

Scripture Reading: Exodus 20.8-11; Isaiah 58.1-13; Matthew 12.1-14
Lord's Day 38 (QA103)
30 Oct 11, PM

Sermon Notes by Pastor Paul Goh
Call - Psa. 118.24
P256, P318, P251

Beloved, remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. God reminds us that one in seven days, is to be kept holy unto the Lord. Don't we need this reminder? We are involved in so many other activities on this day, that God is crowded out and pushed to a little corner in our lives. Or we have decided that time is very precious and this day is the only day that we have to do our own thing and so we have independently decided that we are going to sleep in, do we household chores, do a little shopping, work and laze around. And when we have such thoughts in our hearts, we are exposed as breaking the fourth commandment. Then, we confess that God is not sovereign: the only king and ruler in our lives but we are sovereign. We are sovereign over our time, not God. We are sovereign over the day, not God. And we are sovereign over our rest, not God. And no one wants to bring this matter of keeping the Sabbath to other Christians for there will be great controversy and there will be confusion, charges of Phariseeism, legalism and intruding on someone's Christian liberty. As for us, it is our conviction that the Sabbath Day is to be kept holy. We do not keep the seventh day, which is on Saturday though this is commanded in the law of God. We are not breakers of the law of God but we follow the example of the early church. On the first day of the week, Sunday, the early church gathered together to worship the Lord and to commemorate the resurrection of our Lord. On that day, they continued in the apostle's doctrine, the breaking of bread and in prayer, and the collected the offerings for the poor. And this first day of the week is called the Lord's Day because it was on this day that the apostle John was given a revelation of Jesus Christ. But, there is nothing sacred about the day Sunday, as though this day is more holy than another day. The deeper principle of keeping the day unto the Lord is that we keep one out of seven days. This God demonstrated by his own example of creating the world in six days and rested one day.

The whole point of keeping of Lord's Day holy is that it is a picture of the eternal Sabbath that we now enjoy and will be enjoyed when we are ushered into the gates of heaven at our death, if, the Lord tarries. And for this purpose, we cease from our sins and consecrate ourselves unto the Lord so that the Spirit of Christ can work in us. In our crucified Christ, we are ready and willing to obey this commandment. In Christ, we obey this commandment out of a deep love and gratitude to God for what He has powerfully accomplished for us. May we come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of this commandment so that we will worship Jehovah who gave this commandment out love for us

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT - KEEPING THE SABBATH DAY HOLY

I. God's Requirements

In the Law

The idea of Sabbath is rest, a ceasing or putting an end and so, we can understand the Sabbath in a two-fold meaning: First, it is a ceasing from our sins. In order for us to keep this day holy unto the Lord, it is necessary that we rest: cease from our sins, rest from our labours which we have performed for six days in a week. Our sins will drive us away from God, away from the house of God, away from the worship of God, hearing the Word of God and be partaker of the Lord's Supper and ultimately drive us away from keeping the Lord's Day holy. We cease from

our sins by looking unto God, whom we love and to whom we owe our entire salvation: realising that we have provoked God by our sins, and we come to him in confession and repentance our sins. And we have the assurance that Christ on account of his death on the cross for our sins forgives us of our sins and restores us unto a living fellowship with Him so that we can keep the Lord's Day holy. Secondly, it is a ceasing from our labours of the week. The Lord has commanded us that we are to labour for six days in a week and to rest on the 7th day. And whatever we need to do in order to be faithful to our calling: whether studies, working at our job, shopping, leisure, exercise, we are to do it on the six days of the week. It is also a rest from minding the things that occupy us for six days: our anxieties, our plans for our jobs or vacation so that it will be total rest from our labours. But, this resting from our sins and our labours is not an end in itself but rather all these are done with the view of devoting the entire day unto the Lord. Finally, we keep this day holy unto the Lord. By not forsaking the assembly of God's people but we come to the Lord's house every Lord's Day to worship the one true living God, with no graven images in our hearts and worshipping Him in reverence and with awe. It must be emphasised that we devote the entire day unto the Lord in the worship of God through singing praises to Him through offering the sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving, offering up of our prayers and petitions through the minister through giving our monetary gifts unto the Lord. And in private or family devotions

in the meditation of the preached Word in order to apply it to your life to teach your children the Word of God so that you will have heavenly frame of mind throughout the entire day. The keeping of the Lord's day holy also includes works of mercy. In Matthew 12, Jesus defended the actions of his disciples for plucking the ears of corn and eating it. He gave the example of David and his men who were hungry, while fleeing from Saul. Ahimelech the priest gave the table of shewbread, which is not lawful for others to eat except for the priest because it was necessary otherwise David and his men would go hungry. The priest set aside the ceremonial law in order to feed the hungry for it was a work of necessity. And Jesus also cited the example of the priests who profane the Sabbath who were very busy working in the temple. Though they labour on the Sabbath Day but they are innocent. The priests were busy preparing for the worship of God. In both instances, Jesus says, He is sovereign over the temple and the Sabbath. It is always right to show mercy. And He is the lord of the Sabbath, which is to be a blessing to men and man was not created to be the slave of the Sabbath. And in Luke 13.14-17, Jesus healed a crippled woman.

And Jesus defended his actions by exposing the hypocrisy of the ruler of the synagogue: if on the Sabbath day you can bring your ox to drink, ought not this woman, who is a daughter of Abraham, a bound to Satan, be also loosed from this infirmity? Is she more important than this ox? It was a work of mercy. The Ministry of the gospel and the schools is maintained. This is the office of the preaching of the gospel which is instituted by Christ in His church. First, this office serves to the glory of God where God in all the glory of his perfections are declared in all its beauty where the wonder of grace of God's salvation in Christ in saving the elect sinners is displayed in all to behold. And in the end, Christ will come in the glory of his majesty to bring an end to this evil world and vindicate his elect and ushering in the new heavens and the new earth. To God alone be the glory. Secondly, the preaching of the gospel is the chief means of grace by which you are saved in knowing Christ and in living holy lives. And you are fed and nourished by the Word of God and you in turn provoke one another unto good works by your example of godliness unto the praise and glory of God. And you instruct your children in the word of God so that they will be grounded and built up in the faith and they will not be tossed about with every wind of doctrine and cunning craftiness of the false teachers. Finally, that the church may be visible so that the saints and their families may join themselves unto the church of God, and through it, the sound of the gospel goes in all the earth, and their words unto the

ends of the world, Rom. 10.18. This is done with the view that the nations will keep the Lord's Day holy in the worship of His name. This implies that the saints also have certain responsibilities to the ministry of the gospel and school. You are to support the cause of the preaching of the gospel, not by absenting yourself from the house of God without good reasons but by diligently frequenting the house of God to support the ministry of the Word, twice a Lord's Day. To pray for the ministry of the Word that it will have a free course and be glorified and the Word will be accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. You are to obey the Word of the gospel. Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. And be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

In our Attitude

Our obedience to the fourth commandment, there are several dangers: first that we want to keep this law in order to earn to merit with God and earn our salvation. Secondly, that we obey this commandment because we fear that if we don't, then God will punish us in his fierce wrath but this is the wrong way to keep the commandments. The right attitude to have is found in Isaiah 58.13-14. First, we call the Sabbath a delight. The Sabbath is not a heavy burden, a task, or a grievous commandment that I must obey nor is it a day of grief, sadness and a day to put on a sad face. It is a day of joy and gladness so that we eagerly look forward to it and we can't wait for the day to come; why is it that Sunday has not come? Or like the psalmist who confesses, "How amiable (or lovely) are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts". We take pleasure in the worship of God: in the singing of praises to God, reading and hearing His Word offering up of prayers and the sacraments. Secondly, in this way we regard the day as holy, or separated from the holy use but consecrated unto the Lord for the worship of his name. Thirdly, the Sabbath is honourable.

This is a great day and we esteem this day highly for on this day God is praised and worshipped.

Therefore, we thoroughly prepare ourselves to come before the Lord to worship Him and to sanctify the Lord God. And the fruit of such an attitude is that you will delight yourself in the Lord. The Lord will be more and more a pleasant subject of our meditations and affections; you will have tender thoughts towards God and his law: thoughts of God's tender love and mercy towards us and we will gladly go about serving God with joy and satisfaction in our hearts. And God will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth. You will enjoy a great security so that you will be triumphant over your enemies and you will live above the world and will be carried unto your final destination in heaven. And God will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. You will inherit all the blessings of the covenant of grace and you be assured that you possess these blessings now and you have the hope that these blessings are yours in eternity. And God gives reasons why we are to keep this day holy.

II. God's Reason

Yahweh's Example

Yahweh made this world in six days and rested on the seventh day. He gives His own example and pattern of the creation of this world. He created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. And so, He teaches us to follow his example to keep the Sabbath holy unto Him.

For in this way, we do not any excuse to give to God. We might say to Him, God calls me to obey His commandment but I don't see God setting a good example for us to follow. And thus our mouths must be stopped in giving excuses why we cannot keep this day. God could have asked that all seven days be given unto Him but He does not. God seems to say to us "is it too much to ask if I require one out of seven days for you to keep this day holy? Surely not since I give you six other days to do your calling". This is to cause us to readily and willingly keep the

Sabbath Day unto him without murmuring. And remember that the basis is this encouragement is I am Jehovah your God who has redeemed you from the house of bondage. You do not belong to yourself but you belong to me to worship me.

Yahweh's Blessing

He blessed the Sabbath and hallowed it. Gen 2.2, 3 say, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made". After God created the world, he rested on the seventh day from all his work and he blessed and sanctified it. He set this day apart from other days: a day that his saints come to worship and offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving. It is a day where His name will be glorified and honoured. And it is also a day, where the Lord reserves his richest blessing for his people in the way of observing it and keeping this day as holy unto the Lord. In the beginning, the pattern was work and rest but with the resurrection of Christ, there is a new pattern: rest and then labour. We begin the week with the Lord's blessing upon us through the worship of His name and we labour in the remaining of the week with the strength of the resurrected Lord, being victorious over sin and the devil through Christ's death on the cross. And we remember that the ceasing from our sins and yielding ourselves unto the Lord on the Sabbath Day is the beginning of living out the eternal Sabbath which is the eternal rest that we will enjoy in heaven with God. Amen