Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Understanding the Sabbath
Scripture: Genesis 2:1-3
Code: 90-379

Well, it was some months ago when we were in the gospel of Mark early in the summer that we covered the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3, in which Jesus violated the sabbath by the standards of the Jews. And when they confronted Him, He said two things. He said, “Man was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath was made for man.” Which was to say that the sabbath was not to be a burden which men had to conform to, but the sabbath was to be a delight which men could enjoy. The Jews had turned it in to an almost unbearable burden.

The second thing He said which, was even more shocking was, “The Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath,” and thus He declared His sovereignty over the sabbath.

How are we to understand the place that the sabbath plays, if any, in the life of the people of God? Turn in your Bible for a moment to Exodus chapter 20. This is the Decalogue, the ten commandments. And near the middle of the ten commandments is the 4th commandment. We begin to read about it in verse 8. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servants or your cattle or your sojourner - ” or stranger “ - who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.”

There is no question about the other nine commandments being permanent and binding. We are to have no other gods. We are never to make an idol. We are to worship only the true and living God. We are never to take the name of the Lord in vain. We are not to dishonor our father or mother, but rather give them honor. We are not to murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, or covet.

Those are all moral mandates, moral commands, with the exception of verses 8 through 11, the fourth command regarding the sabbath. And the question that is often posed is a simple one. If all the other commands are permanent, is not this one permanent, as well?

There are people who believe it is and we might call them strict sabbatarians. They fall generally into two categories. One would be Seventh Day Adventists. I think we’re familiar with them. I think it’s legitimate to consider Seventh Day Adventism as a cult because they believe that the writings of Ellen G. White are inspired by God and could be put alongside the Bible. But they identify themselves as

faithful to the fourth command.

There are also Seventh Day Baptists, a smaller group that interpret the commandment as permanently binding, as well. Not quite so strict, you could also identify what you would call Christian sabbatarians. They have decided that as Christians, we must keep the sabbath, but it's not any longer the seventh day, it's the first day. So they shift the command in Exodus from Saturday to Sunday.

This is a classic view among reformed theologians. This was the view of many, if not most of the Puritans. In fact, if you go back to the 1689 Baptist Confession, you will find a Christian sabbatarian article in that Confession, that Christians are to treat Sunday as a new sabbath, and they are to follow, generally, the prescriptions and limitations that were placed upon the old sabbath.

And the question before us tonight is are they correct? Is it correct that we should be observing Saturday, the old sabbath, or perhaps Sunday as a kind of new replacement sabbath as a holy day, set apart from all other days?

Well, to answer that, we need to go back to Genesis chapter 2. So let's do that. Genesis chapter 2. The chapter opens with the indication that creation is over. And we read these words, "Then the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts - " everything that occupies them. "By the seventh day, God completed 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."

You will notice in verse 3 the word "sanctified." That word is essentially the word "holy" and this is the first time the word "holy" is used in the Bible. The root means "to separate," or perhaps better, to turn that into a vertical concept, "to elevate." It is a separation that elevates or exalts.

So here, for the first time, we come across the idea of something being separated by being elevated. That is, God designates this seventh day as an exalted day, a day lifted above all other days. And God makes it holy, and declares it to be so for three reasons. The three reasons are basically connected to the three verbs that make up the text.

First of all, it is a day that is unique because the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts. That's the first verb, the whole work of creation was finished. This work of creation was done in six essentially 24-hour days by God, and since that close of the sixth day, there has never been any further creation with the exception of those divine miracles that we have read about occasionally in the Old Testament, and the flurry of miracles through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which He creates wholeness and wellness within the midst of His now fallen creation.

Apart from that, creation ceased on the sixth day. It didn't go on for thousands of years. It didn't go on for millions or billions of years. After six days it was finished, it was completed. And so, this is a special day because it signals that God's entire creation is finished.

Secondly is the verb "rested." When it says in verse 2 that "by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested." And then in verse 3 again, "He rested from all His work which God had created and made." This is a unique day because the creation being completed, God stops and rests.

Does not imply weariness. The Lord does not grow weary, Isaiah 40:28. The Psalmist says He doesn't slumber or sleep. He rested only in the sense that He ceased from work, not that He had to replenish His energy. But what it tells us when He rested is really that He was satisfied. And that takes you back to 1:31, "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." It was a perfect work, and it was the rest of utter satisfaction.

And by the way, there would be no more creation, and for a little while there was no more work for God to do. God didn't go to work again until the 3rd chapter of Genesis, not very long, when Adam and Eve fell and God had to go to work. And what was the first thing that God did? 3:21, "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them." And then He drove them out of the garden.

God did no work between the end of creation and the fall of man. And with the fall of man, God's work began again. God had to preserve as Hebrews 1 says, He had to "uphold by His power His creation" because it was now subject to decay. And so, He went to work to preserve the universe that He had made, the creation that He has made, and He also went to work to fulfill all aspects necessary in the redemption of that creation.

Now, you do not hear in those three verses anything about people resting. There's nothing here about man resting, nothing here about Adam resting, and because he was without sin and a perfect man in every sense, there was no depletion of his energies when he was doing whatever the simple tending of the garden called for. There's no need to have a day of rest for man. What would he rest from? He's living in a paradise with no labor, and no sweat, and no expended and lost energy.

There's no sabbath law given here for Adam, none at all. Nothing is said about this day being a day of worship. It doesn't say anything about that. It doesn't prescribe anything for anyone. It is isolated completely to God. He completed His creation, satisfied with it, He ceased, which is constituting rest, and the third verb in verse 3, "He blessed the seventh day."

He designed that that seventh day would be a special memorial to His creation and its original perfection. This is so important for you to understand. This is a day to be elevated above all other days as a memorial to remember the glory of God's perfection in creation. Every seventh day from here on out would be a reminder that God in six days created the universe in perfection.

Have you ever asked yourself why we operate calendars all over the world in sevens? It seems an odd number, does it not? There certainly is no rational reason for coming up with seven, then designating weeks, and months, and years to be in sets of sevens. It's actually kind of an awkward way to do things. It might be simpler to do them in tens. And yet it is universally adopted across the world, and it is unique, and it is designed to be unique because every seventh day is a reminder of the power and the glory of God expressed in the magnificence of six-day creation.

To reject God as Creator, to reject God as Creator in six days is to unbless the seventh day. To say that somehow God used thousands of years, millions of years, billions of years is to desanctify the seventh day. There's a reason why we live in seven-day units, and man has always done so, and it is because every seventh day provides for us a reminder that God is the Creator who created in six days the entire universe.

In Revelation chapter 14 there is the testimony of the gospel - well, I won't read it to you - the angels flying through heaven, and the testimony of the gospel is to acknowledge God as the Creator. It is the everlasting good news that God is the Creator. Every seventh day that passes should stand as a testimony to the Creator.

Every Saturday, America, the western world with its Christian influences work toward a five-day work week. Part of that was the underlying sense that Saturday was a day to enjoy the creation. Saturday is a perpetual witness to God as Creator. Sunday, on the other hand, is a perpetual witness to God as Redeemer. We'll talk more about that next time.

So, when you go back to Genesis chapter 2, there's no mention of sabbath being a law, no mention of sabbath being a day of worship. The next time you even run into the word is in Exodus 16. Hundreds of years have passed. Patriarchs have come and gone. None of them worshiped, as far as we know, on the sabbath. That was designated for them. It was not prescribed for them. It was not mandated for them, not Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the rest of the people of God.

The first time the sabbath is mentioned in some significant way is in the 16th chapter of Exodus when God feeds the people manna from heaven as they wander in the wilderness, and the manna comes every day except the sabbath day, and the day before they get enough for that day so that they don't have to work on that day. And that gives them a little preview of what's coming because in the 20th chapter you have the ten commandments, and in the ten commandments, which I just read to you, prescriptions are given that do set down laws for the sabbath day. This is the first time any such laws

have been given by God.

This is very important so that we understand that the sabbath was not instituted for man in Genesis. It was instituted officially in Exodus in the law of Moses. A further understanding of that comes from Exodus chapter 31. You might want to look at it for a minute. The Lord speaks to Moses in verse 12 and He says to him, “As for you, speak to the sons of Israel saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, 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. For six days work may be done but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; - ” Why? “ - for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased; and was refreshed,’ ” or rested.

Here we find that sabbath is a sign. It is a sign. That is to say, it points to something else. It is a symbol, if you will. It is placed in the middle, or near the middle, of the ten commandments because it is a symbol connected to the Mosaic covenant.

Let me see if I can help you with that. When God made a covenant with Noah, He promised Noah that He would never destroy the world again and God identified a sign. What was the sign of the Noahic Covenant? Rainbow. When God made a covenant with Abraham, He made that covenant with Abraham and He designated a sign, and the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, participation among the covenant people Israel, was the sign of circumcision.

And here you have in the Mosaic Covenant another sign, and the sign this time is the sabbath. It was only a sign. Observing it with a duplicitous heart gained nothing. In fact, Isaiah 1:13 says, “Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath.”

The prophet Hosea pronounces a similar judgment on their hypocritical sabbaths. “I will put an end to all her gaiety, her feasts, her new moons, or sabbaths.” It didn’t mean anything to observe it outwardly without a heart of love and devotion to God.

But what was the symbol for? What was the sign for? Why this sign? I think you’ll understand this when I explain it. The sabbath was a reminder of creation. The sabbath was to remind the people of Israel that they had forfeited paradise, that man had forfeited paradise. The law said to them, “Obey this law and you will be blessed.” God said that repeatedly, “Obey this law and you will be blessed,” to show them that righteous behavior would restore a taste of Eden’s paradise. Righteous behavior would also point to a future, a future kingdom when paradise would be regained.

So the sabbath, every sabbath that went by when they rested, they were reminded of a perfect creation, a paradise of God dominated by righteousness, which had been forfeited by sin and could only be regained again by righteousness. God then institutes the seventh-day system, not for everybody in the world. In fact, specifically it says for Israel. Verse 17, “A sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever.” Every seventh day was a reminder that they were living in a fallen world. Every seventh day was a reminder that they had lost paradise. And the only way to regain a taste of paradise was obedience to God, righteousness.

And they therefore were to consider the importance of obeying the ten commandments. They were to consider the importance on that seventh day of examining their own lives and looking at how they were measuring up against the law of God. Recognizing sin was the objective, and bringing them to repentance.

So the first seventh day identified God as Creator, but the institution of the sabbath in the Mosaic economy identified God as the law-giver. The first view was to produce gratitude for the wonder of creation. The second, to produce repentance for the forfeiture of all that is right. And so, the sabbath took on a new meaning. Yes, it still is a reminder that God created, but it’s a reminder that the creation of God which was originally perfect is now marred, and we are marred, and the realm of His creation is stained by sin, and we are stained by sin, and the creation, as Paul puts it, is groaning, and we are groaning, as well.

The sign in the middle of the Abrahamic Covenant of circumcision was a way to say, “You need to be clean. You need to be cleansed.” And the sign here, the sabbath, in the middle of the ten commandments, essentially said the same thing. You need to recognize that you have forfeited paradise, and the only way to regain it is to be righteous. Obviously they couldn’t keep the law, but they were to be driven in penitence to plead with God to be merciful to them as sinners.

So we understand that this was unique for the people of Israel. And as I said this morning, when Jesus came, everything changed, everything changed. You remember that I told you this morning that what He did was not a cleansing of the temple, it was an abolishing of the temple? He didn’t just want to eliminate the bad priests and keep the good priests. He eliminated the priesthood.

He didn’t just want to clean up the people’s attitudes as they gave their sacrifices, He obliterated the sacrificial system because He brought an end to Judaism with all its ceremonies, all its rituals, all its sacrifices, all of its external trappings, the temple, the holy of holies, all of it, including the sabbath, including the sabbath. The sabbath observance went away with all the rest that belonged to Judaism.

We begin to understand this by watching Jesus and how He treated the sabbath. How did Jesus treat the sabbath? I’ve said this before, any way He wanted, absolutely any way He wanted. He is the

mediator, we know, of a new covenant, a better covenant. It's important to notice that just as He obliterated the sacrificial system, He obliterated the sabbath system.

Now you may recall that we looked at this in specifics in Mark, but let's look at several other passages to consider this because this is the heart of our message to you tonight. Look at Matthew 12:1. "Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, His disciples became hungry, began to pick the heads of grain and eat." By the way, there was actually no Old Testament law forbidding them to do that. In fact, it was allowed. But the Jews had added endless restrictions to the Old Testament.

"So when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.' He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did?' " You think this is bad? " 'When he became hungry, he and his companions, entered the house of God, and ate the consecrated show bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?' "

I'll even give you something worse. David and his men ate the show bread. " 'Or have you not read in the law, that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and are innocent?' " You all make a big issue out of not working on the sabbath. Guess what? While you're not working, all the priests are working, carrying out all the offerings and all the sacrifices.

Which reminds us that this law is not moral, it's symbolic. So Jesus, rather than acquiescing to their concern over a violation of the sabbath, points to other violations of the sabbath. In verse 8, He says, "The Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath." He can do anything He wants with the sabbath. He can institute it. He can make commands for restrictions. He can require death for violation of those commands, as in the Mosaic law, or He can set it aside totally. He can abrogate it. He can nullify it. And there is the transition that is taking place in the New Testament. As Jesus arrives, everything that is part of the system of Judaism is coming to its end.

Look in Luke chapter 14, Luke chapter 14. Again it's in verse 1, "It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. And there in front of them was a man suffering from dropsy. And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath or not?' But they kept silent. He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. And He said to them, 'Which of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a sabbath day?' And they could make no reply to this."

They thought healing someone was a violation of the sabbath. Jesus appears to have chosen the sabbath day for His healing purposely because it struck a blow at this symbol. Jesus is announcing the end of the sabbath. By the way, healing was no violation of sabbath law, the Old Testament doesn't indicate that. But then again, healing didn't happen.

In Mark chapter 2 - let's go back to that chapter where we first began to look at this recently - He is passing through a grain field on a sabbath. His disciples begin to make their way while picking the heads of grain. The same account is in Matthew. Pharisees say to Him, "Look, why are they doing this? It's not lawful on the sabbath." Then He goes through the illustration of David and et cetera, and comes down in verse 27 to, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. The Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath."

God designed the sabbath to be a blessing, to bring rest, to bring a day in the week when you could thank God for the glory of His creation and also be made aware that paradise had been lost. It was a day to show gratitude for the creation and a day to repent, to seek forgiveness. It was right in the middle of the law, because they lived in violation of that law if not actively, in their hearts. As Jesus said, "If you do these things in your heart, it's as if you've committed these sins," in the sermon on the mount.

So our Lord has given the sabbath to be a blessing to man, to give him rest from his work, a taste of Eden where all was rest before the fall, to give him an opportunity to thank God for the creation, and then to examine his life against the law. And seeing the sin there, seek for forgiveness and mercy, and the result in joy and peace and salvation.

Again, He is Lord of the sabbath. He is greater than the sabbath. The sabbath will be whatever He desires it to be, whatever He designs it to be, nothing more and nothing less. It is not moral. It wasn't even given until the time of Moses and abrogated in the time of Christ.

Turn to John 5. Opposition to Jesus is smoldering under the surface at this time, but this particular healing brought it out in the open. There's a feast of the Jews. We're not sure exactly which, but we could call it a festival or a sabbath feast. "There is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes." And then it says, "In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, withered, waiting for the moving of the waters;" Some dispute over the authenticity of this particular portion there. "An angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool," and so forth. Part of verse 3 and 4 may have been added later. That's why they have little brackets there.

But in verse 5, this picks up the original text. "A man was there who had been ill for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there, He knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, 'Do you wish to get well?' The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.' " This was probably some kind of a superstitious idea that the first one in the water when the ripples came got healed. "And Jesus said to him, 'Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.' " Very light straw mat could be rolled up under his shoulder. "Immediately the man became well - " in verse 9 " - picked up his pallet,

began to walk." Here's the rub. "Now it was a sabbath that day."

Old Testament law didn't forbid walking, didn't forbid carrying your pallet from one place to another. But rabbinic tradition had formulated, I don't know, some say nearly 40 different forbidden activities. You see them in the Mishnah, one of which was carrying your mat. So Jesus had him violate the sabbath. He didn't have to heal the man on the sabbath. He didn't have to command the man to do something that violated their sabbath sensibilities. But He did it, and He did it purposely. Verse 15 says, "The man went away, told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the sabbath."

Jesus would never violate the ten commandments. Jesus would never violate the law of God. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. But Jesus did anything He wanted on the sabbath, and in the sight of the leaders in the doing of it, because it was part of bringing down that whole system.

In verse 17, He goes even beyond that and defends what He did by saying this, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." Wow. This is a claim to be deity. My Father and I are doing our work before your eyes. We are working. "For this reason, therefore - " verse 18 " - the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." He was calling Himself - He was calling, I should say, God His Father, and continually involved in activities that violated sabbath law.

The Pharisees charged Jesus with breaking the sabbath law, making Himself equal with God, and this led them to kill Him eventually. Jesus never attempted to fit His activities into the sabbath law of the old covenant. He established His own authority as one with God and as Lord over the sabbath. The Pharisees were strict sabbath keepers. They followed the old covenant and embellishments to the letter.

And yet they missed the whole point of the sabbath. They found no rest from their endless works efforts at salvation. They found no real honest repentance. The sabbath laws were mere shadows of hope, a weekly reminder that there was a paradise to be regained and it was through the means of righteousness.

There could be a rest from the endless struggle and the horrible burden of trying to earn your salvation. When Jesus came, He brought the rest, the true rest. The child of God is now a new person. Under the new covenant we are healed, and washed, and found, and accepted. We have entered into rest with none other than the Creator Himself. We have been given righteousness. We rejoice in that gift. We cease all effort to earn our salvation. Jesus literally did away with the sabbath.

What about the rest of the New Testament? What does the New Testament say to the church regarding the sabbath? Let's look at Hebrews 3. There's a lot more to be said about this. I'm just trying to give you the highlights. And next Sunday night we're going to look at the Lord's Day, Sunday, and see how that fits in the purpose of God.

But there are a few definitive passages. Hebrews 3:7, probably a good place to start. "The Holy Spirit says, 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for 40 years. Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, "They always go astray in their heart, and they do not know My ways;" and I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter into My rest." ' "

God's true rest didn't come through Joshua. God's true rest didn't come through Moses. God's true rest comes only through Jesus Christ. Joshua led the nation of Israel into the land of their promised rest, and that it was nothing more than a temporary earthly rest, merely a shadow of the final ultimate heavenly rest.

My rest. This is the promise of salvation that God gives to those who put their trust in Him. Verse 12, "Take care, brethren, that there be not in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.'

"For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?" The whole generation died in the wilderness. "And with whom was He angry for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief."

The kind of rest that is important for us is the salvation rest that comes by faith, by faith in God. Unbelief forfeits rest. The rest that the New Testament writers are concerned about, even the emphasis in the book of Hebrews, which is a very Jewish epistle, is not upon a sabbath observance, but upon a spiritual salvation rest.

Look at 4:1, "Let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any of you might seem to have come short of it." The rest that the New Testament concerns itself with is not a day of the week, it is salvation. "For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed have entered that rest."

There is never a command in the New Testament to keep the sabbath. All ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament some numerous times except the fourth command. It is never repeated in the New Testament, not one single time. It was in the midst of the moral law a sign and a symbol to lead the people to rest and repentance. But when you come to the New Testament, there's never a repeat of that command.

The rest that the New Testament is concerned about is the rest that comes to the soul from hearing and believing the good news preached. That's the rest the New Testament offers. Verse 9 says, "There is a sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself rested also from his works, as God did from His." That's so remarkable.

What does that mean? There's only two possible concepts about getting to heaven. You work your way in or it's a gift, right? To the Jews, they were working. But when you enter the rest of grace and the rest of faith, works cease. The day you came to Jesus Christ, you ceased trying to earn your salvation, right? You entered into permanent rest.

This is just a magnificent New Testament emphasis. The Mosaic sabbath, the symbol, the sign was a dim reflection of the true rest. Look at Romans for a moment, chapter 14. Since this is true that the rest the New Testament calls for is a spiritual rest, salvation rest from the works approach to righteousness, you can no longer make anything out of the sabbath.

Listen to Romans 14:5, "One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person is fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord." There were Jews who had come to faith in Christ and had a hard time letting go of the sabbath. It was pretty much ingrained in them. They thought they were still obeying the Lord by maintaining old covenant sabbath law. They observed it for the Lord. "He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, he who eats - " following the dietary laws " - does it for the Lord, he who gives thanks to God; he who eats not, for the Lord he doesn't eat, and gives thanks to God."

In other words, as verse 5 says, each person is fully convinced in his own mind does what he thinks is right. It really doesn't matter. Verse 8 says, "If we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." Don't make an issue out of the sabbath.

As he says back in verse 2, some people are concerned about dietary laws. Some people are concerned about sabbath observance. Those things are part of a passing scheme. And there's instruction in the New Testament elsewhere to let these people develop their understanding of their freedom from these prescriptions. Don't force them against their conscience. Jewish believers still felt compelled to observe sabbath law, dietary law. Let them do that until they come to the fullness of

their freedom.

What is remarkable about this is there's no command here to do that. This would be a perfect place to say, "And those of you who aren't doing it, shape up." It doesn't happen.

In Galatians 4:9, "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, perhaps I have labored over you for nothing." You have no obligation to go back to the calendar prescriptions of the festivals and the sabbaths of the Mosaic economy.

Turn to Colossians chapter 2. This is perhaps the most definitive because it pulls two signs together, the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, circumcision, and the sign of the Mosaic Covenant, sabbath. And in Colossians chapter 2, of course we know that circumcision has been completely abolished in the new covenant, totally abolished.

Galatians 5:2 says, "If you receive circumcision, Christ is of no benefit to you." If you receive circumcision, Christ is no benefit to you. It doesn't matter. "In Christ neither circumcision or uncircumcision means anything, it's faith working through love."

And so here in Colossians 2:11, "In Christ you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;" you had a far more dramatic surgery, and it was internal. You were "buried with Him in baptism, and you were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. You who were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions."

Set aside circumcision. If you hang onto circumcision, you make Christ of no effect. The sign of the Abrahamic Covenant is gone. That Covenant passes away because that Covenant cannot save.

And then in verse 16, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath day – things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." Don't let anybody hold you to a sabbath. And that's referring to the weekly sabbath, because the other festival sabbaths are covered under the term "festival and new moon."

Don't let anybody hold you to the sabbath. It was part of the system that included the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices. It's gone. It was only the shadow, not the substance. It only pointed to the fact that God was the Creator, that paradise had been lost, that you had come under the terrifying judgment of the law and needed to repent and come to God and seek righteousness and mercy and

grace at His hand.

But it didn't provide that. That is provided in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying you no longer need the shadow, you have the substance. You have the rest, the true rest.

More can be said about this. Just some final thoughts and we'll let you go. There's not one New Testament command to keep the sabbath. All the ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament except the one about the sabbath. It is never quoted in the New Testament. There are no prescriptions or sabbath rules anywhere in the new covenant. There is no instruction about behavior on the sabbath anywhere in the New Testament.

In Acts 15, when the Jerusalem Council decided what would be required of Gentile believers in the church, they did not require them to observe the sabbath. The apostles never commanded anybody to observe the sabbath. They never chastise anybody for not observing the sabbath. They never warned believers about sabbath violations. They never encouraged believers to hold to the sabbath.

It is gone, with one exception. We can go back to that original Genesis 2 chapter, and we can be reminded that every seventh day that goes by is an opportunity for us to acknowledge the greatness of our Creator. We can bless that day by in it acknowledging God as Creator.

And then, as I said - and this is for next week - first day is where we acknowledge God as Redeemer. We don't ever really celebrate a sabbath in the Mosaic sense because it's a ministry of death. But we can celebrate a sabbath in the Genesis sense as we celebrate God as our Creator, and then on the first day of the week, as we celebrate Him as our Redeemer.

Now next Sunday night with just that overview, I want to transition to how we view Sunday. Is there something important about it? Is there something unique about it, special about it? And what does Scripture say? And I think you'll enjoy knowing what the Lord wants us to know and how to respond to that as we consider that next time.

Father, we thank You for a wonderful day. We thank You for the consistency of Your truth. We thank You for the Word which opens up our understanding to all things. We're so unendingly thrilled at the glorious truth of Scripture that comes clear and unmistakable to us. We thank You that we're beyond the shadows, and the signs, and the symbols.

We live in the reality of rest. We have rested forever from works righteousness, efforts at self-salvation. We have entered into the rest of the gospel. We have a taste of paradise even now in this rest, and one day we'll enter into that glory of heavenly paradise. But You've given us a taste of it now. Every day for us is a sabbath, because every day we rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. We give Him all the praise. Amen.

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