

Enter Into My Rest

By Scott Brown

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Bible Text: Hebrews 4:1-16

Preached on: Sunday, June 28, 2009

Hope Baptist Church

3721 Quarry Road

Wake Forest, NC 27587

Website: www.hopebaptistchurch.info

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/hopebaptistnc

We will consider this as a final message in our five part series on the sabbath. We have been spending this time digging into the text of Scripture to give the heart of God regarding the sabbath. And our intention as elders of the church was to explain the explicit passages of Scripture to help us think and feel about how we should deal with this question of the sabbath day.

And we have been saying that you ought to know with certainty what the Scripture says about the sabbath day because each week this day will be imposed upon you relentlessly and you better figure out whether you are doing it in a biblical way or not.

So we have tried to focus our attention on the words of Scripture to help us understand this, not our own feelings, not our own culture, but upon the words of Scripture.

We also acknowledged that this sabbath can be a stumbling stone. In Matthew chapter 12 when Jesus corrected the Pharisees, establishing the fact that the sabbath did continue and that they should know how to celebrate it, when he did that it was then that the Pharisees wanted to kill him. The sabbath is a dangerous subject because there is much sin that resides in all of us that wants to rebel and rail against the controls of God upon our lives as he has given us this day for the government of our week.

And we have given historical perspective. We have walked all over Scripture to deal with various passages. Here is one of the most encouraging things about the study for me and that is this. As we have listened—and all of us have been very convicted. All of us have been pierced to the heart. I don't think there is a person sitting in this room here today that hasn't said, "Oh, Lord, help me. How often I have despised this holy day."

But the response has been, "Oh, Lord, help me delight in the sabbath. I want to delight in you. I want to taste of your goodness. I want to have a day like you have described."

That is the overwhelming response that we have had in our church and it is such a joy. It is like what happened in the church of Thessalonica when the apostle Paul said, "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God

which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”¹

So it has been a time of renewal and revival for many of us in this church and it is a time of increased delight. There has been more joy in our sabbath celebrations, I believe, since we have been going.

So it has been a very sweet thing that God has helped us with.

Now this morning we are going to deal with Hebrews four. And then when we get to the end of that, I am going to give some specific counsel to fathers. I am going to give you 17 questions to help you understand how to fulfill the commands of the sabbath, a couple of applications regarding the authority of God and then finally I am going to give you seven benefits of the celebration of the sabbath.

Now, as I am sure has been so plain to all of us who have walked through all of these texts slowly as we have done, that there are many beautiful themes. It is a beautiful song that God plays for us regarding the sabbath. There are so many meanings that we can grab onto.

With Matthew 12 it is absolutely a beautiful song of mercy. I desire mercy, not sacrifice. The sabbath was made for man. Keep on keeping it that way, not the way that you have been keeping it wrongly as the Pharisees did.

With Nehemiah it is a song of rescue from judgment for despising the sabbath, but the blessing that God also bestows on all those who would keep it forever.

And then with Exodus 20 it is a song of duty and to cease from monetary gain, that the heads of the households, the fathers and the mothers, would insure that everybody in their realm gets a sabbath rest.

And then with Isaiah 58 it is a song of delight and pleasure. Why the sabbath? Because God desires to increase the delight of his people.

And now in Hebrews chapter four we come to what is, perhaps, the crescendo in the song, the magnificent meaning of the sabbath that wraps everything together. And that is rest. Rest, rest for the soul today. Rest, eternal rest in heaven.

And so God gives us these physical signs of spiritual realities.

It is fascinating to notice that God gives us a meal at the Lord's table. He gives us a burial in baptism. And he gives us a day, the sabbath, a physical way of celebrating something spiritual to remind us on a regular basis. And this text, he also tells us that we are given a fourth thing. We are given a sword which is the Word of God.

¹ 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

And so God leads his people by his meals, by a burial, by a day and by a sword.

So let's, first of all, review the context of Hebrews chapter four before we begin to work our way verse by verse in it.

This section in Hebrews chapter four is a continuation of the thought in chapter three which are an exposition of Psalm 95. And Psalm 95 says, "Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation."²

It is a call for the people of God to rise up and give thanks. But it is also a call for the unbelievers who are among the people of God to throw off their unbelief and to believe and finally get their first day of rest on the day of their salvation that will continue for all eternity. That is what Psalm 95 is all about.

And so the first part of Psalm 95 is dealt with in Hebrews chapter three. In Psalm 95:7 we read:

For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts.³

So that is what is happening in Hebrews. The hardening of the heart which deprives a human being of rest and the blessings, the delights, the helps that God would bring them in their lifetime.

So when we get to chapter four we find an exposition of Psalm 95 verse 11 and it reads like this.

When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'⁴

So the text begins, really, with this great threat that some will have rest and others will never have rest and the wrath of God abides upon them, but the blessings of God abide on those who have believed and have entered into the rest.

So it details the struggle of the heart to enter into the rest of the Lord. There are warnings and commands and promises.

But he is calling us all to his rest, to believe in him.

So this context here is all about considering Christ. Consider, consider the rest that comes through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

² Psalm 95:1.

³ Psalm 95:7-8.

⁴ Psalm 95:9-11.

So this message in both chapters three and four, they speak of the devastating consequences of hardness of heart, but the relief, the refreshment, the delight of coming into rest by repenting of your sins.

And so as we read this text we are aware that there are always believers and unbelievers among us. If you are an unbeliever today, just let it be so well understood that you will not have rest in this world until you repent of your sins, until you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, until you throw off your own ways and say, “Oh, Lord, not my will, but thine be done.”

And so chapter four begins with a promise of rest. There is a huge overloaded boat of the blessings of God that have been articulated in these first three chapters that he is bringing many sons to glory, that he is the captain of your salvation, that he was not ashamed to call you his brother, that he is able to destroy him who has the power of death, that he would release those who all their lifetime were subject to bondage. This is such wonderful news that he does give aid to the seed of Abraham, that he is a merciful and faithful high priest, that he brings propitiation for the sins of the people. In other words, he satisfies the wrath of God. He takes the wrath that you deserve and he puts it over on his Son and he propitiates the anger of God.

It says that he himself has suffered being tempted. And he is able to aid those who are tempted. So there is this enormous weight of glory that is communicated in everything up to chapter three.

And so there are various states of rest in contrast to the devastations and the judgments that come from disbelief that are mentioned here. And there is this rest, the sabbath day that is symbolic of the rest of Christ.

And this is the shadow, the day is a shadow. That is why he quotes Genesis. He quotes the creation order where God rested.

Of course we have been saying the sabbath never passed away because it is founded in heaven. It is not founded in the ceremonial law. It is founded at the beginning of time.

And we also learned that a sabbath rest also continues on in heaven. It never stops. And so there is this celebration of the day and then there is the celebration of your salvation and the rest that God gave you on the day of your salvation. And then, lastly, the rest of heaven.

Now, let's just stop for a moment before we go into this text. We need to understand that every chapter of Hebrews brings us to contemplate the overwhelming greatness and glory and majesty of Jesus Christ. And it also speaks of how absolutely stupid it is to throw off God's authority because there is such harm in it. And the book of Hebrews is written so that the affections of the Hebrews for Christ would blossom and that their affections for the world would wilt and die. And that is what the book of Hebrews is all about.

So the writer of Hebrews is presenting a sweeter gospel, the truly good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to notice the corporate nature of what we find here. In 4:1 we read, “Let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.”⁵

Let us... and now this term “let us” appears four times in this chapter alone. And it really speaks of the corporate growth of the body of Christ. We are not just a bunch of individuals. We are that, but we are more than that. We move together as a people. And he is picturing a whole people moving into rest.

In verse 11 he says, “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest.”⁶

In 4:14 he says, “Let us hold fast our confession.”⁷

In 4:16, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace.”⁸

And this terminology, “let us...” continues on in the book of Hebrews. And it would be a joy to recite all of them, but let’s at least say this with clarity that there is a corporate element that we all together enjoy this delightful day that God has given us.

So he says, “Let us enter the rest,” all of us together. It is a call for the whole people of God.

So let’s begin in verse one and if you have an outline in front of you, you will see where I am now in the outline, the promise of a rest in verse one.

“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest...”⁹

So God, first of all, we need to see God promises rest for his people. It is rest for our souls because my yoke is easy and my burden is light. It is rest from trying to earn your salvation. It is the rest in understanding what Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished. Your rest is done, brother.”

Are you worried about your sins? This is a day of rest. This is a day of recognizing that the sacrifice for your sins is finished and you can glory in your salvation. Even though you know how imperfect you are, even though you know what sins you committed even this morning on the way here or even right here as you are sitting here. You know that there is a sacrifice for your sins.

⁵ Hebrews 4:1.

⁶ Hebrews 4:11.

⁷ Hebrews 4:14.

⁸ Hebrews 4:16.

⁹ Hebrews 4:1.

And so there is a promise of this rest and throughout this text you will find the rest being profiled as three different things. But there are really only one thing. It is the rest that comes from salvation. But it also gives you rest on that day. And it also gives you eternal rest.

So that is the promise of rest. So the sabbath was a day of rest and God is the pattern for it.

And then there is a command to fear missing his rest.

“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.”¹⁰

So the fear in Hebrews one is the fear that a person should have if they have an empty profession of faith. Maybe you walked an aisle. Maybe at a crusade somebody said, “You walk an aisle and pray this prayer and you are saved.”

Well, that is not true. There are many, many. There are thousands and thousands of unsaved people going into our churches thinking they are saved, but they have never repented of their sins. They have never taken on the mantle of the holiness of God. And because of that they are not saved. Their hearts are hard toward the Word of God. And our churches are full of them, people who walk aisles. And they have professed with their mouth, but not with their heart.

And so he is saying there is a danger. You should fear if you are not saved. If you walked an aisle at an evangelistic crusade you should fear because it may not have been a real thing. You may just have Christian clothing on. But you don't have a Christian heart.

And that is what he is saying here. “Let us fear lest we have fallen short.”

And so like the Israelites seeing how many times God rescued from your oppressors as he is citing here in this whole context. See how many days he has sustained you with manna seeing his kindness toward you in preparing the land, because that is the imagery that is the backdrop of Hebrews chapter four.

You have seen everything. You have seen the goodness of God, but you should fear. You may actually enjoy the presence of the people of God. But you should fear lest you actually have a hard heart toward God.

And so the writer of Hebrews is warning those who have heard the gospel. Maybe they were attracted to it or maybe they were affiliated with the people, but some of them were shrinking back and what complicated the matter is that many of them had never really entered the rest of Christ even though they had seen all the things that were there.

¹⁰ Ibid.

So what Hebrews is telling us is he is able to bring aid to you who are being tempted. He is able to save you. Consider Christ. Today if you would hear his voice do not harden your hearts as they did in the rebellion.

So what is it that keeps us from rest? It is hardness of heart. And that is what he is saying.

And so he says, “Today, today if you hear his voice turn to him and repent.”

And then we see that the Israelites did not enter the rest because of unbelief in verses two through seven. We learn here that in the wilderness in verse two, the gospel was preached. And it was preached in the wilderness. And to enter the rest there must be faith, not just intellectual knowledge.

He says here:

“For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.”¹¹

So they heard the word, but it wasn't mixed with faith. In other words, it didn't go deep into the heart. It just went into the brain. And it might have adjusted some behavior here and there, but there was not a heart that was there.

So we find that the Israelites are a great illustration of being a part of the people, but not being the people of God. All who are Israel are not Israel, so says the apostle Paul in Romans and he is speaking of this reality that you may have the name Christian, but unless you have the heart of a Christian then you are no Christian at all.

He says the gospel was preached. He said the gospel did not profit because they did not have faith. And so there is this great contrast of believers and unbelievers here.

He says:

“For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: ‘So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’ although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.’”¹²

So here is one thing you learn again from this text. There are two kinds of people in the world. There is we and there is they. There is the sheep and the goats. There are those that have hearts toward God and then there are those who have hardened their hearts toward God.

The sabbath day, I believe, was partly given in order to reveal a hardened heart so that when you come among the people of God on the sabbath and you have no rest, you hate

¹¹ Hebrews 4:2.

¹² Hebrews 4:3.

it. You hate the restriction of it. It shows you that you are unbeliever in your heart. And every week you will be confronted with the gospel that God desires for you to repent, that he desires every sabbath to hear this word, "Today if you would hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

And God has given us this day to constantly celebrate.

Again, we have the sabbath meal as well, the meal of communion which does the same thing, which helps us to preach the gospel to ourselves and to everyone in the Church so that we know whether we are believers or not believers, whether we hate the law of God or whether we love it.

And so this tremendous urgency here just runs through this entire passage.

And then he answers what is rest and rest is entering in to trusting God, repentance for rebellion and believing in the finished work of Christ.

And then we find the true rest is founded upon a finished work in verse three.

"Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world."¹³

So now he is bringing us into this idea that there is a two fold aspect of rest. There is the moment of salvation and then there is the final rest. And he says that the rest that you received in those realms has been finished by Christ on the cross.

And so he calls us to enter into his rest.

And there are three aspects of that rest. There is this continuous 24/7 element. It is continuous because God's rest is continuous.

In Genesis 2:1-3 we realize that in this day of creation there is no morning or evening mentioned in the verse as it was in the first six days. It means that on the seventh day, the sabbath, the rest still continued. God's rest began with the completion of the cosmos and continues on and on and it is available to his children.

So he speaks of this rest that is continuous and works every day of your life.

We also know that it is happy and satisfying rest because when God rested he looked at what he had made and he said, "It is good."

And Job 38 says the morning stars sang together and the angels shouted for joy. It was a day of happy and satisfying rest.

And the third aspect of the rest is that it is an active and working rest because God continues a certain kind of work. All work is not work. I think we have said that at the

¹³ Ibid.

beginning. But there is the work of labor that should cease, but there is the kind of work that Jesus did on the sabbath.

“My father is working as I, too, am working.”

And so it is a day of doing the mercy that Mathew 12 talks to us about.

By the way, you know, the Puritans called the things you do on the sabbath sabbath exercises. But what we learn from all of this, even though there is continuous rest, even though there is happy and satisfying rest and even though that rest includes showing mercy on the sabbath, that there is only one way that it will be impossible and that is when the heart is hard. And so that is why in this text twice, in once in chapter three and then in chapter four he appeals to today. Sabbath rest has been given to us, the day, to help us see whether our hearts are hard or whether they are turned toward God in faith.

And in the next point, number five, is the rest of Christ is greater than the rest of Joshua in the wilderness. It was a foreshadowing of the rest of Christ.

And so Joshua’s rest was a certain kind of rest, but it wasn’t enough. It was temporal. Christ’s rest is eternal and complete. That is the point that he is making here in verses eight through 11, that there is more rest, he says, in verse nine.

“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.”¹⁴

And so he is casting a vision for something greater than the rest of Joshua. In the same way that Jesus said something greater than the temple is here, he is now saying here something greater than Joshua’s rest is here. And it is eternal rest.

And then the next point that we run into in verse 12, 13 is that the Word of God is the tool that God uses to bring his children to rest.

Verse 12.

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.¹⁵

So God has made provisions to lead us into his rest. He has given us his Word to pierce our hearts and when he pierces our hearts he shows us our sin through his Word. But the wonderful thing about this sword is that when it pierces, it heals at the same time. And God has given us this living, powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow and it discerns our heart.

¹⁴ Hebrews 4:9.

¹⁵ Hebrews 4:12-13.

So why is it that we spend so much time in the Word of God on the sabbath. It is so that God would pierce our hearts through his Word. And we pray that as we read it, as we blanket the whole service with the Word of God, that the piercing, the comforting, the healing would happen and the sabbath is given for the application of the Word of God.

And so the Word of God is the tool that God uses to help us.

So you see the grand scheme that the writer of Hebrews brings to the sabbath, that it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, that every thing that the Jews were doing to keep the sabbath was fulfilled in the shed blood of Christ on the cross. And it secured for them an eternal rest and they did have eternal rest when they were in the wilderness, those who would turn from their unbelief. And those who would not did not.

And it is the same today.

So that is the grand scheme.

So from one era of biblical history to the next, God's call remains the same.

Enter into my rest.

Different words might be used, but the call is the same and it is the call of the ages. This is the heart of the kingdom of heaven. I think it is so beautifully summed up in the words of Jesus which he used just before he rebuked the Pharisees for their wrong view of the sabbath when he said, “

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.¹⁶

That is the heart of the gospel. It is the heart of the kingdom of heaven.

So when we talk about the sabbath we really are talking about one thing and that is the finished work of Jesus Christ, an entire day to celebrate and to delight in it and immerse ourselves in every aspect of it.

So that is Hebrews chapter four.

Now I would like to move into a time of applying a number of the things that we have been talking about over these weeks and the first is really... I would like to get some specific counsel to your fathers and mothers.

¹⁶ Matthew 11:28-30.

Fathers and mothers, you are playing a role that God has appointed you to. God has been very clear that in the 10 Commandments that it is a father and a mother who are responsible to ensure that everyone in their household has a sabbath day, the workers and everyone who might be in their realm. That is your responsibility. And I just charge you fathers and you mothers, take this charge very seriously and ensure for all of your children, all of your animals, all of your machines, all of those who work for you if you have anyone, ensure it. Be somebody in this world who is ensuring seven and a half weeks of delightful rest for all those in their household.

And let me say this. We take this directly from Exodus chapter 20 and Deuteronomy chapter five. And we want you to be very careful in your treatment of this commandment. Because if you believe you there are only nine commandments then I would really like to talk to you. I would like to talk to anybody who thinks that we only have nine commandments. Or maybe we have eight. Maybe we don't like the adultery one. Or maybe we actually only have seven because we like to steal. Well, if you like to steal and you like to commit adultery, then you might like also to break the sabbath because it is one of the 10 Commandments. And I think it should strike fear in our hearts to take it so lightly. If you want to get your knife out and cut it out of the 10 Commandments, then I will pray for you, because the wrath of God is against those who break his sabbaths. And we have learned that from the texts that we have been studying.

Now, you fathers have five roles. You are the man with mercy in your heart as you apply what God would have on the sabbath. You would see from Matthew 12 that it is a song of mercy, that it is a day to engage your family in doing works of mercy towards those around you, that is a day for the whole family to have in their hearts: How can I express the mercy of Jesus Christ today?

People say, "What are we going to do on the sabbath? I mean we get out of church and then there are like eight, nine, 10 hours left. What are we going to do?"

Well, here is one thing. You fathers and mothers have a responsibility to engage your families, to help their hearts to be turned toward mercy, that it is a day of mercy. That the eyes of every person they look into is an opportunity for mercy. And so you have something wonderful to do all sabbath day long.

What is your ministry? It is the next person you meet. And the next person you meet, it is God's will that they would see the mercy of Jesus Christ so that there would be a living picture that Jesus Christ is the good shepherd and that his eyes would be your eyes, his hands would be yours, his feet would be yours as well and that you would walk in his ways.

So think of this. When we break up today we have an alarmingly wonderful opportunity to look into one another's eyes and to cry out to God for help for the blessing of our brother or our sister.

So a man with mercy in your heart, men, that is your charge before the Lord. Go and celebrate the sabbath in the same way that your Savior celebrated it by doing mercy and he healed on the sabbath and he was a blessing on the sabbath.

Number two, the second role, the second of five roles for men. You are the protector from wrath and judgment. In Nehemiah 13 we hear this song of rescue from the judgment of God for despising the sabbath and the blessing that God [?] who would keep them.

You are a man who has been appointed by God to protect your family, your church, your community from judgment.

We know that whole communities were judged by God because they did not keep the sabbath. Do you think God will spare your church? Do you think God will spare your family? Do you think God will spare you?

Nehemiah 13 I think makes it very clear that God, even though he passes over our sins and he does not bring us to judgment on every thing we do, thank God that we have not been judged according to our sins, but let's know this, that God's wrath is against those who reject his laws.

Number three, we talked about the merciful dad. We talked about the protective dad. Now we are talking about the dutiful dad.

In Exodus 20 there is a song of duty and a ceasing of monetary gain and it is the responsibility of dads to do the duty, to stop working on the sabbath and to cease economic gain on that day.

And then from Isaiah 58 we learn that a dad is the director of delight. It is a song of delight and pleasure, that it should be for parents to pray that God would help them to make it such a delight. And how do they do that? They have to start with their own heart.

If you as a father or a mother do not delight in Jesus Christ, if your heart is not toward him and you love his commandments and you say with David, "Oh, how I love thy law," if you can't say that your heart loves Jesus, then it is going to be very difficult for you to lead your family in this. This is the way God has wired the universe. He gives heads to lead in a direction and he has given that to fathers and mothers to be the directors of delight for that day.

What am I going to do on the sabbath? You need to lead your children in delight.

And I think that that means that we as fathers and mothers have to prepare our own hearts for delight. How can anyone around us delight if we were not saturating our houses with delight from the resources that God has given us in our hearts.

So we should prepare our own hearts first. And then not only are you the director of delight, you are the rector of rest.

Now in Hebrews four you come to this crescendo, this amazing summary statement of everything that the sabbath means and that is that Christ is your sabbath. And that means that he is your sabbath today and you have rest for your soul on a day and you have it every day for all eternity.

And so you become a purveyor of the news of the rest of God.

So those are five things that fathers need to pay attention to.

I am going to give you now 17 questions to guide you in your decision making about the sabbath.

People have said, "Give us a list. What are we supposed to do and what not supposed to do?"

Well, I am going to give you 17 questions and we have studied the texts and so I would like for you to consider these questions because it is true. There are certain things that God has commanded that we do and not do on the sabbath. If you don't think that, then you just need to go read these texts again.

If you think there are no demands on this day, then just go back and read the texts again because there are restrictions and requirements and, you know, the rebellious Antinomian heart of man hates any of that.

So here are the questions.

Number one, does it involve working for money? Exodus 20:8-11. Nehemiah 13. Exodus 13:12-18. Jeremiah 17:22. Ezekiel 46:1. Does it involve working or making money?

Number two, does it involve buying or selling? Nehemiah 13:15-22. Exodus 20:8-11. Jeremiah 17 and Amos 8:5.

If any of you want to get these, I will give you my notes or email them to you.

Number three, does it involve preparations that should have been done on Saturday? Exodus 35:3 is an excellent text that explains the heart of this matter.

Number four, does it involve something that is distracting to the mind toward the normal activities of the week? In other words, it is supposed to be a holy day, right? It is my holy day, God says. You know, it shouldn't be like the other days of the week. It shouldn't drag you into the thoughts and the normal patterns. God wants to break that

pattern for a 24 hour period. And Isaiah 58 is the marvelous place to go to help you understand what that means.

Number five, does the activity speak the principle: this is a holy day? Does it speak to the principle: this is a holy day? Is it my day or is it his day? Be critical. The heart of the Christian is the heart of Christ who said, "Not my will, but thine be done." A true believer does not want to do his own will. And so the sabbath day is either a judgment or it is a sweetness to those who would experience it with the people of God.

Number six, does it promote your own normal ways? Does it promote your own normal ways?

Number seven, does it promote your own words? That is Isaiah 58. Does it promote your own words?

Number eight, does it promote your own works? Does it promote your own works? Isaiah 58.

Number nine, does it promote delighting in the Lord? Does it promote delighting in the Lord? Isaiah 58.

Number 10, does it promote pleasure in the Lord? Isaiah 56. Does it promote pleasure in the Lord?

Number 11, does it distract from contemplation of Christ's work? Does it distract from contemplation of Christ's work?

Number 12, does it distract from reveling in heaven and the heavenly rest we just spoke of in Hebrews four?

Number 13, does it require someone else working? Exodus 20. Deuteronomy five.

Number 14, does it promote afflicting the soul? Leviticus 16:31 and Leviticus 23:32. Does it promote afflicting your soul?

Isn't that interesting that God would give us on the same day to delight and to afflict. God is so wise to help us in the ways that we need help.

And then, number 15, does it promote your sanctification? Exodus 20 says that the sabbath was made for your sanctification. Does it promote your sanctification? Does it carry you on farther?

And then, number 16, does it involve hearing the Word of God? Does it involve hearing the Word of God? Acts 15:21; 13:14; 18:4 and 16:13.

What we find in the book of Acts is that the apostles celebrated the sabbath it involved hearing the Word of God. Why is it that we have preaching on the sabbath day? Because that is what the apostles did. Because it was a day for hearing the Word of God.

And then, number 17, does it involve good and showing mercy? Does it involve doing good and showing mercy? Mathew 12. John 7:23. John 5:9-16.

So these are questions that you can ask. Each one of them is really a question that arises from the various texts that we have been studying this whole time. None of these should come strange or new to you, I know.

God has given us commands. And we have to understand the beauty and the goodness of the commands of God which is why David could say, "Oh, how I love thy law."

One of the most startling moments of my week this week was when I was reading a letter of one of our interns as he recounted what God had taught him while he was here. And our brother Andrew Gillingham wrote in his letter explaining the value of the time spent here in this church and with us. He said that he realized that the commandments of God are infinitely liberating. The commandments of God are infinitely liberating.

They are eternally satisfying. They are perpetually [?]. They are constantly sanctifying. They are a blessing. All of God's commandments are beautiful.

And so when we ask these questions let's not ask them with a heavy heart at all because what you get for obedience is happiness. That is what the Bible teaches everywhere. These supremely pleasurable, abundantly delightful days are meant for our good. And so God has given us a command so that he would take us in a direction instead of letting us just go off into what is not pleasure at all. He knows that we are sheep. He knows that we don't always have discernment about our schedules. And so he comes and gives us a day that is designed to crank up the happiness of our souls, to fill them with pleasure so that we would be satisfied with what is eternally satisfying and that we would drink of the water that is only satisfying in this world and that is the water of life.

So those are 17 questions.

Now I would like to make some comments about the authority of God, the authority of the Word of God and make some applications of the authority of God in the world. And the basis of the sabbath day is that God is king. It is his world. And he has ordered it according to his own pattern. He has set the stars in the heavens and the curvature of the earth and the spinning of the planets for his own glory. And in doing so he has made them and arranged them so that there would be a day, so that here would be these cycles every 24 hours and that the beautiful mathematical unity of the universe would be expressed in your life.

Because he is king he has actually set the spinning of the whole planet spinning at 66,000 miles an hour so that there would be a day of rest for his people. And even though that

planet is spinning 66,000 miles an hour, hurtling through space, there is a rest for the people who live on that planet because God owns everything.

And so from that there are two very critical principles that we need to understand if we are going to be Christians in this world. Number one is God wants to control your life. God wants to control your week. He wants your week. He wants you to stop controlling it.

The doctrine of the sabbath gives mankind a time management system to govern every week of their life and in the meantime to fill their hearts with specific things on a day, as if they were open vessels. And on that one day they are filled up for the coming week. And God has arranged the movement of the stars for this very purpose, that mankind would rest and celebrate the glory of the gospel.

So God does want to control your life.

Often people do... sabbath because they do not want God's control.

And then, number two, not only does God want to control your life, God will punish those who throw off his authority. Nehemiah 13 and Isaiah 56 make this very plain that there is thick and real judgment for those who would despise the sabbath day.

We learn that whole nations have come down because of this. And so will your life in some way that only God can ordain.

There are many problems to grapple with when we encounter these texts of Scripture. Here is one. In a normal church even in family integrated churches around, after the service is a time of organized sports and play. That is almost universal in the church today.

Another issue that is difficult to deal with is how do the leaders of the church, how do the elders or the fathers of the church help the children in the flock to keep it? What do we do? That is actually a very thorny problem to deal with?

We know this, that we must cast a biblical vision for it and that is the beginning of wisdom for us. And so we have just spent now five weeks considering what God has said about it.

What do you do with unbelieving children who want to play? How do you coach a father for how to reorient children's behavior? What is the list? What is the list?

Well, we have actually a long time adopted a list in the Second London Baptist Confession. Those of you who are members of our church know that we subscribe to the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689.

Now what that means is that every person in the church doesn't have to agree with every point in the confession, but we just want you to know that we believe about the sabbath

what the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 says and we plan to teach it the way it is.

Here is what the confession says regarding this list. Now listen for the list. Ok? Because this is the list.

“The sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord.”

And, by the way, no words are thrown away in this.

“...holy to the Lord. When men after due preparing of their hearts and ordering their common affairs aforehand do not only observe a holy rest all day from their own works, words and thoughts about their worldly employment and recreations, but are also taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of worship and in the duties of necessity and mercy.”

So that is the list. It is not a new list. It is actually a very old list that we have been publishing since the day that we have been going. And so nothing really has changed. But as with all people and all churches, there is always room for sanctification. There is always room for more delight. There is always room for more mercy. There is always room for more pleasure. There is always room for more praise for God. And that is what we have so desired would be the results of this time.

We are aware that God has given you to run your own homes and that there is a priority of the sabbath that we want to really inform all of us about and it has implications on many aspects of our schedules, what we do on Saturday, what we do on Sunday and all those kinds of things. We just want to encourage you. Make it a day of delight.

And if somehow we have been wrong about it, the great accusation will be: We urged our people to give an entire day to delight in Jesus Christ. We appealed to them to set the whole day aside because of these texts of Scripture. And if we are wrong about it, then we would just say the same thing that Nehemiah said in Nehemiah 13:22 when he had shut the gates and said, “No more doing business on God’s holy day,” and he cried out to God because he knew he was a sinner and he knew it was hard to keep the sabbath, it was impossible. And only Christ kept it. But he cried out the same way that we should cry out.

And I want you to know that the elders of this church are crying out in the same way that Nehemiah cried out and we are saying, “Remember me, oh my God, concerning this also and spare me according to the greatness of your mercy.”

So as we engage in it all of us, I think are really in the same boat. We say, “Oh God, help us.”

But we should be careful not to throw out the specifics because we don’t understand every single detail.

So you understand 95 percent and throw it out because of the lacking five that you don't understand. We can do that with anything in this book. And so we have to take a look at it and ask for God's help, that he would help us to spend this day in delight.

And then there are a number of benefits and I would like to just bring them out here. Seven benefits.

The point here is don't forget the benefits.

First, it shows whether you love to saturate a whole day in his pleasures. It reveals whether his pleasures are really yours. What a blessing that is. When your conscience bites you and says, "I can't do that," then it should throw you on the mercy of God and you should do this. You should say, "Lord, I desire more delight. Please help me in my lack of it. Come build delight in you in my soul."

So it is a marvelous opportunity to be confronted with dullness of spirit, with latent dis... with a number of things that might be revealed on this day when God has called you to delight in him all day long.

You know, the writer of Hebrews, we should point out, makes it so clear that your heart can be changed. Today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts. This is the good news. God can take hardness and make it into a beautiful garden that is fruitful. Hardness of heart is a most dangerous thing in your family, in this church and in this world. And so God has given us a day to ask ourselves whether our hearts are hardened. That is a tremendous blessing that God would come and reveal to us the things that would kill us.

And so it is a day to ask yourself this question. Is your body here but you have no rest? And I that is true then run to Christ and be relieved for all eternity.

And then it can help you know if you believe. If you despise a day of delighting in him, it is probably a sign that you do not believe. No one here can know your heart. We don't know who the believers are and who are not. There is no way we can tell. We know that wheat and tares grow together. We know that we are to coexist together in a certain way. And we can't pass judgment on one another's salvation. But we can appeal to one another to examine your hearts. And that is what our communion service is partly about. It is that each man would examine himself to know whether he is in the faith.

So not only it shows whether you love to saturate yourself on a whole day, not only does it help you know if you believe, but it also sends a message to the world that there is only one place there is only one place in the world for weary souls who have been abused by the devil and that is Christ. There is only one place and it is Christ.

Come into the day and experience the rest of Jesus Christ. Come and rest your weary soul. And let the whole community know it because you stopped doing business, because

you suspended everything and you said, “No. God has called me to a day of delight because I love him and he loves me.”

And so therefore it will be a holy day. It won't be like every other day of the week.

The rest of the world wants to lure you back in to just another day. Your friends will do it. The evangelical church will do it. Just make it like any day, not a holy day. But it is a way for you to say to the whole community, the whole watching world that Jesus Christ finished a sacrifice for my sins and I love him and I plan to spend a whole day relishing in it.

And then, number four, we need to understand that rest sanctifies. Jesus said, “Sanctify them in truth. Your word is truth.”

We just read that the Word is sharper than any two edged sword and so there is sanctification in that day. There is progress that can be made in that day.

Number five, it is a rest that soothes. We cease from our works and trust in Christ's finished work.

He kept all the commandments that we could not keep. E have not been able to keep even one of the commandments. And Christ kept them all and has given us rest for our souls.

And then also that the rest secures eternal rest. And it tells a story that this world is not your home, that we are just here for a period of time.

Setting aside a sabbath day is to say to the whole world and to yourself and to your whole family that there is heaven waiting for me, that Christ has gone and prepared a place for me. He has set myself in dwelling places ready and prepared and he has done it spiritually now and he is taking me there. It is a way to secure rest.

And then, finally, the rest helps us with our earthly trials. The rest helps us with our earthly trials.

Richard Baxter, a pastor of the 17th century went through a terrible time in his life and so in order to deal with it he sat down and he wrote a book on heaven because he realized that he loved this world too much. It was late in his life and he wrote a book on heaven called, *Saints Everlasting Rest*. Let me quote this book.

In a time of languishing from the sorrows that he had been brought upon him.

“And for you that fear God, and have made him your portion, your end, and rest, and are the heirs of this kingdom, let me entreat you, more frequently to look homeward, and mind your inheritance. Should we not think oft of the state we must be in for ever ? Do you not perceive that God tumbles you up and down the world, and crosseth your desires,

to weary you out of it ; that he setteth loose the winds to raise those storms, that may make you long for the harbour, and may toss you to his breast ; that he makes your dearest friends afflict you, and those that you took sweet counsel with, and went up with to the house of God as companions, to be scorpions to you, that so you might not have here a resting place for the sole of your foot ? O, learn God's gracious meaning, and look upwards!”

And so the sabbath is a blessing because it helps us with our earthly trials and it helps us see that all of our trials are met to cast us on the breast of Jesus, to toss us into his arms so that we would know that he loves us with an everlasting love, so that every sabbath day our whole being would be thrust upon his mercy and we would grip him with all that we have and we would praise him all day long with the people of God and there would be more pleasure in it, there would be more delight in it than anything that you can cook up in your own vain imagination.

Would you pray with me?

Lord, Lord, thank you for the rest in Christ. Thank you for using it to delight us, to refresh us, to convict us, to throw us, toss us upon your great arms. And so now, Lord, I pray that you would help us to delight in you all day long doing the mercy that you have called for and finding the delight that you have granted in it. Amen.