

The Joy of the Sabbath

By Eddie Spencer

The 4th Commandment is: “Remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8). How are we to keep it holy? Simply put, Sunday should be different. It is a day dedicated to the worship of the Lord and our rest in Him. This doesn’t mean we live for ourselves six days and then consecrate one day for God. No, God’s Word says, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (I Corinthians 10:31). Yet, for His glory and our spiritual rest and satisfaction, God has called us to distinguish one day out of seven.

For some, the focus of making the Lord’s Day “holy” includes some vexing questions: “Can our children play sports on Sunday?” “Can we finish up last week’s work or prepare for this week’s work?” “Can we watch TV or go to a restaurant, the theatre, or play golf?” Often these questions are prompted not by, “How can I honor God?” but by, “What can I get away with on Sunday?” Of course, my greatest concern these days is that many of God’s people do not even ask the questions any longer. Sunday is simply another day of the week.

My answer to those questions is this: We must be careful not to make Sunday a day of do’s and don’ts. It is possible to be a strict Sabbath keeper, yet not know the Lord’s Sabbath rest. Jesus noted, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). But the freedom we enjoy in Christ is not an excuse for doing our own thing. I encourage you to answer the questions of Sabbath keeping by asking and answering this question: Is Sunday a day of worship whereby we are celebrating our Sabbath rest in Jesus? Is it a day where our souls, bodies, and families are experiencing rest and godly restoration?

Sunday is to be a day of worship. It is to be a day of “holy convocation”. It is a “market-day of the soul,” as the Puritans would say. Thomas Watson, the great Puritan preacher wrote, “When Saturday evening approaches, sound a retreat; call your minds off from the world and summon your thoughts together to think of the great work of the approaching day.” This sounds anachronistic to far too many Christians.

The Lord’s Day is a day of rest. “Six days you shall labor and do all of your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God” (Ex. 20:8). Many consider this commandment restrictive. Throughout history, burdensome legalism has abounded with regard to this command. Yet this was not God’s intent. God called and still calls His people to one day of rest. No other nation besides Israel enjoyed such a gift. Some have called the Fourth Commandment the “First Worker’s Bill of Rights.” For the owner of the house, his servants, and even the aliens within his gates, were called to rest (Exodus 20:9-10). Such an egalitarian principle in the social order of the day was radical and unprecedented.

For His glory and for our spiritual satisfaction in Him, God calls us to a day of rest, recuperation, and restoration. Think about it this way, the God who has created us and

called us to work is the same God who commands us to set aside one day out of seven to rest and recharge. For the more disciplined we are to rest, the more ready we are to work. The more committed we are to worship on Sunday, the more faithful we will be in the workplace on Monday. How about living T.G.I.S. – Thank God it's Sunday! It's a day to worship, to do mercy, and to rest.

Great Peace in the Lord,
Eddie