

**"THE SABBATH PRINCIPLE"  
GENESIS 2: 1-3**

**NEED: TO PRACTICE THE SABBATH**

**PROPOSITION: THE SABBATH IS A GIFT OF THE CREATOR FOR  
THE GOOD OF THE HUMAN FAMILY.**

**OBJECTIVE: TO LEAD GOD'S PEOPLE TO RE-ARRANGE THEIR  
PRIORITIES TO INCLUDE A SABBATH.**

**INTRODUCTION:**

What would you consider to be the number one family value for your family? Robert Parham has stated that the number one family value is really the Sabbath. He writes, "Time and work are the key issues facing families, not the media, liberal courts and value free public school." He came to this conviction out of study and interaction with others.

Dean Spbetkle Elshtian, an ethic's professor at the University of Chicago, makes a similar observation, "American parents are caught in a time crunch that works to detriment of children. She continues; "parents, especially mothers, are stretched to their limits as they try to combine child rearing with a job outside the home." The result of all this is that parents have less and less time to spend in the moral vocation of child rearing.

Thomas Kohler, a contributor to the new book SEEDBEDS OF VIRTUE notes that men and

women are tied to the market and the workplace in a way never before seen. He reports that 93 percent of the adult men are in the labor force; 74% of the women between the ages of 25 and 54 are employed full time; a majority of mothers are in the work force; both spouses work in nearly 70 % of married couple families; and Americans are working one additional month more now than in 1970. Could it be that we are so busy making a living that some of us are failing to make a life for ourselves and our children?"

Does the creation account have something to say about this contemporary social problem? I believe that there is a need to hear again the pronouncement of the Sabbath principle which is a part of the creation record itself We can learn from what happened on the Sabbath day of creation. Revealed in the event of that day and the responses of the Creator to that day is the Sabbath principle which becomes a dominant theme in the Old Testament, a thing of controversy during the ministry of Jesus, and a principle that is carried forward to us in the Lord's Day. From this piece of the creation record we can learn the following thing about the Sabbath principle.

#### I. The practice of Sabbath limits our commitment to work.

The inspired record of that seventh day reads, "By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all of his work." When this Sabbath principle is translated into the Mosaic law that governed the life of the nation of Israel the limitation for work is made even clearer. In the fourth commandment God said to Israel, "remember the Sabbath day by keeping it Holy." Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath

to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your man servant or maid servant, nor your animals, or the aide within your gates. For in the six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in it, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it Holy. "

When the Creator Himself was involved in the awesome work of creation, there came a moment when He was finished with the creation. That moment came on the afternoon of the sixth day. The seventh day actually began according to the creation record at sunset on the close of the sixth day. The seventh extended then to sunset on what we would consider the seventh, or the last day of the creation week. God's cessation from work at the close of the sixth day and his resting on the seventh day was to teach us that there is to be a limit to our commitment to work. If the Creator Himself limited Himself even though there was no weariness in Him, surely there is a need for the creature who worships the Creator to limit himself

This is the point at which we are having great difficulty in our day. Modern human beings have allowed themselves to be pressured into making a commitment to work that violates the Sabbath principle. Work is not the ultimate thing in the life of man - God is. The recognition and worship of God is more important than anything to which man is committed in his work. His ultimate dependence is not upon his work, but upon the Creator. So when we observe the Sabbath principle we limit our commitment to our work of six days of work and one day of Sabbath.

There is a price to be paid anytime man violates the Sabbath principle .

## II. The practice of Sabbath celebrates the finished work of God.

This is the second truth we need to learn from this helpful word in the creation report. The Creator found it necessary to stop at the close of the sixth day and to consecrate a day for the purpose of enjoying what He had done and to celebrate the completion of His work. God set aside the seventh day for rest and celebration because His work of creation was finished. This does not mean that God is no longer active in the life of the creation that He had made, but it rather means that His order for creation was now all in place. He had finished the creation of man and woman and had placed them in the garden as the custodians of His creation. It was time for the Creator to stop and to enjoy what He had made.

Later in the history of Israel they would associate with the Sabbath not only the completion of creation but also their redemption from Egypt. When God reinstated the Ten Commandments for them in the book of Deuteronomy He associated the observance of the Sabbath principle with their deliverance from Egypt. So when man observes the Sabbath principle he not only celebrates God as Creator, he also celebrate God as Redeemer.

When we come to the New Testament it is especially helpful to us when we understand why God caused those early believers to begin to apply the Sabbath principles to the first day of the week rather than the seventh day. Then they began to call it the Lord's Day. The reason for this transition is rather obvious when you consider the work of God. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God has completed a greater work than that of creation or even the redemption of Israel from the

slavery of Egypt. The Lord's Day commemorates the resurrection of Jesus from death which was the announcement of the completed work of salvation for all the people of God. The work of our salvation was completed - nothing would ever need to be added to it. Because of this we who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ need to set aside the first day of the week to practice the Sabbath Principle so that we too can celebrate and enjoy what God has done for us in Christ. The finished work of our redemption and salvation calls for the observance of the Sabbath principle on the first day of the week.

**III.** The practice of the Sabbath principle provides needed rest and renewal for the body and spirit of humankind.

When the creation record indicates that God "blessed the seventh day and made it holy," he reveals something very basic about the day. This day had on it a blessing that did not belong to either the other days of the creation week. And this day because of the blessing was set apart for Holy ends in a special way. This truth is underlined again and again as God called on His people in the Old Testament to "remember the Sabbath Day and keep it Holy". Unfortunately the Old Testament ' people of God began to misunderstand the holiness of the Sabbath. They begin to encumber it with rules on top of rules until it became a burden instead of a blessing. There were more than fifteen hundred rules that had been put together by the rabbis and scribes before the Lord Jesus came to the earth. The Sabbath had become a day of dread lest one violate some rule with which they were not familiar.

God knew that the physical and spiritual makeup of the human beings that He had created and of the animals that He had placed on the earth to populate the earth with the family of man. God knew that it was important for them to have a day in which the physical aspect of their being would receive rest. This needed rest was to be given to man on this seventh or Sabbath of the week.

All of the studies made concerning man in our day have indicated the wisdom of the Sabbath principles that was given in the creation.

After the Communist take over in Russia in the early part of this century there was an attempt by this materialistic atheistic government to eliminate any practice of the Sabbath. After an extended experiment it became necessary for them to re-establish a day of rest for the people of Russia. They found that the workers could not survive emotionally and physically if they were continually at work and never had time for rest. The French made a similar experiment when they tried to re-arrange the week into eight days after their revolution, but they came to the same conclusion. God is wise in His provisions for physical well being of man and He revealed to him the Sabbath principle in the creation week.

God was also sensitive to man's spiritual need when He established this Sabbath principle. God knew that man would need specific time in which he could quiet himself before his Creator and could be renewed in his inner spirit. This is the reason that God so wisely established that one day out after every seven would be a day of physical and spiritual renewal through rest and worship.

This should give us some guidance in determining what is proper behavior on the Lord's Day. We

have gotten into some rather silly positions when we have tried to make a list of rules that would govern behavior on the Lord's Day. If we remember that the original intention of the Sabbath Principle is that we would have time for the physical relaxation of the body and the spiritual renewal of the spirit, then we don't need rules if we keep this primary purpose of the Sabbath in view.

IV. The practice of the Sabbath principle establishes a needful rhythm to life.

Dr. B. H. Carroll, the wise Baptist preacher who founded Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, made a revealing observation concerning the Sabbath. He reminds us that the establishment of the month is taken care of by the number of days it takes for the moon to revolve around the earth. The dividing of life into years is taken care of by the number of days that it takes the earth to revolve around the sun. But there is nothing in the natural order that gives the division of the month into units. So the Creator very wisely revealed to us the creation of the earth in the frame work of seven days. God knew that each day is divided into night and day, but it was also helpful to man to have a rhythm to his life that moved beyond the division into night and day, and yet was not as long as the division of life into months, or the period of time that it takes for the moon to revolve around the sun. So there is seven day record of creation that gives to life the rhythm that is needed for the good of man.

We as human being achieve our best whenever we organize our lives into a rhythm. God's rhythm for life revealed in the creation is the wise and best rhythm to life. His rhythm to life is six days given to work and one day given to rest and renewal. The Sabbath principle very wisely divides your life into such a rhythmic pattern.

If you are not observing this rhythm that God has built into life, then you are doing it to your own hurt. One wise old preacher in another day described it like this - suppose a beggar comes up to a man on the street and asked for a handout. The man is generous and he has in his billfold seven one dollar bills. He takes six of those dollars out of his billfold and gives them to the beggar. But the beggar is ungrateful and is not satisfied. Instead of saying "thank you", he grabs his benefactor and steals from him the one last dollar he has in his billfold. Can you imagine a greater ingrate than that! Yet that is what we do when we do not practice the Sabbath principle. The Creator has given us six days in which we are to make a living and provide for our families. He has set aside one day for us to rest our bodies and to worship Him. If we take His day and use it for our own selfish interest, are we not as ungrateful as the man that the old preacher described?

I think it goes without saying that as a culture we are living in violation of the Sabbath principle.

Many of us have given up any attempt to really have a Sabbath in our lives. We have allowed the world around us to control the schedules of our lives rather than the word of God. I am here to call you back as a family of faith tonight to the observances of the Sabbath principle. Whatever it takes to re-arrange your lives so that the first day of the week is established as a day of rest and spiritual renewal, it is in your best interest, the interest of your family and the interest of the kingdom of God for you to do it. I urge you to do it tonight.