



Deut 5:12-15
Freed from Slavery

12 ' Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

14 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

15 And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

As you all know, the giving of the Ten Commandments or Moral Law of God here in Deuteronomy 5, is the second time that Moses had delivered them to Israel. For the most part, what we read is a straight repetition of the Commandments as they are spelled out in Exodus 20. But the giving of the fourth Commandment here is considerably different. In Exodus 20 the emphasis is on the Sabbath day (Sabbath means rest incidentally) as following the pattern that God set for us in His Creating work. Although God could have created the World in an instant, he chose to labor for six days and then on the Seventh he rested from his labors and hallowed the day, thus giving his creation by Divine example a cycle of six days of labor and one of rest. Although the importance of allowing your servants, and your family, and your visitors, and even your livestock to have a day of rest is spoken there, the emphasis is definitely on the Lord's creative work. Here, the emphasis is not on the Sabbath as a day of rest from Creation but as a day of liberation from bondage and oppression, a day upon which being freed from slavery is remembered.

John Currid points out that in Exodus 20, “the rationale for the Exodus is creation, whereas here it God’s great redemptive acts of rescuing his people from oppression in Egypt. In reality these are not mutually exclusive, but they complement one another.”

The Sabbath was both a creation ordinance and a redemptive sign

You see when God created the world, he gave man two particular creations ordinances in the garden, for His own good, one was Marriage and the other was the Sabbath. Gen. 2:3 ***Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.*** We remember that even in the Garden man was supposed to be working, we read in ***Gen.2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.*** And yes that means that work is not a result of the fall it is a good thing. Even after the fall when Adam was driven out of the garden he was allowed to take those ordinances with him.

But God’s people Israel had been brought into a state of slavery and bondage in Egypt. We read that the Egyptians had *made their lives bitter with hard bondage*. They toiled for their Egyptian task masters all day every day, and received none of the profits of their labor. They had no rest and they had no relief, and this situation continued for hundreds of years. Then they cried out to the Lord and He had delivered them by His Mighty right hand.

One of the first things that He had done to bless them, even before the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai, was to restore the Sabbath that their bondage in Egypt had obliterated. Old habits die hard and we find they have difficulty breaking the slave mindset that they had left Egypt with:

Exodus 16:23 Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.' "

24 So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.

25 Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field.

26 "Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there will be none."

27 Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none.

28 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?"

29 "See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

Notice, to that here the Lord uses the Sabbath to teach his people to depend not on what they can do, the labors of their hands, it teaches them to depend upon his provision, which is a lesson the Lord seeks to teach his people throughout scripture.

Now here in Deuteronomy, he reminds them you were slaves in Egypt, you had no rest but I brought you out, I released you from your bondage, I delivered you. Therefore do not go back to it, neither bring your children or your servants into the same kind of bondage that you were in. After they entered the Promised land, one of the signs that the people were falling away from the Lord and becoming like the godless Canaanite nations was their breaking the Sabbath. In doing this they eliminated the day of rest, that was meant to be a benefit to them, a blessing, a holy day, and they entered into a materialistic idolatry where they depended upon their own labor and worshipped mammon. They also took away the memorial to the Lord's work. As the Sabbath disappeared from their society, so did the remembrance of the Lord and his redemption. The Sabbath and religion were tied together and as one disappeared the other did as well. Now it doesn't therefore take a genius to figure out that the World, the Flesh, and the Devil had a vested interest in erasing the Sabbath. As they did, they erased the remembrance of the Lord from amongst his people, they committed them to materialistic idolatry, and they laid a heavy yoke on their shoulders.

Erase observation of this commandment and you return God's people to bondage and idolatry.

That is not only true for them, as Christians we too have been given one day in seven as a day of rest and worship, the day called by John in Rev. 1:10 “The Lord’s Day” the first day of the week. This was the day when the Apostolic church gathered together to worship *Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.*

The reason why the Christians celebrated Sunday and not Saturday as their one day in seven of rest: is because Sunday was the day of the resurrection the day when Jesus completed his work of rescuing his people from the slavery and oppression of sin, thus Sunday the Christian Sabbath, this holy day is still our day of liberation and freedom from slavery. It is given to us for rest and for works of necessity and mercy. We know that we should always be doing good on the Sabbath, and that there are certain jobs, Soldier, Doctor, Nurse, fireman, etc. that need to be done on Sunday. It reminds us that there is still a Sabbath rest coming, when all of creation will be freed from bondage:

Heb. 4:9 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

10 For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

For centuries brothers and sisters, here in the west we remembered that day, one of the first acts of Constantine, the first Christian emperor was to enact a law in 321 AD that followed the Scripture pattern and the practice of the church and made Sunday the empire’s day of rest and worship. For centuries we followed that habit, most of you will remember as you were growing up that the stores and banks and non-essential services were all closed on Sunday. But brothers and sisters, we are seeing in our own day, both of the Creation ordinances, Marriage and the Sabbath are being gradually deleted from our society. For instance, 50% of British Babies this year were born out of wedlock, and the Sunday Sabbath has almost been forgotten by pagans and Christians. That bodes extremely ill for us for as Williams S. Plumer put it ***“There is no example of any community, large or small, ancient or modern, continuing virtuous or happy for a considerable time, if they slighted either marriage of the Sabbath-day.”***

A little while ago one of the members of our church had the disappointing experience of not getting a job that had seemed like a sure thing. She was well-qualified for the position, she worked for another branch of the same company, and she had an excellent work record. The manager of the particular location had actually told her she was the only candidate he was considering. Everything went well until she told him that while she was willing to work any other day of the week, she could not work on Sunday - the Lord's Day - as this went against her conviction and the teaching of her church that we are to keep the Lord's day holy. At that point she was told that this was non-negotiable, that the store was open on Sunday (and no they don't sell necessities like medicine) and that all employees had to take their turn working on Sunday. He even pointed out that he was also a Christian and that working on Sunday didn't bother him and that he was not willing to make an exception.

Her experience has become increasingly common, Sunday is going from being the Lord's Day to just another day for work and recreation, and that change rather than being resisted by Christians (and even Pastors) is being encouraged. But have we stopped to ask ourselves, what the long term effects of this change will be? Today it is mostly retail and food service workers whom we cause to work on Sundays by going out for meals or going shopping, but gradually the trend is beginning to affect other businesses as well. We seldom stop to consider when the person providing us with our Sunday after-service brunch is going to go to worship, but will we be quite as indifferent to the question when it is our employer who expects us to be at work at 11:00 AM on Sunday Morning? Church, as some commentators have noted, is already in danger of becoming solely the domain of women and children, do we expect that situation to improve when the only people free to attend are stay at home moms and their children? If things continue, I would guess that in a couple of decades the Lord's Day just might be something as alien to our culture as it is to Islamic nations. And we will have returned to precisely the kind of bondage God delivered Israel from. Where all we do is spend all our time praising Mammon and pleasure and never realize the blessing we have forfeited or the heavy yoke we have put on our shoulders.

Plumer has said rightly ***“Just in proportion as churches decline in the practice and power of godliness, become unsound in doctrine, licentious in life, and lax in discipline, wedded to human inventions, and heedless of the law of***

God in other respects, in the same proportion do they lightly esteem the Sabbath of the Lord. No Sabbath, no church, is the rule laid down in scripture. It is a correct rule. Without that holy day, all true religion would soon vanish from the earth.”

Does it surprise us that as we have abandoned God’s revelation we have abandoned the day when we gather together to hear it read and preached?

Brothers and Sisters, we have been from bondage to sin and idolatry by Christ, let us not therefore fall prey to the agenda of the world, the flesh and the devil and return to a crushing slavery of work, work, work, play, play, play, and never rest and worship. Know that the devil WANTS you so busy you never even think of CHRIST and his work.

Brothers what should be the pattern: “Rest assured, that a Christian, having the love of God written in his heart, and denying the Sabbath a place in its affections, is an anomaly that is no where to be found Every Sabbath image, and every Sabbath circumstance, is dear to him. He loves the quietness of that hallowed morn. He loves the church-bell sound, which summons him to the house of prayer. He loves to join the chorus of devotion, and to sit and listen to that voice of persuasion which is lifted in the hearing of an assembled multitude. He loves the retirement of this day from the din of worldly business, and the inroads of worldly men. He loves the leisure it brings along with it—and sweet to his soul is the exercise of that hallowed hour, when there is no eye to witness him but the eye of heaven—and when in solemn audience with the Father, who seeth him in secret, he can, on the wings of celestial contemplation, leave all the cares, and all the vexations, and all the secularities of an alienated world behind him. – Thomas Chalmers