

Remember the Sabbath Day, Part 2

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[0:00] Some of you might not know this, but I used to play the keyboards for a big kind of mega church back in the day.! It's been a long while.

We used to play some good soul music, some fun stuff. Well, we are in the book of Exodus. We've been going through the Ten Commandments, and we are on commandment number four here. Or excuse me, am I getting this right?

I guess I got to count. One of the things that maybe we should do is memorize the Ten Commandments. How many of you, let me ask this, think that if I asked you right now to come up here, that you could say the Ten Commandments in order?

Okay, a couple of brave people. Come on! No, I'm just kidding. I won't have you come up. But the first one is, you shall have no other gods before me. The second one is about making no graven images.

[1:11] The third one is, take not the Lord's name in vain. Which, by the way, thank you to the Dickerson family. That came up in the song that you shared with us this morning.

We want to be respectful of God and His name. And this is number four about keeping the Sabbath. And like I said last week when we talked about this, this is our second week on this particular commandment.

It's the most controversial of all the commandments. The rest of the nine are, you know, pretty standard among Christians. There's basic agreement.

But when it comes to this one, there is some controversy. Before we jump into some of these things, and looking specifically at what we're going to look at today with this commandment on keeping the Sabbath, I want to provide our perspective.

We did an introduction to the Ten Commandments, and really the whole law of Moses back a few weeks ago. And there were two things that we talked about that I want us to keep in mind as we look at this fourth command today.

[2:19] Number one is that what we said in our memory verse or recited our memory verse today is that as Christians, we are not under the law, but instead we are under grace.

And that changes how we live our lives. Because we are not under the law, the law does not have any power to condemn us. And it also doesn't have any power to make us righteous either.

Our righteousness as Christians comes through Christ alone. God's grace provides that for us through the cross. And for anyone who trusts in Jesus, instead of being under the law, you can be under grace as well.

But at the same time, the New Testament also teaches us that even for us believers under grace, that the law is still good, but only if it's used lawfully.

The law can still teach us right from wrong. It can set boundaries for us, show us the boundaries for avoiding sin, which leads to so much pain and suffering in the world.

[3:33] And it can also, for those commandments that are not moral in nature, but are ceremonial in nature, can point us to future things or past things, point us really to Christ and what He's done for us.

So we shouldn't ignore or diminish God's law or any of these Ten Commandments. Let's go ahead and read this fourth commandment this morning. It comes from Exodus, Exodus chapter 20, starting in verse 8.

Exodus 20, verse 8. Here's what it says. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.

In it you shall do no work, you nor your son nor your daughter, nor your male servant nor your female servant, nor your cattle nor your stranger who is within your gates.
For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and He hallowed it, or He made it holy.

[4:41] Like I said, this is the most controversial of the Ten Commandments. We've established that we're not under the law, we're under grace. But the question is, and this is the controversy, should Christians keep the Sabbath?

Sabbath? And last week we addressed that question. We addressed that head on, and really came to the conclusion that Christians should not observe or keep the Sabbath.

Anyway, as it is described in the law. Just to do a quick review of what we looked at last week. Just explaining what the Sabbath is. It is a day of rest.

It's a specific day of rest. Not just any day, but the seventh day of a seven-day week. The Sabbath is not about worship, even though we kind of get that idea today, because we see that as a pattern that we have among Christians, and even among Jews today.

But in the law, it was about rest. Again, not just any day of the week, but the seventh, the last day of the week. It's not something that was just recommended, that, hey, you take a break every once in a while.

[5:52] This was a commandment that actually came with a punishment for the Jewish people who are under the law of Moses. A very severe one. Do you remember what that penalty was?

Death. Wow. And also, this was not just for some people. It was not just for the household leaders. It was just not for the Jewish people, even themselves. But specifically, what we just read, it was for the servants, and the children, the sons and daughters, and also, even for their animals.

That's your cattle. Don't put even your animals to work on the Sabbath day. We talked about four different views that Christians have on the Sabbath.

You have seventh-day Sabbatarianism, big word, which just means that those Christians keep the Sabbath as it is in the law, or generally, how it is in the law, on the seventh day of the week.

And then, you have first-day Sabbatarians, those who believe that after the time of Christ, after the cross, that the Sabbath is meant to be kept, but instead of on the seventh day, in order to honor the Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week, that the Sabbath is changed to a Sunday.

[7:08] You have a view called Lord's Day worship, which says that, hey, there is a day of the Lord called, that is Sunday, the first day of the week. And we see a pattern of Christians gathering together on that day.

And so, even though Christians do not need to keep the Sabbath as the Jews did, that Christians are required to gather together on Sundays.

days. And then, the last view, which is the view that I'm taking, and will continue to take this morning, is what I call the freedom in Christ view, that there is no requirement to keep a Sabbath day.

There is no hard and fast rule, though there are some principles, and that's what we will actually be looking at this morning. We talked about why Christians should not observe the Sabbath.

One, it was established under Moses. This was not something that was even thought about or described in any kind of way outside of the creation story, but that was more of a description, not any kind of commandment.

[8:20] But until the time of Moses, there was no seven-day week and no Sabbath. In the scriptures we read, in the law itself, it says that the Sabbath, the purpose of the Sabbath was to be a sign of Israel's covenant with God.

A sign of Israel's covenant with God. Also, we looked at how that we can see that it is part of the ceremonial law and not the moral law.

Sometimes, you know, believers can have differences on, well, what is ceremonial and what is moral. We talked about that last week and gave some scriptures to try to make that case. And then lastly, and probably most importantly, is we looked in the New Testament, we looked at the epistles of Paul and two scriptures in particular, in which Paul, who is, by the way, the apostle to the

Gentiles, who says that he was given a dispensation of the grace of God for us, for the believers who are under grace.

and he says that you should not observe specific days or weeks or years or any kind of other special days.

So, but that leads to a question for us believers in this age of grace. Does the Sabbath teach us anything? Should we just completely ignore it? What about rest?

[9:52] Should us as Christians, should we rest? What about weekly worship, which is a tradition among Christians? We get together like this, usually on Sunday morning. Is this what we ought to do?

Are we required to do it? What does that look like for us? And that's what we're going to look at today. What can we learn from this fourth commandment? Like I said, these Old Testament scriptures do not directly apply to us, but we can learn from them.

And so we shouldn't ignore the Old Testament, but we should read it with a proper perspective. In Romans chapter 15 verse 4, Paul says this, for whatever things were written before, and he's talking about the Old Testament scriptures, were written for our learning.

And so regardless of whether we are under the law of Moses, or something in the Old Testament applies directly to us, and there are plenty of things in the Old Testament that do apply directly to us.

The Proverbs are one example. Wisdom, much wisdom in the Bible is for any age, right? But even for those things that do not directly apply to us, we can and should learn from us, learn from them.

[11:14] So there are two things that I want us to look at this morning. One is just this whole concept of rest. The Christian and rest.

And then the second one is this weekly practice that we do of gathering together on a weekly basis. So let's start with the first one.

The first one, should Christians rest? So the answer is yes, we should. And by the way, I think that we should learn something about rest from this commandment.

Even though we don't observe the Sabbath directly, it still teaches us something about rest. When we read this fourth commandment, what did we read at the very end of it?

It says this, Exodus 20, verse 11. This is the very last part of the fourth commandment. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.

[12:20] Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and he hallowed it. And so this is describing God's creation account, how God created the heavens and the earth.

And the seventh day, it doesn't just say that he created the earth in six days and then went on to other things, right? It specifically says, and this is in Genesis, and let me read this in a second here, but it specifically says that on that seventh day he rested from all of his works.

Here it is, Genesis chapter two and verse one. Thus the heavens and the earth and all the host of them were finished. And on the seventh day God ended his work, which he had done.

He rested on the seventh day from all of his work, which he had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and he sanctified it because in it he rested from all his work, which God had created and made.

And by that way, if you are inclined to look at the Hebrew or to read this in the Hebrew, you will find that that word translated rested is what word? Or the root of it anyway is Sabbath.

[13:29] He Sabbath on that day. And again, the word Sabbath just simply means, we looked at this last week, but the word Sabbath simply just means to stop, to cease, to rest.

So, there is this pattern of God resting on the seventh day. And even though there is no commandment at all at this time or any time for 2,500 years until the time of Moses, no command at all to rest on any day of the week, we do see this as a pattern that God points to in this fourth commandment.

I'd actually like to look at the history of not just the Sabbath, but also this whole idea of a week, a weekly pattern. Today, we kind of take our work week, if you might call it that, for granted.

It's practiced not only in this country, but really all across the world, in which there is a work week. Usually, we consider it five days, and then two days of rest.

We call it the weekend. But, unlike many of the other patterns of time in our culture, in our world, for example, our day, our month, and our year, those are all actually governed or informed by what? [14:57] By the movement of celestial bodies, right? So, we measure a day by how quickly the earth turns on its axis. And, we measure a month by the patterns of the moon, the phases of the moon.

And, then, we measure a year, right, by the orbit of the earth around the sun. But, a week does not have any pattern that would indicate seven days means something celestially. And, so, the idea of a seven-day week actually comes exclusively from the Jewish scriptures, the Hebrew scriptures.

It was a uniquely Jewish thing. And, it's something that actually made Israel very unique, especially when they were dispersed among the other people groups of the world, among the Babylonians and the Persians and the Greeks and the Romans.

Romans, they were very different. They observed this day. Every seven days, these Jews would just rest. They wouldn't do any work. They wouldn't do any labor.

[16:07] And, it actually caused a little bit of friction between the Jews and the people that they lived among. In fact, you can find writings among the Romans around the time of Jesus in which they called the Jews lazy because every seventh day they would just stop working.

We do see other kind of week type patterns throughout history. Sometimes we see ten days, eight days, six days.

And the Romans actually did have some kind of a seven-day pattern that was introduced right around the time of Christ, maybe a generation or two. In my research, I found that focus specifically in the center of Rome in Italy there, was a pattern of a seven-day week.

In fact, that's where they started to name these days after their gods. And there was some kind of reference to celestial bodies.

They named their days after the seven celestial bodies that they could observe in the sky at that time. The sun, the moon, moon, and then there were five planets that they could observe at that time.

[17:30] And the days of the week, the names that we use today, are actually those same names. They're the German versions in most cases of those names.

But we call it Saturday because it's named after the god of Saturn, or the false god, I should say. And Monday, if I'm getting this right, I think it was about the moon, and then Sunday is named after the sun.

But during the time of Jesus, in Rome, there was somewhat of a loose schedule that we might call a week that was actually eight days, and that was the most common.

And it was actually, there wasn't anything about resting on the eighth day, but the eighth day was the market day. It was the day in which people would come and bring their crops in or their things to sell on the markets.

And that was the popular cycle that we might call a weekly cycle at that time. Now, after the Jewish, after the time of Jesus, Christians continued to observe a seven-day week, just like the Jews did, and the Christians would actually meet on Sundays, and that eventually became a part of the greater culture.

[19:05] During, in the 300s, Constantine was emperor over Rome, and he became a Christian, and he started Christianizing the entire Roman Empire, and he actually, as part of that, he declared the seven-day week to be an official part of the Roman Empire, and actually required or made Sundays to be an official holiday, especially for government officials.

It wasn't required like the Jewish Sabbath was, but it was a day off for government officials, and that pattern has continued even to this day and spread beyond the Roman Empire to where a seven-day week is observed basically everywhere in the whole world.

So with all that as the history, to see kind of where we are today and why we have what we have today, back to the question, should Christians rest?

We said yes, but how should Christians rest? Should Christians take off Saturday? Should Christians take off Sunday? Should we take off both days?

I like that idea. Two days off a week? Should we rest from sundown to sundown like the Jews did and still do?

[20:31] What does a day of rest look like? What should it look like? Should you play games? Is it okay to play volleyball or go bowling on your day of rest?

Is it okay if you have to fix the family van so that you can drive it to work or some other event on Monday or some other day in that week? Is it okay to work on your hobbies to do some woodworking or something like that?

If you are a Christian business owner, is it okay for you to have your business open on a Sunday or on a Saturday? Is that okay? There are some businesses, Christian owned usually, that actually close their businesses on Sunday.

When you are looking for those waffle fries after church, you are going to be highly disappointed because Chick Filet is closed. Here is the answer.

The answer is that we have freedom as Christians on how we rest. We have freedom but also we ought to use wisdom.

[21:40] The Bible talks in the New Testament about living by grace. We are not under the law, we are under grace and we ought to live by grace and this is part of what it means to live by grace.

We have freedom in Christ, especially when it comes to ceremonial type laws, but we ought to use the wisdom that God has given us.

Paul actually talks about this in his letter to the Galatians. If you are familiar with the letter to the Galatians, it is actually somewhat of an adversarial letter because Paul is very upset with what is going on with his church that he started there in Galatia.

They have been influenced by Christians who came out of Judaism and they are telling these Galatian people that in order to be a really good Christian, that you have to circumcise and keep the rest of the law of Moses.

And Paul gets very animated in this letter and he is very emphatic. No, do not put yourself under the law. It will be detrimental to your Christian life.

[22:51] In Galatians chapter 4, we won't go into it because it's a quite expansive passage there, but he talks about how when people were under the law, they were like slaves slaves or like children, like young children whose life is basically like a slave.

And for a slave or a young child, your life is basically being told what to do every moment of your life, right? Being told when to do this and when to do that when it comes to food.

You've got to eat your vegetables, right? And oh, you can only have one piece of cake, right? When you're a child, you need that structure, that rigid structure.

When it comes to school, well, you have to finish your homework before you go out to play. Or when it comes to rest, you have to be in bed by 8:30. But what happens when children grow up? They become responsible for how they live their life, for what time they go to bed, to what foods they eat, to how many pieces of cake they have after dinner.

[24:08] And this is what God wants from us. He wants us to grow up in the freedom that he has given us in Christ, but also to make wise decisions.

Let me just read a few passages here from Galatians to kind of bring this home. Galatians chapter 4, verse 1. Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all.

But he is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the fathers. A child is just like the servants, just being told what to do, until the time comes when you become an adult.

Even so, when we were children, we were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that they might receive the adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father. Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

[25:20] So we're not slaves, and we're not children. The Bible calls us sons, and again, not young, little children, but adult sons and daughters

of God.

And he wants us to act that way. He continues on, or sorry, yeah, verse 8.

Sorry, Galatians chapter 4, verse 8, he says this, but then indeed, when you did not know God, you served those things which were by nature not God's. But now, after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements to which you desire again to be in bondage?

You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. Paul is saying, listen, putting yourself under these regulations of observing certain days is not good for you.

It's counterproductive. God wants you to grow up. He does not want you to act as children. And he does not want you to act as slaves. It was for freedom that you were set free, that you might have an adult-to-adult relationship with God, to know him, to use your wisdom, the wisdom that he has given you, to live a good and principled life.

[26:47] And he finishes up with this. This is in the first verse in Galatians 5. So he says this, Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

We do not want to come under that yoke of bondage and slavery. So now, as Christians who are not under the law but are under grace, the idea of rest, how we take rest in our lives, is up to us to make decisions about.

It's up to us how we rest. Taking into account not just a rule that we find in the Old Testament, though, again, we can learn from it, but to take into account the full spectrum of our lives in deciding how to honor God's concept, his principle of rest that we see in the scriptures.

So what day should Christians rest? Well, you know what? It's any day. Or part of a day. And it doesn't even necessarily have to be a weekly day.

You know, we have people who are firemen and policemen or nurses, and they might work three on and two off, or, you know, two twelves or four tens or all kinds of different patterns because of the needs of those kinds of jobs.

[28:22] And so rest doesn't look like, you know, the normal nine to five weekly pattern that you see with many office jobs or manufacturing or factory work. It's very different.

But I think weekly rest is good. Some kind of a weekly rest. That's the pattern that we see in the creation account. But again, it's not something that is required.

Many of you may know the history of kind of how we got our 40-hour work week during the heyday of Henry Ford as he was kind of, he really created the whole automobile revolution and the automation of factory work.

work. And he was actually trying to optimize productivity in his own, among his own labor force. And so he did some research.

And at the time, it was common, if you worked in a manufacturing setting, to work six days a week and at least 48 hours, if not more. And through all of his studies, he kind of came to the conclusion that the most optimal pattern was to have a five-day week of work and just 40 hours a week.

[29:48] And it was actually, they had more, they were more productive by having fewer hours if they hit that general pattern of 40 hours a week and five days a week.

Now, you might say, well, five days a week. You know, God says, six days you shall work, right? And one you shall rest. And I remember having a friend who, he had his own business and he said that.

You know, he looked at me because I worked in a, like an office setting five days a week and he was making fun of me. You only work five days a week. The Bible says you should work six. Well, of course, he's not taking into account, you know, many of us when we go home from our jobs, it's not as if there's no work left to be done, right?

Anybody verify that, that, you know, whether it's on a Saturday or Sunday, whatever day of the week, there's plenty of things that you have to do at home that don't get done while you're at an office or at a manufacturing facility or whatever your job might be.

And so, yeah, in general, I think it's good. Work six days, rest to seventh. But we have liberty in how we do that. And different businesses have different labor requirements.

[30:59] You know, I think some businesses are seasonal. You might have some seasons where you have more rest and other seasons, if you're a farmer or if you're a landscaper, where you have less rest.

Less, less rest. Where there are seasons of the year where there's more intense labor. And other seasons where there's more rest available.

people. Also, I think about seasons of life. Based on your age, you're younger, you're trying to get your career going, and man, you just have to work really hard to get your foot in the door, to learn that new trade or skills, to get that experience that you need to really start up a career.

And so, there might be rest, less, less rest during that season of life. I think about mothers. And is a mother's day ever finished?

How, as a mother, especially a mother of young children, do you get that rest that you need? It takes creativity, doesn't it? Maybe naps during the day.

[32:10] Rest can be quite sporadic when you are a young mom, especially. And I think, when I think about men and women, and I think about marriage, I think it is important to live with each other with understanding when it comes to rest.

You know, some people, I have observed, need more rest than others. There are some people that are very ambitious. I think about Elon Musk. I don't know if any of you observe the whole Elon Musk phenomenon.

But the guy literally works 80 hours a week. Seven days. And I cannot imagine how somebody could survive, like literally survive, through that kind of activity. And I wouldn't recommend it either to other people.

But there are just people right out there who are highly ambitious and they just love working. And we shouldn't put, if that's you, then you shouldn't put that kind of thing on somebody else.

And especially not on a spouse. So what does rest look like? We talked about days. What do you do during your times of rest?

[33:23] Well, again, it depends on you and it depends on your family. Something that might look like work to one person is actually restful for another.

There are people that they just love to work on cars. I think about, there's somebody here in this church, he's got an old Corvette that somebody gave to him. And it's in horrible shape.

And one of the things that he loves to do, and it's very restful for him, I'm sure he would say that, is he loves to go out and tinker on that car and try to get that, you know, restored back to its original beauty.

To me, that is just work and only work. But for me, you know, I'm a software engineer. And one of the reasons I became a software engineer is because I am such a geek.

And I love writing code and building things. To me, that's a restful day. If I get to write code, not for somebody else, but for myself, what a restful day that is.

[34:21] But it looks differently for everybody. You know, I even think about playing games. You know, there are churches out there that say, well, you know, if you, on the Sabbath day or on whatever day it is, Sunday, the Lord's Day, you're not allowed to play games.

And you might think about it, when you're playing volleyball, if I went and played volleyball, I'm actually exerting more labor, more physical exertion than during my day job, right?

So, am I resting? Well, I would, that would be very restful for me. Actually, I think many people would say the same thing.

So, there are so many things. That we can do. So many ways that we can rest. Patterns of days of the week. Patterns of how we actually rest.

In 1 Corinthians 6, verse 12, this is what Paul says regarding the law. He says this, All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful.

[35:23] All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. We're not under the law, but that doesn't mean that we should just do whatever.

We should still use our wisdom to live a life that is, as Paul describes here, helpful. Helpful to us and helpful to others. In Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 23, it says, do not, this is Proverbs chapter 23, verse 4.

Do not overwork to be rich. Because of your own understanding, cease. Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings. They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.

You know, there may be times where it's appropriate, even as a Christian, to overwork for a season. Just work really, really hard. I think, you know, there are times where I was just really focused on getting out of debt.

I had built up a horrible amount of debt, and I was just so focused on getting out of that because of the way that it was affecting our family. But, you should never ever overwork to be rich.

[36:35] Don't ever overwork to be rich. That's a fool's errand. The last thing I wanted to talk about was our weekly worship pattern.

And, man, we just kind of ran out of time here with talking about the rest stuff. And, you know, I don't want to take advantage of everybody's 30 minutes of resting in those chairs.

Some of you might fall asleep if I go too long. I think I'm going to save this for another week. Is that okay with everybody? It won't be next week, because next week we'll have our special Easter service.

But the week after that, we can talk more about Sunday worship and what that looks like. And we'll add in some other things too. Specifically about the typology of the Sabbath, which I think is even more important than anything else, is what that Sabbath day rest actually symbolizes.

But let's just end with a few points of note, a few things to think about. The Sabbath was for Israel, not for us.

[37:54] It was a sign of their special covenant with God. And as Christians, we are not under that law. Instead, we're under grace. Colossians 2.16, I'm going to repeat it again. We looked at this last week.

Let no one judge you in food or in drink or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

But at the same time, we can learn from everything in the Old Testament, everything that we find in the scriptures. And we can look to the Sabbath day as a reminder that God designed us, not as machines to work 24-7, but as people who are designed to work, yes, but also to rest, to take regular breaks, to take time off, to go on vacation.

And so let's, as just a response to this message, let's think through in our own lives. What are ways that I can pivot, that I can make an adjustment in my life to take the rest that I should?

Looking at the patterns of rest that we have in our own life. If you're married, this is something that you can talk to your husband or your wife about. How are we doing as a family when it comes to rest?

[39:22] Are we doing a good job in this area or are we failing in some ways? Again, these are matters of wisdom. What adjustments should we make as individuals or as a family?

And then talk it through. And then the last thing that I would recommend is when we come to some kind of a conclusion, again, not for everybody, not something to apply to all people, but something to apply to us, to myself, to our family, come up with a plan and write it down.

Say, hey, this is something that we need to do together as a family, or if it's just an individual, just me individual. And this is the standard that we're going to make. Again, not a legalistic standard, but a plan that we have for our family.

And I think that would be helpful to most of us. Let's end in a word of prayer. Father, rest was important to you, and you want it to be important to us.

We need to be careful not to put ourselves under legalistic standards, but at the same time, there is this principle of rest that you share in the scriptures for our learning. We ask you to work in us, and we look to you to work in us to figure out the best way that that will work in our lives, to honor you with our bodies and our work and our labor, but to honor you also with our rest.

[40:50] We thank you for working in us each and every day. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.