

The Law of Life - 2 : The Fourth Commandment

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The New Creation

The Sabbath was instituted at the close of creation. It is the memorial of God's creative power. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious; and His righteousness endures forever. He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered." Psalm 111.2-4. This last statement would be better rendered, "He hath made a memorial for His wonderful works." In the "song for the Sabbath day," the Psalmist says, "I will triumph in the works of Thy hands." God alone works righteousness. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." Psalm 145.17. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2.10, R.V.

The Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation," and His everlasting power is seen in all the things that He has made. Therefore the power of the Gospel is to create, to make new. "If any man is in Christ there is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold they are become new. But all things are of God." 2 Corinthians 5.18, 19, R.V., margin. In Christ "is our redemption" because "in Him were all things created." Colossians 1.14,16. He is Redeemer because He is Creator, and redemption is creation. It is a complete and perfect work. Christ's last words on the cross were, "It is finished!" The cross of Christ brings those who accept it into the condition in which man was at the close of the sixth day of creation, when God saw everything that He had made, "and behold it was very good." Therefore, since the Sabbath is the mark or seal of a perfect new creation, it is the seal of the Gospel, the sign of the cross, the pledge of the complete redemption of all things.

"Remember"

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." When shall we remember it? Many seem to think that the commandment merely requires them to remember it on Friday, so as to be able to get their work out of the way, and be ready to sit down and rest at the setting of the sun. This is well, but it is infinitely below what the commandment says. The word is absolute and unlimited. We are to remember it all the time, everyday in the week. We are always to remember the sanctifying power which it reveals, in order that we may continually worship God "in the beauty of holiness," "lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." Knowing that only those who are holy can truly worship a holy God and keep a holy day, we must remember the Sabbath which makes known God the sanctifier, and then when the Sabbath day comes to us, we shall be ready for it. It comes bringing a blessing; for God "blessed the seventh day." It is frequently said, with a view to avoiding the force of the commandment, that we may have a blessing at any time. Some say, "I keep every day holy." Now we not only may, but should, experience the blessing of God every

day. But a blessing upon us is not the same as a blessing upon the day. As we have already seen, we cannot keep any day holy except the one, which God has made holy. Our motion or condition has no effect upon it; but the day is given to us to effect us. Do not forget that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” No man’s holiness can impart holiness to any day; but the Sabbath was given that we might partake of the holiness of God, and be kept holy every day. While God blesses us every day, there is a special blessing on the seventh day, even the blessing of the Sabbath, and this blessing assures to us all the blessings that we may have on any other day.

The Blessing of Eden

The Sabbath is a fragment of Eden that comes down to us untouched by the curse. It is the bridge by which men may pass from Eden lost to Eden restored, freed from the intervening curse. It is the rest to which Christ calls all who labor and are heavy laden. By it we become sharers of His burden, which is light, for He lays upon us only a “weight of glory.” So the Sabbath, when kept in the Spirit, brings to us the glory of that new creation when “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” and is the pledge of the time when all the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Although Eden has been taken from the earth, that it might not suffer the effects of the curse, the reality of it is left us in the Sabbath, that we may come back to the beginning, and find in the beginning the end, “even the salvation of our souls.” 1 Peter 1.9. The reason why now, at this time, we have the Sabbath made clear as never before in this world’s history, is because Eden is about to be restored, and we must be made ready for the change. When Christ comes, He appears not as a stranger, but as one with whom we are well acquainted, and He will conduct us to Eden, not a strange country, but a familiar home. To this end God has given us the Sabbath, the essential part of Eden. There is to be a change now day by day, through the sanctifying power that the Sabbath makes us know and remember, so that at last when we get to Eden we shall not have to get used to our surroundings. Before the last day comes, we shall have drunk of the river of Eden, and eaten of the hidden manna. “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures,” or, literally, “the river of Thy Eden.” Psalm 36.8

Rest, not a burden

Sometimes when we talk about Sabbath-keeping, people will say, as though they were telling something new, “Oh, but keeping the Sabbath will not save us; we are saved by faith, not by works.” Exactly; and that is what the Sabbath teaches us. We keep the Sabbath, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved. *Sabbath-keeping is rest in God, the assurance of His finished work.* “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” By believing, we receive the perfect works, which God Himself has prepared for us to walk in. These works were finished from the foundation of the world. Therefore whoever receives them must find perfect rest, because when the work is done and well done, rest must necessarily follow. “There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.” Note, it is the people of God who have the rest. “We which have believed do enter into rest,” and they which do

not believe, cannot rest. *There can be no perfect Sabbath-keeping without perfect faith in God, which means perfect righteousness, because we are justified by faith. So the Sabbath means pre-eminently justification by faith.* Although there are many believers in Christ who observe Sunday, thinking it to be the Sabbath, it is nevertheless *a fact that Sunday-keeping stands as a sign of attempted justification by works.* It is the attempt of man to do the work which only God can do, namely, sanctify a day; for God never sanctified any day except the seventh day, so that all the sanctity Sunday has is what man has put upon it. He who can sanctify one thing can sanctify anything, because he must have the sanctifying power in himself. So *the idea that man can make any day holy, involves the idea that he can make himself holy, that is, justify himself by his own works; its principle is that man has holiness in himself. Sunday-keeping is therefore the sign of the man of sin who "exalts himself against God."*

The Sabbath is rest; that is the meaning of the word. The word "Sabbath" is the untranslated Hebrew word for "rest." It would be well if it had been translated into our language, instead of transferred. The word "Sabbath" conveys to the Hebrew mind exactly what the English word "rest" does to ours. So we may read: "Remember the rest day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the rest of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work." How can anybody call this a burden? Rest is not a burden; to cease from labor is not wearisome; rest, absolute, perfect rest, the rest that cannot be disturbed by anything on earth, is the sum of all blessings. He who knows the Sabbath indeed can never count it a burden to keep it. Such a one will never say: "I could not make a living if I should keep the Sabbath," because the Sabbath reveals God, in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." It reveals Him who delivers from the power of darkness, and the curse and burdens and perplexities of this present evil world, and translates us into the kingdom of His dear Son, making known to us the power and the joy of the world to come. Then remember it, and keep it, that you may know the sweetness of rest in the bosom of the Father, and delight yourself in the Lord.