

REST

Hebrews 4:9-13

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Our world is a busy place, and we get caught up in it whether we plan to or get drawn in by someone else. But still, we are responsible for our own actions and inactions. A good question to ask yourself is *what do you busy yourself doing?* Or maybe, *what consumes most of your time in your life?* Even more importantly, ask yourself *am I able to set this thing (or those things) aside one day a week and focus on God?*

Most people do not set aside a sabbath for God anymore but instead, set it aside for themselves. It has become the day to get personal things accomplished. Personal satisfaction with hobbies, leisure, visiting. Even the most avid Christians that say they *do* set it aside for God only set aside an hour or two on Sunday mornings and maybe a couple more in the evenings, though most churches have abandoned Sunday evening services due to lack of interest.

Yet, God told Moses to write: "Remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy" In other words, set it apart for God. Distinguish it from all other days of the week. To the Christian (and to the Jew) the word Holy when used in Scripture means to "set aside for God" and for no other. No other includes yourself.

Exodus 20:8-11 — Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 1but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Now listen to what God later directly told Moses:

Exodus 31:12-17 ESV — And the Lord said to Moses, "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore, the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.

Wow! This is not only the longest of the Ten Commandments, but it is also the only one that God directly calls for death as the penalty for not obeying. Now, while I do not believe God is going to chase you down with lightning bolts and strike you dead (but that is up to him), I do believe He was speaking of a danger in His creation that came about because of the curse He put in place after the fall in the Garden of Eden. This broken creation we live in is full of danger, and God is the only one that truly knows the extent of these dangers. Now think: what is the number one cause of death cited by doctors and medical researchers? STRESS! According to the American Psychological Association, chronic stress is linked to six leading causes of death including heart disease, cancer, respiratory ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide. Number seven might be learning of this damage that stress can do.

Stress is a killer. Sabbath is a lifesaver. Stress takes from us. Sabbath gives to us. Stress weakens, Sabbath strengthens. Stress harms, Sabbath heals. Note that the devil would have us believe that Sabbath takes from us. Just another reason he is referred to as the great deceiver. Sabbath is a time to draw near to God so he can draw near to you (James 4:8). It is a time to spend with the Great Physician. You see, the more we know about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the more we understand His plan “to prosper you, to give you hope and a future” as He did for the prophet Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Not only is Sabbath a time that God uses to help us get to know Him better, but it is a time to get to know ourselves better. Sabbath is a time that the Holy Spirit uses to convict us of sin. He makes us aware of some that we do not even realize we are committing. Sabbath is a time that Jesus, our Lord, and Savior helps us take inventory of our life, to review our weekly activities, past, and future, in light of His desires.

Sabbath is a time of redirection for the week ahead, from the One who knows us best... remember our text this morning: **And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13).** Remember that we do not have to give an account so He can be informed. God already knows everything we have done or thought about doing. Sabbath brings us to a place to consider those things so that we can be informed of REAL truth, not the deceptions of the devil.

What are some ways that you can improve the way you intentionally make time for God each week? Would you be willing to face ridicule and forfeit millions of dollars a week as Truett Cathy did, and his heirs still do, just to be obedient to God about keeping His Sabbath?

Think about this: if someone remotely famous was coming to a destination close to where you are *wouldn't you do everything you could to at least get a glimpse of them" If for no other reason than curiosity and bragging rights?* Yet the King of the universe invites us to “come after” Him for one day out of seven every week and we struggle to find the resolve and energy to run against our culture and do just that.

Spending time with God, both corporately (later here in Hebrews 10, the Bible instructs us to “not forsake the assembling together” in His name.) and privately cues the axiom I mentioned earlier from Jesus' brother James, **“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”** Sabbath is a time to draw near to God so that we can be shown, and confess, our sins, seek and receive forgiveness to cleanse our hearts, and forfeit our corrupted will for His perfect will.

A few years ago, when I was going through an intense time of searching and turmoil, God inserted a phrase into my prayers that I have faithfully uttered to this day. "Lord, keep me (us) in the center of Your will." Such a simple prayer, and yet it strikes directly at the purpose of Sabbath and why honoring this commandment is important.

Are you at the place in your life where you can sincerely pray that God would hold you in the center of His will, and commit to taking the steps He directs as a result?

God's richest blessings!

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