

**Jeremiah 17: 19-27; “Taking Heed to the Sabbath”, Sermon # 18 in the series – “Heart Lessons Learned For a Prophet and the People of God”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

As you followed me in the reading of these words, did it not strike you that God considered the observance of the Sabbath a very significant indication of whether the Jews of that day would honor and obey Him? He appears to indicate from these words that their total repentance and their total obedience could be tested on this one point; whether they would keep His day holy. And, there is a very real sense in which this is true today for us who are Gentiles as well. This afternoon I want to speak to you about taking heed to the Sabbath, in both Old Testament and New Testament dispensations. I want to begin our consideration of this subject with the following thoughts: Some people think that the Sabbath has no application to Christians living under the New Covenant. To them, it was a part of the law which was given to Moses, which was a picture of our rest in Christ. They think that it only applied to Israel of old, and is not applicable to us today. But I hope that you will come to agree with me that it is very apparent from the strength of God's statements in these verse that God considers the Sabbath a moral imperative in all generations; not simply those persons under the Old Covenant. The observance of the Christian Sabbath is based upon the truth that none of the commandments in the 10 commandments has been abrogated or set aside, just because Christ fulfilled them all perfectly. He fulfilled them all perfectly so that we could be justified in the sight of God, and that our sanctification would consist of going about to do and keep God's commandments, no longer being under any condemnation. But attempting by the grace of Christ to make progress in doing and keeping God's commandments is the essence of the Christian life. "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters," Paul says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7: 19.

The first and greatest commandment, that you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and soul and mind and strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself, simply sums up the duty which every Christian has, to keep all of the 10 commandments from the new position of being "in Christ". Each Christian is learning to keep God's commandments out of love and not out of the legal obligation to do them in order to find favor with God. Favor and blessing have already been obtained in Christ, and so the object of keeping all of the 10 commandments from the heart, is that you as a Christian will become more like your Lord who kept them perfectly. You want to be like Him, and you want to have the commandments in your heart; all of them, not just some of them. God considers it a moral imperative that all of His people, and indeed all people in the world, will come to observe the Christian Sabbath, or what we call the Lord's Day. We find in our passage, God making strong statements to that end. There are 3 phrases we can draw from this passage which indicate the strength of God's insistence in our keeping the Christian Sabbath: The 1<sup>st</sup> Phrase is found in verse 21 – Take heed to yourselves. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Phrase is found in verse 26 – If you heed Me carefully. And the 3<sup>rd</sup> Phrase is found in verse 27 – If you will not heed me... Let's see if we can think together as to what God's mind on this subject.

**1<sup>st</sup>, Let's look at this phrase – If you heed Me carefully.**

The thing that God had commanded the nation of Israel was that on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week was that they would do no work on that day. It is described in particular in verses 21 and 22 as not bearing a burden on the Sabbath, nor bringing it in by the gates of Jerusalem. What God was saying to them and what He is saying to us today is that we must take heed to ourselves with regard to our work in His sight. God has made the Sabbath for man. Turn with me over to Genesis chapter 1, and we will look at verse 31. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." "So the evening and the morning were the sixth day." "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished." "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." "Then God

blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” God made the heavens and the earth in six literal days, and then He rested from all His work on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. This is the 1<sup>st</sup> creation and it included man created in His own image and likeness. He blessed that 7<sup>th</sup> day and sanctified it (He hallowed it). He set this day apart, not that He needed rest, for He is Omnipotent; but because He would set us the example and give us a day of rest from all our work and our 6-day labors. So the Sabbath was instituted in the beginning, before the fall of man. And it was instituted for man and for his good. God knew that there would be a tendency in man to always be working; He knew that His creature man would not stop for needed rest, either because of consuming interest in his work, or because others would try to force him to it. We see this all around us today, in many companies and many factories that try to get, or do have men working pretty much 7 days a week. This is not good for any man with regard to himself, his family, or his God. We need to take heed to ourselves. We need to learn to work hard enough that we get all of the work done that we need to get done on the 6 days. Then the 7<sup>th</sup> day, or what is now the New Sabbath Day in the New Testament times, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, will be a day of rest. “Six days shall you labor” affects others as well as yourself.

Look with me over at Exodus 23: 10-13. “Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat.” “In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove.” “Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.” “And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.” You can see here from these verses that their oxen, their donkeys, their servants, their land; everything of the 1<sup>st</sup> creation needed rest; one of seven days, one of seven years in the case of the land. Six days shall you work, shows us that work is a good thing which God gave to man to pursue. He should pursue it. But he does need to rest for the sake of his own well-being, and for the well-being of others, and to worship God. “Six days shall you work, but the 7<sup>th</sup> is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. This day belongs to Him, but it is for your good.

**Now, the 2<sup>nd</sup> phrase we can draw from this passage, which indicates God’s insistence in our keeping the Sabbath is found in verses 24-26: If you will heed Me carefully.**

“If you will heed me carefully, says the Lord, to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work in it, then shall enter the gates of this city, kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever.” A new thought is introduced here which is very significant. The Sabbath day is to be hallowed. It is a matter of our having respect to God on this day. The most obvious trial of that obedience is: Will we put our own work away for one day to spend it with God in worship? And if we will not give Him the one day, will we give Him real obedience on any other day of the week in respect to any commandment? To hallow the day is to first give God the day, by ceasing from our worldly labors.

Look now with me at Exodus 31: 13-17. “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.’” “You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you.” “Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.” “Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord.” “Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.” “Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.” “It is a sign between Me 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.” You can see here, that for the children of Israel keeping this commandment was a matter of life and death. They were being told that their labors would

not save them from sin; they must cease from their own work or die forever. “Not the labors of my hands, can fulfill Thy laws demands”. What can we learn from this; we who are under the New Covenant? The thing that we can learn is that we should heed God carefully, in all matters of obedience, and study in our hearts and minds the particulars related to His worship. Why is the Christian Sabbath called the Lord’s Day? It is called so, because it is related to Christ’s glorious resurrection from the dead after He died upon the cross to take away our sins. We rest in Jesus’ finished work of redemption which began to have its effects upon the minds and hearts of men on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week – Sunday morning. This is the day of our exultant worship.

It was Christ’s resurrection which inaugurated a new and 2<sup>nd</sup> creation in the hearts of men, women, and children who believed in Him for eternal life. Sinners who believe in Jesus receive the gift of eternal life, a New Birth, and an eternal inheritance. A New Creation commemorated by a shift in the day of observance from Saturday to Sunday. Remember the Sabbath day – the one-in-seven principle which God requires; the day to be observed, did not remain on Saturday when Christ filled up the law with His righteousness. When Christ rose from the dead, this was the day that the Lord had made, and we will rejoice and be glad in it. We will not trust in our works to save us; we will trust in Christ alone. We will not observe it with a legalistic strictness; we will observe the day with gladness of heart; knowing that Christ has rendered a perfect obedience to this commandment and all the commandments. Some, called the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists, do not carefully heed these truths. They believe that since the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is moral, then the day cannot be altered; the appointed day of worship is still the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week. But they fail to realize that the commandment is also positive as well as moral. The day itself may change, and it did, but the one-in-seven principle remains.

The example of the apostles is irrefutable in this regard. The early Church met on the first day of the week. They did not continue to meet on the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath. That Sabbath day was a part of the Old Covenant law. It was what God required during that whole dispensation before Christ came and fulfilled it. Since it has been fulfilled, the day of worship must be determined by what Christ did. Having fulfilled the law, He rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and so the Early Church met on that day for worship. Further, the 7<sup>th</sup> day relates to Adam and the first creation which fell. The first day of the week relates to Christ and the New Creation in which redeemed men are being transformed into His image and likeness, and even the physical creation will eventually be restored. We need to take heed carefully, to hallow this day, so that His cause and kingdom can triumph and flourish, and that the sacrifices of praise will ascend to Him; to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, because these are His appointments with His people. This is a true witness to Christ. Holding to the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath is not a true witness to Christ’s finished work, and His resurrection from the dead, or to the fulfillment of the law by Christ.

The Lord’s Day is hallowed when we prepare our hearts for the worship on Saturday evening, settle our earthly affairs ahead of time; go to bed early enough that we will give Him our best attention, our full heart, our active mind. We may sit quietly in our pews, but we are very active in our minds and hearts. We do not bring into the sanctuary the burdens of our work. We deliberately lay them down ahead of time. We rest from our own works, and words, and thoughts, and we deliberately think about God and holy, heavenly things. We hopefully will cease from all participation in organized sports and recreations, although we may allow children to have rest in simple recreations under parental supervision after services. We rest from our labors, our worldly pursuits; and we pursue God in public and private exercises of devotion. This is not a burdensome thing to those who yearn for more of God Himself. We call the Sabbath a delight because God causes us to sit as kings, and to ride in horses and chariots as it says in verse 25 of our text. We ride the heights of what is truly spiritual when we observe the Lord’s Day to keep it holy. Isaiah 58: 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 you 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.” And what is that heritage?

Well, turn over to Deuteronomy 32: 9-14. “For the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.” “He found in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.” “As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the Lord alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him.” “He made him ride in the heights of the earth, that he might eat the produce of the fields; He made him draw honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock; curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock, with the fat of lambs; and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the choicest wheat; and you drank the wine, the blood of the grapes.” All of these great blessings picture the spiritual blessings that would come through the spiritual Seed, our Lord Jesus Christ. And these verses lead us to our 3<sup>rd</sup> phrase in our passage: **The 3<sup>rd</sup> phrase which indicates God’s insistence in our keeping the Sabbath is – If you will not heed Me...**

In verses 15-22 of Deuteronomy 32, we read this: “But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese!” “Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” “They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger.” “They sacrificed to demons, not God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear.” “Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you.” “And when the Lord saw it, He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.” “And He said: ‘I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith.’” “They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.” “But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.” “For a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; it shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.”

Although this directly pertains to the Old Testament people of God, let us see if we can apply this to ourselves. You can see here that Israel grew fat with blessing, and they kicked at God’s commandments. Their obesity was a picture of their self-indulgence, and their neglect of heeding God’s word carefully. Oh, we must take heed to ourselves, that we do not forsake the God who made us; that we do not scornfully esteem the Rock of His salvation Jesus Christ. We must take heed that we do not provoke Him to anger with other gods, or sacrifice to demons and not to God. Jesus Christ is the Rock who begot you, if you are a true Christian. Do not forget the God who fathered you; either physically or spiritually! We must strive to become holy children of our heavenly Father; children of faith. These people in Jeremiah’s day moved God to anger by their foolish idols. And so He says that He would provoke them to jealousy, by those who were not a nation. The Apostle Paul refers these verses to the calling of the Gentiles, and their being grafted into the Church. You and I who worship here this afternoon, have been shown mercy, while a partial hardening has happened to the Jews. A fire was kindled in God’s anger, and it burns to the lowest hell for those who will not take heed. God is looking, dear Christian, to see whether you care to observe the least of His commandments. And if you will observe the Christian Sabbath day, you will ride the heights, spiritually speaking. For those of you who may not have yet believed, I say this: Lay the burden of your sins upon Jesus, crucified outside the city gates, so that you can enter the City of the great King Jesus; enter His Church and enter into heaven itself. Come today to Christ if you have never come before. Come on this, the best of days.