

The Greatest Commandment

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[0 : 0 0] If we could, this morning for a short while, and with the Lord's help, turn back to the book of Deuteronomy in chapter 6. Deuteronomy chapter 6, it's on page 181 in the Pew Bible.

And if we read again at verse 4. Deuteronomy 6 at verse 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

I'm sure that many of us, if not all of us, we have photo albums gathered somewhere in our homes, where we have a collection of photos with all those special moments in our life.

And maybe the idea of a photo album is maybe a bit outdated now, because we all have our photos stored on memory cards or on the computer. But I don't know about you, I've always loved looking through old photo albums, and looking at all the photos of your friends and your family when they were younger, and where it seems then that everyone was younger and everyone else was slimmer.

[1 : 3 4] But what you often notice about photo albums is that they are photos which have been taken during the occasions of those milestones in our lives.

Whether it's a birthday, the first birthday, or the 21st or the 50th, a wedding, or a wedding anniversary. And for some of you, you've had the opportunity, or will have the opportunity, to record the wedding of your own children.

Not to mention the day maybe they graduated, or they graduated from college or university, or the first time they became a parent, or you became a grandparent.

And all these happy occasions, they're all great milestones in our lives, which we like to record and we like to treasure and sometimes reminisce over.

But this morning we have the privilege of witnessing a baptism in our congregation. And I wonder if you would ever consider a baptism as one of the great milestones in life.

[2 : 4 0] Would we ever consider a baptism as a special occasion? Would we ever think that this baptism today is a great occasion, not only in the life of the Macmillan family, but in the life of our congregation and our community?

Because we can often have the tendency not to think much of baptism. We might just think it's the done thing. But a baptism is one of the great milestone events in the life of any congregation.

Because a baptism is the moment when another young life in this community is brought under the spiritual care and well-being of this congregation.

And it's not something which should be taken lightly, because we are not only doing it before God, but because it's another precious life.

It's another soul. And it's another soul which needs Jesus. And so today is a great milestone in the life of our congregation.

[3 : 47] And every baptism is. Every baptism is, not just this one. And these great milestones, they are occasions which we should treasure, in a sense, in the photo album of our congregation.

We should treasure them. And when we come to this passage in Deuteronomy, I'd like us to see that this chapter is one of those momentous occasions in the photo album of the book of Deuteronomy.

And I say that because the book of Deuteronomy was put together with the intention of recording the momentous occasion when the children of Israel left slavery in Egypt and they passed through the wilderness on towards the promised land.

And so the purpose of the book of Deuteronomy is to record all those events and all these milestones which took place during this 40-year period when the children of Israel were in the wilderness.

Because when we come to the book of Deuteronomy, we find the children of Israel, they're gathered at the River Jordan where they have been travelling through the wilderness for the past 40 years and now they've come to the border of the promised land.

[5 : 01] They're just about to cross in and what stood between them and the promised land was now the River Jordan. But before the children of Israel were to proceed towards the promised land, the Lord commanded Moses to remind the children of Israel of all that they had received from the Lord since they had left slavery in Egypt.

And in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses, he recounts all the events which took place along their journey. And I suppose you could say that Moses, he opened the photo album and he walks the children of Israel through these milestone events which took place along their journey, beginning at year 1 right up to year 40.

And so when we come to Deuteronomy chapter 6, Moses, he's only a few pages in to this photo album. But he's highlighting here the occasion and the great milestone in the history of God's people when the Lord gave the law to his people.

But at this point, the milestone which is recorded for us is the occasion when the greatest commandment was given to God's people. And what I want us to notice is that the greatest commandment was not only for the adults to uphold and to adhere to, but the greatest commandment was to be passed on to the children.

And so I'd like us to see that Moses presented to the people of God in this section, and it also applies to what we are doing this morning and as congregations, that he presented to them a milestone.

[6 : 47] And in light of our own milestone today, I'd like us to look at this milestone and see what we can learn from it. Because what I believe that it's stressing to us is the importance of the commandment and the importance of children.

The importance of the commandment and the importance of children. So we look first at the importance of the commandment. He says in verse 4, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. And as we can see, this statement begins with the call, Hear, O Israel.

And this call to hear, it's directed to every person within the covenant community. This call to listen is a call to every Israelite.

Or you could say, just to bring it into the New Testament, the call is to every man, woman, boy or girl within the church. And the call is not only to hear what is going to be said, but the implication of hearing is the responsibility of obedience.

[8 : 03] Because obedience is required on the basis of what is heard. And so this call, it would go out to everyone who was part of the covenant community of Israel.

Hear, O Israel. But what followed this call to hear was the distinct doctrinal statement, The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

And to a Jew, this statement is the most important of all statements. Because the statement, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, it's the confession of faith of an Orthodox Jew.

And this confession of faith, it's referred to as the Shema. The Shema. And for the Orthodox Jew, the Shema was understood to be the heart of the Torah.

It was the key to keeping the law. And for Jews, they insisted that the way to keep the law of God is to confess that there is no other God except the Lord.

[9 : 06] And this confession, it's still recited every morning and every evening by devout Jews all over the world where they confess, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

And this confession, it's considered to be so important to the Jews that Jewish boys are required to memorize this verse as soon as they can speak.

Where the desire of the Jews is that the first words of a Jewish boy when he speaks is that there to be the words, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

But not only that, many Jews, they hold this statement in such high esteem that their desire is to have the Shema as the last words upon their lips before they die.

And that's, the Jews, they're often found repeating it on their deathbed, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And this confession, although it may seem like a lucky charm to us that's repeated all the time by the Jews, but the Shema was the statement which it characterized the Lord's people.

[10 : 17] It characterized them as to who they were and what they were like. Because by asserting twice a day, every day, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

The Lord's people, they were not only confessing that the Lord is one. But they're saying that the Lord alone is God. And, but in that statement, they're also asserting that there is no other God besides the Lord.

There's no one else. And it was this statement which was, which distinguished the people of God, the people of Israel, from all the other nations that surrounded Israel.

Because all the other nations, they worshipped other gods and they served other idols. But this confession, it categorically stated that there was no other God besides the Lord.

And their confession was not only a proclamation to everyone else as to who was their God and who they worshipped. But it was also a promise that they would remain faithful to their God and serve Him all their life.

[11 : 27] Because they confessed that they were a people who worshipped the Lord and followed the Lord. And in a sense, that's exactly what we're doing this morning in the act of baptism.

Because in the act of bringing a child to be baptized, the child has been distinguished as being part of the covenant community of the Lord's people by a confession of faith.

Which is the confession of the parents' faith. just as it was with the Jews. And the confession of the parents' faith and their proclamation as a family is that they are declaring to everyone else in this congregation and in this community that they worship no other God apart from the Lord.

For He alone is the one that they worship. worship. But what we see here is that this declaration and confession of those who worship the Lord alone is followed by a command.

The command in verse 5, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And what we see here is that the greatest commandment calls us to love the Lord.

[12 : 44] And we are called to love the Lord in this threefold manner. We're to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.

And when Moses says that we're to love the Lord with all our heart, he's not talking about the emotions of the heart. but he's talking about the way in which we think.

Because for the Jew, loving the Lord with your heart, it wasn't an act of emotion. Loving the Lord with all your heart was an act of the will. It was your desire because it was about the mind and the choices which we make.

And so loving the Lord was about what your mind focused upon. And it's a call, this command, it's a call to a single-minded devotion to the Lord.

But Moses says that we're to love the Lord not only with our heart but also with our soul. But Moses, he's not referring to our undying soul.

[13 : 46] He's referring to our whole being. Our whole being where every part of us, every fibre of us is to love the Lord and to live in obedience to Him and to His Word.

Our whole being is to be devoted to loving the Lord and having this wholehearted commitment to Him. So we're to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strength.

And what we can see in this command is that there is this movement because Moses moves from our inner core of our being which is our heart to the outward nature of a person to the soul.

Then he proceeds to the outward actions of a person the strength. And it's fitting that Moses starts with the inward being of a person because what goes into a person must come out.

And what we are putting in will be seen when it comes out. Therefore, what we are inwardly will be evidenced outwardly.

[14 : 53] And so the greatest commandment to love the Lord is this call to absolute commitment to the Lord in every area of our life.

And this is relevant to everyone who is part of the covenant community. This is relevant to everyone who has been baptized and who has been brought into the visible church.

And if our confession is that we worship no other God but the Lord then our love for the Lord should display that. And as those who are the visible church our lives should at least reflect the distinct confession which we have made by loving the Lord.

And we are being confronted this morning with the greatest commandment because it is the key to inheriting eternal life. The Zenhold will be read in Luke's Gospel where Jesus was confronted by a man who knew the laws of God inside out and back to front.

He knew them in his head but he didn't know them in his heart. But when he came to Jesus he asked Jesus one of the best questions you could ever ask Jesus.

[16 : 14] Master how do I inherit eternal life? How do I inherit eternal life? But what's interesting about what we read is that Jesus doesn't answer his great question.

Instead Jesus answers the question with another question and he says what is what's written in the law? How do you read it? What do you think the way to inherit eternal life is?

In other words Jesus was saying to the man you know already. You know it in your head and you know what's required of you. You know the only way to inherit eternal life is to love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your strength.

You know that. You know it in your head but you don't know it in your heart. You need to know it in your heart and you need to love the Lord in your heart. And my friend this commandment isn't called the greatest commandment for no reason.

It's called the greatest commandment because it's the key to inherit eternal life. For the key to inherit eternal life is to wholeheartedly love the Lord and to live for him.

[17 : 34] It's to live for him. and this is what so many of you need. So many of you in here need. You need this above everything else. You need to inherit eternal life.

You need to be saved from your sin. You need to be brought from the darkness into the marvelous light of Jesus Christ. You need to love the Lord. You need to cast your lot in with Jesus because in light of hearing about all about the greatest commandment Jesus is asking the question do you love me?

Do you love me? And do you not love him for his faithfulness towards you? Do you not love him for the love that he has displayed to you so clearly at Calvary?

Do you love the Lord? Do you love the Lord? Because the greatest commandment and the greatest call upon our lives is to love the Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your might and then he says these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

[18 : 53] So we have considered the importance of the commandment but secondly we see the importance of children the importance of children says in verse 6 and these words that I command you today shall be on your heart you shall teach them diligently to your children shall talk of them when you sit in your house when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise and what we can see in these verses is that the greatest commandment is now applied to the people of God and the importance of the commandment it's applied by stressing to the parents the importance of children and it's the application which makes us see the solemnity and the responsibility of adhering to the greatest commandment because this commandment is given to the parent it says in verse 6 in relation to the commandment and these words that I command you today shall be on your heart the responsibility of being obedient to this commandment is that it's to be written on the heart of every parent where we're being told that every person who is in the visible church these words shall be on your heart and what we can see here is that it's not only the parents who are to love the Lord but their responsibility because of their confession is that they are to teach their children to love the

Lord because the promise is to us and to our children the promise is to us and to our children so our first responsibility as adults and as parents is to our own soul our first responsibility is to our own soul we must love the Lord we must be committed to him this commandment must be written upon our heart and we are not to neglect this teaching because we cannot teach something to our children which we do not adhere to ourselves first that would be hypocrisy because we cannot truly teach our children to love the Lord if we do not love him in our own heart first we can't truly teach our children to follow the Lord if we don't exemplify what it looks like to follow the Lord in our own lives because my friend the best thing we can do for our children as parents is to love the

Lord and to follow him the best thing we can do for the next generation in our congregation is to be faithful to the Lord the best thing that we can do as those who hear the precious message of eternal life is to adhere to it ourselves and share it with our children then be obedient to the Lord love the Lord follow the Lord be faithful to the Lord during these precious years when your children are under your care but whatever you do please please do not take your children to hell with you please yourself do not take them to hell with you don't do it to them and don't do it to yourself.

But I just wish to remind you as I remind myself, our confession when we baptize our children and when we bring them into the visible church is that we're saying our desire as parents is that we want our children to be saved.

We want our children to be converted. We want them to inherit eternal life. Yes, we want them to be brought up in the church and we want them to go to Sunday school and we want them to hear the gospel.

[23 : 17] But when you bring your child for baptism and for those of us who have done it already, we have vowed before God by saying, my desire is to see my child converted.

My desire is to see my precious child come to love the Lord with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their strength. My desire is that they will inherit eternal life.

But our confession when we baptize our children and bring them into the visible church is that we are saying, I am going to teach them how to do that.

I am going to teach them how to love the Lord. I am going to teach them how to follow the Lord and how to be faithful to the Lord. And what these verses emphasize to us is that most of our teaching must take place in our home.

Because it's all good and well bringing our children to church and encouraging them to come to Sunday school. And I just want to say, it's so encouraging to see so many children coming to Sunday school.

[24 : 27] And I'm so thankful that you are bringing your children to Sunday school. It's great to see so many of them. And I'd encourage you to keep bringing them.

But as you know, Sunday school is only one hour a week. And the church services, they only take up two hours in a 168 hour week.

It's not much. Which makes me wonder why some of you don't come to church in the evening as well as the morning. Because on the whole, church and Sunday school, they only take up a small part of our time.

They are a very significant part and an important part. But they are only a small part of our responsibility to teach our children to love the Lord.

Because what verse 7 reminds us is the importance of our homes. And the teaching which must take place in the home. You shall teach them diligently to your children.

[25 : 30] You shall talk of them when you sit in your house. And when you walk by the way. And when you lie down. And when you rise. We are to teach our children diligently.

We are to speak to them about loving the Lord in our home and in our family. And you might be saying to yourself, I'm not even a church member.

I don't profess to be a Christian. How can I be expected to do all this? But that's what it was like for the people of Israel.

Because not every person in the covenant community of Israel was a believer. But it was because they were part of the covenant community. And they confessed that they were part of the covenant community.

And that they only worshipped the Lord. Therefore the responsibility which was put upon them was the same. They were to teach their children how to love the Lord.

[26 : 29] And the same is true of us when we baptise our children. Our responsibility is to teach our children about the Lord and about loving the Lord. And we're to teach them in our daily lives.

And as it says, when we lie down and when we rise. And you know, I cannot help but apply this teaching. The teaching of when we lie down and when we rise.

I can't help but applying it to the neglected practice of family worship. We take time as a family to begin our day with the Lord and to end our day as a family with the Lord.

By reading the Bible and praying even if it's the Lord's prayer. Which many of us learned in school. We can sing with our children. And there are so many children's Bibles today and children's books to help us and to help us teach our children how to love the Lord.

And they're there to help us and to encourage us to teach our children to love the Lord. Lord. But above all else, I want you to know that when I speak to you about this, I speak to you not only as your minister, I speak to you as a parent.

[27 : 47] Because I know that it's not easy. It's not easy. It's not easy to bring up children. It's not easy to teach children.

And it's not easy especially to teach children about loving the Lord. Because there are so many other views which we are bombarded with and the ideas that are presented to us in our day and generation.

And it's not easy when our lives are so full and there's other things and other distractions and activities that our children are involved in which isn't a bad thing. It's a good thing.

But despite all the difficulty of it and all the distractions, this is what we have promised to do for them. This is what we have promised to do for them.

And I'm certainly not saying that I'm the perfect parent because I'm not. But what I am saying is that our love for the Lord should not only make us want to teach our children about the Lord, but our love for the Lord should be what drives us to ensure that we are teaching our children as best as we can.

[28 : 58] And by the grace of God we are teaching them to love the Lord. And my friend, our responsibility to teach our children to love the Lord in this generation is so that they in turn will teach the generation that is yet unborn to praise and to magnify the Lord.

So on this milestone occasion in the life of our congregation we are being reminded today of the importance of the commandment. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength.

And we are being reminded of the importance of children. The importance of the commandment and the importance of children. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee that Thou art the one who gives to us instruction. We realise, Lord, how much we faint and fail.

But we are so thankful that Thou art one who fails us never. And we pray, Lord, that we would take the instruction to heart. We would learn in the school of Christ from a great Master and a great Teacher.

[30 : 18] Teach us, Lord, to be better parents. Teach us, Lord, we plead, O, to bring up our children loving Thee. But help us, Lord, to love Thee first.

To say like Peter of old, Lord, Thou knowest, Thou knowest that I love Thee. Bless us, Lord, we plead. Lead us and guide us into the rest of this service that Thou wouldst have all the glory and Christ all the preeminence.

Do us good, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, for only a few moments before we proceed with the sacrament of baptism, I'd like us to speak or to talk about the importance of baptism, only for a few moments.

We've looked already this morning at the importance of the commandment and the importance of children, but I'd like us to consider the importance of baptism.

And I'd like to do so under four simple headings. Plan, purpose, promise, and prayer. Plan, purpose, promise, and prayer.

[31 : 29] So first of all, plan. The plan of baptism is that it is God's plan. For baptism, it's a sacrament which is instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there are only two sacraments which Jesus instituted. The sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And so we should view baptism as God's plan for the church.

because the command to baptize was given by Jesus to the disciples. And that's our scriptural warrant for what we are doing this morning. Because in the closing words of the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28, verse 19 and 20, Jesus said, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. So that's the plan of baptism. God planned baptism. But then there's the purpose.

The purpose. Because when we sprinkle water at baptism, what do we say? What is our purpose? Well, we're saying first of all that the water which the child or if an adult was here, the child or the adult is baptized, it's just water.

[32 : 54] It's not mystical water that will change the child in any way because baptism, it doesn't save us. It doesn't make us a Christian. It doesn't guarantee that we will go to heaven.

Instead, the purpose of baptism and the sprinkling of water is to highlight, as we said with the children, it's a symbol of cleansing because the water at a baptism, it's a sign, a sign of cleansing which Christ alone can give by believing on him.

For it's not the water at baptism which cleanses us from our sin, but the Bible clearly says to us that it is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from all sin.

But the water at baptism not only signifies cleansing, it's not only a sign, but it also seals. It seals our engrafting into the church, into Christ, where we are made part of the visible church and brought under the spiritual care and oversight of the church and encouraged by the church and informed by the church how to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And that's done by a promise. So plan, purpose, promise. The promises which are made at baptism are vows before God. They are solemn oaths which we make before God.

[34 : 22] And because they are before God, I will ask Ian to stand while he makes his vows. But as we've said already, what we are promising is that we worship no other God but the Lord.

And that our desire is that our children will come to faith in Jesus Christ. That they will come to love the Lord for themselves. And when Ian takes his vows, it's a good opportunity for us for those who have baptised children, it's a good opportunity for us to remind ourselves of the vows that we took when we baptised our children.

It's a good opportunity to remember what we have promised and what we have said before God and that where we have failed the Lord because we all fail but where we have failed we should seek forgiveness and desire by the grace of God to uphold our vows more diligently and more faithfully.

Plan, purpose, promise and prayer. Prayer is the most important part. And the responsibility of prayer is not only upon the family or the parents and the minister to pray for the children but we as a congregation who are witnesses of this momentous occasion in the life of our congregation we are responsible for praying for the children in our congregation and even the children who have grown up in this congregation and you know when our children grow up and when they leave our homes and if they have their own families and maybe if they rebel against the Lord and turn their back upon the church prayer is the responsibility which remains prayer is the responsibility which remains because sometimes nothing can be said to them but we can pray to the

Lord that they will come to know the Lord and come to love him for themselves so that is in a few words the importance of baptism plan purpose promise and prayer we can now sing in psalm 102 before we continue with the sacrament of baptism psalm 102 in the scottish psalter page 368 singing from verse 13 down to the verse marked 18 it's in the second version of the psalm psalm 102 psalm 102 verse 13 thou shalt arise and mercy yet thou to mount zion shalt extend her time for favor which was set behold is now come to an end down to the verse marked 18 the afflicted's prayer he will not scorn and all times this shall be on record and generations yet unborn shall praise and magnify the

[37 : 33] Lord these verses of psalm 102 to God's praise so shalt arise on earth the earth the doom and star yon shalt extend her time for labor which was said behold is now come to my air thy sins take pleasure in her souls for any dust to bend is dear all ye heavens and kingly hold on earth thy glorious nature appear for day his glory shall appear when trials rebuilds and prepare he shall reward the men this year unto the need he come the fears thou please this fear he will not

Lord p o t UN he child be conjunction thine ■■■■■ convert Lord.

Lord. Lord.

Lord. Lord. We give thanks to you. That we are able to stand before one who is holy. Who is that holy.

And our Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We bless you Lord for these great privileges. Of bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And help, Lord, this family to do so.

[41 : 18] We have all that we seek to do for the Father and the Father. Lord bless us and speak to you. Remember us and speak to you. And Lord remember all the descendants of them.

We ask us Lord as we continue in the administration of the sacrament. Let all repeat for thy glory. And the furtherance of thy kingdom. Cleanse us and hear us. We seek to see.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

One God, the Lord bless you, the Lord keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. Send us again in our hearts and pray for this prayer.

[42 : 24] Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to you that O one who brings us from darkness unto thy own marvelous light. And we do pray that in these momentous occasions of baptism.

And that will be the experience of Kenneth John. We ask, Lord, that thou in thy grace and thy mercy for the thou in years to come who is bringing from darkness into thy own marvelous light.

If it please thee, Lord, remember Lord Ian and Andrew as they seek to bring up their little boy and the fear and admonition of the Lord. And we do ask that thou in his heart that we might encourage him that thou hast blessed them, Lord.

Remember their home and their family that these covenant blessings would be to our son's family. Remember, Lord, that thou hast blessed them, Lord. And that, Lord, that thou hast held those livingress and through us to be so■ Altvinus as they mash up and h voted in us because of us do us good and be good in us and we need for us of Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you.

[43 : 55] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. birth, O Lord, before they came to me.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.