

The Fourth Commandment (Part 4)

A Work Day vs. A Rest Day

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I am going to continue today the series of sermons that I've been giving in regard to the Sabbath. You might recall that, at the end of the last sermon, I mentioned to you that I thought that this generation has a particularly difficult time adjusting from a workday mode to a Sabbath keeping mode. I gave a series of reasons. One was that life is so fast-paced, with so many ways and activities to give our time to—our energies, our minds, and our attention to.

I compared this to the parable in Matthew 13, about how the seed falls on stony places. With people whose minds are directed in all kinds of different directions, the Word of God does not take very deep root. And so, as Jesus says, when persecution or trouble arises as a result of this way of life—or the Word of God—then they very quickly turn aside. They have nothing really rooted very deeply in them. They've been giving their time, and energy, and all of their talents to something else entirely.

Another thing that we can also extract from that very same parable is that we have never, in any generation of man, been so close to the creations of man and so distant from the creations of God. We are surrounded by concrete, by steel, by glass, by plastic, by rubber and all of the things that man makes. And we are very rapidly losing touch with the things that God has made.

Our mind tends to automatically focus on what we are surrounded by—walking behind a mule, plowing the ground and listening to the birds as we plow that ground; or putting seeds in the ground, and watching them come up, and eating the products of what God has made possible by His laws and by the fact that He continues to provide for His Creation. He sends the rain, and He brings forth the fruit. If we don't have contact with God's Creation, we very quickly begin to have our minds surrounded by other things, and we are then cast adrift—by paying attention to those things.

In addition to that, there is a third thing. That is, that we have been spiritually trained by this Protestant society not to regard a day as belonging to God; but, rather, to use time for our own pleasure as though it all belonged to us. And if we have been taught at all, we've been taught the wrong day.

In Mr. Armstrong's booklet "What is Faith?" (pages 8 and 9), talking about the Holy Spirit, he says this:

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Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul—all common, humble, ordinary men of themselves—all had that power, the SAME identical power Jesus had, because they lived and walked CLOSE TO GOOD, and were filled with the Holy Spirit!

And we seem to LACK that power today, NOT because God denies us that power, but because we are so close to a modern, materialistic world—our minds so filled with the material interests of this life; our minds and our hearts are so far from God; we are so out of touch with Him, through lack of enough time spent in the study of His Word and lack of enough of the right kind of surrendered, submissive, and earnest and heartrending PRAYER—and consequently, because we are not filled with the HOLY SPIRIT!

It seems that we don't have enough time for God, even though we literally have just as much time as Peter, James, John, Philip, and all of the ancients besides them. How much time does a working mother have today for **a good spiritual life** after giving her time and energies to her employer, and then returning home and doing her responsibilities there? How much time does a father holding two jobs, or working as much overtime as he can, or working plus going to school at night in order to get ahead (in order to afford all of the finer things of life)—how much time does he have for God? How much energy does this mother and father have at the end of the week?

Brethren, all of us are pressured and victimized by this insane system that Satan has put together. But few of us have much excuse for not using Sabbath time in the way that God intended that it be used.

I want you to make a special effort to remember Psalm 74:12 and John 6:29. Psalm 74:12 is where it says that God has been **working salvation** in all of the earth. From old, He has been doing that. And then in John 6:29, Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you **believe** in Him whom He sent." God was working, through Christ, that we might have **faith**. Now remember, Jesus is the Word. Our faith is based upon that Word. Our belief is based upon the written Word. He was the Living Word. Without faith in God, we are nothing. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him—because we aren't going to be able to do much that is very "right" spiritually.

Love is the goal, but faith is the foundation—because faith produces obedience; and God gives His Spirit to those who obey Him. Why do we lack power? I think a very basic

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answer is contained in that little circle that I just described for you there. *Love* is the primary attribute of God's Spirit, but *faith* is the property that those close to God have; and the Sabbath is the day that God consecrated for building faith.

The Sabbath is NOT the afterthought of a majestic Creation. Rather, it is the very **CLIMAX** of the Creation Week. It almost looks as though God was pointing in this direction. It's the last thing in the Creation Week that God draws our attention to. And He specifically draws our attention to it by *resting* on it—ceasing from His labor. Is there an example there? You'd better believe that there's an example there! An example set by the Creator! Not one of His servants, but the very Boss Himself set the example. So we'd better focus some attention on that.

Jesus said that the Sabbath was made *for man!* It was made to ensure that man has the right kind of life—both physically and spiritually. The body needs a rest. But even more than that—greater than that—is that the mind needs to be energized. It needs to be filled with the Word of God, and to be energized by fellowship with God.

In order that we have no excuse, God said, "I don't want you to do any work on that day. I don't want you to turn your attention to your own things." Nobody is going to be able to come to God and say "I never had the time to be *able to spend time with You.*"

Isaiah 56:1 Thus says the LOORD: "Keep justice...

That word in the Hebrew for "justice" is very close to the word **love** in actual application. The English word means *to be fair*, and to be fair is to love everybody.

Isaiah 56:1-2 "Keep justice [guard it], and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

Notice the context here. "*My salvation is near.*" This is an end-time prophecy. Is it for our day and age? It certainly is. And I think that, if we can understand this whole thing in its context, what he is talking about here actually began with the ministry of Jesus Christ. We haven't reached its peak by any long shot, but it began when Jesus Christ began to turn to the Gentiles. It was a signal that He was moving away from Israel, and something new was beginning.

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Isaiah 56:3-7 Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the LOORD speak, saying, "The LOORD has utterly separated me from His people"; nor let the eunuch say, "Here I am, a dry tree." For thus says the LOORD: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LOORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LOORD, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

I think that all of us understand that the "foreigners" here are non-Israelites. They are Gentiles. And they are obviously becoming part of the church of God. God was dealing with Israel; and certainly Gentiles and foreigners were permitted to be a part of Israel, if they wanted to be. But this is signaling something that is far bigger than that! This is signaling something that involves worldwide activities, universal activities, all of mankind activities.

A "eunuch"—do you know what a eunuch was? They were set apart to serve the king, usually. And usually they were castrated, as you understand. Another way of saying it is that they were *mutilated*. But, brethren, every one of us are mutilated **spiritually**. And we have been set apart to serve the great King—God. This really fits everybody in here. Not just Gentiles—this fits everybody that is here.

I think that we can understand that God is concerned about the way things are done. Twice here He uses the word **defile**. "Don't defile My Sabbath." In verse 2 and then again in verse 6—these [who "don't defile"] are the ones who are going to be blessed. They are going to be His servants.

Now, can **perfection** [come] to any person or to any project who does not care how things are done? The answer to that is obvious. In regard to the Sabbath, it not only matters to God that we do it—but also *how* we do it. Now why? Because it affects the outcome of the product! A person can produce something of poor quality; and they have, indeed, produced something. But if they produce something in which they really **care** about what the outcome is going to be, they are going to produce something that is going to be closer to perfection. We might say [like] the difference between a mass-

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assembled automobile and a Rolls Royce that is built by hand—"customized" from the bottom up. Because you care about the product, then you produce something that is much better.

That's the principle that is involved in this section here, in verses 1-7. God is concerned that "His people—the Gentiles" and "His people—the eunuchs" do not **defile** the Sabbath. Defile means to pollute, to make impure, unclean, dirty, corrupt, to profane. Biblically, it means **to put to common use**.

A polluted steam is unfit for drinking. It might even be unfit for swimming. It might be so unfit that even fish can't live in it. So it might even be deadly. Think about that in relation to the Sabbath. Does it matter *how* something is done? God **is** concerned—otherwise something like this would not appear in His Word.

Now, let's take a look at a scripture back in the book of Malachi and think about this in regard to the Sabbath.

Malachi 1:6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name, yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'"

When this was written, it was directed at the priesthood of Aaron. Those people certainly were coming under God's castigation here justifiably. God is creating a kingdom of priests, is He not? I think we can extract things from this that are applicable to us. And if we will take the warning that is contained herein, I think it will very greatly affect the way that we *use* and *keep* His Sabbath.

What we are talking about here is: **disrespectful service** those closest to the sacred things were performing, before God. Do you begin to see the tie-in with us? Is there anybody on earth that is closer to God in serving Him than His own people, than His own sons and daughters? We'd better be careful that we are not **defiling the Sabbath**—treating it as common, and giving Him disrespectful service.

Malachi 1:7-8 "You offer defiled food on My altar [God said.], But [you] say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' [Then God comes back.] By saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible.' And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, [something that was not up to snuff, something that was not acceptable as a sacrifice] is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick

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[giving God halfhearted service], is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" says the LOORD of hosts.

The answer is not given, but the answer is obvious. No, he would not accept that.

Malachi 1:9-13 "But now entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, will He accept you favorably?" says the LOORD of hosts. "Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, so that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you," says the LOORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations," says the LOORD of hosts. "But you profane it [God says], in that you say, 'The table of the LOORD is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.' You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," says the LOORD of hosts.

Can you see the halfhearted service, the halfhearted obedience, the profaning that was going on here? Not directly regarding the Sabbath, but *in principle* it was involved in here. The sacrifices that were coming to God were being done in a way that was not acceptable to Him.

There is no indication that what these people were doing was deliberate, that it was *not a reasoned conclusion* that it should be done this way. They didn't really (let's say) want to worship God this way. It wasn't in their heart to do it! But it was nonetheless **being done** that way. They were treating God as though He and the things of the altar—the service of the altar, and the sacrifice of the altar—were less important than other things. So, the way they did the ritual showed that—in their hearts—they considered it a secondary matter. Other things were squeezing out what should have been their first priority.

Malachi 1:14 "But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—for I am a great King," says the LOORD of hosts, and My name is to be revered among the nations.

In the first eight or ten years of Evelyn and my married life, I got to spend a great deal of time with my father-in-law. A bit of that time we lived right across the street from them. And, like all young couples, we were struggling financially with all the things that young couples have to buy and everything. So I always had old automobiles, and I always repaired my own automobiles; I was a reasonably good mechanic. My father-in-law was an automobile mechanic most of his life. He knew a lot of tricks about fixing things. And he had two clichés that he used very frequently.

One cliché was—whenever he did a job that he knew was far from perfect, but was something that would get by—he called it, "Dutching it." In the state of Pennsylvania, where I grew up, we had automobile inspections twice a year. At that time, there were things that had to be done. They had to be up to snuff in order to pass the state inspection, but my father-in-law showed me ways to get around it. When it was in the shop being inspected, it would look pretty good. But maybe 1,000 miles later, it was back to the way it was before I "dutched it." So he taught me ways to get around; and he would say, "Well, this is Dutching."

Another one was that he would say, "A man galloping past on a horse would never notice." That one is pretty obvious. If you are on a galloping horse, and your eyes are going up and down; then you can't concentrate on anything. So he would fix something that he knew wasn't quite good, and he would say, "Well, a man galloping past on a horse would never notice."

I think that God will accept "galloping past on the horse" jobs, because God is merciful. But He doesn't want us to get into **that attitude**. God recognizes our ignorance. God recognizes our weaknesses and our frailties; and He may overlook them, in the sense that He is willing to forgive them. But—like any parent who wants the child to grow, and develop, and produce the most that it possibly can—He wants that child to strive for perfection, to work in that direction.

So God is very patient, and He works with us. But we cannot—let's say in regards to the Sabbath—just take the idea that any old thing will do. That is, that we'll just "Dutch it" or we'll just "gallop past on a horse and nobody will ever notice." That is NOT a godly attitude. There has to be in us the mindset that we are going to strive to do better than we have before, and overcome whatever it is that is holding us back from doing it.

Here in Malachi 1, these people had reached the state where they didn't care. They needed to be stirred up. They needed to get their minds turned around in the right direction. We don't want to ever let ourselves get like that, or the message of Malachi 1 will apply to you and me.

Our subject here is the Sabbath, and the Sabbath is something that we can take for granted. The Sabbath is something that we can deteriorate in the right use of it, and we can begin to think that God will accept 'any ole thing.' But God says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all of your might." That is a good principle to make use of. He also said, through Jesus, to "become you perfect (or mature), even as your Father in heaven is mature."

So God's idea here is that He does not want us to get into an attitude that we'll accept "any old thing" as a finished product. Though He overlooks our frailties, we ought to make sure that we are making every effort to do the right thing. He wants **the best** from us, because it is good for us. Of course, it also serves Him—because the better we do, the better witness is made as well.

We may not have very much to offer God. And what we do have is going to vary from person to person very greatly. But we must strive to do the best we can—not just in maintaining and repairing the automobile; or taking care of our clothing, our home, and job—most importantly of all in the spiritual and moral areas. If we allow ourselves to adopt the kind of attitude that was developing here in Malachi's day, I can guarantee you that, in a very short time (maybe several years), it will turn into rank Protestantism. And we don't want to go in that direction at all.

We saw a multitude of examples of *how Jesus kept the Sabbath*. If God were a Creator who did everything in a slap-dash, "Dutching it," slipshod, "This is good enough" kind of attitude, the Creation would have collapsed into confusion a long time ago. But I think that you will admit that God made things beautifully. Everything works so wonderfully well.

Numbers 15:28-31 So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the LOORD, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, [both] for him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells [sojourns] among them. But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LOORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LOORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him.

Now notice how this context begins. Then, in verse 32, after the stage has been set:

Numbers 15:32-36 Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

I think that the conclusion is almost inescapable that the man who sinned here did so **presumptuously**. It was something of which he was well aware, and the sin was NOT forgiven. Instead, the death penalty was carried out. Let's go on, because (in a way) the story does not stop here.

Numbers 15:37-40 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to take tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God."

I think all of us are aware of the tassels that the Hebrew people wore on their clothing. But again looking at the context here, what seems to be **the primary motivation** that God had in mind whenever He gave them this command? Remember that this was something that they wore right on their clothing. It was a part of their every day dress. It was something that they had to look at every time they put their clothes on, every time they took their clothing off, all the while they were on the street, all the while they were doing business. Everyone who was following this command had a tassel, which everybody could look at—to remind them of the commandments of God. But the context indicates that the primary motivation was because **this man broke the Sabbath presumptuously!**

We all break the Sabbath [from time to time], but to do it **presumptuously** is not something that we want to do. I don't think most of us are going to do that. We will break it out of ignorance. We will break it out of weakness. But I don't think that very many of

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us are going to set our minds to do it, like this man apparently did.

So God wanted to remind His people *not to be negligent* in carrying out their responsibilities before Him. And if these people who were wearing the tassels were aware of the context in which this "tassel commandment" appeared, then they would understand that the primary motivation seems to be the Sabbath. "You'd better keep the Sabbath."

Now think of the Jews in the first century B.C. and the first century A.D.—in that two or three hundred-year period in there—and all of the laws and regulations that they put together regarding the Sabbath. They knew why they went into captivity! They could read Ezekiel 20. They could read Jeremiah 17. They knew why they went into captivity! And in both cases, the Sabbath Commandment played a big part in it.

They made 1,521 regulations to try to keep people from breaking the Sabbath. That's a lot of law. What they did, they did in a misdirected zeal—but **zeal** nonetheless. Their desire was to try to keep it. Instead, they made a burden out of it because they missed the point of *how* and *why* it was to be kept.

Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape **if we neglect** so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.

Here's my concern—"neglect," "**drift away**." Jesus Christ, the living Head of His church, here warns against neglect. Neglect is NOT deliberate. It is NOT willful. It is NOT intentional sin. It is something that happens because of familiarity, or distraction, caused by one having too many things going in one's life.

It says that we are to "give the more earnest heed." We are warned not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (back in chapter 10). What we are going to see here is that, in the message to the Hebrews, the Sabbath plays **a central role** in the whole message that is going out to these people. We can already begin to see, when we get to chapter two, that part of the problem these people had was that they were **neglecting** the things they had heard.

It wasn't deliberate. It wasn't willful. But they were people who were **drifting away**. They

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weren't making the effort towards *perfection*. They were "Dutching it." "A man galloping past on a horse would never notice," but God did! **God noticed**—because it was His church, His sons and daughters; and He cares. So He sent them perhaps the strongest message in the entire Bible. He goes up one side and down the other in this book. And I think Hebrews 10 is arguably the most powerful chapter in the entire Bible. We are just getting to the beginning of the story here. I think, from what we see, the Sabbath was being neglected.

We have to "give the more earnest heed" so that we don't lose sight of the things that were given to us. And what was given to us? The essence of it is given in verse 6.

Hebrews 2:6-8 But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet."

That's what we heard! We heard about our future. We heard the "good news" of the world tomorrow. We heard the "good news" of inheriting the Kingdom of God. We heard the "good news" that we are going to be very God—we are going to be *God* as God is God. Not as great as He is—in authority, wisdom, or intelligence, etc. We will NEVER catch up to Him. But we still are going to be **Good**.

People were **neglecting** it. It wasn't deliberate. It wasn't willful. But the Sabbath plays a part in Paul's explanation here.

Hebrews 2:8-9 For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

So we see the Pathfinder, the *Archegos*, the Author of our salvation went before us. He is pulling us back to Him once again, saying, "This is what you can become. **Don't neglect it!**" "Pick up the pieces," He is saying, "and go on." These are the things that we have heard about the great future that is before us.

Hebrews 3:1-3 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,

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consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.

Jesus Christ, our Leader, is greater than Moses! Moses had the Holy Spirit, but the people he was leading did not have the Holy Spirit. We **do** have the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we should be *guided by that Spirit* in doing what we do. Guided into what? **Guided into perfection!** The perfection of what? The perfection of the One from whom that Spirit emanates—so that we are in His image as well.

From this point on, a very interesting lesson develops about not letting these things slip and *why* we should not let these things slip. Remember that he has already stated the big thing in Hebrews 2:6-10. **We are to be changed and inherit the Kingdom of God.**

Hebrews 3:7-11 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried [proved] Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

Let's stop there and collect things a little bit. What does the word *Sabbath* mean? It means *rest*. What we are going to see begin to develop here is a third reason why God created the Sabbath. Something is being introduced so that **WE** will use the Sabbath in the right way—as a springboard to greater things. The Sabbath was made for **man!**

Let's go back to Psalms 95:7, to the scripture that Paul just quoted. First, look at the very beginning—so that you can see the context in which this appears.

Psalms 95:1-2 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

This is one of those Psalms that the commentators call "A Sabbath Psalm." It is indicating an activity that is taking place **on the Sabbath**. That's when people gather before God, and shout joyfully, and come before His presence with thanksgiving. Of

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course, anybody can do that in prayer as well; but this is a Sabbath Psalm. That is its broad application.

Psalm 95:7 For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. [He is talking about His people, and it says:] Today, if you will hear His voice.

"**Today**" has *two applications* right in the context here. (1) Today, in its broadest application, means the day of salvation in which we are living. The day in which we are called. The day in which we are converted. The day in which we have the opportunity to "go on" to the perfection that God wants us to achieve. (2) In its narrow application, it is **the Sabbath**. "Today, if you will hear His voice." That's when we hear it primarily—on the Sabbath. We appear before the ministry, and God inspires and speaks through the ministry; and we hear the lessons that He has for us that day.

Psalm 95:8-9 Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me...

That's enough. You can see that it is a direct quote of this there in Hebrews 3.

Hebrews 3:11-12 "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Then, in verse 13, Paul uses "**Today**," — from Psalm 95:7—in its broad sense. That is, the time that we are called.

Hebrews 3:14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

That's important. "To the end." What was happening to these people? They were neglecting things. They weren't holding steadfast to the end. Things were drifting away. They were drifting away.

Paul begins, then, to show that the quotation from Psalm 95:7 has never been fulfilled. So, who would be the first ones to fulfill it? The first ones, you would think, would be the

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ones God called out of Egypt. That would be a right answer. They would be the first ones that **could** fulfill it, but we find in chapter 4:

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest...

They **didn't** fulfill it. It's still open. I won't go into every detail. Paul then goes on into Joshua and the people who entered the Land—which should have been the fulfillment. But it was NOT the fulfillment. You know what happened after Joshua died. Boy, the whole nation went down spiritually, like a rock in water—until everybody (as it says in the last verse of Judges) was doing what was right in his own eyes. There was no king. There was no central authority. There was nobody to point these people in the right direction. They didn't enter into the "**rest.**"

Now, let's jump all the way up to the time that Psalm 95 was written. It is generally conceded to be a psalm of David or of Asaph—someone of that period of time. And they were looking back. David lived how long after Joshua? Roughly 300 years after Joshua, and it hadn't been fulfilled in David's time either. Was it fulfilled in any other time? No, it wasn't. That's why the apostle [Paul] is writing this. It still remains! God's promise has NOT been fulfilled.

Who's it going to be fulfilled by? Paul's hoping that it's going to be fulfilled by these people who were drifting away. That is, be fulfilled by the church. The promise of entering into that Sabbath rest has not yet been fulfilled.

Hebrews 4:9-10 There remains therefore a rest [In Greek, the word is *sabbatismos*. It means "a Sabbath rest."] for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

What did he just say there? Have we entered into that **rest**? We have NOT entered into it yet. It hasn't occurred. So, what *rest* is God talking about here? He's talking about the Kingdom of God, which still lies before us. Now, look at the instruction.

Hebrews 4:11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

We've seen the Sabbath, now, in several different lights. First of all, it commemorates

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the completion of the Creation Week. **God is Creator**. Then, in Deuteronomy, we see that it commemorates **redemption**. We find in the things that we see of Jesus in the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—we see Him acting upon not the Creation motif, but acting upon the redemption motif.

God has gotten us out of Egypt. Now, how do we use the Sabbath? So He **magnifies it**, by showing that we should *use the Sabbath* in terms of a redemption motif. We might almost say that the first thing we need to make sure is that we are **free** and that we stay free. Therefore, we have to strive to do what? Keep the Sabbath! And the third lesson, then, is that it prefigures a time yet future when the people of God enjoy **the rest**.

So, now we see the Sabbath doing what?

It points to the past—the Creation.

It points to the present—redemption and sanctification.

It points to the future—the Kingdom of God.

These three areas are the perimeters within which Sabbath *use* and *obedience* fall. "For there remains yet a keeping of the Sabbath." We won't go into this, but it is really beautiful. That is, what it shows in the Greek here—which, incidentally, is probably the most beautiful Greek in the whole Bible. It is really beautifully written. It shows **that Sabbath rest** has already begun IF we are striving to use it right. We have already begun to enter into it. (If a person works on the Sabbath, have they entered into it? Obviously not! I'm talking about working and earning a living.)

This thing that I just mentioned ties very closely to the term *eternal life* in the Bible. And **eternal life**, we find (shown by Jesus Christ), is not merely a period in which there is extended life. That is, life without end. But, to God, **eternal life** also includes **the quality of life being lived**. It would be no good to have eternal life if we had to live it like a demon. But eternal life is only good when it is lived as *God lives it*.

Now, are you starting to live like God? IF you have begun to live like God lives—having His attitude, doing the things that He does in terms of what Christ has showed us—THEN you have begun to enter into eternal life. Therefore, you are already beginning to enter into **THE REST**. It's a beautiful picture!

The point to these people, to whom this was written, is that the children of Israel did

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NOT enter into God's rest because they didn't hear God's Word and obey. The illustration is **the Sabbath** — for the breaking of which both Israel and Judah (as Ezekiel and Jeremiah show) went into captivity. What is so interesting here is that this is written to the First Century church, and it is introduced as an illustration of what they are to do with their lives.

Think about this. If the Sabbath had been done away, the illustration was useless. For those who can think, this is one of the strongest **proofs** in the entire New Testament that the First Century church—the church of the apostles—were **still keeping the Sabbath**. And reinforcing its keeping by using it as an illustration of the very Kingdom of God—the *rest* into which we will enter. Far be it from the apostles to say that it was done away. That's ridiculous. Maybe the spiritually blinded can't see that; but we should be able to see that, and see that clearly.

Virtually everything we do on the Sabbath revolves around these three broad areas. *Our minds, our conversations, our activities* are NOT to be centered and focused on material concerns, cares, and pleasures. God commands us to keep the Sabbath because He wants time to be free from mundane responsibilities and activities. He wants our minds to be **free** — to be thinking about the great purpose that He is working out in our lives. And then there is another reason. It is that the Sabbath, and the proper keeping of it, sets the stage for the proper worship of God.

Remember that **worship** is our devoted response to God. It is NOT confined to one day. Rather, it involves the whole of life. Those who cannot—or will not—control their minds and time on this day are very likely going to be the ones who call the day "bondage." However, that very attitude is likely to lead those people into NOT entering God's rest. So we need to be turning our attention to keeping it as well as we possibly can.

Let's go to Isaiah 58:13-14. It is very likely that the Sabbath (that is in mind here) is either Trumpets or Atonement. The chapter opens up with "Lift up your voice like a trumpet," and there might be a reference there. But then the bulk of the chapter has to do with fasting. The Sabbath comes up, as a part of the context, in verse 13—which indicates that, when Isaiah wrote this, God had a *Sabbath* in mind. If I had my choice, it would be that the Sabbath that was in mind was probably the Day of Atonement.

I bring that to your attention because there are only two Sabbaths in which God says, "No work shall be done." The one is the Day of Atonement, and the other is the weekly Sabbath (which occurs fifty-two times a year). In that regard, the weekly Sabbath is more **stringent** than are the holy days. When holy days and weekly Sabbaths coincide, the holy day takes precedence—as being a Sabbath of the first rank. But yet, in regard

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to the weekly Sabbath, God says, "No work shall be done." So it's fairly stringent. Let's think about that in these verses.

Isaiah 58:13-14 "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and 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."

Instruction in the Bible as to *how to keep the Sabbath* is not given in very specific detail but, rather, in **broad principles** that cover a multitude of specifics. If we are being led by God's Spirit, we should be able to determine what is right. Maybe not the first time around, maybe not the tenth time around—but eventually, if we are being led by God's Spirit, we are going to see that we are doing something wrong; and we are going to make a change. Or, if we find out that we have been doing it right, we will probably intensify our efforts to even do 'what is right' better.

God's Spirit will gently impel us towards **the perfection** of the One from whom that Spirit is emanating—if we are being led by it.

How can one call the Sabbath **a delight**? Like everything else in life, we *delight* in (1) what we recognize as being valuable and in (2) that which we do well. Doing something well is fun. Doing something poorly is a burden, and we wish nobody were around to see us do this poor thing. On the other hand, if we are doing something well, we want to make sure that everybody watches us. In a way, that's not a wrong principle—because, if we are doing something right, we are going to be a good witness for God.

There are *four broad concerns* that God has here. Number one is "*to turn your foot away*." This primarily has to do with one's overall approach. It has to do with one's attitude towards the day. It has to do with **respect**. In Exodus 3:5 God told Moses to take off his shoes, his sandals, because the ground he was standing on was holy ground. God was saying, "Get your dirty feet off where I am." That's the principle that is involved here. There has to be respect for what is of God. The Sabbath is of God. So, don't trample all over **His holy Sabbath day**.

The Sabbath, first of all, has to be looked upon—regarded—as **holy**. It is different. It is NOT common. We are to hold it in deep respect. That is, the same kind of respect that

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we might call "the fear of God." The same kind of fear that would keep one from falling on his knees before a statue—because, "*Hey, that's idolatry. I don't want to do that!*" We have to have the same kind of respect towards the Sabbath. So, this attitude has to dominate this period of time.

Now, think about this. The Sabbath—above all things appointed by law—**unites us** as a religious organization committed to God. It is "the test commandment." It is "the sign" that God gave. So, it is what unites us as an organization that is committed to God.

On the other hand, the Passover—of all things appointed by law—unites us as an organization "under obligation" to God. There's a difference between the two. First comes **recognition of obligation**. Then comes **commitment to obedience**. This is why one has to accept the blood of Jesus Christ first. When one does that, he is put under obligation.

So every time we take the Passover, every year, we are recommitting ourselves to the New Covenant—because we are being made forcefully aware of our obligations to the One who died for us. The Sabbath unites us, then, as an organization committed to God. And then our sense of obligation is shown by our obedience to the Sabbath.

"*Your ways*" is another aspect of this. A way is a path, or a course, leading from one place to another. It is a direction—a manner or method of doing something. It is a code of life. It is a lifestyle. The problem with mankind's **way** is its direction. Its direction is **self-centered**. There is preoccupation with self.

In this context, "ways" means the path, direction, or manner of speaking or worshipping God. **The way** is the means of accomplishing this worshipping. There are many scriptures in which the word "way" occurs in the Bible.

Psalm 16:11 You will show me the path of life [or, the way of life]; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

What he is saying is that—because God has showed him the path and he is walking in God's way (and because he is in the presence of God, fellowshiping with God)—it begins to produce **fullness of joy**. That's a fruit of walking God's way.

Isaiah 35:8-9 A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. No lion

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shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beasts go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there.

There is a certain path—a certain **way**. In this case, he calls it "a highway" in which those who are close to God are going to walk. We find in Isaiah 58 that God said, "*Take care—pay attention to your way.*"

Jeremiah 6:16 Thus says the LORD: "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, "We will not walk in it."

Do you want rest? See what I meant there in Hebrews 4? When we are striving to obey God and we are walking **His way**, then we have already been brought into the rest of God. It is beginning. Not the fullness, but it is beginning! Why? It is producing the right fruit. "My peace I leave with you." "My joy I give to you." God's way will produce the right fruit, and the Sabbath is central to all these things. It is the day that God made for man. It is an expanse of time in which He says, "Today, if you will hear My voice."

Why is God working towards producing **faith**? It should be so clear. Those with faith are going to submit to Him. They are going to commit their lives to Him. And if He can build people's faith, they will believe in Christ. They will believe the words of Christ. They will begin to enter into **God's rest**. This teaching is all over the Bible.

Hosea 14:9 Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right. The righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

Matthew 7:14 "Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way [Jesus says] which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Those of us who have knowledge of Mr. Armstrong (back many, many years), know that he quoted Proverbs 14:12 and Proverbs 16:25 over and over again. Those verses ought to be burned into our minds. "**There is a way that seems right, but the ends thereof are the way of death!**" Man has presumptuously thought 'any old way' will do. He's been "Dutching it" all along. He's been doing whatever looks good to a guy "*galloping past on a horse.*"

It all depends upon what one desires to produce at the end. This is why Paul wrote what he did in Hebrews 2. **"Don't let this slip!"** Because these people were neglecting, their **GREAT HIGH CALLING** was slipping away. This is what we want to have produced at the end! What's it going to take to cooperate in producing it? It's going to take walking a certain way, and those are the people whom God will allow to enter into **His rest**.

Do you ever give any thought about end results? Sure you do. You do it often. If you want to bake a cake, you begin to envision what it is that you want to produce. And you take care that you take the proper steps to produce whatever it is that you envision. If you want to decorate a room, you get an idea (a concept, a vision) of what it is that you want to produce. And then you begin to take steps. You go along a certain course, a way, in order to produce those things. If you have an idea about the way that you want to dress, you get a vision in your mind about what it is that you want to have come out. If you want to remodel, you get ideas about whatever it is that you envision the end result to be.

So Paul said, "Don't forget what we have been called to. Don't neglect so great salvation." And then he uses the Sabbath as an illustration in that. In Proverbs 14:12, God is cautioning us to take a long-range view of life. How it ends is what is important. And, brethren, present appearances are deceiving. Perhaps above all else, we need to be careful about being deceived by our feelings. We need to be humble enough to be willing to take advice.

If you **only** had eyes, you would come to the same conclusion that those people did in the Dark Ages. That is, that the world was flat. If you only had eyes, you would think that the sun was circling the earth. Our senses—our feelings—are subject to being easily deceived because they are limited in their scope. There are things that determine the outcome of life that must be **revealed**.

The Sabbath was given to provide for that **revelation**—through communication and fellowship with God, through sermons, through personal study and prayer. And guess what God intends to be the focus? **His way of life!** Why? In order that we be "one" with Him, and that He be reproduced in us. Anything that does not have to do with **this Way**—in thought, action, or conversation—is a distraction from God's intention for the Sabbath. It is "missing the mark."

As I said before, God is willing to forgive those things. He is mostly concerned about the attitude because eventually, if we have the right attitude, He will get across the truth to us; and we will make the adjustments that need to be done. But we have to make sure that **our attitude** is that we desire to use it in the right way.

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As we've been beginning to see, there is a great deal more latitude in terms of energy expended than we might expect if all we were doing was observing biblical Jews. What God is concerned about is WHY we are doing such a thing. Not so much the energy, but WHY are we doing it.

Suppose you had an appointment to meet with the President of the United States. He had a project going on, and he wanted you to play a part in that project. So you went to your appointment at the time that it was set up for. But all the while that you were with him, your mind was on something else other than the project. What would be accomplished?

It's so simple. God set ***an appointment time*** every Sabbath day. And a subject **on the Sabbath** is carnal or spiritual—depending upon intention and motivation for what is being done.