

The Commandments (Part Nine)

The Sabbath, Part Five

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Well, this is going to be the last sermon in the series on the Sabbath. I think that I can confidently say that. But I wanted to just remind us of two of the reasons why I went so deeply into this. The first of my purposes was that I wanted to emphasize the spiritual aspects of the Sabbath. That is something that the work [in Worldwide] has done fairly frequently, but my main reason for spending so much time was that I wanted to remind us so that we do not slip into an attitude of neglect regarding the keeping of it.

I want to pick up on kind of the theme, I guess you might say, of Mr. Brady's sermonette about the erosion that is certainly taking place in the physical creation. I did not realize that it was such a problem. I did not realize that if it was allowed to go on without being checked, why, we might lose a great deal of the surface of the earth. I did not think of it as being anything near that, having anywhere near that tragic of a consequence. But on the other hand, when I begin to think of it in its spiritual terms, I can see why eventually the sea would take over, because spiritually the same kind of principle is very much at work, and I think that it is very likely the kind of attitude or syndrome that we are most likely to fall into.

Hebrews the second chapter begins by saying,

Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest we drift away.

You might recall when I was going through this book in that Bible study series I mentioned to you, very frequently, because I keep wanting to hammer this home so that we will understand that this book was written to a group of people who were living at the end of an age. And it very closely equates with what is happening to us. We too are a group of people—church people, converted people, people who have the Spirit of God—who are living at the end of an age. And the same kind of attitude that the apostle

Paul was confronting with these people who are living in this period between 60 and 70 AD is also something that we are confronting here as we approach the end of the age and the return of Jesus Christ. There are so many distractions, so many things to get our attention, so many things going on in our lives that it is possible that we will neglect what has been given to us in the spiritual area of life. And so that is why he writes that "therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest we drift away."

What a beautiful picture—I mean, a beautiful, bad picture. What a beautiful illustration, just drifting away. The word picture that he is using there comes from a ship, a boat being moored at a dock, but somehow or another the knot that was tying it to the dock has loosened, and the boat is going out with the tide. It is not rushing out to sea, but little by little each wave that comes by pushes it out into the sea a couple inches. Another one comes by, pushes it out, and the first thing you know, the boat is going to be out and completely out of sight. It will not be in the harbor where it had the protection of the harbor any longer, but it is slowly drifting away—and that is what happens to us. It is not deliberate, it is not intended. We do not set our mind and our will to drift away from the things of God, we just drift, because we are not making any effort, or very little effort, to keep ourselves anchored, to keep that knot tied very tightly.

In verse 3 he says,

Hebrews 2:3 How shall we escape if we neglect so a great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him?

So there it is: neglect. That is what he is pointing to here was the problem of these people. It was not a matter that they were unconverted. They were not rebelling. Neglect is almost benign. We can just kind of sidle up to it and it does not slap us across the face. It is just like that proverbial frog. It comes over on a person just little by little, by increments, and the first thing you know, one finds oneself boiling in the water. Just like the erosion, grain by grain, it goes out into the sea and nobody notices each individual grain that is being taken away, but the first thing you know, the beach would be gone if it was not replaced.

And so it is spiritually. Day after day, the time goes by, and little by little the opportunities to have a good, wholesome, strong, zealous, enthusiastic fellowship contact with God is gone. We are dealing in time. That is what the Sabbath is—it is a space of time that has been sanctified by our Creator, set apart for holy use, and made holy by His presence within it. And each Sabbath goes by, and how much of it has been used by you to keep yourself from eroding away? How much has gone by because you have neglected the opportunity to sit down in your chair and think deeply about the things that you are reading, and to compare scripture with scripture, and maybe to spend some time fellowshiping with God in prayer as well, and then turning these things over in your mind and teaching your children about the things that you are learning? The time goes by, it slips by. We are drifting out to sea like that boat, and the first thing you know, each little wave takes us a little bit further and a little bit further, and by the time we recognize that the shore is so far away, we are out there without a paddle and there is no way to get in.

I was thinking of this yesterday, and thinking that that neglect is very similar to a drug, very similar to alcohol, very similar to smoking a cigarette. In smoking a cigarette, or in dealing with alcohol (in terms of beer or something harder than that, or even a drug), each little bit may give a person a little bit of a lift, or maybe a great lift. The only difference in principle has to do with intensity of the feeling, whether it is a cigarette or whether it is coffee. We could even include that in there, the caffeine is there, people become addicted to that, and so there is a lift. As I said, the only difference between all of them is the intensity and the speed with which they work.

There is a nickname for cigarettes: coffin nails. People knew that way back when I was a kid, they called cigarettes coffin nails. Well, how real that term was did not come out until men were able to prove pretty effectively in the 60s and 70s how much each cigarette, they have determined, cuts off the average person's life? Seven minutes, just one cigarette! That does not sound like very much, but you see, a person's life is eroding away minutes at a time, each time he takes a drag on that cigarette. But he is not aware of the erosion, is he? He is not looking down the road to when he is 72, 73, 74. He is only thinking of that lift that he is getting at the moment.

Well, that is the way Sabbath time—and for that matter, all time—gets away from us if we do not have control of it. The first thing you know, it slips away, moment by moment, and all we are interested in is what is on our mind at the time. As this is going on, we get a momentary lift from the expending of our time, very often in things that are not sin at all, but they are simply things that have distracted us away from maybe the thing that is far more important and should be done.

We are going to look very briefly at a man who suffered from benign neglect. That man is Solomon. If there was ever a man who had great gifts, if there was ever a man that it seemed as though he had everything going for him, it was Solomon. And yet we are going to see, just ever so briefly, that it was this benign neglect that carried him away into idolatry and caused him very likely to lose out on the Kingdom of God. Let us go back to I Kings, the 3rd chapter, and just look at a couple of verses there as to how he began his rulership.

How would you like to have a man after God's own heart as your father, a man who was enthusiastically zealous for God, certainly a man who at times could not control his appetite, but he never lost sight of whom he was, and he never lost sight of God and God's great purpose in life? And so the man, having the right mind, the right heart, the right attitude, though he did not always understand what he was doing, when he did understand, he repented. Now that man was not near as gifted as his son Solomon was gifted, and yet David made it into the Kingdom. David is going to be king over Israel, and where is his gifted son going to be?

In I Kings 3, and in verse 3 it says,

I Kings 3:3 And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.

An indication there that there was a fly in the ointment already. But God overlooked it in the sense that He did not really hold it against him in a way like, "Boy, I'm going to get you for this, Solomon, if you do not repent of that."

So in verse 5,

I Kings 3:5 At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"

And really you can see Solomon's attitude at the time. It was humble before God, and he certainly recognized that his being in that position of authority was not because really of his greatness, but because God had given it to him through his father David.

And then down in verse 11,

I Kings 3:11-13 Then God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have you asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. [A unique individual in the annals of mankind. Never has there been a human being, until Jesus Christ came along, with insight and discernment and understanding into the affairs and relationships of men as Solomon.] And I also have given what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among all the kings all your days. So if you walk in My ways, and keep My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days." And then Solomon awoke.

Hold your fingers there and let us go back to Deuteronomy 17, and we will review something that all of the kings of Israel were commanded to do, and it is something maybe that we ought to do—even to take it in its letter-of-the-law approach—that since we are kings and priests in training, maybe we ought to do this. That is not a command in any way, it is just something that might be very helpful to many of us. Beginning in verse 14, it says,

Deuteronomy 17:14-19 "When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you may set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you who is not your brother. [Now look at these instructions.] But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. And also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. [Now the law that is probably being spoken of here is the book of Deuteronomy, not the whole five books of Moses. I do not know that for sure, but that is what I feel that he is talking about here.] And it shall be with him, and he shall read it [listen to this] all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God.

Look at these instructions in the light of your position within the church, and of your possible position in the Kingdom of God. Are we not in a preparation period for the Kingdom of God? Are we not going to be kings and priests? Should we know the law of God? Would you say that if we are not doing what God says here, that every day we spend a little time with Him in Bible study and prayer, that we are neglecting our responsibility, and that there is erosion in our spiritual life taken away? I want you to think of this, especially in regard to the Sabbath.

Deuteronomy 17:19-20 "And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel."

God makes it very clear, owing to the king's duty to the people—the king, you see, is governing and ruling over them. His first obligation is to God. You see that? And the reason for that is because he is, in the last analysis, representing God. You see, he is God's agent at the head of these people, and the basis for that is that all power and authority flows from God in the first place, does it not? And so the king is the agent of God, and so it then becomes the necessity on the part of the king that if he is going to set the right example for the people, that example be gleaned from the Word of God.

Now let us go back now to I Kings, the 10th chapter. The life of Solomon has been just about lived by the time we get to this part in the continuing saga here. Let us begin in verse 26.

I Kings 10:26 And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.

I read this verse because I want you to reflect on what it said in Deuteronomy 17: do not multiply horses. Horses, in the context of the Bible, are the equivalent of tanks, of ships, of men of war, of bombers, of missiles. He is saying, do not put your reliance, your trust, your faith in your own military might that you are able to build up. The reason for that, of course, is that God wanted him to have faith in God, that God would protect, that God would intervene, that God would fight for him. But as long as we are able to see physical things, the chances are very great we are going to put our reliance in those physical things.

I Kings 10:27 The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars as abundant as the sycamores which are in the lowlands.

Now we can somewhat forgive Solomon for the wealth, even though God said he shall not multiply it for himself. God did say in the vision that because you have not asked for it, I am going to give it to you anyway. But it becomes very evident that Solomon mishandled the wealth, and when he left office upon dying, Israel was broke, they were bankrupt. And that he had

taxed the people heavily, and that was the occasion for those people coming to Rehoboam and complaining, Lower the taxes and we will serve you. So it looks to me as though Solomon still did not follow through on God's command not to multiply silver and gold. God would have given it to him, but apparently Solomon got lustful after more, and he taxed the people heavily in order to undertake all of these projects that he had going on—building up the army and raising up tremendous buildings for people to look at.

I Kings 10:28 Also Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh, and the king's merchants brought them in Keveh at the current price.

Let us drop down into verse 1 of chapter 11.

I Kings 11:1-2 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—

Solomon was a great man, but he had feet of clay, and God is pointing out where his weakness was. David had a weakness too regarding women, but David was able to get it under control. Solomon never did.

I Kings 11:2-3 from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.

Solomon was not obedient to Deuteronomy 17. He was neglectful of it; he neglected his responsibility to God in that area. Solomon succumbed to idolatry. Remember the big two there in Ezekiel 20: Sabbath breaking and idolatry. Solomon succumbed to idolatry. Is it possible that he also succumbed to keeping, or not keeping, the Sabbath? It does not say directly, but I would not doubt it. The two seem to go hand in hand.

You know what happened? Solomon lost his faith in God. That is what the Sabbath is for—to build a person's faith in God. And Solomon lost his faith, and he went into idolatry just as sure as anything. It did not do it overnight. It was not something that happened with the click of the finger, but it happened through his wives that he loved. He was emotionally attached to them, you can understand that. But first, he allowed it into his home. He had tolerated it there—I mean the idolatry of his wives. It was not something that he did rebelliously in the sense of, "Boy, I'm going to do this because I just love idolatry." No, he did not do that. It was something that happened by degrees, little by little. It eroded away until now he was not only tolerating it in his home, he began to practice it in public places. He participated in it with his wives, and then the first thing you know it was out in the public.

Solomon apparently considered himself to be above the law, and he paid a bitter price. We might say the law destroyed him. Paul said in one place, Am I stronger than the law? No. Only a person whose faith in God and in God's Word is eroding away is going to think that he is going to be strong enough to resist the temptation and put himself in front of it, which is what Solomon did.

Now, we are not gifted individually like Solomon, but we are subject to the same kind of frailties as Solomon, because entrance into the Kingdom of God is not based upon whether a person is super intelligent or super wise or super insightful in the way Solomon was. Entrance into the Kingdom of God is based upon loyalty to God, faith in God, and is shown by living a life in love for God and in obedience to His law.

Now again, remember those two scriptures that I have been tying together virtually every Sabbath once we cross them: Psalm 74:12, "God is. . . working salvation in the midst of the earth." That is what His work is. He is a Creator, and He is creating sons in His own image, and He is working salvation, which means delivering, saving—whether it be in terms of healing, whether it be in terms of delivering us from other problems and trials in our lives involving jobs or marital problems, child-rearing problems, personal problems with overcoming weaknesses, or whatever. God is working salvation in all the earth.

And then there in John 6, verse 29, where Jesus made it very clear,

John 6:29 "This is the work of God [here it comes], that you believe in [His Son Jesus Christ]."

God's work is to produce faith in His children, faith in Jesus Christ. Christ said without Him we can do nothing. He is talking about spiritually. But without faith, nothing can be done.

And again we have to get back to the Sabbath, because life rushes by. It does not wait for anybody. Day after day the days go by, and we are caught up in the routines of work, of taking care of our family, taking care of the automobile, taking care of the lawn, clothing ourselves, cleaning ourselves, and it is very easy to slip in those areas and not maintain contact with God every day. But when the Sabbath comes around, nobody has an excuse—I mean nobody that knows about the Sabbath—because God has sanctified that time, set it apart, so that we might have time to, in a sense, almost make up for it. If we did not spend time in studying and praying, we at least have the Sabbath time to somehow keep us on keel, keep us going in the right direction. So it is essential that we keep that day. We will get to that a little bit later in the sermon.

Let us go back to Isaiah, the 58th chapter. We went over these verses, but they are important in understanding God's attitude toward the Sabbath and what our attitude needs to be toward the Sabbath. You might remember how I said that instruction in the Bible regarding the keeping of the Sabbath is not given in specific detail, but rather it is given in broad principles, and the specifics are, to a large measure, left to us to discern. We are being led and guided by God's Spirit. We should be able to determine what is right. Now, that does not mean that we are not going to make any mistakes. We will not always be right in our determinations in regard to the keeping of the Sabbath, but I will tell you, if you are sincere and you are in touch with God, you are going to get corrected by God, your own thinking, meditating on it, or whatever it is, and you will make the change, and those mistakes will be behind you.

In Isaiah 58, it says,

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, and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken."

It is obvious from reading those two verses right there that God does not intend the day to be one of rigorous bondage. He said He wants it to be a delight. We delight in things that we consider valuable. Many of you ladies take delight in your engagement ring, because you know that it is valuable, from the sense that the stone is worth a great deal of money, and also there is the sentimental value to it as well. It is given to you by someone that you love and that loves you very much, and so you delight in that because it is valuable to you.

You also understand that you delight in things that you do well, do you not? And if you play the piano well, or ski well, or play basketball well, or golf well, or whatever it happens to be, if you do it well, that skill brings you delight, you enjoy doing it. That is the point here. The Sabbath becomes a delight when we become good at doing it, and when we understand how valuable it is—far more valuable than the other six days of the week! It is the only one that God declared holy. It is the only one that He has put Himself into. How much more value could a day be given? How much more value is there to something that was given, from the indications in the Bible, to ensure that we have salvation? Every seven days it comes up to refresh us, to get us turned around, to straighten us out, fill us with the kind of faith that we need for the next six days that are coming.

In the Old Testament there is a great deal of emphasis on not working. Now, in the New Testament there is a decided shift in emphasis away from not working to doing good and fellowshiping. This does not mean that those things were missing under the Old Covenant, but rather in the writings of God, they were not emphasized. But even though they are emphasized in the

New Testament, that does not mean that one is free to work, but he is emphasizing that his intent for the day be one of doing good and of fellowshiping, and those things are contained within the examples of Jesus' life. No, He did not work, but the emphasis in what you see there is in what He did on the day. See, He preached, and I can tell you that is work. He healed people, see? And in His part in the body of Christ, in the church, in God's purpose, that was work.

What we are going to be seeing here through much of the remainder of this sermon is that the work is absolutely necessary in order to keep the day. Now, the emphasis on these verses here, especially verse 13 of Isaiah 58, is on the contrast between your and My. It is emphasizing *My*, and it is diminishing *your*. Now, it is in doing this, that is, if you and I do it, if we emphasize the *My* and we diminish the *your*, that the day will become a delight.

First of all, he says, turn away your foot. Now, this phrase has to do with a person's overall approach toward the day. It has to do with respect. It is reflecting, or signaling back to Exodus the 3rd chapter, beginning in verse 5, where Moses was in the presence of God at the burning bush. God told Moses, Take off your shoe [sandal], for the ground on which you stand is holy ground. It was respected because God was there.

The Sabbath is holy. It is different from other days. It was created for a purpose different from the other days, and so we have to have a respect for that day that we do not have for the other days.

The second thing is, your ways. A way is a path or a course leading from one place to another—highways, roads, alleys, paths, those kinds of things. So it is a path or a course leading from one place to another. Now, in this context, it has to do with a manner or method of doing something, in this case, a mode of life, a way of life. In this case, it has to do with the means of worshipping God. See, how do we get from here to here when we are right here and our object is to worship God in the right way? God's way is the means of reaching that destination, properly respecting and worshipping God.

Hold your finger there and let us go to Proverbs 14:12, a very familiar scripture. I want to again emphasize this.

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

This is a generality, but man has pretty much thought that any old way of worshipping God will do. But as I mentioned to you last time, that depends on what you are trying to produce. What do you want to produce at the end of this way in which you are going?

Now, what this verse is doing is cautioning us to take a long-range view of life. Say, look where you are: you are 35 years old, you are halfway to 70. See, somewhere around the age of 70, you are probably going to die. Now, how are you going to get from here to there? What do you want to produce when you get to 70? Nan's ways emphasize preoccupation with the self, and therefore God shows that they are going to produce death. Now, God has given us a way, and that way is to design the product He is making, and that is to be the focus of the day—the focus of the Sabbath day—to get rid of *your* way. Instead, focus on *My* way.

Back to Isaiah 58. The next thing he says is, your pleasure. Now, this word pleasure is better translated purposes, matters, business, or affairs. So he is talking about the things that keep us busy during the other six days. He is not talking here about something that is sin. He is just talking about the kind of thing you do the other six days. You are a welder, you are an oil well driller, you are a dentist, you are a housewife, you are a mechanic, you are a clerk. And your life is not occupied totally with those things, there are other things that you do too. There are entertainments that you involve yourself in, there might be projects around the house that you involve yourself in, there are hobbies that you have.

And God is not accusing that any of these things are sin. He is only saying that they are not fit for the reason that the Sabbath was created. And so He wants us, for that one day, to set that aside so that we can focus our attention on what is His pleasure. See, *His* pleasure, *His* matter, *His* purpose, *His* business, *His* affair, is getting us into the Kingdom of God. See, *His* work, *His* business, *His* pleasure is the salvation of mankind. He is not saying that the Sabbath cannot be fun, not at all. He intends the day to be a delight. It ought to be fun.

The next thing is, your words. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). Our words show what we are thinking about. I will concede that this is easily the most difficult of the four to control—our words. James said that the person who is able to control his tongue is the same as a perfect man. I am not perfect, I have a long way to go. I feel as though I have not even started yet. I cannot control my tongue. So we have a long way to go, and this is a very difficult one.

Let us go back to the book of Malachi, chapter 3, verse 16. This is a scripture that most of us are pretty familiar with.

Malachi 3:16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name.

Now, yesterday when I was putting this sermon together, in its form that I am delivering to you now, was first time in my life in the church that I ever looked at that verse in its context. Very interesting. I had always looked at that verse by itself, but I thought that this time I am going to look at it in its context and see what it has to say.

The most difficult thing for me to figure out in this was to whom was he speaking. In the whole context, to whom was he speaking? Well, it was rather slow coming. I think I finally figured it out. He was speaking to a group of people within Israel, we might put in parentheses the church, the Israel of God. But he was speaking to a group of people in Israel who were genuinely sincere—they were trying hard to be obedient to God, to be submissive to God, but they were becoming frustrated. They were beginning to become doubtful about what was going on, because it seemed as though the things in their lives were not quite working out right, where other people who were aggressive and assertive and seemed to have no regard at all for God and for God's law were getting ahead in the nation. And these people to whom he was speaking were getting discouraged. God really was not hearing them, but He seemed to be blessing the very people that these genuinely sincere people felt were really not really with it.

Now look at that in this context. Let us go back to verse 13.

Malachi 3:13-15 "Your words have been harsh against Me," says the Lord "yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' You have said, 'It is vain to serve God [They were serving God, but they had reached a place in their life, and their discouragement and frustration say it does not pay to serve God, it is vain to do it, useless.]; what profit is it if we have kept His ordinance [Look, here we are keeping His law, keeping His ordinances, and it looks as though things are falling apart, they are degenerating, they are not going ahead.], and we have walked as mourners [it means that they had humbled themselves before God, an indication of lowliness of mind. They were submissive and obedient to God,] before the Lord of hosts. So now we call the proud blessed [yeah, the rugged, assertive individualists, they are the ones that are getting ahead, those with a great deal of drive and personal ambition to get ahead, they are being blessed.], for those who do wickedness are raised up [those are the people who are getting into positions of power]; they even tempt God and go free.'"

And then comes the word of encouragement: Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another. When do you have the opportunity to do that? Oh, because we have telephones and because we live fairly close together, maybe we have an opportunity to get together with one another reasonably often. You know very well the day that God intended that we do get together in fellowship with one another is on the Sabbath day. Now, what do you do on the Sabbath day when you get together with God's people? What is on your mind? What are you talking about? What is on the heart? What is coming out of the heart? Is it God's way, or is it our pleasures, our business, our affairs? Now they can be blended together. Remember what I told you last week? It all depends on your intent and motivation, what you are extracting from the subject, and the reason why you are talking about it.

"And those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and He heard them." God reacted to it. "So a book of remembrance was written before Him." God wrote the names of these people down who got together and talked about Him and talked about His way.

You know what it says back in Isaiah 49:16? God says, "I have your name written right on My hand." He said that to His people, to His church, Zion, I have your names written right there in the palm of His hand. Now He does not mean it literally, He is just showing the attention that He is paying to us.

"And the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear [respect]," get your foot off My holy day, He says. "Those who respect the Lord and meditate [it can be translated esteemed or honored] His name." His name describes what He is, and these people are obviously talking about Him and about His way.

Now this is the major purpose for the Sabbath, that we have the time to get His Word in us. When we are not encumbered with the mundane activities that are being carried on, and all of the business conversation that goes on revolving around those things, it was given to man to give him time, a break from normal affairs, so that he can have God's name, or God's Word, in him. Our words are the symbols by which we think, make decisions, and communicate. The Bible is God's Word. It contains His way of life, and it is by His Word that He expects us to think, to make decisions, and to communicate.

Now it is through Jesus Christ that He has broken the bondage that we were held in to Satan. When we were in bondage to Satan, we were not free, we were not at liberty to obey God. But when Jesus Christ died, when He was resurrected, when He sent His Spirit to this earth, God opened up access to Him, and He gave us then—those of us who repent, those of us who receive His Spirit—the liberty to obey Him, and that includes the keeping of the Sabbath. And thus He ensures that we have the opportunity to have His Word in us, and thus pretty much assures our salvation, that is, if we do it and do not let our faith in that erode away.

Now I mentioned to you that properly keeping the Sabbath requires a lot of work, and we are going to see that now. Let us go back to Exodus 16. Most of this work, of course, is not done on the Sabbath, it is done *before* the Sabbath. In Exodus 16, beginning in verse 4, the people were murmuring, and so the Lord said to Moses,

Exodus 16:4-8 "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare twice as much as they gather daily. Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of Egypt. And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord [the glory of the Lord is the manna];. . . This shall be seen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the Lord hears your complaints which you make against Him. [and what are we?] Your complaints are not against us, but against the Lord."

And so they did as they were told.

Exodus 16:21-30 So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted. And so it was on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil, and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.' So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink, nor were there any worms. Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, [which is] the Sabbath, there will be none." Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the Lord said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.

It is very clear to most of us that God has commanded that on the preparation day, that is, on Friday, that we do our heavy cooking—the roasting, baking, broiling, boiling—on that day before the Sabbath. Notice also that as clear as that command is, there were some who also very clearly did not believe Him and disobeyed the command that was given. They presumed to take it upon themselves to add or to subtract from what God said.

Now there is even more to it than that. We should always train ourselves to look for a spiritual lesson in these very physical commands that God gives to us. Hold your finger there and let us go back to a verse that we touched on before, in the New Testament, in the book of John, chapter 9, verse 4. John 9:4 is the occasion where Jesus healed a man of his blindness, he was blind from birth.

And in verse 3 it says,

John 9:3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.

Verse 4 is the one that we want there:

John 9:4 "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no man can work."

I think I mentioned to you, as we were going through there, that most of the better manuscripts of the Greek New Testament say that that word there should be *we must work*, and certainly it applies in principle, even if it is not strictly there. Jesus Christ is not the only one who is working, all of us are involved in a work. We must work the works of Him who sent Me. Are we not supposed to do that? We are to do the works of Him who has called and chosen us and given His Spirit and put us into His work. We are to do the work of God while it is day, because the night comes when no man can work.

I want you to think of this principle of working in relation to the preparation day and to the Sabbath. We may work up until Friday sunset, but when the night comes, the work is done. We are not to work past that point.

Now think of the Sabbath and what it symbolizes spiritually. It is a time of the redemption. It represents, in type, it is the time of the full redemption and salvation of the church and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, thus giving it rest. That is what Hebrews 3 and 4 are about, and that is why Paul, three times in those chapters, says, "Today, if you will hear His voice." What the apostle Paul was getting to these people who were neglecting their responsibility was that time is running out for them, that it was urgent that they turn their attention to overcoming and growing, to doing the work of God, and that they had better get with it today, because the time is coming when no man will be able to work.

Think of that in regard to the Sabbath, in regard to your salvation. God gives us actually six days; He designates one day that we are to use to get prepared for His holy Sabbath. We are given that time, and when the Sabbath arrives on Friday evening and night begins, there is no more work that can be done. What about your salvation? Are you not working against the deadline? Is there not a time when Jesus Christ is going to return? Is there not a time when you are no longer going to be able to do any work? Either Christ will return, or your life will end.

Let us go back to Romans 13, verses 11 through 14.

Romans 13:11-14 And do this [Paul says], knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry, in drunkenness, nor in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy [the overcoming of those things are all part of the work of God]. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Here, Paul reverses the day and night symbolism, but the sense of what he is saying here is exactly the same as it was in John 9:4. We are working against a deadline, even as each week you work against a deadline. We are given the

time to prepare, but when the Sabbath comes, the work is over. There is only so much time to get prepared for the Kingdom of God, and we are now in that preparation time.

It is reasonably clear in the Bible that God has allotted 6,000-year days for man and 1,000-year day for Himself, and in that 1,000-year day is a period of rest for this creation. We are near the end of that sixth 1,000-year day, and the sunset is approaching when no work can be done.

Now back to Exodus 16. The preparation for the Sabbath is intended by God to teach that spiritual lesson—each week you are working against the clock, even as you are working against the clock in terms of our salvation. Now, it does not have to be a frantic, desperate working. If you are plodding along day by day, doing the work of God, you are going to be prepared for that spiritual Sabbath when it comes. But it is very likely, if you are not doing that, you are going to begin to feel the press of time on you, and you are going to feel desperate, as many do, as they begin to get near the Sabbath beginning on Friday evening and they are rushing around trying to get everything done, possibly, that they can possibly get done.

You know, we read here in Exodus 16:4 that the Sabbath is a test. Now what is the test? The test, right in its context, is to see whether we will live by faith, whether we are going to trust God to supply all of our needs, or whether we are going to live our lives according to our own will, according to our own ideas. It is very easy to get deceived by the Sabbath, because if one looks at it only physically. In the last sermon I talked about, if you only have your own eyes, your perspective from your point is going to deceive you about many things. It looks as though the sun is going around the earth, if you were only to judge by your own eyes.

Well, same thing here spiritually as well. By appearances, the Sabbath is the same as every other day. The sun still comes up in the east, it sets in the west, sometimes it is cold, sometimes it is hot, sometimes it rains, sometimes it is real smoggy, sometimes it is clear, but so are all the other days as well. Do not let appearances deceive you, because if you judge by appearances, then the Sabbath is no different from any other day. And thus, because of this, everybody is confronted with a test regarding the Sabbath.

Now, if the Sabbath is to be kept properly, what God is showing us here in Exodus 16, it must be prepared for, even as if salvation is going to be kept properly, it has to be prepared for. Now physically, this is so that the deck is cleared and the Sabbath is free of as many distractions as possible—anything that would keep us from properly communicating and fellowshiping with Him.

In verse 27 again,

Exodus 16:27-29 Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the Lord said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place, let no man go out of his place on the Sabbath day."

Now, in the context, that means to not go out and gather food and prepare food. The reason is that it has already been gathered and prepared for.

I want you to reflect upon Matthew 25:1-10, the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Five were wise, five were foolish, and when the warning came that the bridegroom was about to come—the Sabbath was almost here, see, the beginning of God's Millennial reign on earth—the cry went out, and five of the virgins found out that they were not prepared for His coming. And so they tried to get oil from the five who were prepared, and it could not be given to them. And so you will read in verse 10, they had to go out of the house in order to gather the oil from those who had it, and while they were out of the house, the Lord came, and they were not saved.

Very interesting analogies here; it is kind of scary. You see, the emphasis is on taking advantage of the time, redeeming it, so that you are prepared. Now he is not talking here about each individual Sabbath, I mean, He is not talking about that in Matthew 25. Obviously, from the New Testament we are able to see clearly there is room in God's Sabbath law for circumstances that do not conform to the regular pattern. See, they are beyond the norm. That is why that illustration is given there in Mark 2, and in Luke 6, and in Matthew 12, about the disciples going out into the field and picking the grain

while they were out there. There are going to be occasions that do not conform to the normal pattern. So God says you are free to do that if the situation demands it, take advantage of it. But He is also showing that under normal situations we should be prepared for its arrival and its proper use.

You should do such things as, I mean, besides the heavy cooking, you can make salads the day before, put them in a closed container, put them in your refrigerator, and they will be fresh the next day. Those things can be done. You should go through your clothing before the Sabbath arrives and decide what it is that you want to wear. You do not necessarily have to set it aside, but it is set aside in your mind, and you know before the Sabbath even arrives what it is that you are going to wear. You ought to have your shoes polished and shined, those kind of things, paying attention to the little things. You remember Mr. Fakouri's sermonette last week, that is what makes for perfection. We do not have to be, what would you call it, Pharisaical about it, but we should begin to make that a part of our routine.

You should have your automobile filled with gasoline by the time the Sabbath comes around, so that on the Sabbath you do not have to go running out purchasing those kind of things. The house should be cleaned up. Now, the way that you are going to have to do this in homes in which both father and mother are in the family. Especially, fathers, you ought to take charge of your family and make sure that things are organized, that there is a place for everything and everything is in its place, and that you assign responsibility to each person in the house. I am talking about the children as well, and that they are responsible for taking care of their room, taking care of their clothing, making sure that there is order there, so that all the work of preparation does not fall on Mom.

Fortunately, all too frequently it does, and I would say, just from the observation from our own family, that largely because the husband is away from the home more than the wife is, a lot of the preparation does fall on her. Because things are so disorganized, there are women who have a baby and they do not hear a whole sermon for years, maybe, and largely that is because the husband is not carrying out his responsibility. He is not helping his wife in the way that he should. She gets all worn out, she has headaches, and the children are untrained. Men, you have to take charge there. I am not talking about bowling everybody over. I am talking about sitting everybody

down, making a plan out, enlisting their support, showing which way the family is going to go, why it is going to go in that way, drawing out specific details, and on and on.

Even the baby can be trained. It is not always easy, but the baby can be trained to take a nap during Sabbath services. Services do not sneak up on us every week, we know when service time is, 2:30 to 4:30, and it is possible to train a baby to lay down at 2:30 in the afternoon, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday as well, and when Sabbath comes, 2:30 arrives, and he is ready to go to sleep. I am not saying that that is easy, but it can be done, if the mother is consistent, if the mother is persistent. You plan for it.

Why do you not have a cassette tape of Ritenbaugh [or whoever your minister is] speaking away there right in the room where the baby is sleeping, and so he gets used to Ritenbaugh's voice? And they can learn to sleep right through all of the din. If you do not have Ritenbaugh's voice, turn on the radio, so that there is a measure of noise. Do your vacuuming, whatever, but make sure that the child learns that it can go to sleep at a time when there is general disturbance around it. They can do that.

I will tell you, when I was in the steel mill, I learned to sleep through whistles, dynamite explosions—I am not kidding you—on hard benches that were only about that wide. Have ten minutes at the end of the lunch period, and you are out. I learned you can sleep through anything, as long as you know it is safe, you can train yourself. Well, that is what has to be done with a child. I would like to go into more of this, but we are running out of time. Some more of the details of this, maybe that can come up at some other time.

There is something here (I am going to take you a little bit over time) in Luke 14, and in verse 5. I am mostly concerned that you get the principles anyway, that you use the Spirit of God to think these things through. I would like to give you a lot of detail, but then all you would have is Ritenbaugh's Talmud, and that might not be too profitable for you.

Luke 14:5-6 Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ass that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

Many of you have Bibles that have ox in the ditch, and that is the cliché that has somehow or another, because of this mistranslation, actually survived in our language. The ox in the ditch is not correct; it is almost impossible for an ox to fall in a ditch. How many oxen have you seen in a ditch? I do not think you have ever seen an ox in a ditch. How many men have you seen fall in a ditch? You hardly ever see a man fall in a ditch. Now, a man has two legs, and they hardly ever fall in a ditch. An ox has four legs, and they almost never fall in a ditch. That is the point.

Now the word actually is pit. It is translated correctly in my New King James Version. And what He is talking about is an ox in a well, in a cistern. Now, what would happen was: the cistern would be at ground level, and they would not protect it, would not put a fence around it, and so every once in a while an ox or an ass or something would step on the top of the well, or the cistern, which was normally only covered over with a few branches or something like that, and down they would go into the water. In fact, there are even records of that period of time of men falling in them. Now sometimes it was a matter of life and death, because the thing was full of water and the animal would get in there and it would be a real struggle, he could not get out of the pit. And so they had to be lifted out of there in some way with the help of a lot of people, because an ox was a valuable tool for those people.

What you want to make sure that you do is understand that the point is this: hardly any time does an ox fall in a pit. How frequently do real emergencies come up on the Sabbath? Very, very, very infrequently. There is a real emergency coming up as often as you have seen an ox in a pit. Now I would not expect you to see one, because we are city folk now, and we just do not have oxen running around all over the place. Another point here is that these animals fell in the pit because of human carelessness. Most of these emergency situations on the Sabbath are the result of human carelessness, not paying attention, not being prepared.

Now, you will run into situations like your next-door neighbor will come running over: Oh, I've really got an emergency here, I'm baking a cake and I need sugar - a real emergency! Would you please run me down to the store so that I can buy some sugar? Now what you want to decide is whether or not it really is an emergency. Do not let the person bulldoze you into deciding for you that indeed it is an emergency. If you do, I can tell you what is going to happen. You see, looking at the end result, you will be a ruler that will be able to be bulldozed by any special interest group that comes along. You will not be a king who will stand firm for what is right. So you make the decision, and if you decide this situation really is an emergency, then go ahead in a clear conscience, take care of it, you should feel free to do it, but *you* make the decision, not your neighbor.

Now, if your neighbor comes over and tells you that their son has just fallen out of the tree and he has a broken arm, that is much easier. See, that is an emergency. Now maybe in the case with the sugar, the answer is, why do you not just give them your sugar? There are ways that that can be done rather than following through blindly, without thinking about what they are saying. Maybe you can alleviate the situation in a much easier way.

I want to read a paragraph or two from this book. I have gotten a lot of material out of it. If you ever want to get it, I believe they still sell it at the Ambassador College bookstore. You do not have to buy it; most of the book you are going to find dull and boring and whatever. I was only able to use really the first chapter or two, showing some of God's intent for the Sabbath. It is called *From Sabbath to Sunday*. It was written by Samuel Bacchiocchi. He is an Italian Seventh-day Adventist. He did his research in the Vatican's libraries (by the way, they gave him permission to do so) and he proved from their own material that they were the ones that changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and then they printed the book up for him. It was printed by the Pontifical Gregorian University Press.

This is his conclusion, his summary, part of his summary. He says,

We cannot here survey the theological, thematic development of the Sabbath in redemptive history and its relevancy for the Christian today. The most we can do in our closing remarks is to

emphasize the basic difference between the Sabbath and Sunday. This is very clear: While the aim of the latter, Sunday, as we have seen, is the fulfillment of a worship obligation. The objective of the former, the Sabbath, is the sanctification of time.

A major difference between the two. Your life is time, and you could be saved without knowledge of the Sabbath—God can do anything. But for those of us who know of the Sabbath, it is easily more valuable than the other six days combined.

The main concern and obligation of the Sabbath commandment is for a man to rest on this day. What is involved in the Sabbath rest question? If it were only inactivity or abstention from work, we would question the value of such benefit. Is there anything more depressing than having nothing to do, waiting for the Sabbath hours to pass away in order to resume some meaningful activity? In the Sabbath commandment, however, rest is qualified. It is defined not as a frivolous good time, but as solemn rest, holy to the Lord. It's a whole list of scriptures. Though the Sabbath is given to mankind, nevertheless, it belongs to Yahweh. Repeatedly God calls the day 'My Sabbath,' and undoubtedly because He rested, blessed it, and hallowed it. This particular manifestation of the presence and blessing of God constitutes the ground and essence of the holiness of the Sabbath. [He is in it.] The rest of the Sabbath is not self-centered relaxation, a time when all wishes and desires can be fulfilled without restraint, but rather a divinely centered rest, a time when a person is freed from the care of work to become free for God and fellow beings, and thus finds genuine refreshment in this freedom.

Where do you think the delight of the Sabbath comes from? It comes from using it the right way. God is not concerned about the expending of energy. The Sabbath may be the hardest day of the week—I know it is for the ministry in most cases—and you ought to understand that principle now, because of what it says in Matthew the 12th chapter, in that illustration that Christ gave, that on the Sabbath day the priests' work intensified, it doubled. You are training to be a king and a priest. The Sabbath is a day of labor, but it is the kind of labor, it is the breaking away of the mundane labors of the

other six days and turning one's attention as intensely as one can to keeping this time holy.

The physical relaxation which the rest of the Sabbath provides may be regarded as the preliminary preparation necessary to experience the totality of the divine blessings of creation, redemption, which the day commemorates.

Then he goes on a little bit further:

The believer who interrupts his daily routine and dedicates 24 hours to his Creator and Redeemer, as Karl Barth put it, participates consciously in the salvation provided by God. In other words, the stopping of one's doing on the Sabbath represents the experience of being saved by God's grace. It is an expression of renunciation of human attempts to work out one's salvation, and an acknowledgment of God as the author and finisher of our salvation.

Now, in summary, I am going to give you seven points—could we have anything but seven?

1. The Sabbath is a day of rest sanctified by the Creator at the end of the creation week, and is thus a memorial of the creation. The Sabbath is a memorial of the creation.
2. It is a recurring period of time. The most enduring thing man knows is time. The Creator promises to be in that time, thus guaranteeing man that He will be with man and helping those who keep His Sabbath attain to the Creator's purpose. That is why I tell you the Sabbath virtually guarantees your salvation if you use it the right way, because God is in it, and He is in it for the purpose of building His people's faith.
3. It is a day Christ clearly associated with liberty, redemption, salvation. He showed that in His preaching, healings, and casting out of demons, thus relieving people of their bondage to Satan. See, He did it obviously, He did something to show the intent of the day. The intent of the day is to produce liberty from Satan and obedience to God.

4. The issues in the New Testament never deal with whether one should keep the Sabbath, but how one should keep it.
5. The emphasis, on the Sabbath that is, changes from the Old Testament nationalistic system of communal Sabbath keeping, and thus fulfilling the letter of the law, to the New Testament individual responsibility of personal worship on the Sabbath, fulfilling the spirit of the law. Thus the Sabbath becomes a present type of the rest yet to come. In other words, if you are keeping it right in its spirit, then you are going to get its benefit, and its benefit is it begins to build within you the peace of mind, the sense of safety that one feels in being in Christ.
6. In the New Testament, not working becomes a secondary, though still important, factor in proper Sabbath keeping, and gives place to fellowshiping with God, fellowshiping with others of like mind, and doing good works.
7. The preparation is essential to proper Sabbath keeping in order to clear the decks of as much of the ordinary mundane activities as possible, so attention can be given to its spiritual aspects.

Well, I hope that this has not been boring to you and has been of great value to you, and I hope that you are able to understand and keep the Sabbath much better than you were before, so that you will not neglect it and get into that syndrome that we find Solomon did in his life.