

Keeping the Sabbath Holy

Introduction

It is my great honor and privilege to be able to stand before you today to discuss the holy Sabbath as outlined in God's Word. The fourth commandment of keeping the Sabbath is under attack today perhaps more than any of the other commandments. Most truly born-again Christians will uphold the virtue of the other commandments and yet many will be casual in their observance of the day that God set apart and commanded each of us to keep holy. The goal for our time together this morning is to properly understand the following three areas:

- First, God's purpose for the Sabbath
- Second, the principles on the observance of the Sabbath communicated to us in His Holy Word, and
- Third, the practical application of this grand and glorious commandment.

Main Scriptural Text

Let us start by reading the text of the fourth commandment, which states:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8-11, KJV)

Let us pray.

Definition of the Word Sabbath

In order to understand this commandment, we must understand the meaning of the word Sabbath. The Hebrew word is “shabbath” (pronounced shab-bawth’) and this word carries with it the idea of rest and ceasing from exertion. The Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines the word Sabbath as follows:

The day which God appointed to be observed by the Jews as a day of rest from all secular labor or employments, and to be kept holy and consecrated to his service and worship.

The definition goes on to describe the Sabbath in terms of how it applies to the Christian faith. It states: “the Christian church very early begun and still continue to observe the

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first day of the week, in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ on that day, by which the work of redemption was completed.”

Theological Basis of the Sabbath

It is absolutely critical that we understand that the basis for the Sabbath was established at the creation of the world in the blessed and incredible creation week. The Lord God Omnipotent provided a pattern for us to follow by resting from His creative work on the seventh day. The principle of setting apart this day was done for man’s benefit- but in order to receive these benefits, we must be committed to observing the Sabbath in accordance with the truth revealed to us in God’s Word. In addition to the establishment of treating the Sabbath with special honor based on the order ordained at creation, it is also important to note that God provided the principle of resting on the Sabbath to the Israelites even PRIOR to giving the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. Let us consider the time that the Israelites were being given manna during their wandering in the desert prior to their entrance into the Promised Land. In this time, God specifically commanded that they were NOT to gather the manna on the Sabbath.

We read the following in Exodus 16:4-5:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days." (KJV)

Each day except for the Sabbath, the people were not to keep any of the manna that they gathered until the following day and those that ignored this command of the Lord were greeted the following day with maggots in their manna- as well as an accompanying stench. However, the day before the Sabbath, the people were to gather twice as much as the other days so that they would not have to go out on the Sabbath to perform the task of collecting their needed provision. Thus, God was telling them that the Sabbath was to be set apart as different from the other days in the week and when God gave the fourth commandment to Moses, the principle of remembering the Sabbath day and treating it uniquely from all of the other days of the week was already established.

The Purpose of the Sabbath

In Mark 2:27, we read that **“The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (KJV)**. Since the Sabbath was made for man, we need to understand its purpose so that we can go beyond just knowing the commandment in our head and instead be obeying the commandment in our hearts and in our lives. The keeping of the Sabbath is incredibly practical- but without an understanding of its purpose, our obedience can become little more than a method of conformity to a list of rules and regulations without the proper heart behind it. Without the appropriate motivation, we will be in danger of being like the Pharisees, who came up with HUNDREDS of items on

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their lists outside of the Bible identifying what they could and couldn't do in order to live what they defined to be a godly life- even though this life was by no means pleasing to God as we see in the harsh words of our Lord Jesus in the New Testament for these Pharisees. By the same token, let us be careful not to construe every regulation about the Sabbath as legalistic and move to the extreme of seeing that we are given a free license to do anything and everything that we please. Where the Bible is clear on what principles are to be applied to the Sabbath, we want to be equally clear. If there are activities that are NOT to be performed on the Sabbath according to God's Word, we must not be afraid to boldly proclaim those restrictions. In addition, if there are activities that ARE to be performed on the Sabbath, then we must be equally bold in proclaiming those activities. As we look at both the restrictions and the commanded activities for the Sabbath, we will establish a structure for how we are to live out this blessed and holy day.

The foundation of the issue of the Sabbath (just like the foundation for conforming every area of our life to His purpose) is our love for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and our desire based on that love to obey His commandments. God is interested in the heart as He states in the book of Deuteronomy:

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:5)

It is the heart that is really the central issue of keeping the Sabbath and the central issue to living a life that is honoring and pleasing to the Lord. Knowing that the matter of the heart is of prime importance to the conforming of our lives to become like Christ, let us see what we can understand from God's Word for the purpose of the Sabbath and how that purpose fits in the framework of establishing the Sabbath for the benefit of man.

Recognizing God's Sovereignty over Time

The first principle that we recognize from the fourth commandment is that God has sovereignty over our time. The LORD God Almighty, who is maker of heaven and earth, is the one that has created the rules, precepts, principles, and commandments to govern this world. In His mercy and grace, He has given us all that we need in order to live a life that is pleasing to Him through His infallible Word. With His establishment of the rules of this world, He most certainly has sovereignty over how His creation is to use the gifts that He has given them. One of the gifts that God has given each and every one of us is the gift of time and since He is the creator of both time and every living creature, we should look to His wisdom for how He wants us to use that time.

The fourth commandment is an affirmation of God's sovereignty over the use of our time. He gives us a pattern for how we are to order our time during each week- six days are to be used for work and one day is to be set apart as a Sabbath. The Sabbath is to be used for a special, holy purpose unto the Lord.

As I think about God's magnificent creation, I am absolutely in awe of His power and majesty. It is interesting that science has been unable to find a correlation in nature to the

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seven day period that we term a week. Days have their correlation in the rotation of the earth (which occurs at over 1,000 miles per hour at the equator) with one day being equal to one of the earth's revolutions on its axis. Months have their correlation with the phase of the moon, with the moon being illuminated more or less throughout the month when viewed from the observance point of the earth. Years have their correlation in the orbiting of the earth around the sun with one year equaling one complete circuit of the earth around what the Bible terms in the book of Genesis as the greater light. However, there has been no scientific or historical correlation of the week outside of the Bible. Thus, the establishment of the week in our calendar is entirely based on what the Lord set forth in His Holy Writ. This fact should make us all the more mindful that how we are to use our time throughout the week should be in concert with His plan for that time.

Recognizing God's Sovereignty over Our Work

The second principle that we recognize from our main Biblical text is that work is to be performed six days during each week- but there is not to be work performed on the Sabbath. There seem to be two prevalent and erroneous viewpoints on the subject of work. The first can be summarized as "Work is a curse to be endured until you can get yourself to the weekend (or any other day off) where you are finally able to enjoy the good in this life." This perspective fails to recognize the following three points:

1. Man's work is a gift from the Lord and was given to him PRIOR to the fall of Adam into sin and did not come as a result of Original Sin.
2. God uses our work as a means for the heads of households to provide for the needs of ourselves and the needs of our family so that we can fulfill our responsibility given by the Lord.
3. We are to use our work to take dominion over the specific area where God has called us.

Consequently, work cannot be viewed as a curse and simply a means to get us to a time where we can selfishly do whatever we want. The view of the Christian should be to use each and every day to the honor and glory of God and that includes those days that we are to work.

The second erroneous viewpoint can be stated as "Time is money and if you are not gaining business and accumulating material wealth each and every day, then either you won't stand a chance against your competition or at the very least you are missing out on the true potential of your business." This perspective is also at odds with the Bible and fails to recognize the following three key characteristics of the Biblical view of work.

1. Our work is not to be the main focus of our lives- our Lord is to be the main focus of our lives and nothing should be placed above Him. If we see the Sabbath as a way that we are missing out on gaining either more money or more business, then we have elevated our business above Our Redeemer.

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2. The results of our work are not entirely dependent on our own efforts. The results are in the hands of the One who is over all- the God of the Bible. Deliberately disobeying one of God's commandments for our own selfish gain will never yield God's blessing.
3. Our time is not our own- it belongs to the Lord. Therefore, we cannot go through this life simply doing what it is that we want when we want it. We need to be looking to our Lord to see how He wants us to use the time that we have been given. We must remember that we are accountable to Him for how we use our time and that accountability should be driving us to using our time in accordance with God's truth.

If the two viewpoints that we just examined on work are not consistent with the Bible, then what is the proper Biblical perspective? Let us look to our main text for this message, which states:

“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:” (Exodus 20:9-10)

In order to understand this commandment and how this commandment should shape our view of work, it is important that we are clear on what constitutes work. If we are to uphold this commandment, then we need to be clear on what the Bible does and does not mean when it refers to work. This fourth commandment is not that we need to avoid doing ANYTHING on the Sabbath, but that we are to avoid doing work on the Sabbath. So, what is work as articulated in the pages of the Holy Scriptures? To define work in the context of the keeping of the Sabbath, we need to look to the word that was used to convey this principle. In the fourth commandment, the Hebrew word that is translated “work” in Exodus 20 is “Melakhah” (pronounced mel-aw-kaw’) and the concept of this word stressed the skilled labor in order to carry out a task which carried along with it benefits that one received in fulfilling this task. Allow me to repeat that definition: the skilled labor in order to carry out a task which carried along with it benefits that one received in fulfilling this task. With this in mind, the concept that is being brought forth in the Bible is that our Sabbath should not be filled with activity that is intended to further get us ahead professionally or financially.

In order to further clarify the definition of work, let us look at Matthew 12 where Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath- much to the dismay of the Pharisees, who showed themselves to be more concerned about their own regulations than they were about the well-being of their fellow man. In this account, we read the following:

And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

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And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. (KJV)

Based on the fourth commandment as recorded in our main text of Exodus 20 and the account that we just read of Jesus healing the man with the withered hand in Matthew 12, we can have a clear distinction about what is and what is not defined as work. If what we are doing on the Sabbath is for the purpose of blessing others and shining forth God's love toward them as Jesus demonstrated to the man that He healed, then that activity would be classified as service and not as work. However, if the activity that we are contemplating to perform on the Sabbath has the primary purpose to get us ahead professionally or financially, then that would be defined as work. We are to recognize that God has sovereignty over our work and that our dependence is on Him and not in our own abilities or in our own finances. We are to look to the Lord to supply our provision and the weekly Sabbath is a very concrete reminder that God is the one that will meet our needs. Thus, one of the purposes of the Sabbath is our recognition of God's sovereignty over our work.

Let me pause for a moment in examining the purposes of the Lord giving the Sabbath for the benefit of man and address the issue of those that need to be employed on Sundays. There are certain professions that need to work on Sunday- so does that inherently mean that those who are in these professions are Sabbath-breakers who are going to be judged by a Holy God? I certainly praise God for those who are stationed in the Emergency Room at the hospitals around our nation on Sundays. Similarly, I am grateful that there are firefighters whose job it is to ensure that our homes, places of worship, and businesses will not be ravaged by a devastating blaze if it occurs on a Sunday. There are many other examples of professions that need to be performing a duty for their employment on Sunday and these people should not be condemned as breaking the fourth commandment if they have chosen one of these professions. After all, the keeping of the Sabbath is a matter of the heart. However, there are two major cautions that need to be shared at this point.

First, the fact that some need to perform professional duties on Sunday does not give everyone the license to be engaged in their work on this day. Work on Sunday should be the exception and limited to those professions and for those times that it is truly necessary. It should not be the rule and we cannot use the need of some to work on Sunday as a justification that all can work on Sunday. In fact, I would go so far as to say

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that consideration of whether a certain occupation or job will require work on Sunday should be one of the items that is used in evaluating that specific occupation or job. Before one decides to commit to this job requiring work on Sundays, it is important that he have a plan for how he will be able to uphold this commandment. If after contemplating and evaluating this commandment the conclusion is reached that working on Sundays will NOT allow him to uphold keeping the Sabbath holy, then he must decline this job.

Second, for those that are employed on Sunday, there must be another day that will serve as your Sabbath. The commandment is clear that we are to have one day in seven that is set apart whereby we will do no work. If we fail to heed this commandment, then we are being a Sabbath breaker and are in danger of judgment- just as we are in danger of judgment whenever we fail to keep any of the Lord's holy commandments.

Our Lord is sovereign and that sovereignty includes all areas of our life. Undeniably, God has sovereignty over our work and we must show our recognition of that sovereignty by how we live. Since God commands that we set apart one day each week to rest from our work, we must do so in order to be obedient to Him.

Recognizing God's Sovereignty over Our Rest

We have looked at how God is sovereign over our time and we should be seeking to align how we use our time in accordance with what He has ordained. We then moved on to the importance of recognizing God's sovereignty over our work and how we are commanded to be working six days, with the seventh day to be a day which is not like any other. Now, let's look at the issue of God's sovereignty over our rest.

In a book entitled "Celebrating the Sabbath", Bruce Ray writes a very good summary of the principle of God's sovereignty over our rest. In this book, he writes the following:

"The Sabbath is God's appointed holiday. The King of the universe gives all his subjects one day off every week to celebrate his creation, to interrupt their daily work and to rest in his, and thereby be refreshed. One of the sweetest blessings of the Sabbath is refreshment."

The Lord has made it clear in His Word that the observance of the Sabbath should have NOTHING to do with how busy we are. Each week we are to take the time to honor this very special day independent of what else is going on in our lives. While this doesn't mean that each Sabbath day needs to look identical in form between one week and the next, it does mean that each Sabbath day needs to be treated with special honor. In Exodus 34:21, we read the following:

"Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest."

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The Lord in His divine wisdom knew that we would need rest and refreshment each week. He knew that we would need a day that was different from all of the rest so that our focus would be firmly placed on Him and that we wouldn't become distracted by continually looking inward to our own strength, our own desires, and our own interests. God Almighty instituted the Sabbath for our benefit and in those weeks where we are particularly busy and concerned with the cares of this world, we need the Sabbath. In fact, it is during those busy weeks that we could argue that the Sabbath is needed even more than when we have had a calm and peaceful week.

Our attitude toward the Sabbath should be filled with thanksgiving to our Lord for caring about us so much that He instituted a special day each week whereby we could ensure that our focus was decidedly placed on Him and not on our daily toil. It is through our rest that we can ensure that our focus remains aligned with the God who created each one of us. It is through our rest- not our busyness- that we can draw closer to our Lord and grow deeper in our relationship with Him. The Sabbath was made for man so that man could rest and be refreshed and, consequently, enthusiastically embrace the awaiting labor in a new week.

How Should We Live on the Sabbath

Now that we have looked at God's establishment of the Sabbath based on the order of creation and have recognized God's sovereignty over the three key areas of time, work, and rest related to the blessed fourth commandment, let us now turn our attention to how we should live on this special day. With God's Word as our guide, let us examine how we should be using the very blessed gift God has entrusted to us in the Sabbath, as well as some cautions for how we are to avoid some common pitfalls in the weekly observance of this day of delight. In the New Testament, Jesus was repeatedly accused by the Pharisees of breaking the fourth commandment. However, we know that Jesus was without sin and is to be our perfect model for how we are to live in all areas of life. Thus, we will look to the example of our Lord and Savior for His Divine guidance in how we should abide by this commandment. With Scripture as our basis for the governing of our lives and Jesus as our perfect example of how we are to live, let us examine the life of Christ and determine what we all can learn and apply from His upholding of the Sabbath.

On one occasion, as recorded in Matthew chapter 12, the Pharisees accused the disciples of Christ of breaking the Sabbath based on the fact that they were picking grain in the fields for the purpose of satisfying their hunger. Jesus responded with the conviction that the disciples were innocent of any wrongdoing and related the story of David eating the showbread from the temple- which was lawful only for the priests to do. Jesus relates to the Pharisees that God desires mercy, not sacrifice and this principle is an important one for how we are to live a life consistent with God's best. From this account, we can learn the following:

- First, God desires the heart of the man and not his outward conformance to a list of rules. When Jesus made the statement that God desires mercy and not sacrifice (which is taken from Hosea 6:6), He was telling those who were present as well as

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all of us today that what God wants from us is our covenant love toward Him rather than our devotion to a list of man-made regulations. Adhering to a man-made set of laws that were derived apart from Biblical revelation will in no way gain God's favor and approval. It is only when we couple our actions based on what we learn from God's Word with a desire to please the Lord in how we live that we can truly live a life that is honoring to God's name.

- Second, preparation for providing for our daily sustenance is permissible on the Sabbath. Thus, we can go about our Sabbath and have no fear that preparing meals and caring for our daily needs will displease our Lord.

As we discussed earlier, Matthew 12 also relates the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees about whether it is permissible to heal on the Sabbath. While we have already viewed the distinction between service and work pointed out in this passage, there are some additional conclusions that we can learn from this exchange.

- First, we are to continue to provide care to those for whom we are responsible. In fact, providing this care is expected. Even the Pharisees did not deny this claim as Jesus used the analogy of rescuing the sheep falling into a pit as an illustration of an activity with which they would not find fault. Jesus used this example as a means for establishing a logical conclusion to their original question of whether it is permissible to heal on the Sabbath.
- Second, Jesus clearly states in this passage that it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath. It is not only permissible, but commendable and pleasing to the Lord when we seek to be a blessing to others. As a result, if we are doing activities on the Sabbath that are being done for the purpose of honoring, encouraging, and blessing others, we are not breaking the fourth commandment.

Next let us turn our attention to Luke 4, where we read the following:

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

**He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.
(Luke 4:14-16)**

From this passage we can learn the following:

- First, reading the Scriptures is an activity that should have a special part of our Sabbath day celebration. We should be in God's Word every single day asking the Lord to illuminate our minds with His truth and seeking to allow that truth to conform us to the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. How much more this should be so on the Sabbath.
- Second, we learn that both teaching and learning the truth about God should be an element of our Sabbath. Not only should we be reading God's Word- but we

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should be either teaching it to others or learning it from others. Each Sabbath day should grant us greater opportunity than the other days of the week to be teaching and learning from His Holy Word. Now, in the assembly of the local congregation, this teaching and learning must be done in accordance with the Bible- keeping both the order and the established roles that God has graciously provided to us in the Scriptures for this corporate gathering.

Our time of assembling with one another in the local church should be a time that is focused on the Lord and dedicated to Him. We need to be very mindful to ensure that we are treating those things of the Lord with special honor and reverence. Remember that Jesus turned over the tables of the money-changers and by this action, He demonstrated that those who viewed God's temple as a means of selfish gain would be judged. We, too, must be careful that we do not turn Christ's local church into a means of selfish gain. Our motivation for attending church should not be to see how many new business clients we can establish. Instead, our motivation should be to worship the Maker of heaven and earth, to learn from God's Word, and to encourage others in the faith in their walk with the blessed Savior.

Cautions on the Sabbath

We have now looked at the model that our Lord provided for each of us in the observance of the Sabbath. We have determined through our Lord's example that the Sabbath day is not a man-made list of rules to adhere to that have no basis in Scripture, but neither is the Sabbath day to simply be an ordinary day. The Sabbath is to be set apart from every other day and we see from the life of Christ while He was on this earth that we are to use this day to prepare our daily sustenance, to strive to serve our fellow man, and to draw closer to our Heavenly Father. Now, let us turn our attention to some cautions about the Sabbath. These cautions are intended to be a help to each of us to ensure that we evaluate how we are spending our time on our Sabbath to determine whether our activities are consistent with God's design.

The first caution that I would like to discuss is that of having a casual attitude in the observance of the Sabbath. In the lives of many, there is not a reverence or a holy fear in our treatment of this special day. In order to ensure that we don't fall into wrong thinking, we must recognize the seriousness of this fourth commandment. As with all of the commandments (as well as the whole of God's Word), this mandate was given for our benefit and the seriousness of breaking this commandment must be recognized and understood. In the book of Ezekiel, we read the following:

I am the LORD your God; follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God."

" 'But the children rebelled against me: They did not follow my decrees, they were not careful to keep my laws—although the man who obeys them will live by them—and they desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour

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**out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in the desert.
(Ezekiel 20:19-21, NIV)**

The keeping of the Sabbath was intended to be a sign between the Lord and His chosen people; those that rebelled against this sign were and are in danger of God's judgment.

The second caution that I want to address is the issue of entertainment and recreation on the Sabbath. Entertainment and recreation are not inherently sinful- but they can lure us away from God's best and can even cause us to stumble in the area of keeping the Sabbath. Each one of us needs to be firmly convinced in our own minds based on the truth that is contained within God's Word and follow wholeheartedly the leading of the Holy Spirit. I have observed that there are people- even professing Christians- who put more energy and affection on entertainment and recreation on their Sabbath and will even forego the attending of local church services in order to participate in these activities. If such is the case, then we are in danger of idolatry- placing the entertainment and recreation above the Lord. Please do not misunderstand me to be saying that if any of us participate in any entertainment or recreation on the Sabbath that we are going to be judged for it- but our focus needs to be on the Lord and not on our own selfish desires to be entertained or participate in recreation.

The third caution that I would have for each of us is the issue of treating the Sabbath as a day to catch up on something needful that should have been taken care of on another day during the week. Whether this is errands, house projects, or our employment, the Sabbath is not to be used as a day to catch up- it is to be a day of rest, service, and worship. I have heard people say that they don't attend church because "Sunday is the only day that I can sleep in." When people make this statement, what they are really saying is that the other days of the week are out of balance and are filled with doing things that they believe to be of greater importance than their relationship with the Lord- for they are effectively replacing their church attendance with the other activities that they deem more important during their week. In addition, the placing of our own comfort level above our service to the Lord should never be true of any born-again believer. Since the Sabbath is to be a day like no other day of the week with a special time to consciously place our focus on the Lord, then it should have an impact in how we order our time during the other days of the week. The Bible does speak of a day of preparation, which was the day prior to the Sabbath, in order to make each ready for the Sabbath. In order to observe the Sabbath, it should influence the rest of the week. Allow me to explain it like this:

Since the Sabbath is to be a day of rest, service, and worship, we should have a day to prepare especially for this Sabbath. On this day of preparation, we need to make sure that all is in order so that we can keep the Sabbath in accordance with God's Holy Word. Since this day of preparation needs to occur prior to the Sabbath that will in turn influence what we do the remainder of the week so that our day of preparation is not haphazard and disorderly. Thus, the observance of the Sabbath is really much more than how we treat that specific day- but should serve as a means to guide our lives all throughout the week.

Conclusion

The specific applications that each of us have in keeping the Sabbath may differ and we are to show grace to those who have come to differing conclusions based on the infallible Word of God. Scripture is very clear on a number of points regarding our observance of the Sabbath- but let us be careful to avoid the two extremes. The first extreme to be avoided is license for absolute liberty which says that because of grace we should be able to do anything that we want on the Sabbath. The second extreme to be avoided is the adherence to legalistic regulations which says that we can gain God's favor through the maintaining of a list of man-made rules. Neither extreme is Biblical. Instead, we must diligently seek the Lord in the specific ways that He wants us to use this very special and sacred day.

Indeed, our Lord God has given us a great gift and blessing in the Sabbath. All of our days are a gift from the Lord and each day should be filled with rejoicing in His goodness. The Sabbath day was made for man in order to ensure that we maintain a sharp focus on the Lord and it was given in a manner that will assist us in living our lives by ordering our time wisely throughout the entire week.

I want to leave you today with a challenge and an encouragement. First, I bring to you the challenge- which is the same challenge that Joshua gave to the Israelite people: **“choose you this day whom ye will serve”**. (Joshua 24:15) There are two paths before you for how each of you will uphold the fourth commandment. You need to choose this day which path you will travel. For some that will mean conscious and difficult decisions regarding how the Sabbath is viewed, treated, and celebrated.

In addition to the challenge before you, I am also here to give you hope and encouragement. For all who are willing to keep the Sabbath holy by seeking to live each Sabbath day in accordance with His Word there is a tremendous promise found in the book of Isaiah:

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. (Isaiah 59:13-14, KJV)

May we all treat the Sabbath day in a manner that is honorable and may we all delight ourselves in the Lord. Then, may we give God all of the praise when He causes us to be exalted upon the high places and when He feeds us with the special blessing of the heritage of Jacob.