

Remember the Sabbath to Keep It Holy, Part 5"
(Exodus 20:8-11)

Introduction: In looking at the teaching of the Bible on the Christian Sabbath, we have seen that this day, which was ordained by God at the end of the Creation week, and which continued under the Mosaic dispensation, still continues in the New Covenant. We have also seen that there was a change brought about in the day of its observance through the work of Christ when He brought in the new creation through His work of redemption. It was foretold in the Old Testament that when that work was fulfilled, the memorials of the Old Creation would pass away. Therefore, We no longer observe a day of rest commemorating the original creation, but a day of rest commemorating the new.

All that remains for us to look at now is how this day is to be observed. We have seen that the commandment sets the frequency, one day in seven, and the length, one day, but now we want to see specifically what we are to do on this day. And what I want you to see is that,

The Sabbath is to be a day of rest and worship for the people of God.

- I. *I Want to Begin by Pointing Out What I Mean by the Words "For the People of God."*
 - A. *I Think Much Too Often the Sabbath Is Approached from the Negative Standpoint of "You Can't Do This, and You Can't Do That."*
 1. *I don't have to tell you that people in general are allergic to this kind of phraseology.*
 - a. *They don't like anyone to tell them what to do.*
 - b. *They want to be independent.*
 - c. *The motto of most today is "question authority."*
 - d. *(As we saw this morning) ^{and} whatever philosophy is currently in vogue in the world, it will most certainly penetrate the church sooner or later. After all, we live in this world. It is impossible that the thinking of the world will not affect us, at least to some extent.*
 - e. *And for this reason you must constantly be on your guard that the world's thoughts do not become your's, for they are anti-Christian.*
 2. *Though the world is allergic to this kind of thinking, you must not be.*
 - a. *There are many commandments which the Lord gives us in Scripture which are phrased negatively.*
 - b. *Eight of the Ten Commandments are put in negative terms. "YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME. YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF AN IDOL. . . YOU SHALL NOT WORSHIP THEM . . . YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN . . ., etc."*
 - c. *Remember, it is not the world which sets the standard by which you should live, it is the Lord who does.*
 - d. *If your Lord says you shall not do this or that, you should not do it cheerfully from the heart, and know that the Lord means it for your good, for your well-being.*
 - e. *Luther once said, "If the Lord told me to eat the dung on the street, I would eat it, and know that it was good for me."*

B. The Thing that I Want You to Realize First Is that the Lord Has Ordained the Sabbath for Your Good.

1. Yes there are negative things involved, things which you may not do.
 - a. It is interesting that the fourth commandment is one of the two which are not phrased in negative terms. "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY."
 - b. And yet when He explains it, there are things which you may not do as a result of it, "SIX DAYS YOU SHALL LABOR AND DO ALL YOUR WORK, BUT THE SEVENTH IS A SABBATH OF THE LORD YOUR GOD; IN IT YOU SHALL NOT DO ANY WORK, YOU OR YOUR SON OR YOUR DAUGHTER, YOUR MALE OR YOUR FEMALE SERVANT OR YOUR CATTLE OR YOUR SOJOURNER WHO STAYS WITH YOU" (Ex. 20:9-10).
2. But even though this is true, you must not overlook the good purpose which the Lord has in requiring this of you.
 - a. As Luther recognized, all that the Lord commands you is for your good.
 - b. When God was about to bring the children of Israel into the land of promise, Moses, His spokesman, said to them, "NOW THIS IS THE COMMANDMENT, THE STATUTES AND THE JUDGMENTS WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS COMMANDED ME TO TEACH YOU, THAT YOU MIGHT DO THEM IN THE LAND WHERE YOU ARE GOING OVER TO POSSESS IT, SO THAT YOU AND YOUR SON AND YOUR GRANDSON MIGHT FEAR THE LORD YOUR GOD, TO KEEP ALL HIS STATUTES AND HIS COMMANDMENTS, WHICH I COMMAND YOU, ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE, AND THAT YOUR DAYS MAY BE PROLONGED. O ISRAEL, YOU SHOULD LISTEN AND BE CAREFUL TO DO IT, THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU AND THAT YOU MAY MULTIPLY GREATLY, JUST AS THE LORD, THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, HAS PROMISED YOU, IN A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY" (Deu. 6:1-3).
 - c. God is interested in your prosperity as well, therefore He gives you these commandments that it might be well with you.
 - d. The point is, that this is true of the Sabbath. And I'll show you how.
 - (i) It is the heart of every Christian that he loves the Lord and the things of the Lord above everything else.
 - (ii) The one burden that he always carries with him is that there is never enough time to worship the Lord, to read His Word, and to spend time with Him in prayer.
 - (iii) The things of the world are always crowding these precious and few times out. For one thing, most of you need to work at least five days a week, eight hours a day, and some of you work six days a week, for ten to twelve hours a day.
 - (iv) When that is finished, there are still responsibilities at home. If you own a house, there are all those things that need to be fixed and maintained. And even if you don't, there is the cleaning and the cooking and the care of the children which takes so much time.
 - (v) You also ~~also~~ need to get some recreation, and so you try and organize a night out each week, or each month, and get the family out of the house to maintain your sanity.
 - (vi) But even when you are not involved in these things, many of them are still weighing on your mind and on your heart. The pressures at work and the pressures at home continue to occupy your thoughts. Even the pleasant thoughts of your recreations can steal your attention and keep your mind from focusing on God.

- (vii) All of these things work together to crowd out your precious meditations on God and His Word. Even if you seek to do all these things for the glory of God, which the Bible tells you that should, and you try to be conscious every moment that He is with you, you still have the desire to spend time focusing all of your energies and your attention on the Lord, to set these other things aside and to seek Him alone. This is precisely where the blessing of the Sabbath is to be found.
- e. The Sabbath is a blessing because it is the command of your Lord to take that time and to seek Him.
- (i) You don't have to look for an excuse to find time, like you would for the multitude of other projects that you can't find the time for.
 - (ii) You have a command which gives you the settled confidence that what you are doing is God's will, and that you can set that time aside without harming yourself or your children. It is with God's warrant and blessing that you do.
 - (iii) It is for your good that He gives it to you, for He knows that you need both rest and worship.
 - (iv) First, you need rest.
 - (a) In this fast paced world with so many striving to reach the top of the ladder, or in just striving to make ends meet, few ever take time to rest.
 - (b) Stress is creating an increasing number of heart attacks and heart disease.
 - (c) Studies have shown that even animals will break down and die if they do not have adequate rest.
 - (d) And so the Sabbath is first, by divine command, a day to rest from your worldly labors so that you might find refreshment.
 - (e) You will all admit that when you can go to your work fully rested, you can do it much more easily than if you are exhausted.
 - (f) I learned this lesson while I was in college. During that time I got between 4 to 6 hours of sleep on a regular basis, and I virtually ran myself down. When I got to seminary, I decided to try and get about 7 to 8 hours of rest each night, and I was able to do about three times the work in less time. Rest is very important, and rest is what the Lord is commanding you to get.
 - (v) But you also need worship.
 - (a) You need time to read the Bible.
 - (b) You need quality time to pray.
 - (c) You need time to gather together with the Lord's people, to sing God's praises and to hear His Word read and preached.
 - (d) You not only need to do so because God commands it, but also because through it you are strengthened and encouraged to persevere in holiness and righteousness, and to serve the Lord with all your might.
 - (e) You need time to worship, and the Lord gives you that time in this commandment.

- (vi) But in order to receive these blessings, there are certain things which you cannot do, for they would hinder both yourself and others from receiving either one or both of these blessings from the Lord.

II. Understanding then that God Means This Commandment for Our Good, to Push Out the Things of the World in order that We Might Focus on that which Is Most Important for Our Souls, Let Us Next Look at What It Is that the Lord Commands Us with Regard to This Day.

A. First, He Says, "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY."

1. He says "REMEMBER" for we are all too apt to forget it.
2. As I said with regard to the business of life, it is easy to let it swallow up everything that is important to us, especially that which is most important.
3. But not only this, we also have sin to contend with.
 - a. The Christian life is a constant uphill battle, it is a swimming against the stream.
 - b. You have the devil, the world, and your own flesh to fight against in order to make any progress at all.
 - c. Things are not ^{easy} going to ~~evenly~~ fall into place. You must strive with all your might to move forward.
 - d. And that is why it is especially important for you to remember this day, for it is a day which the Lord has given to you to gain the refreshment and strength that you so desperately need.
 - e. It is a day which your adversary will try and help you to forget or neglect, and he will use his allies, the world and your flesh, very effectively to get you to squander that precious time.
 - f. In the midst of this, you must remember that the Lord has commanded you to set this day aside. It is a day of blessing; it is a day to recharge your spiritual batteries; it is a day to promote your sanctification. But if it is to do this for you, you must remember it and observe it.

B. Second, God Says, "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY."

1. "TO KEEP IT HOLY" means to sanctify the day, to set it apart from all the rest of the days to be God's day, His Holy Sabbath.
 - a. This is not a general command to keep one day in each week holy, as though one day is as good as another, but a command to keep a specific day holy.
 - b. We have already seen from the New Testament that the day which is to be kept holy is the Lord's Day. He has especially set that day aside to commemorate His resurrection from the dead.
2. But don't forget that a day is only a name for a certain amount of time.
 - a. It is not that we are to venerate the day which is called the Lord's Day. It is not the name of the day that we are to consider holy, but it is that time on that day.
 - b. It is what we do in that time which is to be holy to the Lord.
 - c. All of our time is really His. There is nothing that we can claim which is rightfully ours. But He wants us to take this portion of time and use it for a special purpose, that of worship.

- d. As I said when we began this series, since God exists, and God is to be worshiped, there must be a certain frequency and length of time which is best for that purpose. And God has shown us what that is through His pattern of work and resting, and through the fourth commandment.
 - e. The whole day then is to be set apart as holy to the Lord for the purpose of worshiping Him.
- C. Lastly, in Order to Do This, God Says that We Are to Rest on that Day, "SIX DAYS YOU SHALL LABOR AND DO ALL YOUR WORK, BUT THE SEVENTH IS A SABBATH OF THE LORD YOUR GOD; IN IT YOU SHALL NOT DO ANY WORK, YOU OR YOUR SON OR YOUR DAUGHTER, YOUR MALE SERVANT OR YOUR FEMALE SERVANT OR YOUR CATTLE OR YOUR SOJOURNER WHO STAYS WITH YOU."
- 1. If we are to remember the day in order to keep it holy, it goes without saying that we cannot do what we would ordinarily do on that day, such as work.
 - a. We must be free from our worldly labor, or else God's purpose for that day is frustrated.
 - b. How can we rest if we are working?
 - c. And how can we use the time for the worship of God if we are using it all up on our worldly occupations?
 - d. He says that in, "SIX DAYS YOU SHALL LABOR AND DO ALL YOUR WORK," Monday through Saturday you are to complete all that needs to be done in your occupation, and in your houses, with the exception of things which must be done on that day.
 - e. But, He says, "THE SEVENTH IS A SABBATH OF THE LORD YOUR GOD." The word "sabbath" means a day of rest (Holl. 360). On this day, no work is to be done, "IN IT YOU SHALL NOT DO ANY WORK."
 - 2. Not only are you not to do any work, but you are also to insure that no one else under your authority works either, "YOU OR YOUR SON OR YOUR DAUGHTER, YOUR MALE SERVANT OR YOUR FEMALE SERVANT OR YOUR CATTLE OR YOUR SOJOURNER WHO STAYS WITH YOU."
 - a. This is to be a day of rest for all of God's creatures, including your work animals.
 - b. It is a day when you must let all who are under your authority, your entire household, also rest, as well as others who are under your roof. For the Israelite, this meant that even the one who was not of the nation of Israel must rest as well. It is a command, not only for the people of God, but for all people, to rest.
 - 3. Having said this much with regard to the Sabbath in no way exhausts what we need to know about it. It only breaks the ground for where we will pick up next week. The implications of this are far reaching, especially in a culture which has forgotten the Sabbath, not only outside the church, but also inside the church. What we will want to do next week then is to begin seeing what these implications are for our lives as we seek to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy in our day and age. ¶ Jesus said, "HEAVEN AND EARTH WILL PASS AWAY, BUT MY WORDS SHALL NOT PASS AWAY" (Matt. 24:35)¶ Amen.