

<b>Series:</b> Ten	<b>Reference:</b> Exodus 20:8-11; Hebrews 4:9-11	<b>Title:</b> The Fourth	<b>Date:</b> 07.10.2022
<b>Website Writeup:</b> God calls His people to observe the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a gift from God - the high point of the week.			

### COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

Turn with me to Exodus 20:1-17 on p52 in your pew Bibles. Let's stand & envision being there the day Moses came down from Mt. Sinai hearing these Ten Commandments read for the first time. (Read aloud)

*And God spoke all these words:*

*<sup>2</sup>"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

*<sup>3</sup>"You shall have no other gods before me.*

*<sup>4</sup>"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup>but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

*<sup>7</sup>"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*

*<sup>8</sup>"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

*<sup>12</sup>"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.*

*<sup>13</sup>"You shall not murder.*

*<sup>14</sup>"You shall not commit adultery.*

*<sup>15</sup>"You shall not steal.*

*<sup>16</sup>"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

*<sup>17</sup>"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

That would've been a memorable day. Think about not every having heard those words before, it must've been amazing; words which have changed the world!

Today we look at the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment; keeping the Sabbath day of rest. Everyone struggles with intentional rest which is what the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is all about. Interestingly, God's moral Law includes a commandment for rest. Rest's important. Not only for our health but in confronting pride in thinking we're so high capacity that we don't need it, redirecting our attention to the Creator & His desires for our lives.

If you've ever had a 2 year old and sat 5 feet away trying to get them to do something while their busy watching TV, it's the same principle. We yell until we're blue in the face, while their sitting their catching flies with their mouths! We can't focus on the Father's desires while tinkering with our toys - multitasking's a lie.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 states...*Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray continually, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* There's a sense in the Christian life that we're always to be focused on the Lord. But the Sabbath takes this to a new & necessary level - it cuts out all distraction, silences all other voices, and brings our attention & focus onto Jesus. Slowing down, stopping, redirecting ourselves to the Lord in all things a day a week, learning the good it brings.

In one article titled, *Why It's Important to Allow Yourself to Rest*, it says...“Even without a pandemic, Americans are stressed. About 33 percent of people report feeling extreme stress, and up to 73 percent report stress impacts their mental health. Rest's vital for better mental health, increased concentration & memory, a healthier immune system, reduced stress, improved mood & even a better metabolism.

Rest & sleep are different, but both are equally important to mental, emotional & physical health. Prioritizing rest can actually improve your quality of sleep. Rest looks different for everyone; it's any behavior aimed at increasing physical & mental well-being. Active, or passive. Taking a walk. Lying in a hammock. Regardless of how you choose to rest, restful behavior helps recover & recharge from physical & mental effort - rest is linked to better physical & mental health.

Sleep's a body-mind state - sensory detachment from surroundings. An essential bodily function impacting every system from cognitive function to immune health. Quality sleep helps us reset, recover & recharge. Absolutely vital to brain function, memory, concentration, immune health & metabolism. Unlike rest, sleep's something your body can't function without. Sleep deprived, your body will actually force you to sleep, no matter what - you can avoid rest, but you can't avoid sleep.

If left untreated, long-term stress can cause chest pain, headaches, digestive issues, anxiety, depression, changes in sexual desire & inability to focus. It may not seem like a big deal to skip relaxation in your daily routine. However, there are benefits to rest: reduced stress & anxiety, improved mood, decreased blood pressure, chronic pain relief, improved immune health & stronger cardiovascular system."

God called His people to observe the Sabbath, to rest, long before any modern scientific article was written on the issue. A gift from Him, meant to be a high point of the week. As usual, modern science only confirms what the Bible's told us long before!

Sadly, many today begin from the standpoint of culture as their standard of measure for truth. Whereas, we measure culture & science by Scripture. They shoehorn Scripture into culture - discarding from God's Word that which doesn't fit the cultural narrative, or scientific theory. Their revelation emerges from within, from sinful faulty human hearts & minds. Ours is revealed to us from the outside, from the Creator of all things - solid Truth emanating from the mouth of God.

Therefore, we measure culture & all thought against Scripture; if there's clear contradiction we discard it, if there's question, we are obedient to Scripture & wait for the Lord to clarify over time. Realizing answers may not come fully in this life as we see in 1 Corinthians 13:12 where it says...*For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

The 4<sup>th</sup> command comes with interesting commentary. It's found in verse 8, and for the next 3 verses, we're told why this commandment's so important - it doesn't list the scientific benefits, but it does give us the command & moral weight of it. This is why it's important to trust the divine Word of God, knowing He knows best for life. In other words, we may not know the exact scientific reasons why something is right or good for us from a reading of God's Word, but we can trust the Creator of all things to know & direct us to that which is best & good.

For instance, when you were a kid, and you went to stick a fork in a wall socket, your dad didn't break out a whiteboard explaining all the science & danger behind electrical flow. He simply said, "Stop! Don't do that, it could kill you!" And you obeyed, because he was dad. In our prideful arrogance we approach the Scriptures expecting God to explain all the intricate reasons behind everything. When in actuality He's allowed, being the Father He is, to simply tell us without explanation; 'Do this', 'Don't do that'. Not to mention, all the books in the world couldn't explain every detail of Creation either. And even if God did spend that time, we wouldn't read them anyhow - we struggle to read the one Bible He's revealed already! All this is why Francis Chan wisely says, "When I disagree with something in God's Word, I just assume that I'm wrong."

Let's notice in vv8-11 of Exodus 20, none of the other nine commandments get the same level of attention as the Sabbath. Even the prohibition on idolatry doesn't have as much commentary as God's command regarding the Sabbath. So, rest seems to be a very important factor for a healthy life which reflects the character of God - God calls us to healthy mind & body which glorifies His holy name....*"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9Six days you shall labor & do all your work, 10but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11For in six days the Lord made the heavens & the*

*earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day & made it holy.”*

So, it begins with a definition. The Sabbath's a day of rest ordained or consecrated by God, as verses 9-11 demonstrate. Ordination & consecration are a setting apart with conferred holiness on some thing or someone. The reason is that the day's rooted in the creation order: God didn't just create the physical world with all its various aspects, He also *created*, or built into it, a day of rest. A blessed day which God *made* holy; the only one of its kind with such a distinction (Genesis 2:3). Israel observed the Sabbath on what is now our Saturday. A day to cease work & rest. In doing so, we reflect on the God who wasn't so consumed with His work that He couldn't do the same. God models rest.

Now, a question...when was the last time you obeyed, following God's model & took a Sabbath? I'd venture to guess none of us take a whole day a week to rest. Although it's holy set apart, and fosters health in many ways in order to be able to reflect God's holy name & fulfill our calling well.

But we get confused about God's Law in the church. How does a believer in Jesus relate to God's Law? Doesn't it say we shouldn't eat pork? It does. And Jesus fulfilled that aspect of the Law, so when you eat a bite of bacon say, "Thank you, Jesus!"

The Ten Commandments & other moral Law in the Old Testament are different than much of the other Old Testament Law, and as such, are still in effect. We intuitively acknowledge this. No one thinks God's okay with stealing. Or that God's okay with lying about stealing. Or that God's okay with killing people who saw you steal. We'd all say, "God's not okay with that." But if someone was to say God's equally not okay with you ignoring His command to take a weekly Sabbath, then suddenly there's pushback: "God fulfilled the Law!" But we can't pick & choose which of the Ten Commandments are still in play - they're all still in effect.

In one blog a pastor asks... "So how do we know which of the 600+ laws in the Old Testament apply to Christians today? Should we avoid eating shellfish? Ought we to observe Passover? Is it wrong to steal? Do we have to observe the Sabbath? Are sexual relations between blood relatives wrong? Is tithing an eternal commandment?"

We have to answer this question on something better than intuition. The terms of the new covenant must guide, and what we find in the New Testament is, the Civil Law was God's way of shaping Hebrew society in a certain time & place, therefore not binding today. The Ritual/Ceremonial Law used sacrifice, festivals & the Tabernacle to teach lessons about sin & atonement which has been superseded by the work of Christ since He's fully atoned for our sin (see Hebrews.) Moral Law has ongoing validity, mostly because they're repeated in one form or another in the New Testament, Jesus confirms it & they reflect the character & nature of God.

But lest we repeat the legalism & self-righteousness of the Pharisees & teachers of the Law of Jesus' day, we're guided in the new covenant by this one transcendent principle:

the law of love or “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Jesus said the whole Old Covenant Law can be summed up by “Love the Lord your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-40). And we remember from past sermons, those two statements sum up the two lists in the Ten Commandments. The first 4 which teach us how to live in relation to God. The remaining 6 which teach us how to live in relation to others. In those two summary statements Jesus says all Moral Law still stands & it’s by His grace & mercy in which we stand up under it.

We sometimes need to set aside our self-centeredness. The biblical narrative is the story of God moving in history among people in order to bring salvation to humanity, but that doesn’t mean every verse is directly about us. The law of the Old Testament is the Word of God for all people for all time, but some is given to specific people groups in the context of God’s development of a covenant relationship with human beings. The apostle Paul puts it this way: “*The law was our guardian [custodian, tutor] until Christ came that we might be justified by faith*” (Gal. 3:24). It was put in place for a time to lead us to understand our need for Christ.

The Ceremonial & Civic Law stand as true expressions of the will & ways of God, expressed in a particular era of what it means to be the covenant people of God but fulfilled in Christ. Jesus summed it up when He said: “*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*” (Matt. 5:17).<sup>1</sup> The Moral Law stands given it expresses the character & nature of God Himself in which we were created to reflect.

Given all that, the other argument often made is to spiritualize the Sabbath. To say, “Well, it’s a principle, and so long as you find an hour or two to be alone with God, you’re honoring the Sabbath.” That’s like saying, “Well, if you stab someone in the arm & it isn’t lethal, then you don’t have to worry about the fact that you missed their heart!” Nonsense.

And the truth remains, our over-worked, frenetic schedule, combined with sedentary lifestyles, are killing our minds & our ability to think; killing creativity; and literally our bodies!<sup>2</sup> It’s partly the reason behind the ills of society - we’re crazy over-worked beings & our current political & economic situation doesn’t help. Obeying God’s commands are good for us, including the Sabbath.

The Hebrew word for Sabbath literally means a cessation of work.<sup>3</sup> Less of a command, and more of a gift to be opened. The Sabbath brings balance to life by forcing us to make God central priority. This means, when we say, “Okay God, I’m going to take seriously your command to weekly set aside work, attend worship, relax & gain refreshment in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2015/01/how-should-we-understand-the-law/>

<sup>2</sup> Dan Pontefract, “[You Are Way Too Busy: It’s Hampering Your Ability to Think and Be Productive.](#)” published July 9, 2018

<sup>3</sup> *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, s.v. “[H7673, shabath.](#)”

your presence,” we’ll have to start looking at our lives & figure out those things we need to say no to in order to observe the Sabbath. The guiding principle should be that nothing should be placed before our corporate gathering of worship & His day of rest.

In the movie *Waking Ned Devine*, there’s a scene at the end of the day after discovering that someone in the village had died. A couple who were friends of the deceased are about to go to sleep & the woman says, “I think we need to make some room in this day for prayers.”<sup>4</sup>

Is that how we treat God & His commandments? We say, “Well, I guess we need to figure out how to make room in this day or in this week for God.” Rather, it’s better to regularly commit to the Sabbath. In doing so we find the first three commands are much easier to follow as a result. When you give God command of your time, then suddenly it’s much easier to put Him first, to not seek after idols & not misuse His name.

In his classic work on the Sabbath, Jewish author Abraham Heschel explains that observation of the Sabbath encourages us to just be: “To gain control of the world of space is certainly one of our tasks. The danger begins when in gaining power in the realm of space we forfeit all aspirations in the realm of time. There is a realm of time where the goal isn’t to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord. Life goes wrong when the control of space, the acquisition of things of space, becomes our sole concern.” He’s saying, the Sabbath teaches that time, not money, becomes our most precious commodity.<sup>5</sup>

Obedying this command also helps us to cast our minds on the One who’s ultimately done all the work necessary to make us acceptable to God. Only Jesus can do the work which was required to make us right with God; only Jesus can do the impossible work of perfect obedience to God in all His requirements; only Jesus can do the hard task of taking our sin-soaked rags & clothing us with righteousness.

The Sabbath encourages us to cast our mind on the One who truly worked on our behalf & encourages us to just rest in *His* work. In doing so, we cast our minds forward to the great Sabbath we’ll enjoy in the world to come, resting & worshiping in the presence of God forever.

*As it states in Hebrews 4:9-11...“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; <sup>10</sup>for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. <sup>11</sup>Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.”*

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<sup>4</sup> *Waking Ned Devine*, directed by Kirk Jones, Tomboy Films, 1998

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* [1951; New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005], 3

When we obey God's command to obey the Sabbath, we have time to truly enjoy the work of Christ, honor God well, become healthier emotionally & physically & are able to look forward to the greater life to come in Christ.