

"Remember the Sabbath to Keep It Holy, Part 11"
(Exodus 20:8-11)

Introduction: We come now to the concluding sermon in our series on the Sabbath. I think that it was necessary for us to spend so much time on this subject, for it is one that has all but been forgotten by a majority of churches today. As fallen sinners, we are so apt to adopt a way of life which best agrees with our own desires, and not those of the Lord. If we hear that such and such a church does not do something, or if so and so teaches that the Lord does not really require such strict adherence to something, we are so quick to adopt the easier path. We are like Christian and Hopeful who, wanting to get off of the straight path because of its difficulty, step into by-path meadow and are soon brought under the power of the giant called Despair. You must realize that the Christian life is not a life of ease and enjoyment. It is a life which is filled with joy, peace and love in knowing the true and living God, and being in fellowship with His Son. But it is also a life of hardship and self-denial. It is a life of warfare and struggle. It is a life which will cost you everything you have if you are to walk on it. It is a life which is opposed to that of the world. We should not be surprised then if the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath, is unlike the Sundays which the unregenerate and heathen observe. It is not a day like the rest of the week. It is a holy day, in which we set aside everything in order to honor the God who sent His only begotten Son to die for us, that we might live for Him.

Well we have seen the divine institution of the Sabbath at Creation, and we have seen its change when Christ brought in the New Creation. We have dealt with its divine purposes and with its holy requirements. This evening, I want us to consider just one more item with regard to its observance, and then close with a few admonitions to keep the day holy. And what I want you to see is,

The day is holy and is to be wholly set apart to commemorate the life, death and resurrection of Christ. We should do nothing therefore on this day which would distract us from this holy purpose.

- I. *There Are Many Memorials which the Lord Gave to His People in the Old Testament, But in the New, There Are Only Two.*
 - A. *The Old Testament Contains Many Events that Were Commemorated in Some Way.*
 1. *Some were commemorated by way of feasts.*
 - a. *The feast of Passover was to commemorate the Lord's redemption of His people out of Egypt and His final plague which took the first-born of the Egyptians, but passed over the faithful Jews (Lev. 23:5-8).*
 - b. *The feast of Booths was to commemorate their wilderness wanderings, "SO THAT", as the Lord told them, "YOUR GENERATIONS MAY KNOW THAT I HAD THE SONS OF ISRAEL LIVE IN BOOTHS WHEN I BROUGHT THEM OUT FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT (Lev. 23:43).*
 - c. *And the feast of Purim was to commemorate the Lord's miraculous deliverance of His people from the hands of Haman the Agagite during the time of queen Esther (9:17-32).*
 2. *Other events were commemorated in other ways.*
 - a. *The Lord commanded Joshua to take twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, one stone for each tribe, and to lay them down in the place where they were to spend the night.*

The reason was, as Joshua said, was to "BE A SIGN AMONG YOU, SO THAT WHEN YOUR CHILDREN ASK LATER, SAYING, 'WHAT DO THESE STONES MEAN TO YOU?' THEN YOU SHALL SAY TO THEM, 'BECAUSE THE WATERS OF THE JORDAN WERE CUT OFF BEFORE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT OF THE LORD; WHEN IT CROSSED THE JORDAN, THE WATERS OF THE JORDAN WERE CUT OFF.' SO THESE STONES SHALL BECOME A MEMORIAL TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL FOREVER" (Joshua 4:6-7).

- b. After the children of Israel defeated Amalek through the uplifted hands of Moses, as he was supported by Aaron and Hur, "THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, 'WRITE THIS IN A BOOK AS A MEMORIAL, AND RECITE IT TO JOSHUA, THAT I WILL UTTERLY BLOT OUT THE MEMORY OF AMALEK FROM UNDER HEAVEN.' AND MOSES BUILT AN ALTAR, AND NAMED IT THE LORD IS MY BANNER; AND HE SAID, 'THE LORD HAS SWORN; THE LORD WILL HAVE WAR AGAINST AMALEK FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION'" (Ex. 17:14-16).
- c. There were many such memorials which the Lord gave His people in order to keep before their eyes His wonderful works.

B. But What Is Important to Our Subject This Evening Is That in the New Testament, the Lord Has Left Us With Only Two Memorials: The Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day.

- 1. He does not commemorate every event in the life of the Savior, or in the life of His church. Rather, He leaves us with memorials for the two most significant and pivotal events in redemptive history.
- 2. Think for instance of the language which Christ uses when He instituted the Lord's Supper.
 - a. After He had taken the bread and gave thanks, "HE BROKE IT, AND GAVE IT TO THEM, SAYING, 'THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS GIVEN FOR YOU; DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME'" (Luke 22:19).
 - b. "IN THE SAME WAY HE TOOK THE CUP ALSO, AFTER SUPPER, SAYING, 'THIS CUP IS THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD; DO THIS, AS OFTEN AS YOU DRINK IT, IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME'" (1 Cor. 11:25).
 - c. The commandment is to do this to remember Him, to remember His sacrifice on our behalf.
 - d. It is to constantly bring before the mind of the faithful the death of our Lord, the price that was paid to set us free from our sins and to bring us life.
 - e. This is one of the two main things which the Lord directs us to remember and gives us a memorial to help us.
- 3. The second is found in the Lord's Day.
 - a. The fourth commandment, which is still in effect today, reads, "REMEMBER THE SABBATH TO KEEP IT HOLY."
 - b. Though the day has changed because of the work of Christ, yet the commandment has not. One of the things which is commanded here is that of REMEMBERING the Sabbath.
 - c. And so we are to remember it, so that it can remind us of what Christ has done for us. On this day He was raised from the dead, and death no longer had any hold on Him.
 - d. And because He lives, we shall also live with Him. Christ conquered death not only for Himself, but for all His people.
- 4. These memorials were so important that the Lord attached His name to them to signify this fact.
 - a. It is important therefore that we observe them.
 - b. You should let them, as Peter says, stir up "YOUR SINCERE MIND BY WAY OF REMINDED" (2 Peter 3:1).

- c. As often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you remember the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26).
- d. Every Sabbath you are reminded of His resurrection from the dead.
- e. I believe that the Lord has given both of these to us to observe each week in order keep us from forgetting what He has done to save our souls.
- f. These are the only memorials He has given to us, except for the one instance of the woman who poured the perfume over His head, anointing His body for burial. He promised that everywhere this gospel was proclaimed, what she had done would be spoken of in memory of her (Matt. 26:13).

II. Seeing that the Lord Has Given to Us These Two Memorials, It Is Important that We Do Not Add to Them, or Take Away from Them.

- A. We Add to the Lord's Memorials When We Make Memorials Out of Events that He Has Not.
 - 1. Remember, the Lord has given us two memorials to commemorate what He wants us to remember.
 - 2. But in many churches today, we have added at least two more memorial days, and in some churches, we have added more.
 - a. Can you think of what these days might be?
 - b. If I were to ask you what were the most special days in the year on the church calendar, what would you say that they are? As a hint, they are also the days when most of the unchurched would have the best possibility of attending. If you said Christmas and Easter, you were right.
 - c. Those of you from a Christian Reformed background also have other days which commemorate certain events in the life of our Savior and of the Lord's Church: Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Ascension Day and Pentecost.
 - d. The Roman church, which has carried the idea of memorials to the extreme, has a day for just about everything that has happened both in Christ's life and in the life of the church throughout history. They have even built churches on just about every site where the Lord was thought to have done anything.
 - 3. But when we celebrate these other events, and make them special high church days, our eyes are drawn away from the memorials of the Lord, and they are made less significant.
 - a. Now these events celebrated by the churches are important events to be sure. And I certainly do not want to leave you with the impression that they are not. But the fact is that the Lord, in His wisdom, has nowhere given us any indication that He wanted the day of Christ's birth, or the day in which He entered Jerusalem for the last time, or the day of His death, or the day of His ascension, or the day in which He poured forth of His Spirit commemorated by a special day or worship service.
 - b. He has rather given us one memorial day, and one memorial sacrament, to remember all of these things. And He wants us to remember these events, not once a year, but every week.
 - (i) On the Lord's Day, we are celebrating the Lord's birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of God. In short, we are celebrating the Lord's person and work.
 - (ii) It was on this day that the Lord was raised from the dead, and it was apparent to all the faithful that His sacrifice had been accepted on their behalf.

- (iii) This is a day in which His children should rejoice, as the psalmist wrote, "THIS IS THE DAY THAT THE LORD HAS MADE. I WILL REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT" (Ps. 118:24).
 - (iv) And since the event of His resurrection is so closely tied to that of His death, and since He would have us to remember the resurrection of our Lord every week, I believe that this gives us an even stronger ground to remember His death each week through a weekly communion.
- c. If your answer to my earlier question about which day is the most special in the whole year was not the Sabbath, but was Christmas or Easter, then you can see that these extra days have already taken away from its significance. But that is not what God wants. "REMEMBER THE SABBATH TO KEEP IT HOLY."
 - d. This is the day which He wants us to remember. This is the day that He, both through divine command and worship, has shown us that He wants us to gather for worship.
 - e. Samuel Rutherford, the great Scottish Presbyterian pastor and theologian of old, wrote to his congregation while away, "Remember that I forewarned you to forbear the dishonoring of the Lord's blessed name, in swearing, blaspheming, cursing, and the profaning of the Lord's Sabbath; willing you to give that day, from morning to night, to praying, praising, hearing of the word, conferring, and speaking not your own words but God's words, thinking and meditating on God's nature, word, and work; and that every day, at morning and at night (at least), ye should sanctify the Lord by praying in your houses, publicly in the hearing of all . . . And that no day besides the Sabbath (which is of His own appointment) should be kept holy, and sanctified with preaching and the public worship of God, for the memory of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and ascension; seeing such days so observed are unlawful, will-worship, and not warranted in Christ's word. And that everything, in God's worship, not warranted by Christ's Testament and word, was unlawful" (Letters 522).
 - f. Whenever we create other days to commemorate, it takes away from the special character of the Sabbath.
- B. But We Also Take Away from His Memorials When We Seek to Celebrate Other Things Alongside of or in Place of that Event Which He Is Commemorating.
- 1. It is not uncommon in the church to celebrate just about anything on the Lord's Day.
 - a. Whatever special day happens to be on the yearly calendar, eventually it will also be celebrated in the church.
 - b. Members want to honor mothers on Mother's Day, fathers on Father's Day, and married couples or unmarried couples on Valentine's Day.
 - c. If it is Easter, there is the sense that Easter decorations are needed. If it is Christmas, that the church have seasonal trim.
 - d. Birthdays and anniversaries are also celebrated on the Lord's day in churches, with good intentions no doubt.
 - e. Many of these things are true here.
 - 2. But as well intended as these things may be, if they are celebrated on the Lord's Day, they take away from the honor which the Father is seeking to confer on His Son.

- a. The seasonal trim draws the mind away from the Lord to the secular holiday which it represents.
- b. The celebrations of birthdays and anniversaries draw the attention to those who are celebrating them, rather than to Christ.
- c. Now I am very thankful for each one of your birthdays and anniversaries, and I pray that the Lord will bless you with many more of them. And I certainly don't mind thanking the Lord on the Sabbath that He has so blessed you. But when the celebration focuses on the person and their event, rather than on the Lord, as celebrations often tend to do, then I believe that it is a violation of the holiness of the Lord's Day. I would never put my birthday or anniversary on a par with the resurrection of Christ, or any part of His life. And I know that you would not do so either. But when you celebrate your birthday on the day which He has devoted to Himself, I think that the result is the same.
- d. We must be careful not to introduce anything on the Lord's Day which draws the attention away from His honor and glory, and this applies not only to the worship service itself, but to the whole day.

C. In Closing, I Just Want to Leave You with a Few Exhortations.

- 1. First, be thankful that the Lord has made such a day for you.
 "THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, AND NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH"
 (Mark 2:27).
 - a. It is a day which the Lord has given you to rest from your worldly labors and find refreshment for your souls.
 - b. It is a day of rejoicing for the people of God, "THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HAS MADE; LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT" (Ps. 118:24).
 - c. And so you should call the day honorable and a delight and you should honor it (Isa. 58:13).
 - d. Its name alone, the Lord's Day, should endear it to every Christian, because it shows the special relationship which Christ has to it.
- 2. Secondly, be exhorted to keep the day holy.
 - a. God has shown us that this is, in fact, His will.
 - b. He will surely call you to account if you do not keep it.
 - c. But if you keep it the way He requires, you are surely putting yourself in the way of His blessing and reward.
 - d. So consider the following encouragements:
 - (i) When you keep the Sabbath, you honor Him. You show others that God is real and not a figment of your imagination. If there were no Sabbath, then there would be very little worship of God as a witness to Him.
 - (ii) You were made to worship God. Everything else that you do is less important than this. Is it too much for God to ask you to set aside one-seventh of your time to do that which is most important to your soul?
 - (iii) Remember, all of your time is His. He could have asked for more. Should you hold back that which is already His?
 - (iv) Where the Sabbath is kept, religion flourishes; but where it is not, there is not much religion.

- (v) *And finally, God blessed the Sabbath at the beginning, and He stands ready to bless His people on it now. It is an important means of grace to your soul. It is the day in which Jesus delighted to reveal Himself, and to pour out of His Spirit. Jonathan Edwards wrote, "O therefore, how well is it worth our while to improve this day, to call upon God and seek Jesus Christ! Let awakened sinners be stirred up by these things to improve the sabbath-day, as they would lay themselves most in the way of the Spirit of God. Improve this day to call upon God; for then he is near. Improve it for reading the Holy Scriptures, and diligently attending his word preached; for then is the likeliest time to have the Spirit accompanying it. Let the saints who are desirous of growing in grace, and enjoying communion with God, improve the sabbath in order to it."*
- (vi) *May the Lord help you to make the best use of His Sabbaths to give glory to Him, and to strengthen you and prepare you for heaven. Amen.*