

THE DAY FOR RENEWAL

EXODUS 20: 8-11

Christians are not legally obligated to keep the Sabbath. It was fulfilled in Christ.

“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.” (Col. 2:16, 17)

Yet as human beings, we need such a day for renewal. We keep such a day out of love and gratitude. Such a day can be for us what a “time-out” is in the games we play.

This is why Christians have kept the Lord’s Day on the first day of the week since the first century. At times they have slipped into a legalistic attitude

toward the day—and have lost the joy that should accompany the observance of the day.

I want us to take a fresh look at the Sabbath as a day of total renewal.

Everyone needs this weekly “timeout” in the game of life. We need it physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

I. THE RENEWAL OF THE BODY.

When God made man, He made him in such a way that he needs a Sabbath.

In fact God Himself set the pattern for the Sabbath in the Creation week itself. God rested from His work of creation on the seventh day. The person who attempts to live life without the day for renewal is ignoring the basic nature of his existence.

To help us understand just how deeply we need such a Sabbath, let us break man down into his basic parts. The most obvious thing about us is that we have a body—the body is an essential part of our being. The body very definitely needs such a day of renewal.

1. The human body is made of dust—fragile.

You are familiar with the record of creation. God made the body for the man out of the dust of the ground. He did not make it out of tough stuff like diamonds, or iron, or some other durable metal. Rather he made it out of dust.

Any study of the make-up of the body will cause you to be amazed at just how fragile it is. The wonder is not that the body gives into decay after so many years, but rather that it lasts as long as it does. It was partly for the sake of your fragile body that God gave the weekly Sabbath.

2. The human body thrives on work.

The commandment about the Sabbath is a reminder to us that work is a part of our human calling. “Six days you shall labor and do all your work.” Work is not detrimental to the human body, but is rather healthy for the human body. Most of us stay healthier if we have work to do. Both the mind and the body need the work experience.

Most of you who have retired found it necessary to find some work to do. The amount of work contributed by volunteers in this town is amazing—and good. It is good not only for the institutions and people they serve, but also for them. The body does better when it has work to do.

3. The human body needs daily and weekly rest.

God so created man that he needs both daily and weekly rest. He so ordered creation that each day has both a morning and evening. God so made the body that it needs to spend a significant part of each twenty-four hour day in sleep. Whenever a person begins to ignore this need for regular renewal through sleep, they will pay for it physically, emotionally, and spiritually. All of us have known people who have ignored this necessity to their own hurt.

The same God that so created your body that it needs daily renewal through sleep also created you to need a weekly day of renewal for the body. In the French Revolution they attempted to change this. They established a ten-day week. It did not last long. They soon went back to the seven-day week. Working people did not do well on the ten-day week. In Russia the

Communist sought to do away with the Lord's Day in their attempts to get rid of the influence of Christianity on the nation. But when Stalin came to power he returned the nation to the seven-day week with a day of rest. Man did not function well without a day of rest, a day of physical renewal.

Our society is ignoring this to its own hurt. Studies indicate that we are increasing our commitment to work year after year. We work more each year than we did in 1970—that is the average. It is alarming how many people are working at more than one job in their attempt to acquire a little bit more—this is in the nation that has more things than any nation on the face of the earth.

The Sabbath means that one-day out of the week you stop! You quit! You have a day in which no work is done. You allow your body to rest. It will serve you a lot longer and with greater health if you enjoy this day of renewal that the Lord God, your Creator, gave you.

II. THE RENEWAL OF THE SOUL.

You already know this, but you are more than a body—you are a living soul. The soul needs the Sabbath just like the body needs the Sabbath.

1. The soul includes the mind, emotions, and will.

The soul of humankind is made of what we identify as the mind, the emotions and the will. It is the part of us that enables us to relate to each other. It is a part of you that still needs a weekly Sabbath—a weekly “time out”.

2. The soul needs the renewal that a day of rest makes possible.

The mind, emotions and will are so intertwined in you that it is hard to separate them for study. We know that there is a part of us that thinks and informs. We know that there is a part of us that feels and loves. We know that there is a part of us that decides and chooses. This is the soul!

When the soul is not given a weekly day for renewal, there is a price to be paid. The mind will begin to lose its ability to think clearly, the emotions

will begin to be troubled, and the will will begin to make skewed decisions. The person may even begin to think that this is normal.

I heard of one pastor who received a call from one of his members on his day off. When she had called the church, the pastor's secretary had informed her that the pastor was taking a day off. She called the pastor at home anyway. She began to verbally chastise him for not being in his office. She said, "I want you know that the Devil does not take a day off."

The pastor had a good answer for her. He said, "Yes, you are right. And you need to know that when I don't take a day off I begin to act just like him—my family will soon know it and so will the church." It is an amazing thing that happens when the soul is given a Sabbath.

Does this mean that the person does not think on this day, does not feel on this day, or does not decide anything on this day? No! It means that the mind is free to think about other things, to feel about other things, and can decide about other things on this day. It is the change that is good for the soul! In the Jewish world where the observance of Sabbath is such a vital part of their faith, it is day that includes relaxed time with the family. The family

begins the Sabbath observance on Friday evening with a wonderful family meal. They will often sing together, read scripture together, share family time. O this is good for the soul! It was even considered a good thing for the couple to have an intimate time sexually on the Sabbath.

III. THE RENEWAL OF THE SPIRIT.

This is the part of you that sets you apart from the rest of creation. No other part of the created order has a spirit except man.

1. The spirit is the part of us that relates to God.

The spirit is the godward side of your being. God breathed into Adam the “breath of life”. Breath is the same word as spirit. It is a part of what it means to be created in the image of God because God is Spirit. The spirit part of you is in special need of the Sabbath. The spirit needs the “time out” from the daily routines of life.

2. The spirit is renewed through worship.

The work a day world is hard on the spirit. It will shrivel up like a prune if there is not some renewal. This is where worship comes in! God gave the Sabbath so there would be time for man to renew in his spirit by worship on this special day.

(1) Of the Creator.

It will be helpful if we will just look at the language that provides the basis for the Sabbath. In our text we read: “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore God blessed the Sabbath and made it holy.” So the law relates the observance of the Sabbath to the creation.

It is extremely important for man’s well being that he worship his Creator at least once a week. As we give ourselves to our vocations, it so easy to get to thinking too highly of ourselves, or maybe too lowly. We will begin to think of the world as though it belonged to us. We will begin to imagine that it is likely to fold up if we do not do our part. We need a day in which we stop—and remember who the Creator is.

Is this not what a good coach will do in a game? He will observe a player who has lost his perspective on the game. He will begin to press to hard, to act as though he has to win the game all by himself, so the coach will call a time out, let him sit down restfully on the bench for a minute, let him see that the game can continue without him, and then put him back into the game. The Sabbath is bench time. It is a time to bow the heart in a fresh way to the will of the Designer and the Lord of the game. All of us need some bench time once a week.

This is the reason that a Sunday morning on the Golf course, or the lake is not the same as a morning in worship. There is no one on the Golf course to remind you that God is your Creator, that He is the Designer and Lord of all of life. You can play all morning on the Golf course without ever once thinking about your not being in charge. O how you need the bench time of worship before the Creator!

(2) Of the Redeemer.

The second time God gave the commandments to the Israelites He changed this basis for the Sabbath. He declared: “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.” (Deut. 5:15) This makes redemption the basis for the day of renewal.

We need that moment each week when we acknowledge with others, “I have been redeemed. I owe everything to God. Without Him I would have perished forever.” Without such a moment of worship, it is so easy to forget who you are! It is so easy to begin to treat your life as though it belongs to you. It does not. You have been bought with a price. Acknowledging this before God in worship renews the spirit within.

(3) Of the Risen Christ.

For the earliest Christians they set aside a day to remember that Jesus Christ is the Lord of life because He has been raised from the dead. This is why they worshipped on the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, rather than the seventh day of the week. This was to them an even greater reality than the Creation itself. Jesus lives as the Lord of life.

You need a weekly time when you bow before this risen Christ as Lord. All human beings need such a day.

You may have been ignoring your spirit to your own hurt. It is not enough to renew the body and the soul. The spirit needs renewal as well.

Are you providing for the renewal that comes through a Time-Out? What changes do you need to make in your weekly schedule? You are encouraged to remember that God made this one of the ten basic principles for life.