

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 233

THE LORD'S DAY

*I was in the Spirit
on the Lord's day.*

Revelation 1:10

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

Free Grace Broadcaster

THE LORD'S DAY

233

Contents

Established at Creation	1
<i>Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)</i>	
Biblical Thoughts about the Lord's Day	6
<i>J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)</i>	
The Fourth Commandment.....	11
<i>Thomas Boston (1676-1732)</i>	
Foundations of the Lord's Day.....	15
<i>Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921)</i>	
From Sabbath to Lord's Day	24
<i>Archibald A. Hodge (1823-1886)</i>	
The Lord's Day in Public.....	30
<i>Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690)</i>	
The Lord's Day at Home.....	33
<i>William S. Plumer (1802-1880)</i>	
Piety, Necessity, and Charity.....	38
<i>Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690)</i>	
Honoring God on His Day.....	41
<i>Thomas Case (1598-1682)</i>	
A Most Precious Enjoyment	45
<i>Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)</i>	

Published by

CHAPEL LIBRARY • 2603 West Wright St. • Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA

Sending Christ-centered materials from prior centuries worldwide

Worldwide: please use the online downloads worldwide without charge,
www.chapellibrary.org.

In North America: please write for your free subscription in print. The FGB is sent quarterly without charge. Chapel Library is a faith ministry that relies upon God's faithfulness. We seek His glory in all things, depending upon Him to supply our needs through those who freely desire to give and pray. We therefore do not solicit donations; you will only hear from us when you request materials or receive your subscription. We also do not share our mailing list, so your contact information will remain secure with us. Chapel Library does not necessarily agree with all the doctrinal views of the authors it publishes.

© Copyright 2015 CHAPEL LIBRARY:
compilation, abridgment, annotations

ESTABLISHED AT CREATION

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.—Genesis 2:2-3

THIS passage records the institution of the Sabbath.¹ Lest any should wish to cavil² because the word *sabbath* is not found in Genesis 2:2-3, we call attention to the fact that in Exodus 20:11 Jehovah Himself expressly terms that *first* “seventh day” the “sabbath day”: “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 hallowed³ it.”

The second chapter of Genesis opens with the words, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” And then, the very next thing we read of is the institution of the Sabbath rest. Thus, to institute the Sabbath was God’s *first* act after the earth had been made fit for human habitation! Let us now point out four things in connection with this first Scripture in which the Sabbath is referred to.

1. **The primal⁴ Sabbath was a rest day.** Emphasis is laid upon this feature by the repetition in thought that is found in the two parts of Genesis 2:2. First, on the seventh day, “God ended his work which he had made”; second, “And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.” Therefore, the prime element and basic

¹ The Sabbath [did not] originate with Moses or with any sinner. It was an ordinance in Eden. So that the first whole day that man ever spent on earth was in the observance of this holy day. “The Sabbath is but one day younger than man; ordained for him, in the state of his uprightness and innocence that, his faculties being then holy and excellent, he might employ them, especially on that day, in the singular and most spiritual worship of God his Creator” (Ezekiel Hopkins). When, for his sins, man was driven out of Paradise, God permitted him to carry with him two institutions, established for his good before his fall. Which of these institutions is the greatest mercy to our world, or which is the dearest to the heart of a good man, I will not undertake to say. One of them is *marriage*, the other the *Sabbath day*. (William Plumer, *The Law of God*, 294-295)

² **cavil** – find fault without good reason.

³ **hallowed** – set apart as sacred; made or declared holy.

⁴ **primal** – belonging to the earliest stage; original.

truth connected with the Sabbath is *rest*. Before raising the question as to *why* God “rested,” let us offer a few words upon the *nature* of His rest.

It has been said repeatedly by a certain class of expositors⁵ that this rest of God consisted of His *satisfaction* in the work of His hands, that it was God looking out in complacency over His fair creation. But, we are told that this “rest” of God did not last for long: it was rudely broken by the entrance of sin; and ever since man fell [into sin,] God has been “working,” John 5:17 being appealed to in proof. That such a definition of the “rest” of God in Genesis 2:2 should have been received by a large number of the Lord’s people, only goes to show how few of them ever do much thinking or studying for themselves. It also proves how the most puerile⁶ interpretations of Scripture are likely to be accepted, providing they are made by reputable teachers, who on other matters are worthy of respect. Finally, it demonstrates what a real need there is for every one of us to humbly, prayerfully, and diligently bring everything we read and hear to a rigid examination in the light of Holy Scripture.

That God’s “rest” in Genesis 2:2 *was not* the complacency of the Creator prior to the entrance of sin is unequivocally⁷ evidenced by the fact that Satan had fallen before the time contemplated in that verse. How could God look abroad upon creation with divine contentment when the highest creature of all had become the basest and blackest of sinners? How could God find satisfaction in all the works of His hands when the anointed cherub had apostatized,⁸ and in his rebellion had dragged down with him “the third part” of the angels (Rev 12:4)? No, this is manifestly untenable.⁹ Some other definition of God’s “rest” must therefore be sought.

Now, we need to pay very close attention to the exact wording here (as everywhere). Genesis 2:2 does not say (nor does Exodus 20:10) that God rested from *all* work, for that was not true. Genesis 2:2 is careful to say, “On the seventh day God ended his work *which he had made*,” and, “He rested on the seventh day from all his work *which he had made*.” And this brings out and calls attention to the basic feature and primal element in the Sabbath: *it is a resting from the activities commonly pursued during the six working days*. But the Sabbath day is not ap-

⁵ **expositors** – persons that explain the meaning or intent of a text.

⁶ **puerile** – childish; immature.

⁷ **unequivocally** – plainly.

⁸ **apostatized** – abandoned the faith one had believed in.

⁹ **untenable** – not able to be defended against objection.

pointed as a day for the cessation of *all* activities—to remain in bed and sleep through that day would not be spending the Sabbath as God requires it to be spent...What we now press upon the reader is the fact that, according to Genesis 2:2, the Sabbath rest consists of resting from the labors of the working week.

Genesis 2:2 does not state that on the seventh day God did no work, for, as we have said, that would not have been true. God *did* work on the seventh day, though His activities on the seventh day were of a different nature from the ones in which He had been engaged during the preceding days. And herein we see not only the marvelous accuracy of Scripture, but the perfect example God here set before His creatures; for as we shall yet see, there are works suited to the Sabbath. For God to have ceased *all* work on that first seventh day in human history would have meant the total destruction of all creation. God's providential working could not cease, or no provision would be made for the supply of His creatures' wants. "All things" needed to be "upheld" (Heb 1:3), or they would have passed back into nonentity.¹⁰

Let us fix it firmly in our minds that rest is not *inertia*.¹¹ The Lord Jesus has entered into "rest" (Heb 4:10); yet He is not inactive, for He ever liveth "to make intercession." And when the saints shall enter their eternal rest, they shall not be inactive; for it is written, "And his servants shall serve him" (Rev 22:3). So here with God. His rest on that first day was not a rest of total inactivity. He rested from the work of creation and restoration, but He then began (and has never ceased) the work of Providence¹²—the providing of supplies for His myriad creatures.

But now the question arises, Why did God rest on the seventh day? Why did He so order it that all the works recorded in Genesis 1 were completed in six days, and that then He rested? Certainly, it was not because the Creator *needed* rest, for "the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary" (Isa 40:28). Why, then, did He "rest," and why is it so recorded on the top of the second page of Holy Writ? Surely, there can be only one answer: as an example for man! Nor is this answer merely a logical or plausible inference of ours. It rests on divine authority. It is based directly upon the words of none other than the Son of God, for He expressly declared, "The sabbath

¹⁰ **nonentity** – non-existence.

¹¹ **inertia** – inactivity; unwillingness to move.

¹² **Providence** – What are God's works of providence? A: God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions. (Spurgeon's Catechism, Q. 11)

was made for man” (Mar 2:27): made not for God, but for man. Nothing could be plainer, nothing simpler, nothing more unequivocal.

2. The next thing that we would carefully note in this initial reference to the Sabbath is that Genesis 2:3 tells us this day was *blessed* by God: “And God blessed the seventh day.” The reason why God blessed the seventh day was not because it was the seventh, but because “in it he had rested.” Hence, when the Sabbath law was written upon the tables of stone, God did not say, “Remember the seventh day to keep it holy,” but, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” And again, He did not say, “He blessed the seventh day and hallowed it,” but “the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

But why should He? Why single out the seventh day thus? Young’s Concordance defines the Hebrew word for *blessed* here as “to declare blessed.” But why should God have “declared” the *seventh* day blessed, for there is no hint that He pronounced any of the other days blessed. Surely, it was not for the mere day’s sake. Only one other alternative remains: God declared the seventh day blessed because it was the *Sabbath* day; and because He would have every reader of His Word know, right at the beginning, that special divine blessing marks its observance. This at once refutes a modern heresy and removes an aspersion¹³ that many cast upon God. The Sabbath was not appointed to bring man into bondage. It was not designed to be a burden, but a blessing! And if history demonstrates anything, it demonstrates beyond a peradventure that the family or nation that has kept the Sabbath day holy has been markedly *blest* of God; and contrariwise, that the family or nation that has desecrated the Sabbath has been *cursed* of God. Explain it as we may, the fact remains.

3. Genesis 2:3 teaches us that the Sabbath was a day *set apart for sacred use*. This comes out plainly in the words, “And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it”...The prime meaning (according to its scriptural usage) of the Hebrew word rendered “sanctified” and “hallowed” is “*to set apart for sacred use*.” This shows that here in Genesis 2:3 we have something more than a historical reference to the resting of God on the seventh day, and something more, even, than God setting an example before His creatures. The fact that we are told God “sanctified” it proves conclusively that here we have the original *institution* of the Sabbath, the divine appointment of it for man’s use and observance. As exemplified by the Creator Himself, the Sabbath day is separated from the six preceding days of manual labor.

¹³ **aspersion** – damaging, abusive speech regarding someone’s character.

4. Let us call attention to a notable *omission* in Genesis 2:3. If the reader will turn to Genesis 1, he will find that at the close of each of the six working days, the Holy Spirit says, “And the evening and the morning were...” (see Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). But here in Genesis 2:2-3 we do not read, “And the evening and the morning were the seventh day”; nor are we told what took place in the eighth day. In other words, the Holy Spirit has not mentioned the ending of the “seventh day.” Why is this? There is a reason for every omission in Scripture, a divine reason, and there is a reason why the Holy Spirit omitted the usual formula at the close of the seventh day. We suggest that this omission is a silent but most significant intimation that the *observance* of the Sabbath never would end—it was to be perpetuated as long as time should last.

Before we proceed further, let it be said that Genesis 2 contains nothing whatever that enables us to determine *which* day of our week this primal “seventh day” was. We have absolutely no means of knowing whether that original seventh day fell on a Saturday, a Sunday, or any other day of the week, for the simple reason that we are quite unable to ascertain on which day that first week began. All we do know—and it is all that is *necessary* for us to know—is that the seventh day was the day that followed six days of manual work...

Ere passing from Genesis 2, let us duly weigh the fact that this notice of the divine institution of the Sabbath is *placed almost at the very beginning of Holy Writ*. Nothing takes precedence save the brief announcement in the first two verses of Genesis 1 and the description of the six days’ work of creation... This at once impresses us with the great importance that God Himself places upon the Sabbath and its observance. *Before* a single page of human history is chronicled, before a single act of Adam is described, the Holy Spirit places before us the institution of the Sabbath! Does not this signify, plainly, that the observance of the Sabbath—the sanctifying of a seventh day—is a *primary* duty! Moreover, are we not thereby plainly warned that failure to keep the Sabbath day holy is a sin of the first magnitude!

From *The Holy Sabbath*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England, UK.



BIBLICAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE LORD'S DAY

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

Ask the attention of all professing Christians, while I try to say a few plain words on the subject of the Sabbath. I have no new argument to advance. I can say nothing that has not been said, and said better too, a hundred times before. But at a time like this, it becomes every Christian writer to cast in his mite into the treasury of truth. As a minister of Christ, a father of a family, and a lover of my country, I feel bound to plead in behalf of the old English Sunday. My sentence is emphatically expressed in the words of Scripture: let us “keep it holy.” My advice to all Christians is to contend earnestly for the whole day against all enemies, both without and within. It is worth a struggle...

Let me, in the first place, consider *the authority on which the Sabbath stands*. I hold it to be of primary importance to have this point clearly settled in our minds. Here is the very rock on which many of the enemies of the Sabbath make shipwreck. They tell us that the day is “a mere Jewish ordinance,” and that we are no more bound to keep it holy than to offer sacrifice. They proclaim to the world that the observance of the Lord’s Day rests upon nothing but *Church* authority and cannot be proved by the Word of God.

Now, I believe that those who say such things are entirely mistaken. Amiable and respectable as many of them are, I regard them in this matter as being thoroughly in error. Names go for nothing with me in such a case. It is not the assertion of a hundred divines—living or dead—that will make me believe black is white or reject the evidence of plain texts of Scripture... The grand question is, “Were their thoughts worth credit?—were they right or wrong?”

My own firm conviction is that the observance of a Sabbath Day is *part of the eternal Law of God*. It is not a mere temporary Jewish ordinance. It is not a man-made institution of priestcraft.¹ It is not an unauthorized imposition² of the Church. It is one of the everlasting rules that God has revealed for the guidance of all mankind. It is a

¹ **priestcraft** – influence and work of priests.

² **imposition** – making something required by a rule.

rule that many nations without the Bible have lost sight of and buried, like other rules, under the rubbish of superstition and heathenism. But it was a rule intended to be binding on all the children of Adam.

What saith the Scripture? This is the grand point after all. What public opinion says or newspaper writers think matters nothing. We are not going to stand at the bar of man when we die. He that judgeth us is the Lord God of the Bible. What saith the Lord?

1. I turn to *the history of creation*. I read there, "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" (Gen 2:3). I find the Sabbath mentioned in the very beginning of all things. There are five things that were given to the father of the human race in the day that he was made. God gave him a dwelling place, a work to do, a command to observe, a help meet to be his companion, and a Sabbath Day to keep. I am utterly unable to believe that it was in the mind of God that there ever should be a time when Adam's children should keep no Sabbath.

2. I turn to *the giving of the Law* on Mount Sinai. I there read one whole commandment out of ten devoted to the Sabbath Day, and that the longest, fullest, and most minute of all (Exo 20:8-11). I see a broad, plain distinction between these Ten Commandments and any other part of the Law of Moses. It was the only part spoken in the hearing of all the people; and after the Lord had spoken it, the Book of Deuteronomy expressly says, "He added no more" (Deu 5:22). It was delivered under circumstances of singular solemnity and accompanied by thunder, lightning, and an earthquake. It was the only part written on tables of stone by God Himself. It was the only part put *inside* the ark. I find the law of the Sabbath side by side with the law about idolatry, murder, adultery, theft, and the like. I am utterly unable to believe that it was meant to be only of temporary obligation.

3. I turn to *the writings of the Old Testament Prophets*. I find them repeatedly speaking of the breach³ of the Sabbath side by side with the most heinous⁴ transgressions of the Moral Law (Eze 20:13, 16, 24; 22:8, 26). I find them speaking of it as one of the great sins that brought judgments on Israel and carried the Jews into captivity (Neh 13:18; Jer 17:19-27). It seems clear to me that the Sabbath, in their judgment, is something far higher than the washings and cleansings of the ceremonial law. I am utterly unable to believe, when I read their language, that

³ **breach** – breaking.

⁴ **heinous** – extremely wicked.

the Fourth Commandment was one of the things one day to pass away.

4. I turn to *the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ when He was upon earth*. I cannot discover that our Savior ever let fall a word in discredit of any one of the Ten Commandments. On the contrary, I find Him declaring at the outset of His ministry that He came not to “destroy the law...but to fulfil,” and the context of the passage where He uses these words satisfies me that He was not speaking of the ceremonial law, but the moral (Mat 5:17). I find Him speaking of the Ten Commandments as a recognized standard of moral right and wrong: “Thou knowest the commandments” (Mar 10:19). I find Him speaking eleven times on the subject of the Sabbath, but it is always to correct the superstitious additions that the Pharisees had made to the Law of Moses about observing it and never to deny the holiness of the day. He no more abolishes the Sabbath than a man destroys a house when he cleans off the moss or weeds from its roof. Above all, I find our Savior taking for granted the continuance of the Sabbath when He foretells the destruction of Jerusalem. “Pray ye,” He says to the disciples, “that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day” (Mat 24:20). I am utterly unable to believe, when I see all this, that our Lord did not mean the Fourth Commandment to be as binding on Christians as the other nine.

5. I turn to *the writings of the apostles*. I there find plain speaking about the temporary nature of the ceremonial law and its sacrifices and ordinances. I see them called “carnal” and “weak.” I am told they are a “shadow of good things to come” (Heb 10:1)—“a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ” (Gal 3:24), and “imposed on them until the time of reformation” (Heb 9:10). But I cannot find a syllable in their writings that teaches that any one of the Ten Commandments is done away. On the contrary, I see St. Paul speaking of the Moral Law in the most respectful manner, though he teaches strongly that it cannot justify us before God. When he teaches the Ephesians the duty of children to parents, he simply quotes the Fifth Commandment: “Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)” (Rom 7:12; 13:8; Eph 6:2; 1Ti 1:8). I see St. James and St. John recognizing the Moral Law as a rule, acknowledged and accredited among those to whom they wrote (Jam 2:10; 1Jo 3:4). Again, I say that I am utterly unable to believe that when the apostles spoke of the Law, they only meant nine commandments and not ten.

6. I turn to *the practice of the apostles*, when they were engaged in planting the Church of Christ. I find distinct mention of their keep-

ing one day of the week as a holy day (Act 20:7; 1Co 16:2). I find the day spoken of by one of them as “the Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10). Undoubtedly, the day was changed: it was made the first day of the week in memory of our Lord’s resurrection, instead of the seventh—but I believe the apostles were divinely inspired to make that change, and at the same time wisely directed to make *no public decree* about it.⁵ The decree would only have raised a ferment⁶ in the Jewish mind and caused needless offence; the change was one that it was better to effect gradually, and not to force on the consciences of weak brethren. The change did not interfere with the spirit of the Fourth Commandment in the smallest degree: the Lord’s Day, on the first day of the week, was just as much *a day of rest after six days’ labor*, as the seventh-day Sabbath had been. But why we are told so pointedly about the “first day of the week” and the “Lord’s Day,” if the apostles kept no one day more holy than another, is to my mind wholly inexplicable.

7. I turn, in the last place, to *the pages of unfulfilled prophecy*. I find there a plain prediction that in the last days, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, there shall still be a Sabbath. “From one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD” (Isa 66:23). The subject of this prophecy no doubt is deep. I do not pretend to say that I can fathom all its parts, but one thing is very certain to me: in the glorious days to come on the earth, there is to be a Sabbath, and a Sabbath not for the Jews only, but for “all flesh.” And when I see this, I am utterly unable to believe that God meant the Sabbath to cease between the first coming of Christ and the second. I believe He meant it to be an everlasting ordinance in His Church.

I ask serious attention to these arguments from Scripture. To my own mind, it appears very plain that wherever God has had a church, in Bible times, God has also had a Sabbath Day. My own firm conviction is that a church without a Sabbath would not be a church on the model of Scripture.

Let me close this part of the subject by offering two cautions, which I consider are eminently required by the temper of the times.

⁵ The Jews had a regard for their Sabbath above almost anything in the laws of Moses... Therefore, Christ dealt very tenderly with them in this point. Other things of this nature we find very gradually revealed. Christ had many things to say, as we are informed, which yet He said not because they could not as yet bear them and gave this reason for it: it was like putting new wine into old bottles (Joh 16:12).—*Jonathan Edwards*

⁶ **ferment** – agitation; excitement.

For one thing, let us beware of undervaluing the Old Testament. There has arisen of late years a most unhappy tendency to slight and despise any religious argument that is drawn from an Old Testament source, and to regard the man who uses it as a dark, benighted, and old-fashioned person. We shall do well to remember that the Old Testament is just as much inspired as the New and that the religion of both Testaments is in the main, and at the root, one and the same. The Old Testament is the gospel in the bud; the New Testament is the gospel in full flower. The Old Testament is the gospel in the blade; the New Testament is the gospel in full ear. The Old Testament saints saw many things through a glass darkly, but they looked to the same Christ by faith and were led by the same Spirit as ourselves. Let us, therefore, never listen to those who sneer at Old Testament arguments. Much infidelity begins with an ignorant contempt of the Old Testament.

For another thing, let us beware of despising the law of the Ten Commandments. I grieve to observe how exceedingly loose and unsound the opinions of many men are upon this subject. I have been astonished at the coolness with which even clergymen sometimes speak of them as a part of Judaism, which may be classed with sacrifices and circumcision. I wonder how such men can read them to their congregations every week! For my own part, I believe that the coming of Christ's gospel did not alter the position of the Ten Commandments one hair's breadth. If anything, it rather exalted and raised their authority. I believe that, in due place and proportion, it is just as important to expound and enforce them, as to preach Christ crucified. By them is the knowledge of sin. By them, the Spirit teaches men their need of a Savior. By them, the Lord Jesus teaches His people how to walk and please God. I suspect it would be well for the Church if the Ten Commandments were more frequently expounded in the pulpit than they are. At all events, I fear that much of the present ignorance on the Sabbath question is attributable to erroneous views about the Fourth Commandment.

From "The Sabbath" in *Knots Untied*, in the public domain.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): English Anglican Bishop and author; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, UK.



THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

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

THIS command respects the time of worship and is the last of the first table, set to join both together, the Sabbath being the bond of all religion. In the words we have,

1. **THE COMMAND:** It is delivered two ways.

1st, **positively:** “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” Sabbath signifies *rest* or cessation from labor. There is a threefold rest or Sabbath spoken of in Scripture: (1) *temporal*; (2) *spiritual*, which is an internal soul-rest in ceasing from sin (Heb 4:3); (3) *eternal*, celebrated in heaven (Heb 4:9, 11), where the saints rest from their labors. It is the first of these, the weekly Sabbath that is here meant. Observe here, (1) Our duty with respect to the Sabbath is *to keep it holy*. God has made it holy, set it apart for holy exercises, and we must keep it holy, spending it in holy exercises. (2) The quantity of time to be observed as a Sabbath of rest [is] *a day*—a whole day of twenty-four hours, and one day in seven. They must observe a seventh day after six days’ labor, wherein all our work must be done, put by hand, so as nothing of it may remain to be done on the Sabbath. (3) A note of remembrance put upon it: [this] imports that this precept should be diligently observed, special regard paid to it, and due honor put upon this sacred day.

2nd, **negatively:** Where observe (1) what is forbidden here: the doing of any work that may hinder the sanctifying of this day. (2) To whom the command is directed and who must observe it: magistrates, to whom belong the gates of the city; and masters of families, to whom belong the gates of the house. They must observe it themselves and cause others to observe it.

2. THE REASONS ANNEXED TO THIS COMMAND. None of the commands are thus delivered, both positively and negatively, as this is. And that imports, (1) God is in a special manner concerned for the keeping of the Sabbath, it being that on which all religion depends. Accordingly, as it is observed or disregarded, so it readily goes with the other parts of religion. (2) People are most ready to halve the service of this day, either to look on resting from labor as sufficient or to look on the work of the day as over when the public work is over. (3) There is less light of nature for this command than the rest: for though it is naturally moral that there should *be* a sabbath, yet it is but positively moral that this should be one day in seven, depending entirely on the will of God...

First, I am to show that this command requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as He hath appointed in His Word. The Jews under the Old Testament had several days beside the weekly Sabbath that by divine appointment were to be kept as holy days. By virtue of this command, they were to observe them, even as by virtue of the second they were to observe the sacrifices and other parts of the Old Testament instituted worship. But these days are taken away under the gospel by the coming of Christ.

But that which this command requires in the first place is the keeping holy of a sabbath to God: whatever be the day, God determines it, whether the seventh in order from the creation, as under the Old Testament, or the first, as under the New. And so the command is “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy,” not “Remember the seventh day.” Thus, the keeping of a sabbath is a moral duty binding all persons in all places of the world.

For it is a moral duty and by the natural law required that as God is to be worshipped—not only internally, but externally, not only privately, but publicly—so there must be some special time designed and set apart for this, without which it cannot be done. And so the very pagans had their sabbaths and holidays. This is the first thing imported¹ here: a sabbath is to be kept.

Another thing imported here is that it belongs to God to determine the Sabbath, or what day or days He will have to be kept holy. He says not, “Remember to keep holy *a* sabbath day,” or “*a* day of rest,” leaving it to men what days should be holy and what not; but, “Remember *the* sabbath day,” supposing the day to be already determined by Himself. So that we are bound to set time appointed in His Word.

¹ imported – brought in; introduced.

And this condemns men's taking on themselves, whether churches or states, to appoint holidays to be kept that God has not appointed in His Word. Consider, (1) This command puts a peculiar honor on the Sabbath above all other days: "Remember the sabbath day." But when men make holidays of their own to be kept holy, the day appointed of God is spoiled of its peculiar honor, and there is no peculiar honor left to it (Eze 43:8). Yea, in practice, they go before it: *men's* holidays, where they are regarded, are more regarded than *God's* day. (2) This command says, "Six days shalt thou labour." Formalists say, "There are many of these six days thou shalt not labor, for they are holy days. If these words contain a command, who can countermand it? If but a permission, who can take away that liberty that God has left us?" As for fast-days or thanksgiving days occasionally appointed that are not holy days, the worship is not made to wait on the days as on sabbaths and holidays, but the days on the worship that God by His providence requires. Consequently, there must be a time for performing these exercises. (3) It belongs only to God to make a holy day. For who can sanctify a creature but the Creator or time but the Lord of time? He only can give the blessing: why should they that cannot bless it then sanctify a day? The Lord abhors holy days devised out of men's own hearts (1Ki 12:33). (4) What reason is there to think that when God has taken away from the Church's neck a great many holy days appointed by Himself, He has left the gospel-church to be burdened with as many, nay, and more of men's invention than He Himself had appointed?

Secondly, this command requires one day in seven to be kept as a holy sabbath unto the Lord. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God." Thus, the Lord determines the quantity of time that is to be His own, in a peculiar manner, that is, the seventh part of our time. After six days working, a seventh is to be a sabbath. This is moral, [obligating] all persons in all ages, and not a ceremony abrogated² by Christ. (1) This command of appointing one day in seven for a sabbath is one of the commands of that Law, consisting of ten commands, which...[was] written on tables of stone, to show the perpetuity of it, and of which Christ says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore

² **abrogated** – abolished authoritatively; done away with.

shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:17-19). (2) It was appointed and given of God to Adam in innocence before there was any ceremony to be taken away by the coming of Christ (Gen 2:3). (3) All the reasons annexed to this command are moral, respecting all men, as well as the Jews to whom the ceremonial law was given. And we find strangers obliged to the observation of it, as well as the Jews; but they were not so to ceremonial laws. (4) Jesus Christ speaks of it as a thing perpetually to endure, even after the Jewish Sabbath was over and gone (Mat 24:20). Although the Sabbath of the seventh day in order from the creation was changed into the first day, yet still it was kept a seventh day.

Thirdly, the day to be kept holy is one whole day—not a few hours, while the public worship lasts, but a whole day. There is an artificial day between sun rising and sun setting (Joh 11:9) and a natural day of twenty-four hours (Gen 1), which is the day here meant. This day we begin in the morning, immediately after midnight; and so does the Sabbath begin, and not in the evening, as is clear, if ye consider, (1) John 20:19: “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week,” where ye see that the evening following, not going before this first day of the week, is called the evening of the first day. (2) Our Sabbath begins where the Jewish Sabbath ended; but the Jewish Sabbath did not end towards the evening, but towards the morning: “In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week” (Mat 28:1). (3) Our Sabbath is held in memory of Christ’s resurrection, and it is certain that Christ rose early in the morning of the first day of the week.

Let us therefore take the utmost care to give God the whole day—spending it in the manner He has appointed—and not look on all the time, besides what is spent in public worship, as our own, which is too much the case in these degenerate times wherein we live.

From *The Works of Thomas Boston*, Vol. 2, in the public domain.

Thomas Boston (1676-1732): Scottish Presbyterian minister and theologian; born in Duns, Berwickshire, Scotland.



FOUNDATIONS OF THE LORD'S DAY

Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921)

WHEN we wish to remind ourselves of the foundations of the Sabbath in the Word of God, it is naturally to the Decalogue¹ that we go first. There we read the fundamental commandment that underlay the Sabbath of which our Lord asserted Himself to be the Lord, and the divine authority and continued validity of which He recognized and reaffirmed when He announced Himself Lord of the Sabbath established by it.

The Ten Commandments were, of course, given to Israel; and they are couched in language that could only be addressed to Israel. They are introduced by a preface adapted and doubtless designed to give them entrance into the hearts of precisely the Israelitish people, as the household ordinances of their own God—the God to Whom they owed their liberation from slavery and their establishment as a free people: “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exo 20:2). This intimacy of appeal specifically to Israel is never lost throughout the whole document. Everywhere it has just Israel in mind, and in every part of it, it is closely adapted to the special circumstances of Israel’s life. We may, therefore, read off from its texts many facts about Israel... We may learn from it also that Israel was a people to whom the Sabbath was already known, and which needed not to be informed, but only to be reminded of it: “Remember the sabbath day” (Exo 20:8).

Nothing can be clearer, then, than that the Ten Commandments are definitely addressed to the Israelitish people and declare the duties peculiarly incumbent² upon them, unless it be even clearer that these duties, declared thus to be peculiarly incumbent upon the Israelitish people, are not duties peculiar to that people. Samuel R. Driver³ describes the Ten Commandments as “a concise but comprehensive summary of the duties of the Israelite towards God and man...” It does not appear but that this is a very fair description of them. They are addressed to the Israelite. They give him a concise but comprehensive summary of his duties towards God and man. But the Is-

¹ **Decalogue** – Ten Commandments.

² **incumbent** – necessary as obligation or duty.

³ **Samuel Rolles Driver** (1846-1914) – English theologian and Hebrew scholar.

raelite, too, is a man. And it ought not to surprise us to discover that the duties of the Israelite towards God and man, when summarily stated, are just the fundamental duties that are owed to God and man by *every* man, whether Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. Such, at all events, is, in fact, the case. There is no duty imposed upon the Israelite in the Ten Commandments that is not equally incumbent upon all men everywhere. These commandments are but the positive publication to Israel of the universal human duties, the common morality of mankind.

It was not merely natural but inevitable that in this positive proclamation of universal human duties to a particular people, a special form should be given their enunciation⁴ specifically adapting them to this particular people in its peculiar circumstances; and it was eminently desirable that they should be so phrased and so commended as to open a ready approach for them to this particular people's mind and to bring them to bear with special force upon its heart. This element of particularity embedded in the mode of their proclamation, however, has no tendency to void these commandments of their intrinsic⁵ and universal obligation. It only clothes them with an additional appeal to those to whom this particular proclamation of them is immediately addressed. It is not less the duty of all men to do no murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness, not to covet a neighbor's possession that the Israelite too is commanded not to do these things and is urged to withhold himself from them by the moving plea that he owes a peculiar obedience to a God Who has dealt with him with distinguishing grace. And it is not less the duty of all men to worship none but the one true God and Him only with spiritual worship; not to profane His name nor to withhold from Him the time necessary for His service or refuse to reverence Him in His representatives that these duties are impressed especially on the heart of the Israelite by the great plea that this God has shown Himself in a peculiar manner His God. The presence of the Sabbath commandment in the midst of this series of fundamental human duties, singled out to form the compact core of the positive morality divinely required of God's peculiar people is rather its commendation *to all peoples of all times* as an essential element in primary human good conduct.

It is clearly this view of the matter that was taken by our Lord...He tells us explicitly that His mission as regards the Law was not to ab-

⁴ **enunciation** – formal declaration.

⁵ **intrinsic** – belonging to something as a basic and essential feature of what it is.

rogate it, but “to fulfil it,” that is to say, “to fill it out,” complete it, develop it into its full reach and power. The Law, He declares in the most solemn manner, is not susceptible of being done away with, but shall never cease to be authoritative and obligatory. “For verily I say unto you” (Mat 5:18), He says, employing for the first time in the record of His sayings that have come down to us, this formula of solemn asseveration:⁶ “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” So long as time endures, the Law shall endure in full validity, down to its smallest details...Now, the Law of which our Lord makes this strong assertion of its ever-abiding validity includes, as one of its prominent constituent parts, just the Ten Commandments. For, as He proceeds to illustrate His statements from instances in point, showing how the Law is filled out, completed by Him, He begins by adducing instances⁷ from the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not kill” (Mat 5:21); “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Mat 5:27). It is with the Ten Commandments clearly in His mind, therefore, that He declares that no jot or tittle of the Law shall ever pass away, but it all must be fulfilled.

Like Master, like disciple: There is an illuminating passage in the Epistle of James in which the Law is so adverted to⁸ as to throw a strong emphasis on its unity and its binding character in every precept of it. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law,” we read, “and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jam 2:10)...If then, we keep the Law, indeed, in general but fail in one precept, we have broken not that precept only, but the whole Law of which that precept is a portion...Now, the matter of special interest to us is that James illustrates this doctrine from the Ten Commandments. It is the same God, he declares, Who has said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery, and thou shalt not kill.” If we do not commit adultery but kill, we are transgressors of the holy will of this God, expressed in all the precepts and not merely in one. It is obvious that James might have taken any others of the precepts of the Decalogue to illustrate his point—the Fourth as well as the Sixth or Seventh. The Decalogue evidently lies in his mind as a convenient summary of fundamental duty; and he says in effect that it is binding on us all, in all its precepts alike, because they all alike are from God and publish His holy will.

An equally instructive allusion to the Decalogue meets us in Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom 13:8-10). Paul is dwelling on one of his

⁶ **asseveration** – forcible, definite declaration.

⁷ **adducing instances** – bringing forward examples for consideration.

⁸ **adverted to** – referred to.

favorite themes—love as the fulfilment of the Law. “He who loveth his neighbor,” he says, “hath fulfilled the law” (Rom 13:10). For, all the precepts of the Law—he is thinking here only of our duties to our fellowmen—are summed up in the one commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Rom 13:9). To illustrate this proposition, he enumerates some of the relevant precepts. They are taken from the second table of the Decalogue: “Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet” (13:9). Clearly, the Ten Commandments stand in Paul’s mind as a summary of the fundamental principles of essential morality and are, as such, of eternal validity. When he declares that love is the fulfilment of these precepts, he does not mean, of course, that love *supersedes* them, so that we may content ourselves with loving our neighbor and not concern ourselves at all with the details of our conduct toward him. What he means is the precise contrary of this: he who loves his neighbor has within him a spring of right conduct towards his neighbor, which will make him [eager] to fulfil all his duties to him. Love does not abrogate but fulfils the Law.

Paul was not the originator of this view of the relation of love to the Law. Of his Master before him we read, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Mat 22:37-38). “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mat 22:39-40)...Love, again, means not the abrogation but the *fulfilment* of the law.

It cannot be necessary to multiply examples. Nothing could be clearer than that our Lord and the writers of the New Testament treated the Ten Commandments as the embodiment—in a form suited to commend them to Israel—of the fundamental elements of essential morality, authoritative for all time and valid in all the circumstances of life. All the references made to them have as their tendency not to discredit them, but to cleanse them from the obscuring accretions⁹ of years of more or less uncomprehending and unspiritual tradition, and penetrating to their core, to throw up into high light their purest ethical content. Observe how our Lord deals with the two commandments—“Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adul-

⁹ **obscuring accretions** – made unclear and difficult to understand by increasing layers of tradition.

tery”—in the passage near the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, to which we have already had occasion to allude. Everything external and mechanical in the customary application of these commandments is swept away at once; the central moral principle is seized with firmness and...is developed without hesitation into its uttermost manifestations. Murder, for example, is discovered in principle already in anger, and not in anger only, but even in harsh language—adultery, in the vagrant¹⁰ impulses of the mind and senses, and in every approach to levity¹¹ in the treatment of the marriage tie. There is no question here of abrogating these commandments or of limiting their application. One might say rather that their applications are immensely extended, though “extended” is not quite the right word—say rather, *deepened*. They seem somehow to be enriched and ennobled in our Lord's hands, made more valuable and [fertile], increased in beauty and splendor. Nothing really has happened to them. But our eyes have been opened to see them as they are—purely ethical precepts, declaring fundamental duties and declaring them with that clean absoluteness that covers all the ground.

We have no such formal commentary from our Lord's lips on the Fourth Commandment. But we have the commentary of His *life*, and that is quite as illuminating and to the same deepening and ennobling effect. There was no commandment that had been more overlaid in the later Jewish practice with mechanical incrustations.¹² Our Lord was compelled, in the mere process of living, to break His way through these and to uncover to the sight of man ever more and more clearly the real Law of the Sabbath—the Sabbath that was ordained of God, and of which He, the Son of Man, is Lord. Thus, we have from Him a series of crisp declarations, called out as occasion arose, the effect of which in the mass is to give us a comment on this commandment altogether similar in character to the more formal expositions of the Sixth and Seventh Commandments.

Among these, such a one as this stands out with great emphasis: “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day.” And this will lead us naturally to this broad proclamation: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (Joh 5:17). Obviously, the Sabbath, in our Lord's view, was not a day of sheer idleness: inactivity was not its mark. Inactivity was not the mark of God's Sabbath when He rested from the works that He creatively made. Up to this very moment, He has been working con-

¹⁰ **vagrant** – straying; wandering.

¹¹ **levity** – lack of care in making and breaking promises; unbecoming freedom of conduct.

¹² **mechanical incrustations** – legalistic, hard crusty layers of tradition.

tinuously; and, imitating Him, our Sabbath is also to be filled with work. God rested, not because He was weary or needed an intermission in His labors, but because He had completed the task He had set for Himself (we speak as a man) and had completed it well. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good... God ended his work which he had made” (Gen 1:31, 2:2). He was now ready to turn to other work. And we, like Him, are to do our appointed work—“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work” (Exo 20:9)—and then, laying it well aside, turn to another task. It is not work as such, but our *own* work from which we are to cease on the Sabbath. “Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work,” says the commandment; or, as Isaiah puts it: “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath” (that is, from trampling it down), “from doing thy pleasure on my holy day” (that is the way we trample it down); “and call the sabbath a delight, the holy (day) 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” (Isa 58:13-14).

In one word, the Sabbath is the Lord’s Day, not ours; and on it is to be done the Lord’s work, not ours; that is our “rest”...Rest is not the true essence of the Sabbath or the end of its institution; it is the means to a further end, which constitutes the real Sabbath “rest.” We are to rest from our own things that we may give ourselves to the things of God.

The Sabbath came out of Christ’s hands, we see then, not despoiled¹³ of any of its authority or robbed of any of its glory, but rather enhanced in both authority and glory. Like the other commandments, it was cleansed of all that was local or temporary in the modes in which it had hitherto been commended to God’s people in their isolation as a nation and stood forth in its universal ethical content. Among the changes in its external form that it thus underwent was a change in the day of its observance. No injury was thus done the Sabbath as it was commended to the Jews, rather a new greatness was brought to it. Our Lord, too, following the example of His Father, when He had finished the work that it had been given Him to do, rested on the Sabbath—in the peace of His grave. But He had work yet to do. And, when the first day of the new week dawned, which was

¹³ **despoiled** – stripped.

the first day of a new era—the era of salvation—He rose from the Sabbath rest of the grave and made all things new. As C. F. Keil beautifully puts it, “Christ is Lord of the Sabbath (Mat 12:8), and after the completion of His work, He also rested on the Sabbath. But He rose again on Sunday; and through His resurrection, which is the pledge to the world of the fruits of His redeeming work, He has made this day the Lord’s Day for His Church, to be observed by [her] till the Captain of [her] salvation shall return, and having finished the judgment upon all His foes to the very last shall lead [her] to the rest of that eternal Sabbath, which God prepared for the whole creation through His own resting after the completion of the heaven and the earth.”¹⁴ Christ took the Sabbath into the grave with Him and brought the Lord’s Day out of the grave with Him on the resurrection morn.

It is true enough that we have no record of a commandment of our Lord’s requiring a change in the day of the observance of the Sabbath. Neither has any of the apostles to whom He committed the task of founding His Church given us such a commandment. By their actions, nevertheless, both our Lord and His apostles appear to commend the first day of the week to us as the Christian Sabbath. It is not merely that our Lord rose from the dead on that day: a certain emphasis seems to be placed precisely upon the fact that it was on the first day of the week that He rose. This is true of all the accounts of His rising. Luke, for example, after telling us that Jesus rose “on the first day of the week” (Luk 24:1) on coming to add the account of His appearing to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, throws what almost seems to be superfluous¹⁵ stress on that also having happened “on that very day.” It is in John’s account, however, that this emphasis is most noticeable. “The first day of the week,” he tells us, “cometh Mary Magdalene early” to find the empty tomb. And then, a little later: “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week,” Jesus showed Himself to His assembled followers...After thus pointedly indicating that it was on the evening of precisely the first day of the week that Jesus first showed Himself to His assembled disciples, John proceeds equally sharply to define the time of His next showing Himself to them as “after eight days.” That is to say, it was on the next first day of the week that “again his disciples were within” (Joh 20:26), and Jesus manifested Himself to them. The appearance is strong that our Lord, having crowned the day of His rising with mani-

¹⁴ **Carl Friedrich Keil** (1807-1888) and **Franz Delitzsch** (1813-1890), *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, 400; Keil and Delitzsch were Lutheran commentators.

¹⁵ **superfluous** – beyond what is required; unnecessary.

festations, disappeared for a whole week to appear again *only on the next Sabbath*...There is an appearance, at least, that the first day of the week was becoming under this direct sanction of the risen Lord the appointed day of Christian assemblies.

That the Christians [had been driven early] to separate themselves from the Jews (*see* Acts 19:9) and had soon established regular times of “the assembling of ourselves together,” we know from an exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 10:25). A hint of Paul’s suggests that their ordinary day of assembly was on the first day of the week (1Co 16:2). It is clear from a passage in Acts 20:7 that the custom “upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread” was so fixed in the middle of the period of Paul’s missionary activity that, though in haste, he felt constrained to tarry a whole week in Troas that he might meet with the brethren on that day...We learn from a passing reference in the Apocalypse (1:10) that the designation “the Lord’s day” had already established itself in Christian usage...With such suggestions behind us, we cannot wonder that the Church emerges from the Apostolic Age with the first day of the week firmly established as [her] day of religious observance...

If we wish, however, fully to apprehend how Paul was accustomed to Christianize and universalize the Ten Commandments while preserving nevertheless intact their whole substance and formal authority, we should turn over the page and read this: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph 6:1-3). Observe, *first*, how the Fifth Commandment is introduced here as the appropriate proof that obedience to parents is right. Having asserted it to be right, Paul adduces the commandment that requires it. Thus, the acknowledged authority of the Fifth Commandment as such in the Christian Church is simply taken for granted. Observe, *secondly*, how the authority of the Fifth Commandment—thus assumed as unquestionable—is extended over the whole Decalogue. For this commandment is not adduced here as an isolated precept: it is brought forward as one of a series in which it stands on equal ground with the others, differing from them only in being the first of them that has a promise attached to it—“which is the first commandment with promise.” Observe, *thirdly*, how everything in the manner in which the Fifth Commandment is enunciated in the Decalogue that gives it a form and color adapting it specifically to the Old Dispensation is quietly set aside and a universalizing mode of statement substituted for

it: "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the *earth*" (Eph 6:3). All allusion to Canaan—the land that Jehovah, Israel's God, had promised to Israel—is eliminated and with it all that gives the promise or the commandment to which it is annexed any appearance of exclusive application to Israel. In its place is set a broad declaration valid not merely for the Jew who worships the Father in Jerusalem, but for all those true worshippers everywhere who worship Him in spirit and in truth (Joh 4:24). This may seem the more remarkable because Paul, in adducing the commandment, calls special attention to this promise, and that in such a manner as to appeal to its divine origin. It is quite clear that he was thoroughly sure of his ground with his readers [Gentiles]. And that means that the universalizing reading of the Ten Commandments was the established custom of the Apostolic Church.

Can we doubt that as Paul, and the whole Apostolic Church with him, dealt with the Fifth Commandment, so he dealt with the Fourth? That he preserved to it its whole substance and its complete authority, but eliminated from it, too, all that tended to give it a local and temporary reference? And why should this not have carried with it, as it certainly seems to have carried with it, the substitution for the day of *the God of Israel* (Who brought His people out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage) the day of *the Lord Jesus* (Who brought them out of worse bondage than that of Egypt by a greater deliverance, a deliverance of which that from Egypt was but a type)? Paul would be dealing with the Fourth Commandment precisely as he deals with the Fifth, if he treated the shadow-Sabbath as a matter of indifference and brought the whole obligation of the commandment to bear upon keeping holy to the Lord the new Lord's Day, the monument of the second and better creation.

That this was precisely what he did, and with him the whole Apostolic Church, there seems no room to question. And the meaning of that is that the Lord's Day is placed in our hands by the authority of the apostles of Christ, under the undiminished sanction of the eternal Law of God.

From *Sunday: The World's Rest Day*, in the public domain.

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921): Presbyterian professor of theology at Princeton Seminary; born near Lexington, KY, USA.



FROM SABBATH TO LORD'S DAY

Archibald A. Hodge (1823-1886)

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.—Exodus 20:8

THE object of this [article] is simply to state the grounds upon which the faith of the universal Church rests when, while recognizing the Fourth Commandment as an integral part of the supreme, universal, and unalterable Moral Law, she affirms that the first day of the week has for this purpose—and for obvious reasons—been substituted for the seventh by the authority of the inspired apostles and, therefore, of Christ Himself.

1. Observe that the particular day of the week on which the Sabbath is to be kept, although fixed for revealed reasons by the will of God at the creation, never was or could be of the *essence* of the institution itself. The command to observe the Sabbath is essentially as moral and immutable as the commands to abstain from stealing, killing, or adultery. It has, like them, its ground in the universal and permanent constitution and relations of human nature. It was designed to meet the physical, moral, spiritual, and social wants of men; to afford a suitable time for the public moral and religious instruction of the people and the public and private worship of God; and to afford a suitable period of rest from the wear and tear of secular labor. That a certain proper proportion of time—regularly recurring and observed in common by the community of Christian people and of Christian nations—should be appointed and its observance rendered obligatory by divine authority is therefore the very essence of the institution. These essential elements are found unchanged under both dispensations.¹

The Sabbath, as divinely ordained in the Old Testament, is just what all men need today. It was commanded that all should cease from worldly labor and keep the time holy in devoting it to the worship of God and the good of men. The services of the temple were redoubled;² and, afterward, the instructions and worship of the synagogue were introduced. It was granted to the people and to their serv-

¹ **under both dispensations** – *dispensations*, as used here, means “periods of time,” and in this context, the phrase means “under the Old and New Covenants.”

² **redoubled** – increased.

ants and beasts as a privilege, not as a burden (Deu 5:12-15). It was always kept by the Jews and after them by the early Christians, as a festival, and not as a fast.³

In later years, it was—like all other parts of God's revealed will—overlaid with pharisaical and rabbinical carnal interpretations and additions. From all these, Christ purged it, as He did the rest of the Law. He came "to fulfill all righteousness"; therefore, He kept the Sabbath religiously and taught His disciples, while disregarding the glosses⁴ of the Pharisees, to keep it in its essential spiritual sense as ordained by God. He declared that "the Sabbath was made for man" (Mar 2:27), the *genus homo*,⁵ and consequently is both binding on all men for all time and adapted to the nature and wants of all men under all historical conditions.

On the other hand, it is evident that the particular day set apart is not in the least of the essence of the institution and that it must depend upon the positive will of God, which of course may substitute one day instead of another on suitable occasions for adequate reasons.

2. The introduction of a new dispensation, which a preparatory and particularistic nation-system [Israel] is to be replaced by a permanent and universal one [the Church], embracing all nations to the end time, is certainly such a suitable occasion. The Moral Law, expressed in the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God on stone and made the foundation of His throne between the cherubim and the condition of His covenant, must remain. The types, the special municipal laws of the Jews, and whatever is unessential in Sabbath or other permanent institutions must be changed.

3. The amazing fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus on the first day of the week constitutes evidently adequate reason for appointing that instead of the seventh day to be the Christian Sabbath. The Old Testament is introduced with an account of the genesis of the heaven and earth, and the old dispensation first grounds itself upon the relation of God as Creator of the universe and of man.

The New Testament is introduced with an account of the genesis of Jesus Christ and reveals the incarnate Creator as our champion, victorious over sin and death. The recognition of God as Creator is

³ Joseph Bingham (1668-1723), *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, bk. 20, ch. 3; *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. "Sabbath."

⁴ **glosses** – deceptive interpretations.

⁵ **genus homo** – *genus* = scientific classification of one or more species; in this context, *homo* = human beings.

common to every theistic⁶ system; the recognition of the resurrection of the incarnate God is peculiar to Christianity. The recognition of God as Creator is involved and conserved in the recognition of the resurrection of Christ, while the latter article of faith carries with it also the entire body of Christian faith and hope and life. The fact of the resurrection consummates the process of redemption as far as it is objective to the Church. It is the reason of our faith, the ground of our hope, [and] the pledge of our personal salvation and of the ultimate triumph of our Lord as the Savior of the world. It is the keystone of historical Christianity and, consequently, of all living theism⁷ in the civilized world. The essential qualification of an apostle was that he was an eyewitness of the resurrection. Their doctrine was summed up as a preaching of “Jesus and the resurrection” (Act 1:22; 4:2; 17:18; 23:6; 24:21).

4. During His life, Jesus had affirmed that He was “Lord also of the Sabbath day” (Mar 2:28). After His resurrection, He signalized the first day of the week, and not the seventh, by His revelation. On the day He rose, He appeared to His disciples on five different occasions. Withdrawing Himself during the interval, [He] reappeared on the following “first day of the week,”⁸ His disciples being assembled and Thomas with them: “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you” (Joh 20:19). The day of Pentecost falling that year on the “first day of the week,” the disciples were again found assembled by mutual understanding: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place...And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Act 2:1, 4); and the promised gift of the Holy Ghost descended upon them. The Lord, after many years, appeared unto John in Patmos and granted him the great closing Revelation on the “Lord’s day”: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet” (Rev 1:10), which all the early Christians understood to signify the weekly festival dedicated to the resurrection of the Lord.

⁶ **theistic** – pertaining to belief in the existence of a god or gods.

⁷ **theism** – belief in the existence of God.

⁸ **first day of the week** – (*Greek* = μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων) The assertion of the seventh day Sabbatarians that this phrase should be translated “one of the Sabbaths” is absurd. σαββάτων (*sabbatōn*) is neuter and cannot agree [grammatically] with the feminine μιᾷ (*mia*).

The record is also full of evidence that the members of all the apostolic churches were in the habit of assembling in their respective places at regular times for the purpose of common worship (1Co 11:17, 20; 14:23-26; Heb 10:25). That these assemblies were held on the "first day of the week" is certain from the action of Paul at Troas: "And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Act 20:6-7). So also his orders to the churches of Corinth and Galatia: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1Co 16:1-2). The change was then certainly made, as we can trace by an unbroken and consistent chain of testimonies from the time of the apostles to the present. The motives for the change assigned by the early Christian Fathers are known to have operated upon the apostles and are perfectly congruous⁹ with all that is recorded of their characters, lives, and doctrines. The change, therefore, had the sanction of the apostles and, consequently, the authority of the "Lord of the Sabbath" Himself.

5. From the time of John, who first gave the institution its best and most sacred title—"Lord's Day"—there is an unbroken and unexceptional chain of testimonies that the "first day of the week" was observed as the Christian's day of worship and rest. For a long time, the word *Sabbath* continued to be applied exclusively to the seventh day. From habit, and in conformity to the natural sentiments of the Jewish converts, the early Christians long continued to observe both days. They kept every seventh day except the Sabbath before Easter, when the Lord lay in the grave, as they did every first day, as a festival. Afterward for a time, [Romanism], in opposition to Judaism, kept it as a fast. They held public religious services upon it. But the day was no longer considered sacred; labor was never suspended nor legally interdicted.¹⁰ On the other hand, any tendency to return to its ancient observance as a strictly holy day, as in any sense sacred, as the first day of the week was maintained to be, was discountenanced¹¹ as an

⁹ **congruous** – in agreement or harmony.

¹⁰ **interdicted** – forbidden.

¹¹ **discountenanced** – looked on with disfavor.

abandoning the freedom of the gospel and a returning to the ceremonial [practices] of the Jews.

The early Christians called their own day, for which they asserted preeminence and exclusive obligation, “the Lord’s Day,” “the first day of the week,” “the eighth day”; and, in their communication with the heathen, they came to call it, as we have done in correspondence with ancient secular usage, “*dies solis*”—“Sunday.” A comparison of the passages in which these designations are used by the early Christians makes it absolutely certain that they signify the same day, since they are all defined as applying to the day after the Jewish Sabbath or to the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

Ignatius,¹² an immediate friend of the apostles, martyred at Rome not more than fifteen years after the death of John, in his Epistle to the Magnesians, chapter 9, says, “Those who have come to the possession of new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath (seventh day), but living in the observance of the Lord’s Day, on which also our life has sprung up again, by Him and by His death.” He calls the Lord’s Day “the queen and chief of all the days” (of the week).

The author of the Epistle of St. Barnabas, writing a little before or at latest not long after the death of the apostle John, says, chapter 15, “We celebrate the eighth day with joy, on which, too, Jesus rose from the dead.”

Justin Martyr¹³ says, “On the day called Sunday is an assembly of all who live either in cities or in the rural districts, and the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read...because it is the first day on which God dispelled the darkness and the original state of things and formed the world, and because Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead upon it.” “Therefore it remains the chief and first of days.” The testimony continues uniform and unbroken...

Tertullian,¹⁴ writing at the close of the second century, says, “On the Lord’s Day, Christians, in honor of the resurrection of the Lord...must avoid everything that would cause anxiety, and defer all worldly business, lest they should give place to the devil.”

Athanasius¹⁵ says explicitly, “The Lord transferred the sacred ob-

¹² **Ignatius of Antioch** (c. 35/50-c. 110) – early Christian theologian and martyr; student of John the Apostle.

¹³ **Justin Martyr** (c. 100-c. 165) – early Christian apologist and martyr.

¹⁴ **Tertullian** (c. 155-220) – early Latin theologian and apologist from Carthage, Africa.

¹⁵ **Athanasius** (c. 295-373) – Greek bishop of Alexandria, Egypt; defender of the deity of Christ.

servance (from the Sabbath) to the Lord's Day.”

The author of the sermons *de Tempore*¹⁶ says: “The apostles transferred the observance of the Sabbath to the Lord's Day; and therefore from the evening of the Sabbath to the evening of the Lord's Day, men ought to abstain from all country-work and secular business, and only attend divine service”...

The testimony of all the great Reformers and all historical branches of the modern Christian Church agree...(1) Luther,¹⁷ Calvin,¹⁸ and other Reformers taught that the Sabbath was ordained for the whole human race at the creation, [and] (2) that it was in its essential features designed to be of universal and perpetual obligation...

The change of the day by the apostolic Church [is] proved by historical testimony [of the early church and of the Reformers], to which much might be added if space permitted, but against which no counter-evidence exists. This, as well as the passages above cited, proves that the change was effected by the authority of the apostles and, hence, by the authority of Christ. With the apostles preaching “Jesus and the resurrection” and observing and appointing the first day of the week for religious services, God bore “witness both with signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost” (Heb 2:4). Ever since the great Pentecostal Lord's Day, this day has been observed by God's true people and blessed by the Holy Ghost. It has been recognized and graciously used as an essential and pre-eminent means of building up the kingdom of Christ and effecting the salvation of His seed. And this divine acknowledgement has been in every age and nation in direct proportion to the faithful consecration of the day to its spiritual purpose. It is not possible that either a superstitious will-worship or an ignorant misconception should have been crowned with uniform and discriminating seals of divine [approval] through eighteen hundred years.

From *The Sabbath: The Day Changed; the Sabbath Preserved*,
in the public domain.

Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886): American Presbyterian pastor, theologian, and principal of Princeton Seminary; born in Princeton, NJ, USA.



¹⁶ sermons *de Tempore* – festival sermons.

¹⁷ Martin Luther (1483-1546) – German theologian and leader of the Reformation.

¹⁸ John Calvin (1509-1564) – French-born Swiss Protestant reformer.

THE LORD'S DAY IN PUBLIC

Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690)

CONSIDER what duties you are to be engaged in [for] the public and solemn worship of God on this day. For in them, a great and principal part of the sanctification of it doth consist.

This I mention in the first place as most preferable. For, certainly, as long as—through the mercy of God—we have the public and free dispensation¹ of the gospel, we ought not to slight nor turn our backs upon this visible communion of the Church. [Rather we should] honor and own the freedom of the gospel by our constant attendance on the dispensations of it, lest, despising the mercy of God in giving them to us so publicly, we provoke Him...Now the public duties that are necessary to the right sanctifying of the Lord's Day are these:

1. Affectionate prayer, in joining with the minister, who is our mouth unto God as well as God's mouth unto us. For, as he is entrusted to deliver [God's] sovereign will and commands, so likewise to present our requests unto the throne of His grace. We ought heedfully to attend to every petition, to dart it up to heaven with our most earnest desires, and to close and seal it up with our affectionate *Amen*—“So be it.” For, though it be the minister alone that speaks, yet it is not the minister alone that prays, but the whole congregation by him and with him. Whatsoever petition is not accompanied with thy most sincere and cordial affections, it is as much mocking of God as if thine own mouth had uttered it without the concurrence² of thy heart. [This] is most gross hypocrisy. Consider what promises are made to particular Christians when they pray singly and by themselves: “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will grant it you” (Joh 15:16; 16:23). What great prevalence,³ then, must the united prayers of the saints have when they join interests and put all the favor that each of them hath at the Throne of Grace into one common stock! When we come to the public prayers, we are not to come as auditors, but as actors: we have our part in them. And every petition that is spread before God ought to be breathed from our very hearts and souls. If we affectionately perform [this], we may have good as-

¹ **dispensation** – act of distributing or dispensing; here, through preaching and literature.

² **concurrence** – agreement.

³ **prevalence** – influence; effective power.

surance that what is ratified by so many votes and suffrages⁴ here on earth shall likewise be confirmed in heaven. For our Savior hath told us, "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Mat 18:19).

2. Our reverent and attentive hearing of the Word of God, either read or preached, is another public duty necessary to the sanctification of the Lord's Day. This was observed also in the times of the Law, before Christ's coming into the world: "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day" (Act 15:21). Their synagogues were built for this very purpose: as their temple was the great place of their legal and ceremonial worship, so these were for their moral and natural worship. In the temple, they chiefly sacrificed; in their synagogues, they prayed, read, and heard. Every town and almost every village had one erected in it, as now our churches are, where the people on the Sabbath day assembled and had some portion of the Law read and expounded to them. Much more ought we to give our attendance on this holy ordinance now, in the times of the gospel, since a greater measure of spiritual knowledge is required from us, and the mysteries of salvation are more clearly declared unto us. And may that tongue wither and that mouth be forever silenced that shall dare to utter anything in contempt and vilifying⁵ of this holy ordinance! Such excellent things are spoken of the preaching of the gospel! It is "the power of God" (1Co 1:18). It is the salvation of "them that believe" (1Co 1:21). It is the sweet "savour of his knowledge" (2Co 2:14). Certainly, whosoever disparageth⁶ it, rejecteth against himself the counsel of God and neglects the only appointed means for the begetting of faith and for the obtaining of eternal salvation! For "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17).

3. Another public duty pertaining to the sanctifying of the Lord's Day is singing of Psalms. For this day being a festival unto God, a day of spiritual joy and gladness, how can we better testify our joy than by our melody? "Is any merry?" saith St. James, "let him sing psalms" (Jam 5:13). And, therefore, let profane spirits deride this how they please; yet, certainly, it is a most heavenly and spiritual duty. The holy angels and the spirits of just men in heaven are said to sing Eternal Hallelujahs unto the Great King! And if our Lord's Day be

⁴ **votes and suffrages** – prayers and intercessions.

⁵ **vilifying** – speaking or writing about with slanderous or abusive language.

⁶ **disparageth** – refer disapprovingly or contemptuously to somebody or something.

typical of heaven and the work of the Lord's Day represents to us the everlasting work of these blessed spirits, how can it be better done than when we are singing forth the praises of Him that sits upon the throne and of the Lamb our Redeemer? This is to join with the heavenly choir in their heavenly work and to observe a Lord's Day *here*, like that eternal Sabbath *there*, as the imperfection of earth can resemble the glory and perfection of heaven.

4. Another public duty belonging unto the sanctifying of the Lord's Day is the administration of the [ordinances], especially that of the Lord's Supper. And therefore it is mentioned, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread," that is, to partake of the Holy Communion of the body and blood of Christ, "Paul preached unto them" (Act 20:7), which intimates that the primary intent of their assemblies was to receive the Lord's Supper. Upon occasion of this, the apostle instructed them by preaching. It is most evident by all the records of the Church that it was the apostolic and primitive custom to partake of this most holy ordinance every Lord's Day and that their meetings were chiefly designed for this, to which were annexed prayer and preaching. I am afraid, Sirs, that one of the great sins of our age is not only the neglect and contempt of this ordinance by some, but the seldom celebrating it by all. The apostle, where he speaks of this holy institution, intimates that it should be frequently dispensed and participated: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup" (1Co 11:26). Although this ordinance be too seldom administered, let us consider what dishonor [some show to] Christ, [when they] totally withdraw themselves from it or very rarely partake of it. I shall no longer insist upon this, but leave it to God and your own consciences; for, certainly, if either persuasion or demonstration itself could prevail against resolution, enough hath been said many times [before] to spare me the labor of making this complaint any more.

And, thus much, concerning the sanctification of the Lord's Day, in the public duties of His worship and service.

From *The Works of Ezekiel Hopkins*, Vol. 1, in the public domain.



I grant you that before we knew the Lord, it did sometimes seem to our young minds rather a dull thing to read the Bible, [to] hear sermons, and to keep Sabbaths.

But now that we have come to Christ and He has saved us, now that we are His, the first day of the week...has become a feast! We look with eager delight for Sundays to come round one after another.—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

THE LORD'S DAY AT HOME

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

THE prophet Jeremiah puts prayerless families and the heathen in the same category. If God's wrath falls on the latter, it will certainly descend on the former. The language the prophet uses is truly startling: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name" (Jer 10:25). Such families¹ are truly heathenish² in their dispositions and practices.

Perhaps there never was a godly pastor who did not feel that the cultivation of family religion³ was very important to the success of his ministry and to the progress of true piety—who did not regret the neglect of it as a sad injury to the cause of God. But what is the cultivation of family religion? It consists,

1. In a devout reading, hearing, and studying of the Scriptures. The Word of God is able to make us wise unto salvation, and Timothy knew it from a child. We should acquaint ourselves and all our household with the sacred volume because it is the Word of God, because it is as fit to be read and spoken of in the family as anywhere else, and because we are specially commanded to teach all its truths to our children in the most familiar manner (2Ti 3:15; Deu 4:9, 6:7; Psa 78:4).

2. A portion should be spent in praising God for His mercies. Where it can be done to edification, families should sing God's praises. If it is impossible to sing them,...read [a] sacred hymn.

3. To these should be added prayer, including adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and supplication.

4. Religious conversation guided and conducted by the head of the family, consisting of familiar explanations. This commandment also requires Scripture and catechetical⁴ instruction. In these endeavors to maintain domestic piety,⁵ all the family as far as possible should

¹ **families** – clans; "This noun is used in a wider sense than the English term *family* usually conveys. The word for the inhabitants of one house is usually *house, household...* [Family] most often refers to a circle of relatives with strong blood ties." (Harris, Archer, Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 947)

² **heathenish** – pagan; not acknowledging the God of the Bible.

³ See FGB 188, *Family Worship*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴ **catechetical** – relating to Christian instruction through questions and answers.

⁵ **domestic piety** – godliness in the home.

unite. Some may be too young. Others may be sick, but none should be absent except for good cause. Servants should be kindly invited to unite with the rest of the family, and comfortable seats should be provided for all. What a blessed sight is that, when the pious head of a family, “with solemn air,” says, “Let us worship God,”⁶ and then devoutly reads the Bible and sings the praises of the Most High...

Great care should be taken that this family religion should be attended to at the most fitting time and not at hours so early as to make it necessary for the members of a household to neglect their private devotions in the morning, nor so late in the evening as to render it certain that children and others will be drowsy and, of course, unedified. That this whole matter may be truly useful, family worship and attention to family religion should be [as follows:]

1. Stated and regular: No light or trivial cause should be allowed to postpone or hinder it.

2. It should be decorous,⁷ orderly, quiet, and serious. If it fails in this respect, it can scarcely edify any one. All trifling behavior should be carefully avoided.

3. It should be cheerful, not austere and morose.⁸ God, Who loves a cheerful giver (2Co 9:7), no less loves a cheerful worshipper. Everything said and done should be suited to secure attention and to awaken an interest in the service.

4. Therefore, tediousness⁹ should be avoided. A wise man regardeth both time and judgment. Where exhaustion begins, edification ceases. It would often prevent weariness, if there was more variety in conducting Sabbath day instruction and worship. Prayers, expositions, and remarks should be short and comprehensive.

5. But we should avoid both the appearance and reality of being hasty and of attending to this matter as though we were desirous of finishing it as speedily as possible.

6. Family instruction and worship should take proper notice of family mercies and afflictions. Such are continually occurring. But we should be very careful not to wound the feelings of even the youngest or most ignorant. It is seldom well to lecture one member of a family for personal faults in the presence of others.

⁶ From *The Cotter's Saturday Night* by Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759-1796).

⁷ **decorous** – characterized by conformity to the recognized standards of behavior.

⁸ **austere and morose** – stern in manner and gloomy.

⁹ **tediousness** – long and tiresome.

7. In this matter, widows who are the heads of families should remember that they are held responsible for the order and religious education of their households...

8. It is sometimes asked, what should pious¹⁰ wives and mothers do when husbands and fathers are absent? The correct answer is, "Take [their] place and see to it that God is honored in the house."

9. But what shall wives and mothers do when husbands and fathers—even when at home and well—decline to give proper religious instruction and to conduct family worship? In answer, it may be stated that it is not the duty of the wife to assume the husband's place, and therefore she may not in his presence, with an air of authority over him, convene¹¹ the family and give instruction. But though she is not the head of her husband, yet, with him and under him, she is the head of the rest of the family. She ought to assemble her children and servants in some suitable apartment and there teach them and unite with them in suitable acts of devotion. This course has often been followed by the happiest consequences.

10. As the great object of all religious instruction and worship is to please God and secure His blessing, so let great care be taken that whatever is done be sincere, humble, and fervent. A heartless form is idle; yea, it is *worse*. Be zealous, not cold.

The following considerations show the propriety¹² and obligation of family religion:

(1) The very heathen, who profess and practice any form of religion, do, without exception, maintain some form of domestic religion. Though they call not on the name of Jehovah, yet they call upon their gods, and teach their children to do the same. This certainly argues a strong presumption that family religion is a dictate of nature. It is only in countries nominally¹³ Christian that we find men failing to cultivate some form of devotion at home...

(2) The condition of every family calls for such instruction and devotion. We are very ignorant. Every appliance¹⁴ is necessary to diffuse light into our darkened understandings. Every family has wants,¹⁵ which should lead it to unite in prayer. Every family has mercies,

¹⁰ pious – godly.

¹¹ convene – bring together.

¹² propriety – quality of being proper.

¹³ nominally – in name only, not really.

¹⁴ appliance – thing applied as a means to an end.

¹⁵ wants – needs.

which demand a united song. Every family has trials, where each should shed with the rest the tear of sympathy. Afflicted souls can find no better way to staunch¹⁶ their bleeding wounds than thus to unite in solemn acts of worship. Sometimes a household is threatened with some dire calamity. Then, what is more proper than united petitions to Him, Who is Lord of all, to avert the dreaded evil?

(3) The maintenance of domestic religion has a happy effect on the peace and order of families. If one is absent, sick, or peculiarly afflicted, how it awakens and strengthens proper affection in the rest to speak of that one, to utter words of kindness to turn, and to pray for his return or deliverance! How many little heart-burnings and jealousies are thus extinguished. How sweet is the sight, when old and young quietly and lovingly meet and put away all else that they may speak, hear, think, pray, and praise before the Father of their spirits! There can hardly be an unamiable, disobliging¹⁷ family, whose habit is to make common confession of sin, common acknowledgments of mercies, and common supplications for needed blessings, attended with the correct understanding of God's mind and will. They may lack much that the world calls courtliness.¹⁸ But of the politeness that consists in "real kindness, kindly expressed," such a family can hardly be destitute. There is real love there. Every act of joint devotion strengthens it. Temptation may assail it. It may even be temporarily interrupted; but it will seldom or never be destroyed. Such bonds as these are the ligaments of the whole social system...A nation made up of such families can never be [worthy of hatred]. It is an alarming fact that during the nineteenth century, infidelity¹⁹ has directed its most formidable enginery²⁰ against the family institution and against family religion.

(4) The primitive church, and indeed every thriving evangelical church, has set us an example in this matter, which it cannot be safe to despise. Church history informs us that after their private devotions, the members of the family in primitive times met for united prayer, the reading of the Scriptures, the recital of doctrinal and practical sentiments and mutual edification generally. This indeed, to some extent, was done every day. Each day was also closed by similar devotions. But the Lord's Day abounded in them.

¹⁶ **staunch** – stop the flow.

¹⁷ **unamiable, disobliging** – unfriendly, deliberately unhelpful.

¹⁸ **courtliness** – the elegance of manners befitting a royal court.

¹⁹ **infidelity** – atheism.

²⁰ **enginery** – *figuratively*, artillery.

(5) **This maintenance of family religion is eminently useful.** It has nearly every advantage attending every possible method of teaching. It gives a little at a time and repeats it often. It is varied in its modes. It cuts up ignorance by the roots...

(6) **Family instruction and worship are of great importance in promoting pure and undefiled religion in the world.** When Richard Baxter²¹ settled in Kidderminster, there were but few devout families. Consequently, iniquity abounded. But as the spirit of religion revived, so did family worship, until at last, in some whole streets, not one family was found [in which] God was not honored by even daily worship...

(7) **Besides the solemn passage already cited from Jeremiah, other Scriptures show that pious men did not neglect family religion.** Of Abraham, God said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Gen 18:19). Joshua said, "for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Jos 24:15). David says, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart" (Psa 101:2). Solomon says, "The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just" (Pro 3:33).²²

Let family religion be maintained in all its purity and power, cost what it may. But this has never been done where families have slighted the Lord's Day. Stowell [wrote,] "It may be seriously questioned whether any one duty is so lamentably neglected among all classes of professing Christians, as the domestic observance of the Sabbath."²³

From *The Law of God*, Sprinkle Publications,
www.sprinklepublications.net.

William S. Plumer (1802-1880): American Presbyterian minister and author; born in Greensburg, PA, USA.



Every Sabbath should be a thanksgiving Sunday, for Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. We ought to give thanks every time we celebrate His resurrection!—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

²¹ **Richard Baxter** (1615-1691) – Nonconformist Puritan preacher and theologian.

²² See also Acts 10:2, and all those passages of Scripture that speak of praying always (Col 1:3), praying always with all prayer and supplication (Eph 6:18), praying everywhere (1Ti 2:8), praying without ceasing (1Th 5:17)

²³ **William Hendry Stowell** (1800-1858), *The Ten Commandments Illustrated* (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1825), 89.

PIETY, NECESSITY, AND CHARITY

Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690)

WHEN we devote ourselves to [God] service and worship, meditating on His excellency, magnifying and praising His mercy, and invoking His holy name, we then hallow this day and give unto God that which is God's. Thus, you see what it is to sanctify the Lord's Day: both as God hath done it—by *dedication*—and as man ought to do it—by observation. But the great difficulty is in what manner the Lord's Day ought to be sanctified and kept holy: whether or not we are bound to the same strict and vigorous observation of our Christian Sabbath, as the Jews were of theirs under the economy of Moses.

To this I answer in general: as our Sabbath is not the very same with theirs, but only [similar], bearing a fit proportion to it, so, likewise, our sanctification of the Lord's Day—for thus I would rather call it than the Sabbath—is not, in all particulars the same that was required from the Jews. [It] bears a proportion to it in those things that are not ceremonial nor burdensome to our Christian liberty.

But, more particularly: The sanctifying of this day consists, partly, in abstaining from those things whereby it would be profaned; and, partly, in the performance of those things that are required of us and tend to promote the sanctity and holiness of it...Notwithstanding this rest and cessation from labor that is required from us on the Lord's Day, yet there are three sorts of works that may and ought to be performed on it, how great soever our bodily labor may be in doing them. And they are works of *piety*, works of *necessity*, and works of *charity*.

1. Works of *piety* are to be performed on the Lord's Day, yea, on this day especially, as being the proper works of the day. And such are not only those that consist in the *internal* operations of the soul, as heavenly meditations and spiritual affections; but such also as consist in the *external* actions of the body, as oral prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and preaching of the Word. Yea, on this day are ministers chiefly employed in their bodily labor and spending of their spirits: yet it is far from being a profanation of the Lord's Day, for holy works are most proper for holy days. And not only are such works to be performed on the Lord's Day, but they were enjoined also on the Jewish Sabbath. And therefore saith our Savior, "Have ye not read in the law,

how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?” (Mat 12:5). This word, therefore, of profaning the Sabbath is not to be understood of a formal profanation, as if they did that which was unlawful to be done on that day. [This was] only of a material profanation, that is, they labored hard in killing and flaying, dividing and boiling, and burning the sacrifices in the temple. Had they not been instituted parts of God’s worship, [they would have] been profanations of the Sabbath. But, being commanded by God, [they] were so far from being profanations that they were sanctifications of that day...So that it appears that works of *piety* or works immediately tending to piety may lawfully be performed with the strictest observation of the Lord’s Day.

2. Not only works of piety, but works of necessity—and of great convenience—may also be done on the Lord’s Day. And [these] are such without which we cannot subsist or not well subsist. Therefore, we may quench a raging fire; prevent any great and notable damage that would happen either to our persons or estates...without being guilty of the violation of this day...And not only those works that are of absolute necessity, but those likewise that are of great convenience may lawfully be done on the Lord’s Day: such as kindling of fire, preparing of [food], and many other particulars too numerous to be mentioned. We find our Savior defending His disciples against the exceptions of the Pharisees for plucking the ears of corn, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them on the Sabbath Day (Mat 12:1-8). Only let us take this caution: we [should not] neglect the doing of those things until the Lord’s Day that might be well done before and then plead necessity or convenience for it. For, if the necessity or convenience were such as might have been foreseen, our Christian prudence and piety ought to have provided for it before this holy day, so that we might wholly attend the immediate service of God in it, with as few avocations and impediments¹ as are possible.

3. Another sort of works that may and ought to be done on the Lord’s Day are the works of *charity* and *mercy*. For, indeed, this day is instituted for a memorial of God’s great mercy towards us. Therefore, in it, we are obliged to show charity and mercy: charity towards men and mercy to the very beasts themselves. Therefore, although the observation of the Sabbath was so strictly enjoined [upon] the Jews, yet was it to give place to the works of mercy whenever a poor *beast* did but stand in need of it. So Matthew 12:11: “What man shall there be

¹ **avocations and impediments** – distractions and hindrances.

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?” So, again, Luke 13:15: “Doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?”...Works of mercy, therefore, are to be done even to beasts themselves, whatsoever labor may be required to the doing of them. How much more, then, [should we do] works of charity to men like ourselves! [This] charity is to be shown either to their souls or their bodies, for both many times are extremely miserable. To their souls in instructing, advising, exhorting, reproving, comforting, and counselling of them, praying for them—and if in anything they have offended us, freely forgiving them. This, indeed, is a work of charity proper for the Lord’s Day, a work highly acceptable unto God and the best way that can be to sanctify it.

Neither are we to forbear any work of charity to their bodies and outward man. [For this reason,] we find how severely our Savior rebukes the superstitious hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who murmured against Him as a Sabbath-breaker because He had healed some of their infirmities on the Sabbath Day: “The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.” See how our Lord takes him up: “Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox?...Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” (Luk 13:14-16)...Certainly, it is a right Sabbath-Day’s work to do good and to put ourselves to any work and labor that may tend to the saving of life, easing of pain, or healing of the diseases and sickness of our brother...The strict and punctual observation of the Sabbath is to give place, whenever the [urgent need] or good of our neighbor doth require it; for God prefers mercy before sacrifice.

Thus, you see what rest is required from us on the Lord’s Day and what works may be done on it, without any violation of the Law or profanation of the day.

From “An Exposition of the Ten Commandments” in *The Works of Ezekiel Hopkins*, Vol. 1, in the public domain.

Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690): Anglican minister and author; born in Sandford, Crediton, Devonshire, UK.



HONORING GOD ON HIS DAY

Thomas Case (1598-1682)

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 58:13-14

THE verb in the Hebrew, “And shalt honour [or glorify] him”—may be rendered “honour it” or “honour him.” But the sense seems to incline to the latter—“him,” rather than “it.” The day having had its title of veneration¹ put upon it before—“honourable”—this may more properly belong to God, even to the whole blessed and glorious Trinity,² requiring at the hands of every one that enjoyeth this blessed privilege of a Sabbath that they ascribe³ the honor and glory of it unto God. And that is done, (1) *When we make divine authority the sole ground of our separating and sanctifying the whole day to His peculiar service and worship, without alienating⁴ any part or parcel of that holy time to our own carnal uses and purposes.* “Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it”—there is the duty. “As the Lord thy God hath commanded thee”—there is the authority (Deu 5:12). (2) *When, as we make God’s command our ground, we make God’s glory our [goal].* When we make it our design to set up God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in all His glorious and infinite perfections—in our adorations and admirations upon His holy day. And that is done in a special manner, when we make it the great business of a Sabbath to ascribe to each glorious person in the Trinity the glory of His proper work and operation, whereby He challengeth a title to and interest in the Sabbath. For example,

1. When we ascribe to God the Father the glory of the stupendous work of creation. And that is done by a due contemplation of all His

¹ **veneration** – reverence; deep respect.

² See FGB 231, *The Triune God*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³ **ascribe** – assign a quality or character to.

⁴ **alienating** – transferring to the ownership of another.

glorious attributes, shining forth in this beautiful structure of heaven and earth, celebrated by the royal Psalmist in Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.” The transcendent excellences of the glorious Jehovah are conspicuous⁵ and illustrious in this admirable theatre of the world, that is to say,

First, *His power* in creating all things out of nothing, and that by a word of His mouth.

Secondly, *His wisdom* in making all things in such a beautiful and exact manner and order. As the great physician [Galen]⁶ said of the body of man, “No man can come after God and say, ‘This might have been better’”; so in the fabric of heaven and earth, neither man nor angels can say, “Here is a defect, and there is a redundancy.⁷ It had been better [if] there had been more suns and fewer stars, more land, and less sea, etc.” No, when the divine prophet had stood and in his most serious contemplation looked through the creation, he could spy out nothing that could have been otherwise, but breaks out in admiration, “O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all” (Psa 104:24). He could see nothing from one end of the universe to another, but what speaks infinite perfection: “In wisdom hast thou made them all!” And as the omnipotence and wisdom of God is magnified in the creation, so also,

Thirdly, *His bounty* in bestowing all this visible creation upon man for his use and benefit. As one saith, “God made man *last* that He might bring him, as a father brings his son, into an house ready furnished.” This is one branch of our honoring God, when we ascribe to God the Father the glory of the work of creation.

2. When we ascribe to God the Son the glory of His most glorious work of redemption. Wherein these particulars are wonderful:

His ineffable⁸ incarnation: “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh” (1Ti 3:16), that is, the invisible God made visible in a body of flesh. This was a mystery indeed: a Son in heaven without a mother and a Son on earth without a father!

Christ’s stupendous being “made under the law” (Gal 4:4). Behold, He that made the Law, was made under the Law—under the ceremonial

⁵ **conspicuous** – clearly visible; easy to be seen.

⁶ **Aelius Galenus or Galen** (129-c. 200/16) – Greek physician, surgeon, and philosopher in the Roman Empire; the quote is from his *The Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*.

⁷ **redundancy** – something not needed or useful.

⁸ **ineffable** – too great to be described in words.

law that He might abolish it! Under the Moral Law, the preceptive⁹ power of it that He might fulfil it, so that every believer might have a “righteousness” that he may call his own (Rom 10:4), [and] the *maledictive*¹⁰ power of it that He might take it away (Gal 3:13).

Christ’s work of redemption was principally transacted by His death and passion. For therein He laid down “the price of redemption,” which was “his own precious blood” (Act 20:28; 1Pe 1:18-19).

This great work and mystery of our redemption was perfectly consummated in Christ’s glorious resurrection. Wherein He “spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them” (Col 2:15)...Christ, rising from the dead like a conqueror, led death, the grave, hell, and the devil in chains after Him. [Christ did this] as conquerors in war were wont¹¹ to lead their vanquished enemies—whom they had taken prisoners—in chains of captivity after them, exposing them to the public scorn of all spectators.

Thus, we are to ascribe the glory of the work of redemption to Jesus Christ the Son of God; and thereby do honor God in our sanctifying of His holy Sabbath.

3. We likewise glorify the Holy Ghost when we ascribe to Him the honor of the work of sanctification.¹² Whether we look upon it in that first miraculous effusion¹³ of the Spirit that our Lord Jesus, as the King and Head of His Church, did first purchase by the blood of His cross,¹⁴ and afterward ascended into heaven and obtained of His Father when He took possession of His kingdom and did abundantly pour down upon the apostles, other officers, and members of His evangelical church in the day of Pentecost (Act 2:1-4), which was (as it were) the sanctification of the whole gospel Church at once in the first-fruits; or whether we understand that work of sanctification, which successively is wrought by the Holy Ghost in every individual elect child of God, happily begun in their...conversion and mightily upheld and carried on in the soul to the dying day, this is a glorious work. [It consists] in these two glorious branches of it: mortification¹⁵

⁹ **preceptive** – expressing a command.

¹⁰ **maledictive** – characterized by curses.

¹¹ **wont** – accustomed; in the habit of doing.

¹² **sanctification** – Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. (Spurgeon’s Catechism, Q. 34) See FGB 215, *Sanctification*; catechism and FGB are available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹³ **effusion** – pouring out.

¹⁴ See FGBs 225, *The Work of Christ*, 226 *Christ upon the Cross*, 227 *Atonement*.

¹⁵ **mortification** – putting to death; see FGB 201, *Mortification*.

of corruption, which, before the Holy Ghost hath [finished in us], shall end in the total annihilation of the body of sin (that blessed privilege groaned for so much by the blessed apostle [in] Rom 7:24); and the erecting of a beautiful fabric of grace, holiness in the soul, which is the very “image” of God—an erection of more transcendent wonder and glory than [His] six-days’ workmanship [in creation]—that the Holy Ghost doth “uphold” and will perfectly [do so] unto the day of Christ (Heb 1:3). This is the great end and design of the Sabbath and of the ordinances of the gospel, according to the Word that the great Maker and Appointer of Sabbaths speaketh: “I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them” (Eze 20:12).

Here, then, is the third branch of our sanctifying the Sabbath, namely, the ascribing to God the Holy Ghost the glory of the work of sanctification.

This is proper work for Christians in the intervals and void spaces between the public ordinances: to sit down and first seriously and impartially to examine the work of grace in our souls (1) for the truth of it [and] (2) for the growth of it. Then, if we can give God and our own consciences some Scriptural account concerning this matter, [we should] humbly fall down and put the crown of praise upon the head of free grace, which hath made a difference where it found none. And so much for this text at this time.

From “Of Sabbath Sanctification” in *Puritan Sermons 1659-1689*,
in the public domain.

Thomas Case (1598-1682): English Presbyterian minister and member of the Westminster Assembly; born in Kent, England, UK.



I feel that we can say about this doctrine of sin what I once heard a man say about the observance of the Lord’s Day. He said he had come to the conclusion that the Lord’s Day, like the Lord Himself, was in danger of dying between two thieves, the two thieves being Saturday night and Monday morning! He said that, increasingly, Saturday night was extended and extended and blended into Sunday, and then people started their Monday morning quite early on Sunday evening. Sunday becomes just a few hours during the morning, and then we think, “Well, that is enough now; we have been to church once.” Thus, our Lord’s Day has been lost between two thieves.—*David Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

It is but a few steps from “no Sabbath” to “no God.”—*J. C. Ryle*

A MOST PRECIOUS ENJOYMENT

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

LET us be *thankful* for the institution of the Christian Sabbath. It is a thing wherein God hath shown His mercy to us and His care for our souls. He shows that He by His infinite wisdom is contriving for our good. Christ teaches us that the Sabbath was made for man: “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mar 2:27). It was made for the profit and for the comfort of our souls.

The Lord’s Day is a day of *rest*: God hath appointed that every seventh day we should rest from all our worldly labors. Instead of that, He might have appointed the hardest labors for us to go through, some severe hardships for us to endure. It is a day of outward, but especially of *spiritual*, rest. It is a day appointed of God that His people thereon may find rest unto their souls; that the souls of believers may rest and be refreshed in their Savior. It is a day of *rejoicing*: God made it to be a joyful day to the Church... They that receive and improve the Sabbath aright, call it a *delight* and *honorable* (Isa 58:13-14). It is a pleasant and a joyful day to them; it is an image of the future heavenly rest of the Church: “There remaineth therefore a rest” (or *sabbatism*, as it is in the original) “to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest” (Heb 4:9-11).

The Christian Sabbath is one of the most precious enjoyments of the visible Church. Christ showed His love to His Church in instituting it; and it [is appropriate for] the Christian Church to be thankful to her Lord for it. The very name of this day—*the Lord’s Day* or *Jesus’ day*—should endear it to Christians, as it intimates the special relation it has to Christ and the design of it, which is the commemoration of our dear Savior and His love to His Church in redeeming it.

Be exhorted to keep this day holy. God hath given such evidences that this is His mind, that He will surely require it of you, if you do not strictly and conscientiously observe it. And if you do thus observe it, you may have this comfort in the reflection upon your conduct: (1) that you have not been superstitious in it, but have done as God hath revealed it to be His mind and will in His Word that you should do;

and (2) that in so doing you are in the way of God's acceptance and reward.

Here let me lay before you the following *motives* to excite you to this duty:

1. By a strict observation of the Lord's Day, the name of God is honored, and that in such a way as is very acceptable to Him. "If thou...call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him" (Isa 58:13). God is honored by it, as it is a visible manifestation of respect to God's holy Law and a reverencing of that which has a peculiar relation to God Himself...If a person, with evident strictness and care, observe the Sabbath, it is a visible manifestation of a conscientious regard to God's declaration of His mind, and [this is] a visible honor done to His authority.

By a strict observance of the Sabbath, the face of religion is kept up in the world. If it were not for the Sabbath, there would be but little public and visible appearance of serving, worshipping, and reverencing the supreme and invisible Being. The Sabbath seems to have been appointed very much for this end, *viz.*,¹ to uphold the visibility of [Christianity] in public...By how much greater the strictness is with which the Sabbath is observed and with how much more solemnity the duties of it are observed among a people, by so much the greater is the manifestation among them of respect to the Divine Being.

This should be a powerful motive with us to the observation of the Sabbath. It should be our study above all things to honor and glorify God. It should be the great thing with all that bear the name of Christian to honor their great God and King...

2. That which is the business of the Lord's Day is the greatest business of our lives, *viz.*, that of religion. To serve and worship God is that for which we were made and for which we had our being given us. Other business, which is of a secular nature and on which we are wont² to attend on week days, is but subordinate and ought to be subservient to the higher purposes and ends of religion. Therefore, surely we should not think much of devoting one-seventh part of our time to be *wholly* spent in this business and to be set apart to exercise ourselves in the immediate duties of religion.

3. Let it be considered that all our time is God's. Therefore, when He challenges of us one day in seven, He challenges His *own*. He doth

¹ *viz.* – Latin = *videlicet*: that is; namely.

² *wont* – accustomed; in the habit.

not exceed His right: He would not have exceeded it if He had challenged a far greater proportion of our time to be spent in His immediate service. But He hath mercifully considered our state and our necessities here; and, as He hath consulted the good of our souls in appointing a seventh day for the immediate duties of religion, so He hath considered our outward necessities and hath allowed us six days for attendance on our outward affairs. What unworthy treatment therefore will it be of God, if we refuse to allow Him even the seventh day!

4. As the Lord's Day is a day that is especially set apart for religious exercises, so it is a day wherein God especially confers His grace and blessing. As God hath commanded us to set it apart to have converse with Him, so hath He set it apart for Himself to have converse with us. As God hath commanded us to observe the Sabbath, so God observes the Sabbath too...His eyes are open upon it. He stands ready then especially to hear prayers, to accept of religious services, to meet His people, to manifest Himself to them, to give His Holy Spirit and blessing to those who diligently and conscientiously sanctify it.

That we should sanctify the Lord's Day, as we have observed, is according to God's institution. God in a sense observes His own institutions, *i.e.*, [He] is wont to cause them to be attended with a blessing. The institutions of God are His appointed means of grace; and with His institutions, He hath promised His blessing: "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Exo 20:24). For the same reason, we may conclude that God will meet His people and bless them, waiting upon Him not only in appointed places, but at appointed times and in all appointed ways...God hath made it our duty, by His institution, to set apart this day for a special seeking of His grace and blessing. [Therefore,] we may argue that He will be especially ready to confer His grace on those who thus seek it. If it is the day on which God requires us especially to seek Him, we may argue that it is a day on which especially He will be found. That God is ready on this day especially to bestow His blessing on them that keep it aright is implied in that expression of *God's blessing the Sabbath day* (Gen 2:3)...So here is great encouragement for us to keep holy the Sabbath, as we would seek God's grace and our own spiritual good. The Sabbath day is an accepted time, a day of salvation, a time wherein God especially loves to be sought and loves to be found. The Lord Jesus Christ takes delight in His own day: He delights to honor it. He delights to meet with and manifest Himself to His disciples on it, as He showed before His ascension by appearing to them from time to

time on this day. He delights to give His Holy Spirit on this day, as He intimated by choosing it as the day on which to pour out the Spirit in so remarkable a manner on the primitive church (Act 2:1-4), and on which to give His Spirit to the apostle John (Rev 1:10).

Of old, God blessed the seventh day or appointed it to be a day whereon especially He would bestow blessings on His people, as an expression of His own joyful remembrance of that day and of the rest and refreshment that He had on it: “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath...for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed” (Exo 31:16-17).

But how much more reason has Christ to bless the day of His resurrection, to delight to honor it, and to confer His grace and blessed gifts on His people on this day. It was a day whereon Christ rested and was refreshed in a literal sense. It was a day of deliverance from the chains of death, the day of His finishing that great and difficult work of redemption, which had been upon His heart from all eternity; the day of His [vindication] by the Father; the day of the beginning of His exaltation, and of the fulfilment of the promises of the Father; the day when He had eternal life, which He had purchased, put into His hands. On this day, Christ doth indeed delight to distribute gifts, blessings, joy, and happiness, and will delight to do the same to the end of the world.

O therefore, how well is it worth our while to improve this day, to call upon God and seek Jesus Christ! Let awakened sinners be stirred up by these things to improve the Lord’s Day, as they would lay themselves most in the way of the Spirit of God. Improve this day to call upon God, for then He is near. Improve it for reading the Holy Scriptures and diligently attending His Word preached; for then is the likeliest time to have the Spirit accompanying it. Let the saints who are desirous of growing in grace and enjoying communion with Christ improve the Lord’s Day in order to it.

From “The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, in the public domain.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): American Congregational preacher and theologian; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony, USA.

