

“Sabbath Rest”
(Exodus 20:8-11)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. This evening, we’re continuing our study on what it means to walk with God on the Sabbath. So far we’ve seen:
 - a. That the Sabbath is a perpetual commandment, along with the other nine.
 - b. That it was not abrogated in New Covenant, but strengthened in every way, especially by the fact that Christ calls Himself the Lord of the Sabbath.

2. And so if we are to walk with God, we must honor Him on this day.
 - a. It is the tithe He requires of all our time.
 - (i) He wants only one-tenth of our income.
 - (ii) But He wants one-seventh of our time.
 - (iii) This perhaps shows that our relationship with Him is more important than our money.

 - b. It is a picture of heaven, a reminder of what we are to be striving towards, a reminder that we are only passing through this world.
 - c. And so we are to remember the day – we are not to forget to observe it – and we are to keep it holy.
 - (i) We are to set aside – or fast – from the world.
 - (ii) We are to worship God – spend the majority of the time seeking Him.
 - (iii) And we are to rest our bodies – we are to get all our work done on the six days, so that we will not need to work on the seventh.

B. Preview.

1. One thing we need to keep in front of us is that the Lord intends this day to be a blessing.
 - a. The psalmist writes, “This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps. 118:24).
 - b. Isaiah tells us we are to look forward to it and “call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable” (Isa. 58:13).
 - (i) If we love the Lord, this isn’t hard to do.
 - (ii) If we love the Lord, we want all the days to be the Sabbath.
 - (iii) This is our day with Him, our day to worship Him, to renew our fellowship with Him, to draw strength from Him and to drink from the wells of His salvation.
 - (iv) The Puritans saw this day as the market day of the soul. As farmers brought their goods to market one day a week, and bought and traded for all the things they needed that week, so we are to receive all the spiritual nourishment and fellowship we need for the upcoming week.

2. But as we saw last week, in order to gain the benefits, there are certain things we need to do.
 - a. Our Larger Catechism sums up everything in two questions and answers:
 - (i) “Q. 117. How is the Sabbath or the Lord’s day to be sanctified? A. The Sabbath or Lord’s day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God’s worship: and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.”
 - (ii) And “Q. 119. What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment? A. The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are, all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them; all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful; and by all needless works, words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments and recreations.”
 - (iii) This is what it means to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.
 - b. This evening, we’ll begin to look at how we are to observe this day, beginning with the rest we are to observe from our work. We’ll look at two things:
 - (i) First, we are not to work.
 - (ii) Second, we are not to make others work.
 - (iii) The only exception to these two rules is when necessity or mercy requires.

II. Sermon.

A. First, we are not to work on the Sabbath.

1. This is the first thing that is meant by keeping the day holy (v. 8).
 - a. Holy means sanctified or set apart from secular or common use to God’s use.
 - b. What we are to set apart is the day, the twenty four hours, from how we might ordinarily use them, to how God would have us use them.
 - c. This is made even clearer by the balance of the command: Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; it in you shall not do any work” (vv. 9-10).
 - d. God gives us six days to complete all our work, so that we may keep a holy day with Him.
2. We are not to be working; we are to take the day off from our vocation.
 - a. We are to rest our bodies, if we happen to have a job that requires physical work.
 - b. We are to rest our minds, if we have a job that requires mental work.

- c. We especially need to be careful if we have this second kind of work, because unlike the physical work that we can't do if we're not there, it's all too easy to keep working in our minds if we have mainly mental work.
 - d. We need to free our bodies and our minds so that we can rest.
 - e. More importantly, we need to be free so that we can focus on the Lord.
3. Now realize at the outset that the world is going to make it as difficult for us to do this, as it makes it for all the other commandments.
- a. The world wants to stumble us here, as it wants us to stumble at the seventh commandment by putting things in our path to lust at, or the fifth commandment by making us want to challenge authority, or the tenth commandment by putting things before our eyes to make us covet.
 - b. The world has purposely opened its doors both to commerce and recreation on this day, probably on this day above all days.
 - (i) There used to be a Christian consensus in this nation. There was a time when you couldn't even find an open store on Sunday. There were even laws that prohibited businesses from being open. That's because of the strong Christian foundation this nation once had.
 - (ii) But things aren't like this anymore. Not only are most businesses open on the Lord's Day, we even have churches that suspend the evening service and drop the big screen to watch the Super Bowl.
 - (iii) It's difficult now to find a job where your employer isn't going to call you into work on the Lord's Day.
 - (iv) We'll see later that there are some jobs that may be done without breaking the Sabbath – that would be sinful not to do. But not all jobs are this way, not all work is necessary.
 - (v) This is just one of the many ways the world has placed a stumbling block in front of Christians to tempt us to break God's commandments.
 - (a) By the way, if you already have a job that requires that you work on the Lord's Day, perhaps because you weren't aware of this commandment when you were hired, or because the job qualifications have changed since you were hired, there are things you can do to change this.
 - (b) You can tell your employer that it is your religious conviction that you can't work on that day. You can make yourself available to work any other time, even the less desirable shifts, but not on that day.
 - (c) There will undoubtedly be some cases where the employer won't accommodate you – especially if you were originally hired to work on the Lord's Day.
 - (d) In cases like this, you need to submit to God and trust that He has something better for you.
 - (e) You can't continue to break the Sabbath any more than you can continue to break any of the other commandments and have to face God's discipline.
 - (f) It may seem like the fourth commandment is more negotiable than the others, but it isn't. The breaking of this commandment was severely

punished in the Old Covenant showing us that God takes it very seriously.

- (g) Keep the promise in front of your eyes that if you honor the Lord on His Sabbath, He will provide something better.
- (h) He promised to take care of us if we would put His kingdom and righteousness first (); and He will do it.
- (i) We are to rest from our employment on the Lord's Day.

4. We are also to rest from other types of work that don't need to be done on the Lord's Day.
 - a. For instance, the Lord's Day is not a day to clean your house, to repair your car, to mow your lawn or work in your garden, to do the laundry, or anything else that could be done on this day.
 - b. This is work, and we are to rest from our work.
 - c. And it is holy time – we are to devote all of it to the Lord.

B. Second, we are not to be the cause of others working.

1. Everyone needs to keep God's commandments – they're not just for believers.
 - a. Since we know this is the case, we shouldn't want to do anything that will make others work.
 - b. How can we love our neighbor as we love ourselves and knowingly help them do things that will harden them further in sin and increase their judgment?
 - c. If you were in their position, would you want someone to do that to you? Then you shouldn't want to do that to them.
2. This is also spelled out in the commandment itself: “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*” (v. 10).
 - a. Nothing under your authority is to work – not your son or your daughter, or your male or female servants, or even your work animals.
 - b. This also applies to those you hire to work for you.
 - (i) Would you hire a contractor to build you a patio cover or room addition on the Lord's Day? Not if you want him to keep the Sabbath and not if you don't want to be the cause of his breaking the Sabbath.
 - (ii) There are other applications as well:
 - (a) Children should only do what's necessary to do on the Lord's Day. This isn't the day to do chores.
 - (b) We should shop on any other day of the week so we don't make grocery or department store clerks work.
 - (1) Actually, we're not to be buying or selling on the Sabbath.
 - (2) In Nehemiah, we read, “In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading *them* on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads, and they brought *them* into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. So I admonished *them* on the day they sold food. Also

men of Tyre were living there *who* imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold *them* to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem. Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, ‘What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day? Did not your fathers do the same, so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath.’ It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates *so that* no load would enter on the sabbath day” (Neh. 13:15-19).

- (c) We shouldn’t go to a restaurant on the Lord’s Day and make the cooks, waiters, waitresses, busboys and dishwashers work, unless we happen to be traveling and we need those services.
- (d) The point is that we are not to work or make others work so that we may all enjoy rest and worship the Lord. It doesn’t matter whether these others would worship or not if they weren’t working, or if they would be working even if you didn’t solicit these businesses: they’re not to be working. They’re sinning by working and they’re sinning by not worshipping. You don’t want to be the cause of this.
- (e) Now there are exceptions to these rules which we’ll look at next Lord’s Day.
- (f) But for now, let’s purpose in our hearts to rest on the Lord’s Day and devote it to our Lord who rose from the dead for our salvation, and let’s purpose not to stumble others by making them work on this day.
Amen.