

Revelation 1: 10; “In the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Part 3), Sermon # 10 in the series – “The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 12th, 2006, and again on November 17th, 2013.

This is the 3rd sermon which I am bringing to you on the subject of the Christian Sabbath, or the Lord’s Day, because I believe the observance of it to be of immense significance to the forward progress of the gospel in all generations. Our text says that John was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day”. What a glorious experience for the Apostle John to have, even though he was banished to the Isle of Patmos. He was still serving the Lord there on that forlorn island, as best as he could, under very difficult circumstances. He could not be with his beloved brethren at the church at Ephesus as he would have desired to be, at that time. He had been forcibly driven away, by wicked men, from all of his normal Christian activities of corporate worship and prayer and service to Christ in the church that he loved. And now he was suffering tribulation for Jesus’ sake. He was learning patience through suffering. And yet He considered it all joy, because he had been given such a vision of His Lord, and the future glory of Christ’s Church on that day, that he knew that he was being upheld; he was being sustained, and he could endure these sufferings.

As John thought back, he remembered that it was on the 1st day of the week that his blessed Lord had been raised, and so he kept track of the days of the week in his confinement. He remembered the morning when he and Peter ran to the tomb and found it empty. He remembered worshiping His risen living Lord for the first time, after He was raised from the dead, and O what joy. He also remembered the Day of Pentecost, which fell on the 1st Day of the week, that the Holy Spirit had been sent down to the waiting gathered Church like a might rushing wind. And on that day the Spirit gave saving, converting power and unction to Peter’s preaching; so great, that 3,000 souls were saved after hearing that one sermon. John knew that the first day of the week was the most glorious day of all the days of the week because it was on that day that God had caused Christ’s power and glory to be known and felt by His church as the greatest power, and the highest glory. The Word came with power that day, and their worship of God and Christ was jubilant and triumphant.

And even so, now in his banishment, John was still rejoicing and observing the Lord’s Day. Even though he was in this position of isolation and suffering, he still found himself to be “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day”. It was on this particular day that he heard a loud voice, from behind him that sounded like a trumpet. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.” “What you see, write down.” And turning to see the voice that spoke with him, he saw seven golden lampstands. And in the midst of the seven lampstands, he saw Christ. This came to him on that Lord’s day; that Christ is the midst of His gathered church. Indeed He is in the midst of all of His churches all together, as they gather all over the world. John knew what we should know, that Christ is always with His gathered people in a special way on His day. He is with them in their days of earthly triumph when the Church is clothed with power and seen as awesome as an army with banners, and He is with them all their days of their suffering and tribulation as well; to lift them up to behold His glory and power, and to hold precious communion and fellowship with them, even in their times of difficult and distress.

This is the reason that John was ready and able to receive this tremendous vision and prophecy. Christ was upholding His faith, and coming to him to help him to worship and

receive this great vision. It is the same for Christ's Church in all generations; this day of the week is special, and it is the Christian Sabbath because it is the Lord's day. Now this morning I want us to think together about some of the practical implications of this Day in relation to what the Bible teaches. What does our Lord expect of us on this day; we who live in the 21st Century? What should we do to honor God and Christ and keep this day holy?

1st of all – We should remember that Christ has fulfilled all of the law of God and so God expects us to keep all of His commandments out of love for Him.

John received this book of The Revelation on this blessed Day for a reason. He received it on this Day because it had already become, in the New Testament church, the Christian Sabbath Day which the Lord Jesus had made, by His rising from the dead after His accomplishing the work of redemption. This day had already become in the Church, the day in which all true Christians should worship God; and the primary day of the week in which they would receive from God, the good spiritual things that He intended to give to them. When they gathered together as a church on the 1st day of the week, it was because Christ has risen from the dead on that day, having finished the work of the 2nd or spiritual New Creation, and they would remember it to honor Him, and they would honor God through Christ's finished work. It is that finished work of our Lord Jesus which forms the basis of all God's Elect being regenerated and being given all the blessings of salvation that would make them part of God's 2nd, or New Creation, in Christ. Listen to the words of Ignatius who was an immediate friend of the Apostles, and who was martyred at Rome not more than 15 years after the death of the Apostle John: "Those who have come to the possession of new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath (the seventh day), but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again, by Him and by his death." He calls the Lord's Day "the queen and chief of all the days of the week".

I told you the last time that I preached to you, that the old 7th day Sabbath was related to the 1st creation, the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, God the Father resting from all His works of the physical creation in order to give to man the indication of His will for him; that he should rest from his labors one day in seven, in order to obtain needed rest, and more importantly to find time to worship God. This was the intent of God's giving His people, both Old Testament and New, the Sabbath commandment. It was that men would indeed rest from their own labors, and trust in God's provision on their behalf. The Sabbath ordinance was enshrined forever in the 10 commandments given to Moses on Mt. Sinai and its position in the Law shows it to be binding forever as a moral precept given to men for their good and for God's glory. But we know, from the whole New Testament Scriptures, that the law could not give life men so that they would fulfill its glorious precepts under the Old Covenant. There is nothing bad or unrighteous about the law; it is holy and righteous and good; its intention was to bring life. But it could only bring condemnation to those who sin. (Romans 7: 8-12) The problem for mankind has always been the same since the beginning of time, when Adam sinned and broke the Covenant of Works. It is, that no man descended from Adam can possibly keep God's holy law perfectly.

This is why Jesus Christ had to come; to fulfill the righteous and holy law of God, and to bring life to all who are needy sinners. If any person sees themselves as a needy sinner, and will take Him to be their Savior, they take Him as the One who has fulfilled the law on their behalf. He Himself said that He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5: 17) And fulfill it He did. Everything ceremonial and judicially strict about the Sabbath

Day, Jesus has kept and fulfilled. Everything related to keeping that day holy, Jesus studiously observed. He went about doing good on the Sabbath Day. He healed men's bodies and He preached to them the truth of their need of grace from Him, to save their souls. He was devoted every moment of all of His life to God and to His worship; and He loved God with all of His heart, and every person around him, in a perfect way. And so when the Lord Jesus went to the cross and died, He "wiped out the handwriting of (the law's) requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us." "And He took it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

As the Apostle Paul says in Colossians 2: 16 and 17, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon, or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is Christ." And so, all of the ceremonial Sabbaths of the law, and even the old 7th day Sabbath is gone, because the Old Covenant is gone, Christ having fulfilled all the good and righteous works related to it, and having brought in something new and better, He gives us by His own authority and righteous life, a new Day. The Day has been moved to Sunday because Christ fulfilled the law, but the moral requirement of keeping the Sabbath Day is preserved for our joy and observance, just as are all the other 10 commandments are still there for the Christian to keep. Our commandment keeping under the New Covenant, it must be remembered, is in relation to Christ himself and not anything related to the bondage and condemnation of the legal dispensation. Christ is risen and the Spirit has been given.

Do you love the Lord Jesus? Then you will keep His commandments. (John 14: 15) Are Jesus' commandments different from the Father's commandments, or different from those given in the law? No, not at all. Jesus actually builds on the Ten Commandments of the law, as signposts leading on to a further and deeper heart obedience. New Testament commandment keeping is not legalism. Legalism is when you are trying to justify yourself in the sight of God by keeping His law. No, Jesus says in John 15: 10 – "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." When Christ kept God's commandments was He legalist? No, for He was already righteous. He was not trying to justify Himself in the sight of God, but His intent was to fulfill the law on our behalf. But when He did this, and God raised Him from the dead, then the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, so that we would have the power to be able to go about to do and keep God's commandments; all of them. And the Christian Sabbath is one of them because it was, and it is an integral part of God's holy law which is to be observed by all Christians everywhere. If Jesus had God's law in His heart, and we are being conformed to His blessed image, then we also will love all the moral commandments of God's holy law. We observe them, not to justify ourselves, but in order to glorify God in the way that we live. We live by faith in the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. And therefore, "John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

2nd – You and I, as New Covenant Christians, should remember that the Lord's Day is a day of rest from all our earthly labors.

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day". It does not read: I was at my work on the Lord's Day. Remembering that your work is good, and that it is an institution of God, which was given to all of mankind from before Adam's fall in the garden; remember also, that it is all too easy to get caught up in your work to such an extent that you are not deliberately observing the Sabbath and taking rest from it. This is why the commandment is worded the way that it was in the law. "Six days shall you labor and do all of your work". It is not

saying that you must work every minute of every hour of the 6 days. It is saying that those six days of the week are God's defined parameters for all of the work of your calling. They are His holy boundary for your work. The Lord's Day is His day, which you give to Him if you are sensitive to obey this commandment. The work of your calling is good, but it can become an all-consuming thing; something which you, for selfish reasons, think it must continue on the Lord's Day. This is especially a temptation if you are trying hard to make financial progress, and trying hard to provide for your family, or pay off your debts, if you have them. But let us consider that it is God who gives us the ability to make money. It is "He who gives you the power to get wealth", it says in Deuteronomy 8: 18. It is not "your power and the might of your hand which do so." "Six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the 7th day is a Sabbath unto the Lord your God." "In it you shall do no work." Many Christian men and women do realize that "diligence is the precious possession of a man", as it says in the book of Proverbs, and they apply that principle in regard to their work. But sadly, they do not apply it to the Lord's Day. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might," it says in Ecclesiastes 9: 10. But it also says in the very next verse, "I returned and saw under the sun that - The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill..." Diligence to guard the Sabbath day from your working is also the precious possession of a man.

Sometimes we think that we have to be working all the time to succeed at something. And sometimes we allow ourselves to think that our work is more important than giving God the time that He has commanded in His Word that we give Him. One day of the seven is not too much to give to God, but some people will allow their work to encroach on the Lord's Day. What does this do? Well I believe that what it does is to rob God of what He so richly deserves; our full attention and worship in the public services of worship, and in the private and family devotions which will be conducted on that day if Christians are sensitive to the testimonies of the Lord's blessing upon this day. Psalm 93: 5 says: "Your testimonies are very sure; holiness befits (or adorns) Your house, O Lord, forevermore." "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The only way that you can honor God on His Day, in the right way, is to deliberately say to yourself, you wife, and your children, "I will not permit God to be robbed." There are many people who are ignorant of the 4th commandment of the 10; people who need to be told. I remember, years ago, when we lived in a house in Davenport, Iowa, which sat up on a high terrace, that a man came to my house on a Sunday asking me if I would pay him to mow my lawn. It happened to be the Lord's Day. I said that I would be glad to let him mow my lawn, but not that day; that it was the Lord's Day, and that it was His commandment for me to abstain from my work, and also anyone else who worked for me. If he would come back on any other day of the week, he could do the work. And he did come back on Monday and mowed the lawn. The Lord's Day is a day of rest from all of our earthly labors and calling, so that we can devote ourselves to the Lord in worship, and in all the good spiritual labors of considering what will promote the advancement of Christ's kingdom of God and promote His glory.

Now certainly I believe, and God knows as well, that we can speak to people and tell them of the Lord's commandment in a kind and loving way; realizing that some may have never heard of the 4th commandment and they do not understand the reasons why they should not work. It gives us good opportunities to witness to the truth of the Bible and our faith in Christ to explain to our relatives and the people around us, even your employer or others who want you to work for them on this day, that it is your intention to obey God in

this commandment. Jesus says in Matthew 5: 19 – “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” Could it be that many Christians in our day think that the 4th commandment may be the least of these commandments of God’s Moral Law, or that it has been abrogated and set aside? Indeed, do they really believe that there is no obligation to keep it at all? Christ did fulfill the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, but He did not do it so, so that it would be set aside. He fulfilled it in order to raise our obedience up to a higher and more noble and more freeing observance of it, which truly pleases God. The Christian is not an antinomian. He is not “against the law”. He is for keeping all of the moral commandments of God’s holy law. He does not see the commandments of God as burdensome, but a delight.

3rd - We should remember that this day is to be a day of God’s pleasure, of delighting ourselves in Him.

Not only should the Sabbath be a day of rest from our own work, it should be a rest from our own pleasures and our own words. We are trying to please God in all that we do on this day. To please God and to take pleasure in Him will mean that we will study to keep the day holy; that we will set it apart for God's purpose. This means that we should not thrust our own pleasures upon this day and be continually speaking words in our conversations with other people that indicate that our heart is really somewhere else. If we are more interested in worldly games of cards than we are in speaking to one another of things related to the Lord, on this day; how does this profit the Lord, His people and His kingdom's advance? If we would rather watch a worldly movie with God's people after the services of the church than share with them the spiritual concerns and thoughts that relate to our prayers and our devotional readings, what does that say to God? I think that it says that we have not really come to understand the purpose of the day. And perhaps we have not come to really understand true Christianity. God has given us a day in which we may delight in spiritual things. We should delight ourselves in His word, and be willing to share what we are learning from it with others. Why should we impose upon the Lord’s Day, the entertainments of the world, such as super-bowl Sunday, and call it pleasing to Him? It only shows that our heart is really quite far from the things that would please Him. Let your witness to the unbelieving football watchers be that you will not defile the Sabbath by participating in their entertainments.

Let me attempt to show you what God is really looking for from you, the Christian, in observing the Sabbath. Turn with me over to Isaiah 58 and you will see what the Lord is expecting from us. Verse 13 reads this way. If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken." Now this is truly a very great witness to people both inside and outside of the church, to both believers and unbelievers when they see this kind of attitude and actions coming from you.

There is no greater witness to the truth of God and His Word than a delight in honoring God. This means that as you are entering in to Saturday evening that it is your delight to think of what God might think in relation to what you have planned to do that night. You are thinking, "How can I honor God in my preparation for the Lord’s Day? What kind of thoughts and activities will put my mind and heart in the right tenor for tomorrow's

worship? When I awake in the morning, will I think about what it will mean to give myself to God in worship? Do I pray that the Lord would be honored in my singing and my giving, and my listening to the Word preached? When I am at church do I consciously attempt to think of spiritual topics of conversation with others so that they are built up in their faith? Or am I always speaking of worldly topics of conversation and things which will make no significant contribution to either my growth in grace, or theirs? What am I reading and thinking about in relation to God and Christ and the Bible which I might be able to impart to others at the right time when I come together with them on the Lord's Day? Do I speak of my desire for the salvation of my loved ones and acquaintances when I am with others on the Lord's Day? Do I think of the welfare of the souls of people around me? Am I delighting myself in the prayers of God's people? Do I still want to discuss spiritual things with others between services and after the services of the day? Do I think of how I can show mercy to the poor on this day, or how I might go visit, and speak with, those who have never heard the gospel, or poorly understand it? Oh what a blessed day the Lord's Day is, if we would just make use of it in the way that God intends!

Let us resolve together as a church to think more about this commandment and how we can keep it to the glory of God. It is a command giving us opportunity for devotion to Christ and to God that we do not have on the other six days of the week. How often I have heard of those who say that they do not have time for reading good books. Well, you have it on the Lord's Day. How often do we think of how long it is to our birthday or to Christmas when we have the Lord's Day every Sunday? The Lord stands ready to give you presents of spiritual blessing and truth every Sunday, and yet there are many who are ready to look to the world for their blessings. Think of the Lord Jesus Christ and all that He has done for you. He has died for you, and He has risen from the dead to give to you this very great salvation. And it says in Hebrews 2: 3 – “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” When each Sunday comes, it is a golden opportunity to pay attention to your own soul's needs, and your sanctification. It is a golden opportunity to promote the same good thing in others. It is the golden opportunity to focus your attention upon God Himself as the One who would speak to your soul through the preaching of the Word and your reading the Bible and other good books.

Will you not learn to please God by doing these things on His day? Surely it cannot be pleasing to God if you neglect these precious gifts and times of His appointment in favor of some ridiculous worldly pleasure that leaves Him out of it; that leaves behind the process of your reflecting and meditating upon His Word behind. Let us stir ourselves up to the holy activities of promoting His cause and kingdom both within the church in the stated services of the church, and also in good works and good deeds which we might do in relation to those outside. I mean occasionally visiting the sick, the widows, and orphans; I mean various types of evangelism that we could do together as the Lord would lead; I mean that we could think of how we could encourage each other in a truly spiritual sense that would create more interest in the glory of Christ and His gospel, and thus much profit to His kingdom would come about, because of His blessing upon us.

Think of every Sunday as the birthday of Christ. Do you not feel sad when you forget the birthday of someone you love? You say to yourself, “How stupid I am, that I cannot remember something so simple.” But every Sunday is the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have no commandment in the Scripture to celebrate His incarnation; but we do have a command to observe the Lord's Day, carried over in the 10 commandments fulfilled by Christ and given back to you to love and keep because He loved

and kept them. Where you fall short and sin, He covers you, but He is saying to you today, O believer, “This is the Day that I have made; let us rejoice and be glad in it”, together.