

**Genesis 2: 1-3; “And God Blessed the Sabbath”, Sermon #4 in the series-
“Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on May 19th, 2013,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

In the past several sermons on Genesis 1, we have been looking together at God’s great work of creating the world; of His creating everything which would be essential for man’s life and physical being, and of man’s being a distinct and different creation from the animals, and birds, and fish. Man was created in the image and likeness of God. Man was created to worship, and to serve, and to enjoy God forever. He was to represent God’s rule upon the earth by having dominion over the earth and by subduing it in righteous heartfelt obedience to God’s will. We saw that God created man upright, a noble and beautiful being whose heart was inclined toward God because God’s law was written on his heart. God would give His creature man everything that was good for him, and so we see here in Chapter 2, in these first three verses, that God gave to man the Sabbath.

God rested on the seventh day, after having done all the work of the creation, in order to sanctify and bless to man the Sabbath day for all generations. I would assert to you this morning that you may see what the true state of Christianity is, in any society or any country, by whether or not the Christian Sabbath is kept, or how it is not kept. Is there rest from worldly labors? Is there a love to go up to the House of the Lord? Is there a sanctifying of the day in the hearts of God’s people? All of these things are very important to God. So the question that we are asking this morning is this: In what ways does God bless and sanctify the Sabbath day to His people and to all men? He would show us why it is so important and why it is so necessary.

1st of all – God blessed man by giving him a holy rest.

Verse 2 says, “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.” It is not as though God was weary and tired after His creative work was displayed. And it was not because He needed to set apart for Himself a time to be holy. He did this for our sakes. The Sabbath was made for man. He wanted man to know that he should be wise about how to use his time. And so, God worked six days in His creating the world, and He rested one day. He ordained that there would be a week made up of 7 days, and that by His own example He would define the right proportion of work to the right proportion of rest for man. Six days He worked, and He rested on the 7th day.

This 7th day would be different, set apart, and hallowed. It says in Exodus 31:17 that the “Sabbath was a sign between God and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.” God knew refreshment in considering all the works of creation which He had made. They were good, they were a delight to Him. So He would meditate and think upon them and take pleasure in them. God gave man the Sabbath, not only for rest from his earthly labors, but also that man would stop and consider the works of God, that he would have a special day to delight in God, to be refreshed by God, to hold communion with God, and to worship God.

By resting from his physical labors, he would be able to engage in the spiritual pursuit of God Himself. For God is not commending idleness by His example of rest on His holy day. We are not to confuse the rest given to us in this commandment, with idleness. We are given a day to cease from our labors, and to cease from ourselves in what would profit us personally, in order that we might devote ourselves to God. John Trapp says, “God made the observance of the Sabbath an effectual means of blessing to him that sanctifies it, as a rest from bodily labors and spiritual idleness.” Now I wonder if you have come to see the Lord’s day, the Christian Sabbath, like that? It is a day to rest from bodily labors and the concerns of your job; even the employment of the other six days.

But it is also a day of spiritual service to God. It is that you may have time for Him; time to read, time to meditate, time to pray, time to fellowship with God’s people, and most of all time to

worship Him in the corporate services of that day. This is the question which God would have me to ask you here this morning. Do you give God this day, the one day in seven, or is He being robbed by you in the things you do and the things that you say on this day? Do you run off to the activities of the world and the school because people of the world say that you should? Let us ask ourselves if we have Christian backbone? Will we guard and preserve His day in our hearts and in our lives? Do we take time for the feeding and refreshment of our souls by the consideration of the Word and works of God? Let me take this application a step further.

Some Christians will only attend one service of worship on the Lord's Day, but they will eat three physical meals in a day. They are thinking about the strength of their body, but are they thinking about the strength of their soul? If this is you, why not rest from your worldly activities and come and feed your soul with the preaching of God's Word, and make it stronger by attending all the services of our church on the Lord's Day?

2nd – God blesses and sanctifies the Sabbath before the Fall, and before the giving of the law.

You may or you may not know, that there are many Christian people today who do not want to observe the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath, because they believe that it was part of the Mosaic Law; and that since Christ fulfilled the Law, then the Sabbath commandment was abolished and we are free from any obligation to keep the Sabbath holy. But let us remember what we have already read and established from the text; that the Sabbath was given as an institution by God Himself, even before the Law was given, and even before man fell into sin. The Lord puts the institution of the Sabbath right up alongside the institutions of work and marriage which he also established at the beginning. They, also, are enduring institutions which God has made to last until the end of the world.

God, from the very beginning of the world saw the need for man to have a holy rest, and therefore He would have men worship Him on the day which He has appointed. He not only set an example, but He gave commandment in the example. The fact that the Bible indicates that there was Sabbath observance before the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai only serves to prove to us that it was a moral institution before it was a commandment. Exodus 20, verse 8 says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." How could men remember something which had never been told them before. But they had been told and they did know.

Turn with me to Exodus Chapter 16: 21-30. "So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need." "And when the sun became hot, it melted." "And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one." "And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses." "Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord has said: "Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord." "Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning." "So they laid it up till morning as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it."

"Then Moses said, 'Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field.'" "Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none." "Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none." "And the Lord said to Moses, 'How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?' "See!" "For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days." "Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." "So the people rested on the seventh day."

We see here that God is revealing to the children of Israel and Moses what his will was with regard to the gathering of the manna. On the sixth day they were to gather twice as much as on the other five days of the week because they were going to observe a Sabbath to the Lord. Verse 23 says "Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath rest to the Lord." R.L. Dabney in his discussion on The Christian Sabbath says, "Moses does not say or imply that this was the first time the Lord had

said the seventh day was holy.” “On the contrary, the drift of the whole narrative shows that the Lord was now, by Moses, referring the people to their former knowledge of the sanctity of the Sabbath as an explanation of their finding no manna on that day.” “No fair reader can compare the words with Genesis 2: 3 without seeing this.” What Dabney is saying is undoubtedly true and verse 28 confirms it. It says, “And the Lord said to Moses, How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My Laws?” “See!” “For the Lord has given you the Sabbath.” It was evidently something that the people knew was required of them because some of the people had begun gathering the manna, twice as much of it, on the 6th day and some of the others came to Moses for advice. (verse 22) Moses confirmed that the gathering was to take place on the sixth day, not the seventh.

We find that in the giving of the Law, the Sabbath command is placed right among the 10, which shows it to be intrinsically moral. It did have some ceremonial implications, and even some strict civil punishments attendant upon the breaking of it, found in the Mosaic law. But when that dispensation was put to an end by Christ’s sacrifice we do not find any civil punishments being commanded or enacted under the New Covenant, by the Apostles, in the early Church. This does not mean that Christian Sabbath breaking is not a sin. Rather, the breaking of the Christian Sabbath is an indication of a lack of love for the worship of God and Christ. If we break the Sabbath, it is, or should be, a sign to us; that there are areas of selfishness and worldliness which remain entrenched in our hearts.

We need very much to see that the observance of the Sabbath as a moral commandment did not cease when Christ came. This was because Christ did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. And in fulfilling it He did not do away with any moral commandment of the 10 commandments, as a rule for the Christian to observe. He gave the commandments back to us, making them first of all matters of the heart; matters in which we might show our love to Him, not as a way of meriting salvation. He gave us the Sabbath observance as that good way in which we would delight, because then we would be becoming like God our Father, who rested from all of His works in the creation, who sanctified the Sabbath and was refreshed in observing it.

But in saying this, as we read the New Testament, we see that since Jesus has fulfilled the law, died for all of our sins, and was raised from the dead, that He has given us a Christian Sabbath that was not meant to bind us up. There certainly is a moral obligation to keep the Christian Sabbath, but our keeping it is to be seen by us as a delight, rather than a burden. The New Testament Sabbath is given to all of God’s New Covenant people to free us from all the Jewish traditions surrounding the law, and to refresh us, Christ’s disciples, even as God was refreshed when He rested after creating the world. The intent of the Sabbath command for Christians is two-fold; to abstain from your 6-day work, and to set aside appropriate time for worship. But it is not meant to bind Christians in all the details of keeping it, in a legalistic way.

Turn with me over Mark Chapter 2, and verse 23. “Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain.” “And the Pharisees said to Him, ‘Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’” “But He said to them, ‘Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?’” “And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.’” “Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

Now these verses shows us that we should be very careful about judging other Christians in regard to their Sabbath observance in relation to both food and travel as they go about to keep the commandment. Here Christ and His disciples were traveling on the Jewish Sabbath, and they were walking through fields which were not their own. They were very hungry and so they plucked the heads of grain next to them. They were eating food which had been grown by others. They were

very simply trying to prepare the food by rubbing the heads of grain in their hands, it says in Luke 6. And yet, they were criticized by the Pharisees for doing “what was unlawful on the Sabbath”. Jesus in reproving these Pharisees, asks them whether they had ever read of what David did when he was in need and hungry, that he took of the showbread which was not lawful for any to eat but the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him.

Here we see that Christ recognizes what is both merciful and necessary to do on the Sabbath. It is not wrong for Christians to prepare food on the Lord’s Day. It is not wrong for Christians to travel to get to the place of worship on the Lord’s Day. It is always good to try to keep from having to make others work for you on the Christian Sabbath; for how then can they observe the intent of the Sabbath commandment if they have to work? But when you think about your obedience to this commandment, learn to be very thoughtful in your observations of how other Christians are observing this day, remembering that the Sabbath was made for them, to do them good, and not them for the Sabbath, to bind them up to men’s rules.

3rd - God instituted the principle of Sabbath rest to teach us to freely choose that which pleases Him rather than what pleases ourselves.

Verse 3 says, “Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all his work which God had created and made.” When it says that God “sanctified” that day, it means not only that He set it apart for a holy rest for Himself, but that He set it apart to be a holy rest for His creature man to enter. The Sabbath day was, and it is, made holy by our consideration and reflection upon what He, as God, has done. The day is made holy, and the Christian is made holy by deliberately entering into a consideration of God’s works in both creation and redemption. Indeed, the Christian is called to especially praise and thank God for all of His wonderful works on the Lord’s Day.

When you enter into God’s rest in the creation, you will see the need to rest from your six-day work. When you enter into God’s rest in redemption you will see the need to cease from your own works trying to merit salvation from God through them. And once you have found that Christ’s work is the only work sufficient to save you from your sins and bring you to God, you will enter it by faith. And you will praise God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit for all of the good grace that you have received and continue to receive every day. You will render your thanks for these mighty works of God by learning to choose what pleases God first of all, rather than choosing to please yourself first of all.

Your keeping of this 4th commandment of God’s holy law, observing the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, has a meaning to God. In your observing that day to keep it holy, it speaks to Him that you are willing to come to church and be taught all of what it will mean for you to please Him in every situation, on any given day of your life. Turn over with me to Isaiah 58, verse 13. “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.” “The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Notice here that God is speaking through the prophet Isaiah, and he is saying that if you will turn away from doing your own pleasure on the Sabbath, then He will give to you special blessings. If you call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall really persevere in honoring Him, He will bless you greatly. What does obedience to this command specifically consist of? Well, it consists in delighting in God preeminently on His day, in your heart and in your actions. This will first of all mean that you will be thinking more deeply of God on this, His special day. It involves having devotions with him when you get up, and preparing your heart to meet with him before you go to church. It involves encouraging the same in your family.

It involves the holy anticipation of coming to church to meet with Him, and with the church

gathered. It involves your heart going out to Him there, in the worship, and giving your attention to the hearing of the Word of God as it is preached; receiving it as the very word of God to your heart and mind. All of this spiritual activity will involve your trying to see the difference between His pleasure and yours, and your not acting according to your selfish nature on this day. There may be many things that you might want to do on God's holy day that would be perfectly legitimate on any other day of the week, but to do them on Sunday, these verses are saying, is to put your foot on God's holy day. The way that you will honor Him, therefore, will be by your "not doing your own ways", but rather praying to know, and to do His.

You will not be trying to find your own earthly pleasure, but you will delight yourself wholeheartedly in the spiritual things of truth, and what will spiritually bless others. Your words will not be so much on your work, but rather you will be trying to speak more about God's work in giving to you His rich grace in Christ. You will be thinking of how you can promote Christ's kingdom and His glory in the church. You are willing to go visit the needy or the sick. You will be studying to have real spiritual fellowship with other Christians at church so that they are built up in their faith. And God, who hears every word, will be pleased when He sees these things coming about in your life and in your speech.

And so, the promise is here for all those who will receive it: "And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father." God will give you the blessing of being able to "live above the world, and to have your mind on heavenly things, to be blessed above the men of the world, even the highest of them." (Gill) To have the heritage of Jacob as your father, in this verse, does not mean that you will inherit the physical land of Canaan. But Jacob is mentioned here as "the father of all true Israelites, who are, as he was, wrestling and prevailing with God" for His greatest blessings. "These Christians the Lord will feed with spiritual provisions here, and glory hereafter". (Gill, again) These glorious promises will come to pass in your heart and your life, as you honor the Lord on this His day.