

Rooted

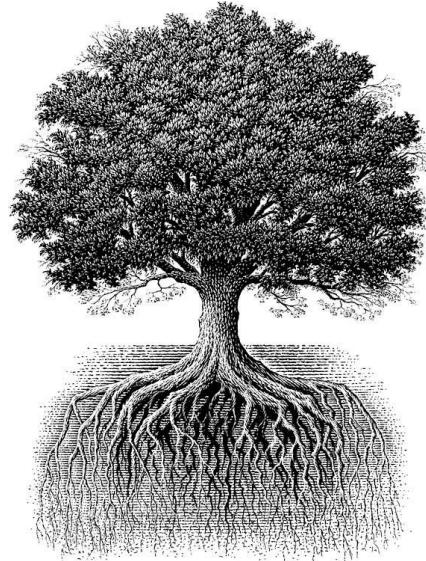
Introduction: "These Words Shall Be Written On Your Heart"

Deuteronomy 6

Today we are beginning a new series of messages entitled "Rooted." The purpose of this series is to make disciples of the Lord Jesus at Covenant Presbyterian by rooting us deeply in the fundamental doctrines and practices of the Christian life. This series of sermons will be based upon Martin Luther's recommended catechism; a pattern followed in the Westminster Standards: The Apostle's Creed, The Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. To that list we will also add a series of messages on the Five "Solas" of the Protestant Reformation.

The meaning of Deuteronomy is "second law" (*Deutero / Nomos*). The Book of Deuteronomy is Moses' preaching of the Ten Commandments to God's people during the Exodus; a sort of second giving of the law. For God's people, the law is something in which to rejoice. This is so because God's law functions in a number of blessed ways. First, God's law reveals something about the holiness and goodness of God. Second, God's law drives sinners to repentance as it uncovers their sin. Third, God's law helps to guard society from the full onslaught of sin. And finally God's law provides His people with the way in which to live for His glory.

Main Idea: Love the Lord your God for He has saved you by His grace.



Vv. 1-3 – In chapter five, Moses restates the 10 Commandments. Chapter six is a continuation of what has previously been written – "Now this is the commandment..." This section is characterized by motivating factors: "that you may do them," "that you may fear the Lord your God," "that your days may be long." Verse 3 reminds us that God is taking a *quid pro quo* approach to salvation with his people. While God promises blessings for obedience and warns against disobedience He also reminds them that the Land of Promise is already theirs.

Vv. 4-9 – The *Shema* seems best understood as equivalent to the declarations of monotheism in Deut 4:35 and 32:39 (cf. 1 Chron 29:1). But more than a profession of there being only one God, the *Shema* acknowledges the undivided nature of God. He is unadulterated by anything outside his own perfection and purity. That Yahweh is God calls forth exclusive and intensive devotion. Jesus called the command to love God "the first and great commandment" (Matt 22:37-38; Mark 12:29-30; cf. Luke 10:25-28). It is the heart principle of all the covenant stipulations. Love for God is to be the animating principle of our lives as if it was bound to our head and hand and placarded to the doorpost of our home.

Vv. 10-15 – In Canaan the temptation to idolatry would be fierce, since the claim made for the gods of that region was that they were the bestowers of fertility and abundance in the land. Such is human perversity that Israel, satisfied with the material plenty of a plundered culture, would be inclined to honor the claims of their victims' idols and forget the claims of the Lord who had saved from Egypt and given victory in Canaan. God explicitly forbade entanglement with the gods of Canaan. He would indeed jealously guard the honor of his name (v. 15).

Vv. 16-19 – "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." God expects his people to give careful attention to the covenant stipulations. Half-hearted obedience is not acceptable. They must not live as though God will not act upon his warnings.

Vv. 20-25 – "When your son asks you..." Seeing generations come and go had lengthened Moses' perspective. His interest was not confined to the present assembly of Israel but took in the long future of God's kingdom (vs. 2). Crucial to the well-being of the covenant community would be the faithful nurture of the children in the message of God's redemptive actions and purposes for his people. God's giving of the Law furthered the purposes of mercy by revealing the path of righteousness, which being followed would lead to divine favor and blessing.

"And it will be righteousness for us" (vs. 25). This verse does not present a works principle of salvation. The stress falls on the function of God's law as disclosing the standard of conduct which is righteous in God's sight, a love for which is prerequisite to blessing but does not constitute meritorious salvation.

1. God's Great Proposition

Vs. 4 – "Hear, O Israel the Lord our God, the Lord is one..."

- *Shema* is a Hebrew word that means "Hear." God created his people to be an auditory lot. We are intended to live not simply on bread but by "every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). From the beginning of his covenant with Abraham God has been made his people by, assembled his people for, and sustained his people by his word. The Scriptures testify that God is still saying to us, "Hear!"
- At Sinai God introduced himself to his people by beginning with the most fundamental doctrine of the Bible: There is only one God and he alone must be worshipped. The *Shema* recapitulates the first commandment. It was a bold announcement in a world filled with idols. The pagan nations we characterized by polytheistic religions. It was very difficult for the mind of man to conceive of a world that did not require multiple gods.
- Christianity begins and is sustained by propositional truths. It is true that Christianity is more than just propositional truths. But it is never less.

2. God's Great Commandment

Vs. 5 – "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your might."

- God calls his people into relationship. The point of the law is not to merely provide boundaries for behavior. The law was given to show God's people how to love him. It was given to show them how to live for God's glory. That is why the promise that the law of God will be upon their "hearts" (vs. 6). This prefigures the New Covenant promise that God will write his law upon the hearts of his people (Jer. 31:31-34).
- Vs. 7: God works through families to pass along the covenant promises. Christian parents must not take a passive role in the discipleship of their children.
- Vv. 8-9: For the figurative use of such language, see Exodus 13:9,16. A literal practice of the injunctions of verses 8-9 became popular among later Jews in the form of the *phylacteries* worn on the body (cf. Matt 23:5) and the *mezuzah* affixed over the doorpost. However the point being made is that the law of God shall have pre-immanence in our thinking, our willing, and our households.

3. God's Great Promise

- Vv. 3b, 21-23 – "as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has *promised you*, in a land flowing with milk and honey... 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the LORD *brought us out* of Egypt with a mighty hand... And *he brought us out* from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers.'
- The law of chapter six along with the promises of blessing and cursing are bracketed with reminders of what God has already done for the salvation of his people. In other words, the law is not announced until after God has graciously saved his people. We are reminded of this pattern at Sinai when the law was given only after God had graciously saved his people. While God blesses obedience, he has determined to save his people by grace alone.