

The Commandments (Part Eight)

The Sabbath, Part Four

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You might recall toward the end of the last sermon that I gave regarding the Sabbath that I mentioned to you that I thought that this generation had a particularly difficult time adjusting from the workaday week to, let us say, getting into a Sabbath mode. I gave to you three reasons why I felt it was that way.

First of all was that because life is so fast paced with so many ways to do things, activities going on to give our time and energy and our minds to. And I compared this to what it says in Matthew 13 about the seed falling on stony places, and it springs up. But because it has no root in itself, why, it soon withers during the heat of a trial. And if that kind of a condition exists in your life, what you are going to find is that you are going to have a very great difficulty in trials because there really is no root. There has not been the time and energy given over to really think things through and come to understand the mind of God.

The second reason that I gave you is never has a generation been so close to the creations of men and so far from the creations of God. And I also compared that to one section of Matthew 13. This had to do with the one that was where the seed fell among thorns, and the deceitfulness of riches brings about confusing situations in people's minds, and they fall aside too as a result of not being well grounded in the truth.

The third reason that I gave to you involved the kind of culture in which we have grown up, that is, religiously. Why, we have been trained in this Protestant society not to regard a day. And if we have been taught to regard a day at all, it has been the wrong day, that is, Sunday. Now, by way of coincidence, I decided to reread the booklet on "What Is Faith?" by Mr. Herbert Armstrong. And I am going to quote to you from pages 8 and 9 of this booklet, because he said virtually the same thing. He is talking about the Holy Spirit though, and he said:

Peter, Stephen, Paul, and Philip, all common, humble, ordinary men themselves, all had that power, the same identical power Jesus had, because they lived and walked close to God and were filled with the Holy Spirit. 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 are so filled with material interests of this life, our minds and our hearts are so far from God, we are so out of touch with Him through a lack of enough time spent in the study of His Word and the lack of enough of the right kind of surrendered, submissive, earnest, and heartrending prayer, consequently, because we are not filled with the Holy Spirit.

He said we get caught in a vicious cycle, is what he said. Because we do not have the Holy Spirit, we do not spend the time with God. And because we do not spend the time with God, we do not have enough of the Holy Spirit. And because we do not have enough of the Holy Spirit, we do not have the attributes of that Holy Spirit as well. Now we do not, it seems, ever have enough time for God, even though we literally have the same amount of time as the ancients did.

How much time does a working mother have for a good spiritual life after her time and energies have been given to her employer and then returning home, doing the responsibilities that she has normally around the house? How much time is left over for God? How much time does a father holding two jobs, or working as much overtime as he possibly can, or working plus going to school at night in order to get ahead—all in order to gain the better material things of this life—how much time does he have for God? Brethren, all of us are pressured and victimized by this insane system that Satan has created. But few of us have much excuse when it comes to using Sabbath time.

I want to go back again to two scriptures that I used in that sermon last two weeks ago. I want you to first turn to Psalm 74, and in verse 12. Apparently Asaph wrote this, and he said something pretty significant, something that is in harmony with what Mr. Fakouri said in his sermonette.

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

That is what God employs the use of His time and energies for. He is working salvation. Remember I gave you those definitions for redemption and salvation, and salvation has to do with deliverance. It can involve deliverance from literal bondages, whether one is in prison, ala Peter, Paul, God opened the doors. It can involve deliverances from sin, and our bondage to it. It can involve deliverance in terms of healing. But there are all kinds of deliverances that God can give to a person, and this is what He is employing Himself in. He is working salvation in all the earth.

Now I want you to go back to John the 6th chapter. We will tie it to another very significant scripture.

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

A very clear statement by Jesus enunciating what He was doing. That is, He was proclaiming the fact that God was working in Him, and that the reason God was working in Him was in order to produce faith in God. So the healings and the other miracles, the preaching that He did, all of it was done by God through Christ in order to produce faith, belief in God. Now, without faith in God, we are nothing spiritually. Without faith, it says in Hebrews 11:6, it is impossible to please Him. And the reason is because we are not going to do very much right spiritually.

Now love may be the goal of this life, but faith is its foundation, and without faith there is not going to be the love of God, because God gives His Spirit to them that obey Him. And love, of course, is the primary attribute of that Spirit. But faith is the property of those who are close to God. We're working back to the "What Is Faith?" booklet by Mr. Armstrong and why we do not have it and why we need it. It is very possibly the most essential spiritual ingredient that we could possibly have. You want to please God, do you not? You want to have the love of God, do you not? You want to be in the Kingdom of God, do you not? Well then, you need to believe God.

And we are tying this together with John the 6th chapter here, where Jesus, speaking on the Sabbath again as usual, was making very clear that all the work that was done through Him by God was done in order that people would believe. I mentioned this to you in light of the things that He did on the Sabbath, where there seems to be times that He purposely did controversial things in order to bring, you might say, an argument to a head, in order to show these people the magnification of the Sabbath commandment, so that it would be written for all to understand and all to be able to see and all to be able to apply, for people to be able to believe in its right use.

Brethren, the Sabbath is not an afterthought of a majestic creation. That was the very climax of that week. It was the last thing God did. It was like the cherry on the top of a sundae. The Sabbath was made for man. It was made to ensure his spiritual and physical well-being. Man was not made for the Sabbath. But without the Sabbath, man is not going to be very much spiritually, as the history of Israel shows very clearly. When they broke the Sabbath, when they lost the Sabbath, they went into captivity. Ezekiel makes it very clear that idolatry and Sabbath breaking go hand in hand. It is just a matter of which one came first. I do not know. But when they went to breaking the Sabbath, breaking it as a way of life, they lost their contact with God because they lost faith.

Let us go back to Isaiah the 56th chapter, verses 1 through 8.

Isaiah 56:1-8 Thus says the Lord: "Keep justice and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come [it is something that has not happened yet, it is an end-time prophecy. It has to do with salvation of Gentiles specifically and those that He calls eunuchs.], and My righteousness is about 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." Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, "The Lord has utterly separated me from His people"; nor let the eunuchs say, "Here I am, a dry tree." For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me [faith pleases God], 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 Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, 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."

It is essential that you understand that this is an end-time prophecy, and Isaiah is showing that the Sabbath is something that is to be kept at the end time, that the Gentiles are to keep it. The eunuchs, incidentally, in a way could include every single one of us. It means here are mutilated ones. Every single one of us is mutilated spiritually. Every single one of us has received the wrong kind of spiritual education. Every single one of us has had to come to be circumcised in the heart, to turn our lives, time, attentions, obedience, and submission to the Almighty God in order to be healed, in order to be delivered from the kind of mind that this world has put into us. Every single one of us is a eunuch in that spiritual sense. And here we are being commanded to keep the Sabbath and praised if we so do.

Does it make any difference how we do a thing? I might ask, how can perfection come to any project or person who does not care the way he does things? It not only matters to God that we keep it, that is, the Sabbath, it also matters to Him *how* it is kept. Now notice right in this context here, He said, do not defile His Sabbath. The King James, I believe, may say pollute. But the word means to pollute. It means to make impure. It means to make unclean, dirty, corrupt, to profane. Biblically it means to put to a common use. The Greek equivalent in the New Testament that is also translated profane means to be far from the temple. The Temple was the place that was the residence of God, and if a person was profane, or he did profane things, or he said profane things, he was profane because he was far from God.

The implication is that anybody who was close to God would not be that way, would not do those things. So God says be careful that you do not profane, make dirty, impure, defile, step upon My Sabbath day. Is He

concerned about how it is to be kept? You better believe that He is concerned about how it is kept! We talk today a very great deal about polluted air and about polluted water. It is something that is on our mind because we can begin to see that the way that we have treated the earth is getting to the place where it is endangering life on the earth, and we cannot go on the way we are going on, or our environment is going to be nothing but garbage into the body in terms of air, garbage into the body in terms of water.

We are walking around in it everywhere we turn. Turn on the television, and there is garbage for the mind. A polluted stream is unfit for drinking. It is unfit for swimming in. It is unfit for fishing. And indeed it may be deadly. You think that God does not care how His Sabbath is kept? Why would He use such a term as profane, defile, if He did not care about how it is kept?

Let us go back into the book of Malachi again, only this time we are going to be in the first chapter, beginning in verse 6.

Malachi 1:6-7 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? [Is it possible to honor God in the keeping of the Sabbath? You bet it is.] And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? [If I am Lord, where is the respect that you show for Me]? says the Lord of hosts [Now this is specifically said to the priests] to you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?' You offer defiled food on My altar, but you say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the Lord is contemptible.'

That is, it is low class, it is mean, it is not something that is really offering Me anything that is very good. Do you understand spiritually what the table of the Lord is? Spiritually it is words, food for the mind. The priests are saying here by their actions, it is not something that is formulated into words. God is judging their conduct, the way that they were doing things. And this is what they did:

Malachi 1:8 And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil?

You know, the animal that they offered had to be perfect as far as the eye was able to see. It could not limp or lame. It could not have some kind of scars and marks and had to have both eyes. It was not allowed to have one horn that was broken off. As far as they could tell, that animal had to be perfect on the outside, the animal that was offered on the altar.

Malachi 1:8 And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?

Now the equivalent of that under the New Testament here would be a person serving God in a very haphazard, slipshod way. Someone who does not care, whose attitude says, "It doesn't matter. Is God really aware of me?" You heard it in the sermonette, He is aware. He is watching what we do. And not only that, He is even watching the little things that we do. We are going to see more of that a little bit later.

Malachi 1:8 "Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably? says the Lord of hosts.

You see, we cannot see God, so out of sight, out of mind. And so we have a tendency to abuse His Sabbath, because after all, what is it? It is just a space of time, and He is not all that concerned.

Malachi 1:8 "But now entreat God's favor, He says, that He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, will He accept you favorably?" says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 1:10-14 "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 Lord of hosts. [And you see that the issue is that they are giving half-hearted, half-baked, slipshod service to God.]. . . . 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 Lord of hosts. "But you profane it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled; and its food is contemptible.' You say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," [Ever have any thoughts about,

"Boy, is the Sabbath long! When's that sun ever going to go down?"] says the Lord of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" says the Lord. "But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished [You see, the wherewithal to do it right is there, but it is not given.]—for I am a great King," says the Lord of hosts, "and My name is to be feared among the nations." [God wants His name to be respected.]

I just returned from my mother- and father-in-law's place in Florida, and while there (it was a family reunion), why, you talk over a lot of things about what you did in the past. And it brought this to my mind once again, talking about things that we did in the past, that my father-in-law had two clichés that he used whenever he was doing a job that he knew was not all that good but that he might have felt that it was sufficient for the job that he was doing, but he really was not very proud of what he was doing. Now he was a very good mechanic. I mean, he was good at anything that involved working with the hands, you know, whether it be carpentry or laying bricks or working on automobiles.

But his particular joy was working on automobiles, what he did for about 30 years of his life. And when I married my wife, he showed me a lot of tricks that I could use in repairing an automobile to get away from having to pay a great deal of money. These were things that from time to time they also did in the shops that he worked in. Well, they had a term for it. They called it Dutching it. It probably started out as Deutsching it. It had to do with German frugality about the way they did things.

And so he showed me tricks, and usually if I did it, the trick would get me by for another 4,000 or 5,000 miles. So they would fix up used automobiles that way, put them back out on a lot. They would run like a clock for a little while, but since they had been Dutched, sooner or later those things, the Dutching, was going to fall apart because it was not a good job. There would be other times when he would be working on something, again that he was not very proud of, but he might have thought, Well, we will get by with this. It is not really perfect, but he would say when he was done, "A man galloping past on a horse would never notice it." And it was true, you know.

But if you look close, if you really inspected the thing, you would find out very clearly that this was not a very good job that was done.

Brethren, our Father in heaven and His Son Jesus Christ says that whatever you put your hand to, do it with all your might. And He adds to that another thing. He said, "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Now He will not accept any old thing as a finished product. In His mercy, He overlooks our faults, our frailties, our flaws in the sense that He does not hold them against us. But He wants the best from you and me, because that is good for us.

We may not have very much to offer Him, and what we do have to offer is going to vary pretty much from person to person. But still, He wants us to strive to do the very best that we can, not only in repairing and maintaining our automobiles, our clothing, our car, our job, our home, or whatever it is, but more importantly, He wants it in the spiritual and moral areas. I want you to apply this in regard to the Sabbath. Will God just accept any old thing on it? Well, that is rank Protestantism. That is what we have been taught: not to really regard a day. The day that was devoted to God has now become the hour of worship at the very best. It has been shrunk that much.

God says that we are to strive to be like Him. And we saw multitudes of examples in the New Testament and those other sermons that I gave you on Christ's attitude toward the Sabbath day. Never was it in question whether it was to be kept. Always the question was *how it was to be kept*. And you could see that He was in sharp disagreement with the Pharisees of that day, and the scribes, and the Sadducees. But never was it a question that it *should be kept*, and He showed us by His example the way God intends that it be kept. Now if God was a creator and a provider and a ruler who did everything in a slapdash, ho-hum, slipshod, what-does-it-matter attitude, I will tell you, this creation would have fallen apart in confusion an awful long time ago. What if the stars were running into each other? Oh, well. I think we have a long way to go, do we not, to be like our Creator?

Let us go back to Numbers 15, a very interesting thing here. Numbers 15, and the context involves sinning presumptuously, just taking it on ourselves to do what we good and well feel like doing.

Numbers 15:29-36 You shall have one law for him who sins intentionally, both for him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them. But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the Lord, and he shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him." [Now comes an interesting example.] While the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. 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.

Now, the implication is from the context that that breaking of the Sabbath may have been, probably was, presumptuous. The major evidence being that he was put to death. It was not something that he just slipped up on. It was something that he must have premeditated about, and then deliberately, in the face of the command to rest, in which the whole nation was supposed to be resting, he went out and did what he did.

Now the interesting thing comes to me anyway in the next couple of verses.

Numbers 15:37-41 Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corner 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 to do all My commandments and be holy for your God. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God."

Now I do not know whether you ever thought of it before, but this is the command to wear phylacteries. And this is the thing that later on Jesus kind of derided, not because they were wearing them, but rather because they kept making them longer and longer and more and more prominent. They put these tassels on their clothing. Now they were, in doing it, following the command of God, which was the right thing to do. I want you to see though where that command was given. It was given right within the context of an example of the breaking of the Sabbath. And so the command to wear tassels, which were intended to remind people about all of the commandments of God, but most likely it was given to remind them specifically about the Sabbath commandment that had just been presumptuously broken by this person. And in the keeping of the Sabbath there would be then the remembrance of all of the commandments. I was tying it to a hook. The remembering of the Sabbath was tied to the hook, you see, you know the laws of memory, and the hook was the tassels. And the tassels then were to remind the people of the keeping of all of the commandments.

Let us go back to Hebrews, the second chapter, to continue to build on this. And this chapter here, I think—maybe the whole book—covers my major concern in regard to the Sabbath. In Hebrews the 2nd chapter, beginning in verse 1:

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.

Now here is the problem for most Christian people. We do not set out to deliberately break the commandments of God, deliberately break the Sabbath commandment. We generally do not do that. We *drift away* from it. We have a tendency to forget, not that we are to keep it, but we forget about *how* to keep it. And we gradually, through the years, begin to get sloppy in keeping

it, thinking that because God has not sent a thunderbolt down that He does not care, that after all He is letting me do this the way that I am doing, and I seem to be doing all right. Are we? Are you being deluded, maybe?

Well, the warning here is against neglect, and that is kind of a major theme that runs through the entirety of the book of Hebrews. These people were not enemies of the church, but they were leaving the church by tiny increments. The Greek is very vivid. They were losing their grip, you see, and drifting away. It is as though they were anchored, you know, in a harbor, but somehow or another the anchor rope was becoming slippery, and in its slipperiness they were losing their grip, and the tide was taking them out away from shore. That is almost literally what that verb means there. They were losing their grip on their anchor.

Now the neglect (we would find out later, as we ran through the whole book), that that is what the major problem was. They were neglecting Bible study. They were neglecting prayer. They were neglecting meditation. And as a result, they were slowly but surely neglecting obedience to God. They were losing their faith, tiny little increment by tiny little increment. Neglect is not deliberate. It is not willful, and it is not intentional, but it happens to people because of familiarity, because of distraction, because of involvement in something else. But He says we are to give the more earnest heed. Later on He adds, "as we see the Day approaching," we see the day of salvation. What are they not supposed to lose their grip on? Well, it is the things that they have heard, "the things we have heard." Now what is it that we have heard? Well, He makes it very clear that in its broadest sense He is talking about the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Hebrews 2:6-8 "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You 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."

We do not need to go on there. So you get the idea that little by little those things were slipping away from those people. Let us carry on a little bit further and drop down to chapter 3:

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

This is another theme that runs through the book of Hebrews: that Christ is greater than anything that can be compared to Him. Even the great Moses does not even begin to measure up to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Head of this work. He is our leader. Now because of that, because of what God has been working out, we have His Holy Spirit—they did not. Therefore, we should be guided by that Spirit in doing what we do, guided into the perfection of the One from whom perfection emanates, that is, Jesus Christ.

Now from this point on in the book of Hebrews, up until chapter 4, verse 11, is a very interesting lesson in which the Sabbath plays a major role. Let us drop down to verse 7. Now the examples that are given here come from a very long period of Israelite history, but the psalm that he is quoting is Psalm 95:7-11. We will get to that in just a minute. Now this is a psalm concerning congregational worship on the Sabbath. The inferences begin to become very clear the deeper we get into this, these people were neglecting God's Sabbath, and this was a major cause for them drifting away. And what we see here is a parallel to Israelite history, only far more serious, because it involves the people of God who have the Spirit of God—God's spirit-begotten children—and they are following in the same basic path as Israel did many, many years ago. And why did they go into captivity? Because of Sabbath breaking and idolatry. And here we have the Sabbath coming up as an illustration of this very same principle.

Hebrews 3:7-10 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, 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 into My rest.'"

See, it was not deliberate. It was something that happened unconsciously, through neglect. They were longtime members of the church. They were keeping the Sabbath. They had God's Spirit. They were drifting away and they were not even aware of it!

Hold your finger there. Let us go back to Psalm 95. I want to show you this so that you understand very clearly where the apostle Paul got this idea.

Psalm 95:7-11 For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they proved Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter into My rest.'"

Do you see what the apostle Paul is doing? He is taking that out of its context in the book of Psalms. He is putting it into a letter to Christian people, because they were going down the same neglectful path that Israel had done a thousand or more years before. They were duplicating it. And rather than being guided by the Spirit of God to maintain their zeal and enthusiasm in the keeping of the Sabbath, they were drifting. And as they drifted in the keeping of the Sabbath, then slowly but surely they began a breakdown in other areas. They became less and less moral, less and less ethical in their dealings. In fact, they were getting to the place where they did not even recognize immorality and being unethical.

Back to Hebrews. The word "today" is being used in two different ways. It symbolizes the period of time in which they had the opportunity to hear God's Word and thus enter into His rest. So, our day of salvation. It is used in that broad application. And secondarily, it means the weekly Sabbath, when they would be hearing the Word of God. That is the day you hear God's Word. So, "Today, if you will hear His voice," that is the day you hear it, on the Sabbath. If there is no other time during the entirety of the week to hear God's voice, there is always the Sabbath.

Now, does God care how you keep the Sabbath? What do you do during the day? Is your contact with God restricted to the time that you come to services? Is the only communication and fellowship you have with God for that two hours because He is here? What about the other twenty-two hours? What kind of use are they put to? I will tell you, if you are depending on Sabbath service attendance, you are drifting away. You are wasting. You are profaning. You are defiling the Sabbath. Why do you think God gave it to you? Not that you would just depend on the ministry. You have to make your own efforts to build your faith. You are not going to get into the Kingdom of God based on the faith that is in the ministry. It is a one-on-one deal with God. The body is here to educate you. We will do the best we can, but the major part of the responsibility is on you and the use of your time.

Now the word "rest." It is shown in four different but all related lights, or approaches, meanings, usages. Now the most important one to you and me is the fourth one that I am going to give you here. And I will give you some verses rather than just run through the whole two chapters. Number 1: it commemorates the completion of the creation week.

Hebrews 4:4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works."

That is way number one, it commemorates the completion of the creation week.

Number 2: it symbolizes the promise of entry into the land of rest, into Canaan and all of the temporal, material blessings that came under the Old Covenant.

Hebrews 4:6-8 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," [as it has been said before in Psalm 95] after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

What he is saying there very briefly is, he is laying the groundwork so that we would understand that the rest that is spoken of in Psalm 95, and the rest that is referred to in other parts of the Bible, is still ahead of us yet, because going into the land of Canaan did not fulfill the scripture. So if going into the land of Canaan under Joshua fulfilled the scripture, then why did David, about 400 years later, write the psalm that he did? That is his proof.

Number 3: it also prefigures the time yet future, when the people of God will enjoy a rest. That is in chapter 4 and verse 9:

Hebrews 4:9 There remains therefore a rest [the word there is even *sabbatismos*, they keep a Sabbath rest] for the people of God.

Now you and I know this as the resurrection of the dead and the millennial period. That is the one that we are most commonly aware of. The seven-day week: six days that God has given over to man, the seventh day He has reserved for Himself. That rest is still ahead.

Number 4: the rest that he is mentioning here is an assurance. This is what he has been aiming for, and this can only be produced by keeping the Sabbath properly. That is the whole point. These people were disobedient. These people, if you look back in chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, that they heard the gospel, but it was not mixed with faith. The faith is the missing ingredient, and the Sabbath is the day that God intended that our faith be reassured and shored up, and built back up and restored from the trials and difficulties that we have faced during the workaday week. And so the weekly Sabbath, you see, it is an assurance that God's people can, if they strive here and now through Jesus Christ, share in the whole purpose of creation and redemption that is epitomized, that is pointed at, exemplified by the weekly Sabbath rest. Now that is in verse 11, chapter 4:

Hebrews 4:11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest [he is not talking about the rest that is off in the future, he is talking about a rest that is available to the children of God right now], lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience.

So the whole point of this long illustration that the apostle Paul gives here is that the children of Israel did not enter into the rest because they did not hear God's Word and by faith obey. And so the illustration for getting this point across is the Sabbath, and the breaking of which Ezekiel clearly shows they went into captivity.

One interesting "aside" is that to the first-century church, somewhere around roughly the mid-60s AD, the Sabbath is introduced into a letter, not concerned with whether they should be keeping it, but how it should be kept. Do not neglect to hear God's Word—today. He is concerned about the how.

Now you put all of these sermons that I have given to you regarding the Sabbath together, and you will see very clearly that the purpose of the Sabbath is not just to rest our bodies. That is secondary. It certainly should be done. *The purpose for God's Sabbath is to hear God's Word.* And there is one other thing that I could add here, very clearly from Christ's examples, it is to hear God's Word and do good, both toward God and men. Everything, virtually everything that we do on the Sabbath is to revolve around this principle. Our minds, our conversations, our activities are not to be on the material and mundane concerns and cares and pleasures of this world.

God commands us to keep the Sabbath holy because He wants our time to be free from the responsibilities and activities, and He wants our minds to be free from thinking about those daily activities for one day a week. Now it is the keeping of the Sabbath that sets the stage for properly worshipping God. And the first step in that is to make sure that you are not employed in your regular daily activities. And those who do not, or those who will not, control their minds on this day, are those who are going to call the day bondage, because they are not going to experience that rest that the apostle Paul is talking about here in Hebrews 4:11.

Isaiah 58, very familiar scripture in Isaiah 58. And let us pick it up in verse 13:

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 shall honor Him,

not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord."

Do you see the cause-and-effect relationship here? If you will do the things that are stipulated in verse 13, then the Sabbath day is going to produce the rest that the apostle Paul was talking about in Hebrews 4:11. What he is saying is that we do not have to wait until the Millennium. We do not have to wait until the resurrection. We can experience a type of that right here and now. Like I said before, if we will not make the effort, if we will not strive to do it, then we are not going to experience it, and the Sabbath is not going to be a very enjoyable time. It is not going to be a delight. And we are going to be thinking all during the day what we can better use our time for, and we are going to find activities to do that are very likely not within harmony of God's way.

Let us look at this a little bit more closely, so that we can call the Sabbath a delight. Now what is it that you call a delight? I am talking about a principle here. Well, it is very likely that you will call a thing a delight if you consider it to be valuable, or that you consider that you do well, and you will take pleasure in those things. If it is valuable to you, and at the same time you do something well. Those are two different categories.

Now let us look at four broad areas here in verse 13. One: if you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, if you turn away *your* foot. Now this principle has to do with one's overall approach. It has to do with fear. It has to do with respecting something. In Exodus 3:5, when Moses saw the burning bush, God told him to take off his shoes because the ground that he was standing on was holy ground. You understand that the ground was literally no different from the ground a half a mile away—the same kind of dirt, sand, rocks, bushes, and whatever else. The only thing that made any difference is that God was there. And because God was there, the ground was consecrated, and as a result, He wanted the man Moses to have respect. Well, it had nothing at all to do with the ground. It had everything to do with the fact that a holy God was there, and that is what consecrated it, or sanctified it.

And so what we have here is a metaphor, and it is an allusion back to that. Now what would be your approach if you are in the same situation that

Moses was? You know very well that you would take off your shoes. Well, the same command involves the Sabbath. Respect the Sabbath in principle in the same way that you would respect it if you are in the presence of God, beside Moses when he saw the burning bush. So it has to do with an overall approach toward the day.

Now ask yourself honestly: do you really respect that Sabbath time in that same way? I think if we are brutally honest with ourselves, we are going to have to say no, we do not. We do not treat the Sabbath that way. We do not have that kind of respect for it. We allow and permit ourselves to do and to think and to say a great number of things that do not fall within the context of what one would do in the presence of a holy God.

Well, brethren, what makes the Sabbath holy, and I do not know how He does it, but somehow or another God, by His Spirit, puts Himself into the day. It is different. That is what the word holy means; it is different from the other days. It is a spiritual difference. It has nothing at all to do with the way it looks or how you feel about it. God consecrated a recurring space of time, the most eternal thing that we know of. Week by week, that thing keeps coming up, and we are told here to hold it in deep respect. Now in principle, it is the same kind of respect that would keep you from falling on your knees before an idol, before a statue. It is the same kind of respect that would keep you from committing blasphemy. It is the same kind of respect that would keep you from murdering someone. And the fact that God calls this thing holy is that He wants, for that space of time, this respect to dominate our thinking, and to use it in the way that He regards as being right.

I read in a book an interesting comment. And these people did not want to keep the Sabbath. They were writing these books in order to show that you did not have to keep it. But they made this admission: that the Sabbath, above all things appointed by law, unites us as a religious organization committed to doing a work. That is right; it unites you to God. And because you are united to God by His Spirit, He unites you to those others who are doing the same thing.

The second factor here is *your* ways. That is down a little bit further in verse 13: "and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways." A way is a path or a course that leads from one place to another, a direction. It also means a

manner or method of doing something, a mode of life, a lifestyle. A man's way is preoccupation with the self. Now, in the context here of Isaiah 58:13, it means the path, direction, or manner of seeking and worshipping God. It means the means of accomplishing this.

I am going to very quickly go through a couple of verses. Just hold your place there in Isaiah 58, but I want you to see how this word is used in some other contexts. The first one is in Psalm 16, verse 11. It says,

Psalm 16:11 You will show me the path of life [see, the path that leads to life, that path will produce life, the means of producing it]; in Your presence is fullness of joy; and at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

There the word way means a path that produces life. It is very obvious then that we do not have life, at least the kind of life that He is talking about.

Let us go now to Isaiah, this time in chapter 35, verses 8 and 9. It is a millennial setting.

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.

If we can just keep in the way of God, regardless of how foolish we are, God's way, if we are sincerely following it, is going to lead to life, and we will not go astray, even though we consider ourselves to be nothing—no great superintelligence, ignorant of a lot of things, do not have a great deal of wisdom. If we have enough godly sense to stay on His way, it is going to lead us into life.

There are others here: Jeremiah 6:16, which we will not go to; Hosea 14:9, the word is used again. Then over in the New Testament, Matthew 7, verses 13 and 14, we will read about this way.

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Now, back again to Proverbs. Keep holding your finger there in Isaiah 58; we are going to get back there. Proverbs 14 and verse 12, a scripture that most of us are quite familiar with, where it says:

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Men have presumptuously thought that any old way will do. That all depends on what one wants to produce at the end. You see, here he is cautioning us to take a long-range view of life. It is how it ends that is important. And we have to understand that present appearances are deceiving.

There are going to be people that I know who may hold high positions, and if you were to look at them, you would think they are doing just great spiritually. And I am just a dumbo; stupid, foolish. Well, do not be deceived by that. There may be people in the congregation who look like they are not very much. They might be old, they might be stooped over, they might have a lot of gray hair. They might, you know, have a lot of hitches in their get-along. They might not be able to see very well. Their ears are stopped up some way. I am talking about physically. Appearances are deceiving, and those people may be on the way, while others who look a lot better may be wandering all around on that broad course. Just remember what Jesus said: the way is narrow. There is not a lot of room for wandering around without falling off the way.

Now if we only have eyes and the kind of perspective that a person has from where he stands—we did not have the kind of knowledge that we do now, but all we had was the kind of perspective, let us say, that a local person had many, many years ago—you can understand why those people thought the earth was flat, or why they thought that the sun revolved around the earth. It was all because of their perspective. Now the Sabbath was given to man to

broaden his perspective, so that he was not looking at life only through his own eyes and only from his own perspective. It was given to give him an understanding of life that was not available to him otherwise.

Everybody is in need of the perspective that God gives us in His Word, and the Sabbath was created in order to provide a means, to provide a time, to provide a way for an education that would give mankind the kind of perspective he needs in order to stay on the way of life. I know that is true, because when Israel lost the Sabbath, they lost their way and they became lost. That is a lesson for all time. And I know, from the book of Hebrews, those people were in danger of losing their way, because they were losing the Sabbath through neglect. It was not something they planned, but they were beginning to wander around in the way, and it would not have been long before they were gone! They were so far gone that the apostle Paul said that they needed to learn the first things again, elementary things. Yeah, they were keeping the Sabbath. It was *how* they were keeping the Sabbath that was the problem, not whether they were keeping it. They were observing it but it was how they were doing it, and they were losing their faith. They were going back to the way that leads to death.

So the Sabbath is given by God in order to make sure that we have a perspective on life that is not limited to our own thinking. It was given in order to give man time for communication from God, through Bible study and prayer and through sermons, and communication with God—to God—through the same things, through prayer, and fellowship with Him through the same things. And it also provides fellowship with other heirs. Now guess what God intends to be the focus of all this communication, all this fellowship? This way of life. This way of life that God has designed to produce sons of God for His Kingdom. Anything that does not have to do with that, in thought or action or conversation, is a distraction away from God's intention for the Sabbath, and it is missing the mark.

Now suppose you had an appointment with the president. He is making all kinds of appointments these days, and there are about 4,000 more to come. But he had a project that you could carry out for him. So he called you to his office. And from the time that you got into his office, your mind was on anything except the project that he had in mind. You were looking out the window. You were looking at the calendar on the wall. You were talking

about the baseball game, the golf game, or whatever it happened to be that came to your mind, anything but what President Bush wanted you to do for him. Do you get the point?

God has a project in mind that involves you and me. That project is producing sons of God, producing life by *a way*. And the Sabbath is that day that He has set aside so that regardless of what happens the other days of the week, we have 24 hours of special time for communication and fellowship with Him. Not just the two hours on the Sabbath, not just the four hours that we might spend in Sabbath services, as well as an hour before or an hour after services communicating with one another. What about the other 20 hours? Knock off about 8 hours for sleep, you still have 12 hours. What do you do with that time? That is still half of the day. How was it spent? On your back sleeping? Watching television? Wondering about how the Dodgers are doing, the Rams are doing? How is that time spent? A subject is carnal on the Sabbath, or spiritual, depending upon its intention and its motivation for using it. There are valuable principles of life that can be extracted from ordinary and mundane experiences and passed along to others as a benefit to this way of life, a right way.

Now let us put these two principles together. What God is saying is: *do not tread upon My holy day with a foot that is occupied in going a different way.*

The next principle is "your pleasures." Now this does not mean that the Sabbath is a rigorous day of abstinence; He just said it should be a delight. The word is better translated business. Now it is not necessarily business in the sense of what one does at a store. It is a little bit broader than that. It also is translated in other places in the Old Testament as delight, desire, purpose, matter. Its basic usage is that which one finds pleasure in occupying oneself. That is, the things that keep us busy on the other six days of the week. Again, the emphasis is on *your*.

Included within this would be things like hobbies, sports, entertainment. The Sabbath is not designed for golf, swimming, jogging, hunting, fishing, television, boating, woodworking, ham radios, raking leaves. I had that one time. Somebody said they wanted to rake the leaves on the Sabbath. I said, why? They said, It relaxes me, raking leaves. The Sabbath is not made for raking leaves, stamp collecting, or whatever it is we do to preserve this

physical life. Now none of these things are sin in themselves, they are just not good for Sabbath time. God has not designed the day for those kinds of things.

Let us go on to the next one: "your words." Remember what Christ said and Matthew recorded it, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). Our words show what we are thinking about. Now this is the most difficult of the four areas to control, but again the emphasis is on *your*. You see, in opposition to God. Now taken in context, it means that our conversations should not be the same as those on working days.

See, there might be valid and right reasons for talking about most anything on the Sabbath, but we have to ask ourselves the question, before speaking, "Why am I talking about this subject?" Now there might be, let us say, a subject like golf, softball, entertainment, you know, like going to a movie or whatever. Why are we talking about that? If we bring it up in the context of making plans, making a date to go golfing on one of the other six days, very likely we have broken the Sabbath—almost 100% chance, I would say, by my judgment. If we bring it up though in the context of some very valuable spiritual or moral lesson that we learned as a result of playing a game, we have changed the context totally. Maybe there is something there that should be passed on. See, so we have to ask ourselves the question: What is my purpose? What is my motivation?

When you start asking yourself that question, quite honestly you are going to find that much, maybe most, of what we talk about is sheer vanity. Remember the illustration that Jesus gave in Matthew 12, Luke 6, Mark 2, about the priests and what they did on the Sabbath. You see, their work doubled on the Sabbath day. Their work intensified on the Sabbath day. You are a priest in this body. You are training to be a king and a priest. You are part of the building blocks of this body, this spiritual organism, and your work at controlling your mind and controlling your tongue is going to intensify on this day. Very valuable things that God is creating through making us learn to control. So we should be talking about subjects that fit within the positive purposes for which the Sabbath was created.