you love God. Integrity matters; love for God is at stake always. So the last point is this (4): Love for God impacts all I do in my home and community.

Conclusion

May God, by his grace, make it so for you, Northwestern. In every context, in every way, aligning with the all satisfying reality that Yahweh alone is God; that Yahweh, through Jesus, is for you; and that Yahweh can, through the grace won for us in

Christ, enable you to love him, so that when the darkness is gone and the light alone shines, his name is found between your eyes and you declare with your lips overflowing from a changed heart, “Yahweh my God, Yahweh is one.”

Closing Prayer

Father in heaven, through Jesus I ask now for a fresh mercy on all this room. Through Jesus' death in our place, you secured all grace that we would need for life and godliness. May you sanctify them completely, keeping them blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; you are faithful, and you will surely do it (1 Thess. 1:23–24). Fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by your power (2 Thess. 1:11). I pray this in Jesus', all-satisfying name. Amen.

I love you, Northwestern.