

## The Commandments (Part Seven)

### The Sabbath, Part Three

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I am going to continue the series that I was giving on the Sabbath commandment. I do not know how long ago it was that I spoke. It seems like it has been ancient history from the last time that I spoke before you, but we are going to continue that. And I made in that sermon a statement that in the New Testament it was never a question of whether the Sabbath was to be kept, but rather *how* it was to be kept. It was always the issue that was at the forefront of the circumstances in which the Sabbath is mentioned.

When Jesus came on the scene, a strict and repressive approach had been developed by the Jews because they understood Ezekiel the 20th chapter, that God had sent Israel into captivity as a result of idolatry and Sabbath breaking, and you might say that they overcorrected. Beginning with the period of time of Nehemiah and Ezra, and by the time Jesus came on the scene, about another 400 years later, a very detailed and complex system had arisen saying that this you can do, this you cannot do, and if you do those things, why, you are breaking the Sabbath commandment.

Now one of Jesus' major responsibilities according to the prophecies in the Old Testament, Isaiah 42:21 to be exact, was that He was to magnify the law and make it honorable. Almost immediately after beginning His ministry, He began to do that. We see in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, in what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, that is what He was doing. He was beginning to magnify the law and help mankind to understand that we are to keep the law in its spirit. We are to come to understand its intent, and therefore conduct our lives according to its intent.

But it did not stop with Matthew 5, 6, and 7, it went all through His ministry. A large number of these episodes in which He was showing the intent of God's law involved the keeping of the Sabbath. There is very much in the New Testament about how to keep the Sabbath. Now it is not given by command—the commands are given in the Old Testament regarding the

Sabbath—but rather it is given by example—examples of what Jesus did. And it is from those broad principles that we are given the ability to make judgments regarding our Sabbath activity.

Now the Sabbath is almost invariably associated with the principle of liberty. Keep that in mind—the principle of liberty, that is, the relieving of moral, physical, and spiritual burdens or enslavements. That is just the opposite of what Jesus found when He came on the scene. Instead, the Sabbath was enslaving people. There were 1,521 laws and regulations regarding the keeping of the Sabbath, by which a person could hardly turn around without being in fear that he was possibly going to be breaking one of those regulations. It was quite a yoke, quite a burden to be thrust upon those people, and I am sure that there is no one who could keep it adequately, at least as far as the Pharisees were concerned.

Jesus, it seems, went out of His way to heal people on the Sabbath. Some of those healings seem to be intentionally provocative. Now the physical healings were a type of the far more important spiritual healings that God intends for them to be used for. Now it is important, I think, helpful to remember that the Sabbath healings were not done to people whose lives were in danger, that is, that they were not going to die if Jesus did not immediately intervene. But rather they were done to people who were chronically ill. Now the Sabbath was given to you and me to free us from the chronic problems of human nature.

In Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve sinned and the curses are pronounced, the curse makes it very clear that because of sin, work, you know, what you and I do the other six days of the week, was generally going to have an endlessly frustrating and oppressive quality to it. That it would never quite seem to produce enough.

Now the Sabbath rest we are commanded to keep in the commandment, that rest from mundane work is a type of the liberty from the spiritual battles and pressures of this world that are equated with the frustrating and oppressive quality of work. The Sabbath is given to keep us free spiritually from Satan and to increase our liberty through fellowship and communication with God and others of the same mind. It is given to keep us in the *true knowledge* of the *true worship* of the *true God*. Now that is its primary function, and any

activity that does not immediately fit within those parameters needs to be carefully examined as to its appropriateness.

Before we launch into the body of the message for today, I want you to remember two terms from that sermon, very common terms to any Christian person. The first is the word "redeemed." It is used in the sense of buying back, to extricate from, to release from blame or debt, to free from the consequences of sin, to free from what distresses or harms, to release by paying a price. Most of us are somewhat familiar with that in terms of something that we used to say we put in hock, and in order to get it out of hock, you have to redeem it. You go and pay a price and then you buy it back. You are redeeming that. So a price is paid in order to extricate something.

The second is the term "salvation." The closest English word to that is deliverance. Probably it would be better if that word was used in the Bible instead of salvation, because salvation has religious connotations to us that do not always lend themselves to a clear understanding. It is simply the Greek word for deliverance. The English word deliverance is its equivalent. It means deliverance and/or preservation from danger to safety and security. It indicates an action, a movement from danger to security.

So, redeeming: to buy back or to free from distresses; and salvation: deliverance and/or preservation from danger to safety and security.

When I left off the last time, we were just finishing up in Luke 13, and we are going to start right there because I am going to very rapidly go through that episode there. We are finishing up with Luke 13, beginning in verse 10, where Jesus pointedly emphasized the Sabbath liberty principle by healing a woman and the use of the verb to loose.

**Luke 13:10-13** Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years [it was a chronic problem], and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." [Liberty, she is given freedom. I believe it is the King James Version, the old version, they say you are free from

your infirmity.] And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

Now in the remaining portion of that episode, He contrasts loosed and bound, so that we cannot miss the intent of what He is doing.

**Luke 13:14** But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day."

You see, it is interesting that the Pharisee, the ruler of the synagogue, considered what Jesus did to be work. Keep that in the back of your mind.

**Luke 13:15-16** Then the Lord answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose [untie] his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound [held in slavery]—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed [there is that verb again] from this bond on the Sabbath?"

You see how clear that is. The Sabbath is a day for releasing people from bondage. It has to do with redemption. It has to do with delivering a person from a state of danger or pain to a state of safety and security. Now I also want you to know that nowhere in this episode, or any other episode that we have looked at in the past or that we are going to continue to look at today, in no place did He challenge the binding obligation of keeping the Sabbath. Instead, in every case, He is arguing for the true values in keeping it. See, the argument was always *how to keep it*, not whether a person should keep it. That is a given that was accepted by the Jews. It was accepted by Christ as a command from God. The people would do it because it was a part of the commandment.

Now in this episode there is an intimation of work. The ruler said, "There are six days in which men ought to work," and when Jesus responded, He also intimated work that was permissible on the Sabbath, even by the Pharisaic regulations. Untying the ox and leading it to water was a work which Jesus did not dispute in any way as being something that would be permissible

under the way that He was looking at the law as well. So you see, there is an intimation of Sabbath work that is permissible both by the Jews and by Christ. So the act of loosing illustrates work. In order to free, in order to redeem, in order to give salvation, in order to save, it is going to require work on the part of someone.

We are now going to move to another illustration, and this one is very interesting. We are going to compare, or work through, two different episodes at the same time. One is in John 5 and the other is in John 9. Both of these involve healings that took place on a Sabbath. Just a little bit of background for both of them. First of all, I want you to see in John 5 (and when I get to John 9, leave your finger in John 5 because we are going to be bouncing back and forth between the two).

**John 5:1** After this there was a feast of the Jews [the feast of the Sabbath], and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

I have read in our material, specifically an article that Dr. Hoeh wrote a number of years ago, that he believes that this was the Feast of Trumpets, just following the chronology through the book of John. Even the commentaries acknowledge that it was a fall festival, just a little bit of disagreement over which one it was. Dr. Hoeh feels that it was the Feast of Trumpets. And down in verse 9, just to confirm that:

**John 5:9** Immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was a Sabbath.

Now in John 9:

**John 9:1** Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth [and Jesus heals him].

And if you look in verse 14:

**John 9:14** Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

Both of these instances involve working.

Let us begin to compare. In John 9:1-2, we have a man who was blind from birth. In verse 2 again, it says that he was born blind. This is another incident where Jesus healed a person who was chronically ill. The person had survived this long—he was not going to die before the day is over—but it was a problem that was typical of the kind of spiritual problems we have that are chronic. We begin to have them as we are growing up, and as we come into the church and are converted, the problems just do not go away overnight, and we suffer from these chronic spiritual problems.

Now back in John 5, and in verse 5,

**John 5:5** Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

Same kind of thing, same background. It was not something that had to be done just then, but Jesus intervened on the Sabbath day. Part of the reason for that intervention was to relate the day to salvation, to redemption, to the freeing and loosening of burdens. Now in each case, Christ told the man to do something that involved work on their part.

**John 5:8** Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

The act of picking up his pallet and walking off with it was something that the Pharisees would construe as work.

**John 9:7** And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

Now for this man—a blind man—to leave the area that he was in and go to the pool was no little stroll-around-the-park kind of thing that you and I could do very easily, being sighted. For him to go that distance was a work on his part. Now in both cases, Christ was accused of Sabbath breaking.

**John 9:16** Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

Back in John 5:

**John 5:16** For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.

**John 5:18** Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

In both cases, Christ repudiates the charge that was made against Him with the same argument, and it is a very interesting argument indeed. In John 5, squeezed in between verses 16 and 18, this very interesting statement. Here comes Jesus' justification for what He did. He is implying very strongly that God has never stopped working. He is saying that God works continuously, and that even when He works on the Sabbath, He is not breaking the Sabbath.

**John 5:17** "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

Now with that statement, He associates Himself directly with the Father in heaven, as doing the same kind of work that His Father has been doing, and therefore, since He is doing what the Father is doing, He is not breaking the Sabbath any more than the Father was breaking the Sabbath.

In John 9, verse 4, here is His justification—and He actually does it before He heals the person, and He gives His justification in this case to His disciples. I want to interject something here before I get away from it, it flicked through my mind. The word "I" that begins this verse, in almost all modern commentaries and in translations, they say that word should be "We." That is very important to His argument for you and me. What I am

going to tell you will stand without it; it does not really need it, but it adds to it.

**John 9:4** [We] must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one [collectively or individually] can work.

He means the kinds of works that involve healings.

Now in both cases, Christ repudiated the charge that was made against Him by arguing that the works of salvation are contemplated by the Sabbath, and that His works on the Sabbath are equivalent to, they are the same as, they are equal to, the works of God, and God is not a man that He should break the Sabbath. God is not a law-breaking God.

It ought to be easily seen by this time that Christ does not regard the Sabbath as a day of idleness, but His activities are always the work of God. It is important that you understand this: His activities on the Sabbath are *always* the works of God. My Father, He said, has been working till now. What kinds of works? It is very important because Jesus identified Himself with it. God is always working to deliver people. Now let us string together a number of scriptures here, beginning in verse 36 of John 5.

**John 5:36** "But I have a greater witness than John's [meaning John the Baptist]; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me."

Let us keep adding to this. We will go to John 10. In order for Jesus to fulfill His commission, it was essential that He carry out certain works, and those works were the works of God. Those works were things that were assigned to Him by God.

**John 10:37** "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me."

See, He is saying now that I am doing the same works that the Father did. You can see now why He felt that He had the authority to say what He did in John 5: "My Father has been working till now, and I am working." And He knew that He did not break the Sabbath because He was doing the same works as the Father.

**John 10:38** "But if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

See, He is associating Himself with the Father.

Now let us go to John 14, probably the most familiar of this series of scriptures.

**John 14:8** Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it will be sufficient for us."

And of course you know what Jesus said, but we are going to drop down to verse 11:

**John 14:11** "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves."

In every one of these scriptures, Jesus is confirming His authority to do the things that He is doing because He is imitating what the Father did.

Now we are going to turn back to Psalm 74, and we will see very clearly there what the Bible says that the Father is doing, and of course then what the Son is doing, because the Son is doing the same works as the Father. It would be interesting to go through this whole psalm and just lead up to this verse, but this will be enough for right now.

**Psalm 74:12** For God is my King from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

There is the work that God is doing. He is working salvation. He is working deliverance. He is working a work of preservation. He is working a work of redemption. Now Jesus is working within the same process as the Father, who is redeeming men and working salvation.

Now it is not the work of physical creation which the Bible forbids. It says very clearly in Genesis 2:2 that the creation was finished. So the work that God does on the Sabbath is not a work of physical creation. That would break the Sabbath.

What we saw is this: that the ministry of Christ was a manifestation of the redemptive work of the Father. The ministry of Christ. He kept pointing to it. Look at what I am doing. See, read My lips. Look at what I am doing, it is identifying who I am. I am working a work of redemption.

Now that is a work of spiritual creation, creating sons in the image of God. Christ is Savior. He is Deliverer. He is Redeemer. That is His work, and it is alright to do those works on the Sabbath. So He teaches God's way, He heals, He forgives sins. Doing good is part of His work.

Let us go back to John 6, another very familiar scripture, and we will begin to make this application to you and me. In verse 29, we are going to see a practical application of why these particular kind of works were done by Christ. This is the work of God. It says here:

**John 6:29** Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

God was working through Christ, and the purpose of the manifestation of the works of God was to produce faith. The work of God, He says right here, is that you believe. The work that He did through Christ was done in order to produce faith. Now if we have faith in God, then we will apply God's Word, and that produces liberty for ourselves and others.

Now back to John 5. Can you begin to understand why He was healing on the Sabbath? So that they would understand that He was God, and so that they would believe what He said. The words that He said were the words of God, and if they would believe what He was *doing*, then there was a pretty

good chance that they would believe what He was *saying*. And if they would believe what He was saying, then they would apply it in their lives, and if they applied it in their lives, they would begin to be redeemed. They would begin to be delivered from all of their troubles, primarily the spiritual troubles. And the physical healings were given to reinforce what He said and to lend authority to what He said.

**John 5:19-21** Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will."

You see, He is saying here, reinforcing that He was involved in the same saving activity as the Father, even to the point of resurrecting. But even more important than resurrecting, of course, is giving spiritual life to people. That is Christ's justification for His Sabbath activities. The physical healings were a type of the spiritual healings. That is so important.

Now we can reach a bit of a conclusion here. By ceasing your mundane work, the kind you do the other six days of the week, by stopping that, by ceasing that mundane work, we are remembering and imitating the Creator God. See, it looks back upon the creation. By doing acts of kindness and carrying out our priestly function within the Body of Christ, we are imitating the Redeemer God, by doing works of salvation.

And so the Sabbath is connected to creation—the creation of God—through Genesis 2:2 and Exodus 20:8-11, right in the commandment, and to the Redeemer God, who is the same God, just acting in a different mode, to redemption through the Exodus, and Deuteronomy 5:15, where there is a change in the Sabbath commandment's wording, and we are told to remember that we were slaves in Egypt.

So the Sabbath commandment looks backward, and it looks forward at the same time. It relates to creation, but even more so, in a much greater manner,

it relates to redemption. Here is our Savior showing us how to keep it spiritually. Far too many of us are thinking of the Sabbath in terms of what I will say is an Old Covenant, Old Testament, letter-of-the-law approach. Now that is part of it. This is what was confusing the Jews. They did not see the redemption aspect of the Sabbath, at least they did not see it very clearly.

Now, in John 7, this leads us to a related area, and actually it is entirely possible that what we see here in John 7 is kind of like an echo, a reverberation of what happened in John the 5th chapter. There are some commentators who feel that it is actually out of position chronologically, that is, the episode that we are now going to look at.

**John 7:22-24** "Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

The Jews considered circumcision a lawful Sabbath activity. Have you ever wondered why? Why did they consider it lawful? You know, no direct answer is given in the Bible, and there is a reason it is not given. The reason it is not given is everybody in this day and age, when this was written, understood why they did it on the Sabbath, and so it was not necessary to write something about what even the Jews understood. With us, we have to deal with it. Two thousand years later, we wonder why they permitted it.

Well, the reason was because the Jews considered it an act of redemption. It was a ritual part of the process of salvation, even as today. Baptism, which has replaced circumcision, is also a ritual part of the process of salvation, and we do it on the Sabbath because it is a Sabbath work—it is an act of redemption. It is a part of the process of salvation, and you are allowed to do it. That is permissible Sabbath activity.

So you can see here that the Jews did understand a little bit of the principle, but they never carried it anywhere near far enough. So they considered it

alright to excise a minor part of a boy's body in order to spiritually save the whole man. Now that makes sense. And so today, we consider it alright to wet a whole person's body in order to do part of the works of salvation.

I ought to interject this. Part of Christ's reasoning is that the works of salvation are accomplished not only by the Father and the Son, but also by Their servants. That is important, because who did the circumcisions? The priests did the circumcision. They were acting on behalf of God and the person who was being circumcised, and so they were carrying out part of the work of God in their acts.

So Christ is reasoning here: well, if it is alright for the priest to do that on the Sabbath and to be blameless, then you see, Christ Himself, as a Servant of God, I too have the right to make a man every whit whole. So why, He says, should you be angry with Me for restoring a person to wholeness? In verse 24, He says, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Well, His enemies could not perceive the redemptive aspects of what He was doing, and in their view, the pallet—the carrying of the pallet and the making of the clay—were more important than the healed man.

Turn with me to Matthew 12, and we will read verses 1 through 8. Now there are parallel accounts to this in Mark the 2nd chapter, beginning in verse 23, and also in Luke the 6th chapter, verses 1 through 5. Matthew's is the most complete of the three, and so we are going to look at this.

**Matthew 12:1-8** At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not

sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

And now here we come to a section that appears to give some exceptions. Now according to the Pharisees, the disciples reaped, they threshed, and they winnowed, and by the whole, they were guilty of preparing a meal on the Sabbath.

The motivation for what the disciples did is given in verse 1, that they were hungry. We might add also to that, it is very likely that they were traveling. They were following an itinerant preacher. It said that He had no place to lay His head, meaning that He had no settled residence anywhere. They were following Him from place to place and learning from Him as they went along. So they were hungry, they were traveling, they had no place to prepare.

Now they could have fasted without damage. These were strong young men, from everything that we are able to see. But I think that Jesus, because it was the Sabbath, deliberately drew attention to one of the Sabbath's main purposes. That is, it is a day of mercy, it is a day for acts of kindness.

Hold your finger there, and let us go back to the episode that He first quotes, back in I Samuel 21.

**I Samuel 21:1-5** Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech was afraid when he met David, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one is with you?" So David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has ordered me on some business, and said to me, 'Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you, or what I have commanded you.' And I have directed my young men to such and such a place. Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found." And the priest answered David and said, "There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women." Then David answered the priest, and said to him, "Truly, women have been kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in

effect common, even though it was sanctified in the vessel this day."

Take note of that: this day. Now what day was it? It was the Sabbath day. Whenever David went to this synagogue, or Tabernacle, or whatever it was, it must have been the Tabernacle, it was on the Sabbath day. And if you want to chase it out in Leviticus 24:5-9, we find that the bread had to be baked on the Sabbath day, so that when it was put out on the Sabbath day, it was absolutely as fresh as one could get. There is some symbolism there.

Now here is God's law. He is telling these people involved with the operation of the Tabernacle that they are to do something on the Sabbath that would ordinarily profane the Sabbath. Now if one of you ladies decided to bake bread on the Sabbath, there is a 99.99% likelihood it would be unlawful for you to do so, you would be breaking the Sabbath. But here we find God ordered them to make the bread fresh on the Sabbath. So all the ingredients had to be put together, it had to be kneaded, put in the oven and baked, and then put out on the tables fresh on the Sabbath day.

So it says in verse 6,

**I Samuel 21:6** The priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread [it had to be hot when they put it on the table] in its place on the day when it was taken away.

And now this is what Jesus is reflecting on when He justifies the disciples going through the grain field. Christ reasoned, then, that if it was alright for David and his men to allay their hunger under unusual circumstances by eating bread that had been consecrated for holy use, then it was also legitimate for His disciples to provide for their needs in unusual circumstances and to use holy time for their needs. He is saying, in effect, that the intent of God's law is not to deprive life but to ensure life, you see, to preserve it, to save it, to make it better.

He admits that David's actions were not lawful. Now, neither were the disciples', except for the circumstances that were presented to them, and in this case they were blameless, because a larger obligation overruled the letter

of the law. That is mercy, you see, which was the larger obligation. The meeting of a human need was more important and greater than sacrificing. Eating holy bread, or holy time, can be used exceptionally in order to sustain life.

Now back to Matthew 12. We are going to reread verses 5 and 6, because the illustration continues.

**Matthew 12:5-6** "Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? But I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple."

Again, if you care to study this and look back, I think specifically one of the chapters is Numbers the 28th chapter, you will find that on the Sabbath day, the priest's work was doubled. That is, if I can give an illustration: on a normal weekday there was the sacrifice of one lamb in the morning and one lamb in the evening, morning and evening sacrifice. But on the Sabbath day they were doubled, so that there was twice as much work as there was on an ordinary day (this is for the priests in the Temple).

Now in addition to that, we just read back there, or at least I explained it to you, Leviticus 24, beginning in verse 5, shows that for the service of the Temple, God commanded that the bread actually be baked on the Sabbath, something that would normally be a profaning of the Sabbath for anybody who was not involved in the working of the Temple.

We are leading to something here that involves you and me directly. Now Jesus said that in this place there is One greater than the Temple. Christ is, of course, the One who is greater than the Temple. He is the Head of God's spiritual Temple, the church. He is its High Priest. The disciples were His priests. Thus their Sabbath ministry intensified. Thus, you see, the justification: these, My priests, were so involved in carrying out acts of redemption, fulfilling their part in the process of salvation, they did not have time to prepare. They were doing the work of God, and therefore they were guiltless as far as profaning the Sabbath.

Let us go to I Peter 2. What He is saying is that the circumstances dictated a profaning of the Sabbath because of their involvement in the work of God.

**I Peter 2:4-5** Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

**I Peter 2:9** You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Looking at these scriptures, I think you begin to see very clearly that you and I are now a part of this Temple, that is, the church of God, the spiritual Temple that consists of people who have been called and chosen, who have been granted repentance, have been baptized, have had hands laid on them, who have received God's Holy Spirit. They have been fitted into the Body as it pleased God, and now we are all a part of that Temple that is responsible for carrying out a commission that God has given to us of proclaiming the good news around the world, as well as providing for the spiritual sustenance of those that God has called, those who are indeed a part of the Temple.

So we all have a part in the spiritual Temple, and therefore we have a responsibility to its operations, even as Christ was alluding to there in Matthew the 12th chapter in regard to His disciples, where He related them to the priests who were doing their work in the Temple that was standing at that time.

We have to ask the question then: are your Sabbath activities justifiable in the light of these things? Are you carrying out works in your life on the Sabbath day that would at least be somewhat equivalent to what a priest would be doing on the Sabbath day? A few questions; I am not going to give a lot of answers here. Some of these you ought to be able to come to a right conclusion about very quickly.

How about this Sabbath activity: praying and studying? That is obvious, is it not? Does that fit within the framework of what a priest ought to be doing on the Sabbath day? Praying and studying.

How about rising from sleep, showering or bathing, shaving, dressing in Sabbath wear, driving to services? That ought to be pretty obvious too. Surely a priest would drive to services on the Sabbath, would he not? And surely he would prepare himself before he went there in the best way that he possibly could, even considering the laws in the Old Testament about how God demanded cleanliness, and how we are to appear before Him, you know, in our best, to not come in rags, unless rags are all we have. And so it justifies, does it not, going to have fellowship with God in the company of those who are of the same mind?

How about using the Sabbath to prepare for and drive to a movie, to a concert, to a banquet, or to work? How does that fit into a priest's activities on the Sabbath? I want to interject here that this is not the only principle that needs to be considered, but it is a major principle. What about using the Sabbath to drive off on a vacation? Does that fit into God's redemptive works, His works of salvation? I will stop asking questions right at this time.

But I think that we in this age have an especially difficult time getting into a Sabbath mode every time it comes around. I can think of three very good reasons.

1. Life is so fast-paced, especially out here [the Los Angeles area], or especially a place like New York City. Almost any big city is going to have life that is generally pretty fast-paced. So that if we kind of compare what that produces with, let us say, a parable that Jesus gave in Matthew 13 when He talked about the seed that was thrown on stony places. Yes, we can receive it with joy, but because it does not take root within us, because life is going by so fast, that when the Sabbath comes and God wants us to separate our minds and our activities from that seemingly ceaseless activity that we are going through all through the week—rushing, hurrying, trying to do things—it is awfully hard to unmesh the gears.

It may take us several hours to even begin to get to the place where our minds are not racing toward those mundane things. How much root can the Word of God take in the place of a mind that is racing on mundane things? It is not going to take much root at all.

2. Never has there been a generation that is so close to the creations of men and so far from the creations of God. We are surrounded by concrete and asphalt and steel and glass. City life presses itself in upon us constantly. There is no way that we can get away from it, except to go way out in the country, and then other things begin to present themselves as problems.

Most of us have television in our homes, and we invite the world right into our home. I was thinking, as I was preparing this thing last night, that television might very well be the worst instrument that has ever been invented or devised against the mind of a person who is trying to be spiritual. It is so distracting, and it is putting so many crazy, weird ideas into our minds.

The automobile is another thing. It just increases the pace of life. I was thinking of this too: back in the old days, they had horses, and they had oxen, and they had jackasses, and we look back upon them as being backward, dumb. Now we have automobiles, but you know what? You cannot have a relationship with an automobile. You can have a relationship with a horse; you can love it, that is something God made. And it is something that we are detached from, and it is one of the reasons why we have trouble keeping the Sabbath.

I do not mean it is just the animals. It is the fact that we are cut off from the creations of God by city life, by electronic marvels, and by having wheels to do things and go places all the time. So we are surrounded by the creations of men.

And then, to make things even worse, we have been spiritually trained from the time that we were children not to regard a day as being special for God. And if there was any day that we were taught to regard, it was not the Sabbath, it was Sunday. I am speaking to those who are not second-generation Christians. Obviously, you would not be included there.

So we do not know how to keep the Sabbath. And I am convinced that most of us are keeping it in a far too loose way and our orientation is far too mundane, physical. And there is far too little time given over to the Sabbath for the meditations and studies, and the fellowship with God that is going to make a major difference in a person's life.

Turn with me to Mark 2. You can see from the illustrations that I am giving you right out of the New Testament here, that Christ's orientation was totally redemptive. That is what His mind was on. He was doing the work of God! Are we doing the work of God on the Sabbath? The work of redemption, the work of salvation. Are the acts that we permit ourselves to do acts of kindness and mercy and generosity to those who are in need? Spiritual need or physical need.

**Mark 2:27-28** And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

The Sabbath was made on account of man. It was made after man's creation as the bestowal of a special gift from God; not to make a man the slave of rules, but to ensure his physical and spiritual well-being through his fellowship with God. He is the Source of life and breath. And He is the Source of spiritual power that leads to eternal life. You have to ask yourself: Is the Sabbath being used to produce faith in God?

Jesus said that He is Lord of the Sabbath. He is its Master, He is its Owner. He is stating His authority to determine how the day is kept and He shows that through His example. You ought to be able to see that Christ's work on the Sabbath was intense.

So the Sabbath is not intended by God as a day of loafing or lying around, although on some occasions that might be needed. I do not mean to exclude it. We are talking here as a generality. But rather, it is to be a day of intensive work that leads to salvation through faith.

It is not a day of passive idleness but of preparing for the Kingdom of God and of giving loving service to those who are in need of salvation. The world

needs salvation! Part of our work on the Sabbath is to be praying for the world. That is an act of mercy in their behalf. God gives us the time to enable us to do that.

Brethren, it is in doing these things, the experience of doing them, that growth in faith in God is promoted.

Now, how did Jesus keep the Sabbath?

1. We have seen very clearly that He attended services.
2. He taught and He fellowshiped.
3. He did acts of kindness that brought liberty, joy, and peace to others.

Now all of us are part of this same spiritual Temple's operation but not all of us have equal responsibilities. We do not all have Mr. Tkach's [former pastor general of the WCG] responsibility so it is highly likely that he would have authority to use in a way, because of the demands of his responsibility, that would be profaning it if we did it. So we have to think these things through. That just because we see another person doing something, and that person may be free and clear in his keeping of the Sabbath, it does not automatically follow through that we are free and clear to do it.

We have to think things through! We do not all have the same responsibility in the Body. We are a part of it and there are some things that are similar to everybody, like praying and studying, doing things with your family—Bible study, playing games together on the Sabbath, making sure that it is unified in Christ. Those kinds of things. But each situation has to be honestly examined according to the principles that are given in God's Word.

Let us go back to Jeremiah 17th chapter. We will conclude with two scriptures here—one in Jeremiah and one in Nehemiah.

**Jeremiah 17:21** Thus says the LORD: "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, . . .

Does that have a ring to it? The Sabbath is to be used to release people from burdens. Now here He is talking about the physical burden of doing a mundane job, something that they could do the other six days of the week, and that applies to us—that letter-of-the-law application applies to us. We are not to bear a burden on the Sabbath. The bearing of the burden has mostly to do with carrying something that has to do with mundane work.

**Jeremiah 17:21-22** . . . nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers."

**Jeremiah 17:27** "But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."

What I get a picture of here is people coming in from the countryside on the Sabbath day. They were coming in to attend services at the Temple, or maybe one of the synagogues there, and they took advantage of the day. You see, since they were going that way anyway, they would carry a burden so that when Sunday came, they would sell it. Now maybe they *were* selling it on the Sabbath—that is a possibility—but we will give them the benefit of the doubt that they were not actually buying and selling on the Sabbath, but they were still carrying their burdens in so that they could do their profane work on Sunday. They would be right at the marketplace there, and so they were killing two birds with one stone. And God seems to be taking exception to that here.

Go to Nehemiah 13. In Nehemiah 13, here we have something that is a number of years later, and we know that the Jews did not heed the warning that was given to them through Jeremiah, and they fell victim to exactly the same sins as Israel had some 130 or 140 years before. Israel went into captivity, according to Ezekiel 20, for idolatry and Sabbath breaking, and now we find here that the Jews went into captivity for exactly the same reason.

**Nehemiah 13:15-18** In those days [Nehemiah was the governor] I saw in Judah some people treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions. [Oh, they were not only bringing it into the city on that day, they were actually selling it on that day as well.] The men of Tyre dwelt there also [the people of the world] and brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

Now the Jews were warned, and they did not heed. We need to make sure we do not follow their example and use it in a wrong way and profane it.