



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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How to Keep the Lord's Day Holy

The subject for our consideration is "How to Keep the Lord's Day Holy." I would like to begin by spending a little bit of time understanding the Scriptural basis for the Lord's Day. Then, I will move on to the practical aspects of how to keep the Lord's Day holy. First of all, as we think of understanding the Scriptural basis for the Lord's Day, I would like to take you back to the book of beginnings, the book of

Genesis 2 where we have recorded there as God finished His creation work. Genesis 2:2, 3 says, "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. (3) 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." We have the Creation being fin-

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ished. It says that God rested. It was not because He was weary but because the creation work was completed. “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”

I) The Scriptural basis for the Lord’s Day. 1) *The concept of a day of rest in seven is a Creation principle.* By that we mean it stands as a principle to be observed and respected throughout time, spanning the covenants and man’s history. It stands with

other creation and early human history principles such as the establishment of the home which we also have in Genesis 2:24 where it says, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” We could think also of other early historical covenants and directions given like those to Noah. Therefore, as a Creation principle it is something that is meant to be observed and

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respected throughout time and throughout human history.

2) *The Old Testament Sabbath regulated, but did not establish the day of rest principle.* We mentioned in the first point that it was a Creation principle. As the Law came to the Israelites in Exodus 20:8, the Law was given. The fourth commandment is, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” It is noteworthy and significant in Exodus 16, as we have the giving of the Manna to the children of Israel. We know the account and the stipulations. They were to gather twice as much on the sixth day because there would be none on the seventh day. We believe the happenings in Exodus 16 preceded the giving of the Law in Exodus 20. Moses refers to this thought. He says, “to day is a sabbath unto the LORD” (Exodus 16:25). Therefore, as the Law was given in Exodus 20, significantly attached to that were the words, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

As we think of the Old Testament sabbath, the Old Testament sabbath was actually a clear type of the rest that we experience as New Testament Christian rest. Man’s first full day was a day of rest. Man was created on the sixth day and man’s full day of existence was

on the seventh day — the day of rest. Later sin entered and spoiled that rest. Consequently man needed to labour, and we have the gathering of the manna and the gathering double on the sixth day in order that he could rest on the seventh day. It is a type of the works of the Law. There is another day of rest which has been provided through our Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 4:9 says, “There remaineth therefore a rest 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.” Jesus provided the plan of salvation for us. Jesus said, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). Therefore, the rest we experience today — the salvation rest we experience — has been provided through Jesus our Lord.

3) *The words of Jesus.* In Matthew 12:1–3 there is an interesting discourse between the scribes and pharisees and our Lord. It was a point that was often contested with Jesus as to His observance of the sabbath day. In this discourse of our Lord, I would like to identify three principles that Jesus made very clear that were part of a lawful observance of the sabbath day.

A) *Jesus was saying that*

works of necessity were lawful to be done on the sabbath day — that which related to the sustenance of life both for ourselves and for one's animals, one's livestock. I take this from verses 3 and 4 where He gives the example of David. The pharisees had challenged Him because His disciples were picking some grain to eat as they moved through the field and He says, “Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; (4) How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat.” If we turn to Exodus 29, we would find the shewbread was only for the priests. A stranger was not to eat of it. We do not find that David was condemned for this action, and our Lord using it here, gives His approval as well. Therefore, we see this principle clearly laid forth. We could turn to other Scriptures where Jesus mentioned that as well as far as leading the ox to the water. Later in on this discourse He refers to rescuing a sheep that has fallen into a pit. Thus, Jesus was saying works of necessity were lawful to do on the sabbath day.

B) Works relating to spiritual service were sanctioned. This second principle I see is in verse 5, where He says, “Or have ye

not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?” What was Jesus referring to here? If we would turn to Numbers 28, we have there mentioned the priests were to prepare and offer a special sacrifice on the sabbath day. As they went about the work to prepare and offer that sacrifice the labour that was involved technically would have been forbidden on the sabbath day but since it related to Temple service or to the worship (the spiritual service) it was sanctioned.

C) *We conclude that Jesus was helping us understand that works of compassion were lawful to be done on the sabbath day.* When Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, He mentions in verse 12, “Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.” It is interesting to note also what Jesus tells them in verse 8. “For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.” Jesus was trying to emphasize to them also in verse 6 “That in this place is one greater than the temple,” referring to Himself. The Jews revered the Temple, and Jesus was helping them to understand that He as Lord was here in a position to say what was correct and lawful sabbath day observance. He also mentions in verse

7 “if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.” Jesus was saying that if they had understood the meaning of the sabbath day — the true meaning and purpose for the sabbath day — they would not have been condemning the disciples for what they were doing. They were erring in the understanding of the purpose of the day.

We know that Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly. He came not to “destroy the law . . . but to fulfil [it]” (Matthew 5:17). We also know that the Jews (the pharisees) had added many of their own ideas to the Law, and particularly to the sabbath day. It was a very cumbersome and technical direction as to what was considered acceptable and unacceptable observance of the sabbath day. While Jesus carefully fulfilled the Law in every aspect, He did not have a lot of time and rather denounced them very severely for all their additions to the Law which in many respects (not only in this law but in other laws as well) detracted from the true meaning of the day, and from the true meaning and purpose of the law.

Jesus said also “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

Therefore, I believe Jesus comments here and in other places were an effort to help restore and return the thinking of men to the proper and true spirit and meaning of the sabbath day.

4) *We see an apparent shift in the New Testament from the seventh day to the first day.* Sometimes this is a point of confusion for people. I was impressed as I studied for this subject of the significance of the Lord’s Day being the first day of the week. I would like to look at a few things that clearly help us see the significance of this. First of all, there were two Old Testament feasts that typified (that were typical of) that were held on the first day. What they typified also happened on the first day. In Leviticus 23:11 we have the feast of the firstfruits. It mentions there clearly that the feast of the firstfruits was to be held on “on the morrow after the sabbath,” or the first day of the week. We know the fulfillment of that type. Paul in writing to the Corinthians helps them understand that our Lord Jesus Christ, as He rose from the dead was the fulfillment of that type of the feast of the firstfruits in His resurrection of the dead on the first day of the week.

The other Old Testament feast was the feast of Pentecost which

we also find in Leviticus 23:15, 16. It clearly mentions they shall count off seven sabbaths and then “the morrow after the sabbath,” which is the feast of Pentecost, again on the first day of the week. We know what happened on the day of Pentecost, there in the book of Acts as the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church. It again was the fulfillment of this type. Thus, we have the fulfillment of those Old Testament feasts being a type of the resurrection of the Lord and of the giving of the Holy Spirit.

In John 20:19, 26, we have examples of the disciples gathering on the first day of the week. John 20:1 begins with, “The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene.” We have the resurrection being understood and the fact of the resurrection being realized by Christ’s followers. Then verse 19 says, “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.” Then verse 26 says, “And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.”

Another reference which also indicates that, is in Acts 20:7. This indicates that the gathering of the disciples and the Early Church on the first day of the week apparently had become a common practice. “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.” We have again the Christians gathering together on the first day of the week. As we think of understanding the Scriptural basis for the Lord’s Day, we do not have commanded or specifically mentioned anywhere in the New Testament that we should now observe the first day of the week as the Lord’s Day. However, I think looking at these types and at the apostolic precedent of gathering together on the first day of the week, we recognize the significance of the first day events. It becomes very clear that it certainly is appropriate for us to gather and to observe the first day of the week as the Lord’s Day.

The Scripture mentions in Acts 20:7 how that they gathered together to break bread, and Paul preached to them. They were remembering again the death and resurrection of their Lord. We are accustomed to thinking about

the resurrection on Easter Sunday, but I think we should be gripped with this fact every first day of the week that this is the day, the first day of the week, that our Lord rose from the dead. As we gather together in collective worship, we should be thinking about the resurrection of our Lord and what it means to us. I would like to remind you of the words of the songwriter as we continue to think about this idea of the first day of the week. He pens words like this, referring to the first day.

“On thee, at the Creation, the light first had its birth.

On thee for our salvation, Christ rose from depth of earth.

On thee, our Lord victorious, the Spirit sent from heaven.

And thus on thee most glorious, a triple light was given.”

There we have it. The first day of Creation, light was created. Also, on the first day of the week, we know that our Lord rose from the dead, and the resurrection — Jesus as Light of the world. We also looked at how the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost also on the first day of the week — The illumination of the Spirit the gift of God to men — all on the first day of the week. It is very significant as it relates to the plan of salvation.

The Old Testament sabbath

observance was to be observed for two reasons. We have them stated in Exodus, one was to help the children of Israel to remember their deliverance from Egypt. Secondly, another reason God says that they were to keep my sabbaths was as a sign that “ye are my holy people” [Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20]. It is parallel to why we remember the Lord’s Day. On the first day of the week we think about our deliverance from sin and the power of sin through the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also think of the fact that we are God’s special people, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9).

II) *How to keep the Lord’s Day holy.* I would like to read, first of all, our statement in our Statement of Christian doctrine and Rules and Discipline on page 17 what it says there about the Lord’s Day. It says, “1. The Lord’s Day shall be well observed by God’s people and shall be made a day of devotion and worship. Church services and Sunday Schools shall be regularly attended; feasting and pleasure seeking shall be strictly avoided.

Members shall seek to avoid labor and business on the Lord’s Day as much as possible. Both

young and old shall be taught how to keep the Lord's Day holy and exercise themselves constantly in showing reverence for God's house and all that pertains to it." Then, we have three references which we will notice some of them as we move through. The title for this subject is from this paragraph and here we have it, "young and old shall be taught how to keep the Lord's Day holy." It mentions that "young and old shall be taught how to keep the Lord's Day holy." One reason this address was included in the Winter Bible School subjects was that our discipline mentions that there needs to be teaching on the observance of the Lord's Day, and how to keep the day holy. It is our interest as children of God to do that and we want to address that. It mentions, "young and old shall be taught." Perhaps the reason for that is that the areas of challenge may vary due to our age. We will notice that as we move through the message.

In the second place, I want to define what we mean by holy — "keep the Lord's Day holy." Vine's dictionary gives this definition for holy, "It signifies being separated unto God." The Lord's Day is a day that is separated unto God in a special way for His honour and glory. We know that

we have been called as God's children to be a holy people as well. Peter tells us that in 1 Peter 1:15. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." That word "conversation," means life — in all manner of life. We are thinking of keeping the Lord's Day holy and keeping it in a way that is fitting to a holy people that are serving a holy God.

I wanted to say also in my thoughts of understanding the Scriptural basis for the Lord's day that as far as the regulations of the Old Testament which the Mosaic Law gave to the Old Testament sabbath, we do not necessarily look to that to establish our observance of the New Testament Lord's Day. There are some principles, however, that we can benefit and learn from. Colossians 2:14 talks about the "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." He clearly mentions the sabbath days.

We know the term sabbath was a rather broad term to the children of Israel. Many of their feasts were also called sabbaths. However, I think it is very clear that as far as the Old Testament regulations for the sabbath day, it was part of mosaic law that was

fulfilled and taken away in Christ. As I mentioned, we can look at, and glean, some principles from this observance that I think also apply and help us in our understanding today.

Isaiah 58:13, 14 mentions, “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: (14) 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.” I think the language used here is very clear. It mentions turning away from our own pleasure and doing the Lord’s pleasure on the sabbath day. Again, we are taking that principle and we are applying it to the Lord’s Day. *It is a turning away from our own pleasure and doing that which pleases the Lord.* As we think of the New Testament observance of the Lord’s Day, we do it not because of laws and regulations but because of a desire in our hearts to please the Lord and to honour Him. It is only possible, I believe, to keep the Lord’s Day

holy as we are a holy people, as we have been born again and have received the new, Divine nature within. It is one that causes us to have our affection set “on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). That is all part of keeping the Lord’s Day holy — doing those things that please the Lord out of a heart that desires to praise and honour Him.

Now I would like to look more directly at *how we can keep the Lord’s Day holy*. My first couple of points are rather basic points and then we will look at a few practical considerations as well. 1) *We keep the Lord’s Day holy by making it a day of worship.* That is mentioned in our statement of doctrine. It says that, “shall be made a day of devotion and worship.” I have a number of sub points under this idea of making it a day of worship. A) *We should make it a day of worship, and personal worship and devotion and meditation.* Another verse that is mentioned in our discipline statement is Revelation 1:10. It refers to John on the Isle of Patmos where it says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.” Then, follows the description of the vision of the glorified Christ. It says John was “in the spirit.”

What does it mean that he was “in the Spirit?” Well, I think it means he was in the spirit of worship. The Scriptures are clear that “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day and we notice two things that were a result of him being in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day. 1) It placed him in a position where he could see God — he could see the Lord. 2) It placed him in a position where he could receive enlightenment, direction, and revelation from Him.

There are three other references in the book of Revelation, in addition to Revelation 1:10, where it refers to John being in the Spirit. Each time it precedes again a revelation from God. Revelation 4:2; 17:3; 21:10 all refer to him being “in the Spirit.”

The challenge and thought for us is that as we are in the spirit of worship and we spend time personally before God, it places us in a position where we can see God and receive from Him the spiritual understanding and inspiration that we need. The challenge I find is that we really should have more time on the Lord’s Day to be in the Spirit — to be in a spirit of personal worship with the Lord, but do we?

As we come apart from our temporal duties, we really should have more time to spend with the Word of God and with the Lord in personal devotion and worship. The challenge I find is, is it really that way? Yes, we may be occupied even with responsibilities that include spiritual service. Maybe we need to study to teach Sunday School, have a devotional, or maybe we even need to preach but we need to remember our service needs to be preceded by worship in order to be effective and useful. The challenge is that on the Lord’s day we would take the time to be in the Spirit.

B) *We should make it a day of collective worship.* We notice from the book of Acts how the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week. We also know the example of our Lord. It is referring to the synagogue worship but it mentions various times or it says, “as his custom was” (Luke 4:16). He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day. The synagogue worship parallels our worship experience somewhat. Jesus was regular in synagogue worship on the sabbath day. We note in the account we read in Matthew 12 that He went into the synagogue after His discourse with the Pharisees. The challenge is that we would be regular in worship. Our disci-

pline mentions that “Church services and Sunday Schools shall be regularly attended.”

As we travel, we should plan to be where we can be in the house of God on the Lord’s Day. We need to make our plans so that we can be with the saints and gather with them in worship on the Lord’s Day. I thought also of our young people as we think of wedding trips, our youth, most of the time get married on Saturday. Where do we plan to be on the Lord’s day? As fathers we should be involved enough to see that those plans are made and carried out. It is important as we think of the establishment of a new home that they honour the Lord on the first full day of their life together by being in the Lord’s house on the Lord’s Day.

Yes, I know we hear this thought expressed sometimes around us (shifting to another thought) that I can worship God anywhere. I can be out in the mountains, fishing, or here or there. We believe that we can worship God other places, but I believe for the children of God they will be with the saints of God in the Lord’s house on the Lord’s Day.

C) *We need to be sincere in our worship.* We honour the Lord only as we are sincere in our worship. Isaiah 58:13 was men-

tioned in our statement of doctrine. It mentions the hypocritical fast that Israel was observing. They were going through the motions of fasting but it was not affecting them. It was not changing their lives. It was not causing them to reach out in compassion to their neighbour, or to their brother. They were simply going through the motions. It mentions there that they bowed down their heads, “as a bulrush” (Isaiah 58:5), but it was not acceptable to God because it was not in sincerity and truth. I ask the question, are we sincere in our worship? As we think of our collective worship, we know that when our Lord was here on the earth, He was very observant as to the conduct that transpired in His Father’s house. He had some stern rebukes and some corrections to make.

What would Jesus say if He was present in our assemblies on the Lord’s Day? Would He challenge those whose heads are nodding in sleep with this thought, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour” (Matthew 26:40)? Or, as the congregation kneels for prayer and some whisper to their neighbour, would He challenge them with this thought that my Father’s House, “is the house of prayer” (Luke 19:46)? Would He overturn the Bibles of some to rid

them of photographs that are hidden among the pages distracting the worshipper? Would He, as One who is able to know the hearts and thoughts of all men maybe addresses some who may be sitting prim and proper but their thoughts are far away, or are on their material pursuits of the week coming up and challenge them with this thought that you have made, “my Father’s house an house of merchandise” (John 2:16). These challenges can come close home to us at times, but the thought is, are we sincere in our worship? We want to beware that we are not merely going through the motions, but we are truly worshipping and communing with God in worship.

D) *We must give the Word a prominent place.* We notice that in Acts 20:7, where it says, “Paul preached unto them. I am glad to be part of a church where the Word holds such a prominent place in our worship services. Our devotionals come from the Scriptures — from the Word. Our Sunday School lessons are a study of the Scriptures. We have the preaching of the Word. What does the psalmist say? He says God, “hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Psalm 138:2). Therefore, we honour the Lord on His day by giving a

prominent place to His Word — a study of His Word — a preaching of the Word. We honour Him when we exalt and honour His Word. In 2 Timothy 3 Paul describes the perilous end times. He then moves on in chapter 4 and instructs Timothy to “Preach the word; be instant in season” (2 Timothy 4:2).

2) *We keep the Lord’s Day holy by making it a day of giving.* I will not elaborate on this too much because we do have the message in the circuit on sacrificial giving. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 Paul directs the Corinthians to “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.” There can be a collection, and we give to the Lord on the Lord’s Day. We give of our finances. The offering is passed and we give. It is a way of honouring the Lord. The proverb writer says, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase” (Proverbs 3:9).

Giving honours the Lord because we give back what He has given to us. I was reminded as well that in giving, we must do as Paul. He addressed the Macedonian Christians in 2 Corinthians 8:5, “This they did, not as we hoped, but first gave

their own selves.” In all our giving we must be remember to give first ourselves. Service, worship and giving honour the Lord, but only as they are accompanied with holiness. Therefore, give yourself to the Lord’s service. If you are asked to teach a class, give yourself to that work and do it as unto the Lord. If you are asked to lead the singing or have devotions, do it as unto the Lord. Give yourself to Him.

3) *We keep the Lord’s day holy by making it a day of praise.* In our history study I appreciated very much that it was mentioned about the singing and how much singing is a part of our worship services. The psalmist says in Psalm 69:30, 31, “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.” Certainly, we keep the Lord’s Day holy by keeping it a day of praise and singing unto the Lord a song. Truly the Lord hath done great things for us, “The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad” (Psalm 126:3). Therefore, may we take, as we think of singing and praising God, as families, find time on this day perhaps to sing together. We can perhaps as families go to sing for others — the elderly or

the shut-in, and provide inspiration and encouragement for them. It is a way of keeping the Lord’s Day holy, when we keep it as a day of praise to Him.

A few practical considerations. These were more basic points, foundational principles. The New Testament, the Scriptures do not give specifics, a lot of specifics as we think of observance of the Lord’s Day. However, I think as we endeavour to evaluate the spirit of the day and these foundational principles that we have looked at that we are to be doing on the Lord’s Day, it helps us understand other activities and functions that fall into an acceptable category.

The Lord’s Day, in society about us, is anything but a holy day. It is a day for their own pleasure and for doing what they want to do. We need not be fooled: it can easily rub off on us. What are some things that could fall into the acceptable category of keeping the Lord’s Day holy? I thought of evangelism efforts. Many of us, in our congregations have at least a Sunday a month where we go out in the local community and distribute literature. Maybe we even do some door-to-door visitation. It is a way of keeping the Lord’ Day holy. We are doing His work on

this day. We are spreading the good news of salvation, seeking to share it with others. It is a way of keeping the Lord's Day holy.

Also acceptable would be family visiting for the purpose of spiritual fellowship and encouragement. Maybe that is where we need the encouragement the most that we keep it on a spiritual plane, and that we do not only discuss the natural and the material things. I think it is all right in our visiting to discuss the natural things too, but if we spend our time discussing how to be the most profitable in our business, we are missing the point. We should remember it is the Lord's day and seek to encourage one another in a spiritual way.

Visiting the sick, the elderly, the widows, we noted from Jesus' example that doing works of compassion, was lawful on the sabbath day. I think the principle is that works of compassion and reaching out to others on the Lord's Day is also acceptable and a way to keep the Lord's Day holy. Resting and quiet times for the family, also is an acceptable way to spend the Lord's day. It is a time for physical refreshment as well as spiritual refreshment. As we come apart and are refreshed as we enjoy the rest and quiet times as a family. We should be planning ahead and

preparing to limit our work in a natural way on the Lord's Day. For farmers this may mean having the feed at the right place so that there is less work perhaps on the Lord's Day. For others the applications may vary, but again we should be seeking to find ways to minimize and limit our work on the Lord's Day.

It could be a day of writing letters, perhaps to missionaries — those from our congregation who are serving on the foreign mission fields. Letters of encouragement to them, letters of encouragement to those who have been bereaved of loved ones, is a profitable way of keeping of keeping the Lord's Day holy as we involve ourselves in these activities.

A few things that would fall in the more or less unacceptable category. Our statement of doctrine mentions that we "shall seek to avoid labor and business on the Lord's Day as much as possible." Purchases, business activities, and so on, need to be avoided as much as possible. Yes, even buying gas, though we can do it so easily, you know, with a card, slipping it into the pump. We need to be keeping a guard there. We need to be keeping a wall there so that we do not become accustomed to buying and purchasing things on the

Lord's Day. There may be times of emergency, or times perhaps where we are involved in the Lord's work, maybe it does become necessary. However, for the most part I think we should avoid buying gas on the Lord's Day. Vending machines can even be a small area but it is a way of breaking down our conviction as we would utilize these things.

Time spent with catalogues or trade magazines, farm papers, is an area we should seek to limit. It is a day for other reading material like the church papers and things that encourage and strengthen us spiritually. A lot of excessive, strenuous, physical activity and exercise should be avoided. We are in the winter season now. We do not have winter necessarily but often there is ice skating. What about our young people? A number of hours on Sunday afternoon skating hard, playing ice hockey? I hardly think it is fitting to keeping the Lord's Day holy is it?

Feasting is also mentioned in our statement. I think we have made some progress as a group in these areas, and in this area. I recall as a young boy preachers preaching against the idea of the mother staying home on the Lord's Day to prepare the Sunday meal. I do not know if any of you remember that at all.

I do not remember that my mother ever did that, but it must have been done some because I remember teaching coming that it is not a proper emphasis for the Lord's Day. Maybe the challenge that faces us is that we keep our meals more simple and avoid the feasting aspect. We are not doing as much strenuous physical labour. Consequently we should not need as much to eat either.

In general, we need to guard against those things that make the Lord's Day seem like any other day. We had those experiences when we were not able, due to emergency or illness, to do what we normally did on the Lord's Day and it does not seem right, does it? We should ever seek to preserve that feeling of what is proper on the Lord's Day for those things that militate against our receiving the spiritual nourishment and refreshment that we so much need. The songwriter said, as he reflected on the worship on the first day,

“O holy day, O happy day,
O day of days the best,

We worship at God's glorious throne;

And there find peace and rest.”
He goes on to say . . .

“Our faith is increased,

And our love is renewed,

And our hearts are with power

from heaven ended.”

We can so easily become lax in observance. There is a very close correspondence between the way that we keep the Lord’s Day and the way we will live in general. If we are careful to keep the Lord’s Day holy, it will help us in our total life to live a holy life. The two are closely related. May we be challenged to keep the Lord’s Day holy. As I preached this message somewhere else, a brother shared with me afterwards, and mentioned an old saying that he had come across. It was from the old country (it mentions Europe I believe). The saying went something like this, “You tell me what the young people of Europe are doing on Sunday, and I will tell you the future of the nation.” As we think about that is there a message, or is there a lesson for us? As we ponder and think what we do, and what our youth do on the Lord’s Day, is it indicative of where our convictions are? Or, where we may be heading as to the observance of the Lord’s Day?

In conclusion, I would like to turn to another verse in Isaiah 56:4–7. I was blessed with this verse as I was studying for this subject. Again, it is an Old Testament reference. Again, the sabbath day is in focus. “For

thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; (5) Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. (6) Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; (7) Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.” This speaks of the inclusion of the gentiles perhaps, as we think of those who respect and keep the sabbath day, and how God will give them a place. I was impressed with that fact as we honour the Lord’s Day and observe the Lord’s Day, I believe God will make for us a place, and we can anticipate the eternal sabbath rest with Him in glory.

Remembering to Keep the Lord's Day Holy

Sometimes as we look at some practical areas of life, they can seem rather complicated. It is good for us to take another look at this. What really is the Lord's day all about? What is the Sabbath day all about? I would like to help us establish a foundation. It is not anything new. We seek God's help to give us a settledness in our mind in relation to the Lord's day, so that we may continue to honour it in a way that is pleasing to Him. There is an awful lot that depends upon the fathers and grandfathers. The greatest encouragement we can give other brethren is to allow the Word that we hear to make a difference in our own lives. May our rough edges that show up in our homes around those we love, be rounded out by the grace of God. May we become more like Jesus. John testified of Jesus that He was "full of grace and truth." (John 1:14). May we be like that. We need to make effort and plan. We need to move forward for this to be accomplished.

Remembering to keep the Lord's day holy. Notice the first word is 'remembering.' I looked at the definition of the word remembering, "to have come into the mind again, or to think again and recollect." When we remem-

ber something, this definition makes it seem like there is something we have forgotten and now we are remembering it again. Is this the way we are looking at this topic? To remember something that we have forgotten? The second definition was, "to keep from forgetting, to keep in mind." The question we would ask as we think of keeping the Lord's day holy is, "where am I at in relation to that?" What has been my attitude toward the Lord's day? Is it like the first definition where we remember again, "yes this is a day that we should keep holy," or have I been keeping it, to remember or to keep from forgetting? I trust it is our experience that we are interested to keep from forgetting, when we talk about remembering to keep the Lord's day holy.

As we look at this subject, of keeping the Lord's day, the way that we observe it personally, has a lot to do with how much we treasure our salvation, our church family, our children, and how sincerely we remember whose day it is, to keep it holy. As I was remembering how it used to be when I was a boy, it seems to me that back in the late 1960's and early 1970's it was rather unusual to see a business open on

Sunday. It was something that you noticed then. When you saw someone working out in their fields with their tractors, or their lawn it seems like it was rather an unusual thing. It would appear like the communities that we live in today, somehow have lost that vision of keeping the Lord's day holy.

“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” (2 Peter 3:1) This reveals Peter's object in writing this epistle. What is the Lord's day? What was God's design? Many times when we think about the Lord's day, at least for myself, I would think that it was something that came through the law of Moses — through the Ten Commandments. However, it goes back much further than that. In Genesis 1:26, 27, we read, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” When man was made we were created in the image and

likeness of God.

As we go on, Genesis 2:2, 3 “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.” As creatures that were created by God, I believe it is right and proper that we also observe that seventh day as a day of rest. It is something that our physical body needs. One of the words that I saw in a description of what the Sabbath day means, is “an intermission.” It is like a time in between the work of last week and the coming work next week. It is a time in between when we like God, rest from our physical labours. We read, “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.” Sanctified means to set apart or consecrate. It is a special day of rest. The first conclusion that I would like to make in this topic is the thought of keeping the Lord's day as a day of rest. It is a creation principle. It is something that God created. It is part of what God wants us to observe. As creatures that are created in the image of God, it is very proper that we recognize and honour this special day that has been sanctified or set apart by

God at the conclusion of His creation.

Keeping the day of rest, or honouring the sabbath that the Lord set aside, is not a foundation for our salvation. It is not what our salvation is based on. However, how we recognize that day tells a lot about us. It is one way that I can check myself, as I look at my attitude and how I keep the day of rest. In Exodus 16:22–26, we read before Moses received the law (the tablets of the law, the Ten Commandments), “And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.”

The thought I want to leave is that, when God sent the manna to feed His people it was before the law. The beginning of the manna that God shared with them was before the law was given to Moses. We notice in that Scripture that the Israelites were to collect the manna that they needed, to provide for themselves enough for each day. On the sixth day, they were to collect twice the amount. The reason is given in verse 23, “This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD.” It was still recognized at that time as a day of rest.

God desired for them to recognize the seventh day as a day of rest even before the law of Moses. That was kind of a new thought to me. The Sabbath goes back to Creation. When God gave the commandments to Moses it included the Sabbath in written form. In Exodus 20:11 “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.” And so God gave that in the law given to Moses that it was to be a day of rest. It was to remind them that God was the Creator. It was to remind them of God’s work. And

as we continue in Exodus 31:13 we notice that there was another dimension added to the Sabbath day. “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.” Notice in verse 14 “Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death.” When they refused to honour the Sabbath the penalty was death.

There is an account mentioned in Numbers 15:32–36 “And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.” We see that the Sabbath law was very strictly observed. Here was a man who

had disobeyed and was stoned. In Deuteronomy 5:14, 15, an additional dimension is mentioned here. “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, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.” In this Scripture Moses reminds them that it was to be a remembrance of their deliverance from the bondage in Egypt. It was to be a token or reminder to keep in mind that God had delivered them, and that they had experienced a deliverance from slavery. So far we have noticed that the Sabbath was kept in a universal recognition of God as the creator and also as a reminder of God’s mighty hand in delivering them from slavery.

As we come to the New Testament, we find that the universal day of rest began to be observed after the resurrection of

Christ, on the first day of the week. It seems to me that the seventh day of rest that God instituted at Creation has been fulfilled. What do I mean by that? In the first generations of time on the earth, man could experience no real rest. There was the sin problem that came in the garden of Eden. The children of God found peace as they made their peace with God, and looked forward to the One that would come to deliver them from that bondage of sin. That is the way the people of God, found their peace with God as they looked forward to that spotless Lamb. According to the way we understand Hebrews it really did not bring a lasting rest in the inner man.

Notice what it says in John 19:30, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." We can picture Jesus hanging on the cross. When God was finished with the creation of the world, He took a day of rest. When the plan of salvation was fulfilled, and Jesus gave His life, His last words here in John were, "It is finished." So the generations of time before Christ, the rest was at the end of the week it was the seventh day. As the plan of salvation was finished, as Jesus

said, "It is finished," that seventh day of rest is now fulfilled. The work of redemption is done. Today, we can experience rest in the inner man.

We are living in the fulfillment of that seventh day of rest. Jesus gave His life, died, was buried and raised on the first day of the week. Now we can not only experience rest every seventh day, but every man in every nation can experience rest in the inner man every day as we accept the finished work of Christ at Calvary. We experience the deliverance from bondage to our sin nature and forgiveness for our sins. It seems to me that the year of jubilee in the Old Testament law (Leviticus 25) is also a type of the New Testament day of rest, on the first day of the week. They were to give the land a sabbath of rest every seven years. After seven sevens, the following year was to be a day of restoring the bondman to his property. It was to be a deliverance for those that had been sold because they were poor and could not help themselves. They were to be given their freedom on that day. The land was to lay idle. It was to be a time of rest. Thus, as we see the land going back to its original owner and the various things that happened in the year of jubilee, it is like the deliver-

ance that we experience also from our sins and from the sin nature. We experience a liberation from the bondage of sin and from servanthood to sin. Thus the year of jubilee was also a type of the first day of the week when Christ rose again to be our redeemer.

What did the New Testament Christians call the first day of the week? In Revelation 1:10 the apostle John was on the Isle of Patmos. He wrote, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet." It was called the Lord's day. As New Testament Christians, it is proper for us to keep the day as the Lord's day in memory of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Two men were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the first day of the week. Jesus met them on the first day of the week. In John 20:19, when the disciples were meeting behind locked doors, Jesus met with them on the first day of the week. It was the practice of the early Christians to meet together on the first day of the week. It is proper that we meet on the first day of the week. It is a special day of turning our hearts toward God. He promises in Matthew 18:20 "Where two or three are gathered together in my name,

there am I in the midst of them." As we look at Acts 20:7 "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." For the New Testament Church, the Lord's day was a day of sharing communion together. It was a day of preaching. Though we read in other places that they attended the synagogue service, which would have been on the seventh day sabbath, when they came together to break bread, it was upon the first day of the week. When they met together with those that joined with them in their faith in the finished work of Calvary, it was the first day of the week.

In 1 Corinthians 16:2 we see that it was the day that was set aside for laying up their increase, and to share with the Church, the increase of their land. It was a day when they took up the offering. It is proper that we do that as well. It is the day when we give as the Lord has blessed (or prospered) us. In the Old Testament, we noticed that it was punishable by death for the man that picked up sticks on the Sabbath. What about today, when we pick up sticks and we bat a ball around on the Sabbath?

What about today, when we do that work with the stick, How does God feel about that today? We say, "Well, we are not under the Ceremonial Law anymore so we are not really under the Law of Moses." As we think about how we observe Sunday, there was a time not too long ago, when I would have said that Sunday and the Sabbath were two different things. In a sense they are, and yet as we look at the Creation principle, I believe for the New Testament Christians it is also a Sabbath day. It is a day of rest. As we think about some of the temptations that we sometimes face, like our young people wanting to get together and use those wooden sticks or aluminum bats to play ball, there is a Scripture to consider in 1 Timothy 4:8 "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It seems to me that the practice that has been allowed in some of our churches of having activities of heavy physical exercise, would be something different from what honours God best.

There is another area that we sometimes struggle with a little bit that we see coming in the world around us. It is possible that we can be affected by it.

What causes us to be tempted to buy on the Lord's day? Or to eat at a restaurant? I was blessed as I looked at that thought. Is it not because we have failed to make proper preparation? Is this not why we are tempted to buy on the Lord's day? When we think of going to McDonald's or somewhere for a meal, or even buying gas, is it not because we have not done it ahead of time? We have not prepared ourselves properly for that rest. In 2 Peter 3:10 speaks about the day of the Lord that is coming as a thief in the night. In verse 14 of the same passage, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." I Trust this can be an encouragement to us as we think about the position that we have typically taken to not be involved in buying and selling. As we think about making our preparation ahead of the Sabbath for those things, it is a challenge to us of the very real need of making our preparation for that day of the Lord that is yet to come. This should spur us onward that we prepare ahead of time. We find in Matthew 25 the parable of the 10 virgins. There were those that fell asleep as they were waiting for the bridegroom to come. While they went to

make their purchases the door was shut. If we wait to prepare for the great, notable, and coming day of the Lord, until we hear the trumpet, the door will be shut to us. May it be a reminder to us, as we observe the Lord's day to prepare ahead of time. May we continue to keep that vision alive and well.

One of the things that we are faced with sometimes is that it seems necessary to travel on the Lord's day. Or, maybe some of us enjoy camping and we are tempted to be involved in camping. When our children are in school, especially in the elementary grades, if they miss school for a number of days, there is a very real possibility that they may miss a very foundational teaching. It will be difficult for them later in school, unless somehow they make it up. An example is when they are learning phonics and the sounds. It is somewhat the same way in our church as our brethren prepare to preach. Our brethren observe the needs of the church, but we decide to go camping. We will have our own little service. It is very possible that we will miss a blessing that the Lord had in store for us. It will make it more difficult for us. Let us be in the house of the Lord when God's people meet together. If we are

not there, when our brethren share the burden that is on their heart, we will miss something the Lord intended to bless us with.

There is also the aspect of after the service. We have what we call "Mennonite hour," where we enjoy visiting. I think that is proper. When we lived in Indiana about once a year, our John Deere dealer used to have what they called "John Deere days." Many children enjoyed going there. It seemed like when people would return from the John Deere company's little presentation that this is kind of what you heard for the next couple of days. There would be quite a bit of enthusiasm about what they saw and heard. As we think about the conversation after service, could we as the ministry have some effect on it? I am sure the John Deere company, puts a lot of effort into making their presentation. Could there be an effect because we did not put enough effort in? I know we are all human. We are naturally bent toward the material things. I think it is right for us as ministry to put our hearts into preparing and doing what we can to stimulate interest.

I would like to notice a couple of Scriptures in closing. Isaiah 58:13, 14 "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.” I have this little pen that I have had in my pocket. Before we left, I got it out of my desk in the shop. We purchased it along with some other pens with money the Lord had entrusted to us. I have been using it. I brought it along for me to use. We have been looking at this topic and it says, “Remembering to keep the Lord’s day holy.” It

has that apostrophe ‘s’ behind the word Lord. May we remember that as we consider the Lord’s day, it is a day for the Lord, it is not for us. It is the Lord’s day. So we honour Him on the Lord’s day.

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.” (Hebrews 2:1–3)

May God continue to move us to faithfulness as we go from here.

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Genesis	15:32–36	240	Matthew		
1:26, 27	238	Deuteronomy	5:17	225	
2:2, 3	221, 238	5:14, 15	240	12:1–3	233
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From the Previous Issue:

Discipleship in a Permissive World

From a message by Mark Rock

Saturday, April 01, 2006

Gospel Light Fellowship

FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

44. **Our chief concern ought to be, Will we be ready for His coming?**

Men may differ as to the exact program of Christ's blessings after He does come. Some expect Him to remain here a thousand years in a glorious personal reign on earth, while others expect His coming to be the immediate windup of all things earthly and that the judgment will immediately follow; after which the saints will be taken at once to glory and the sinners cast into the eternal lake of fire. Then there are other points connected with this subject concerning which not all Bible students are agreed. If we are faithful, God

will take care of all these points. If it were essential that we should know all these things to exactitude, God would have given them to us in language that could not be misunderstood. But here is one thing that Christ did specifically teach in connection with the fact of His coming again: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44). And not only should we be ready ourselves, but in the meantime do all within our power to do, to help others to get ready for this great event.

45. **Our eternal destiny will depend upon our spiritual condition at death.**

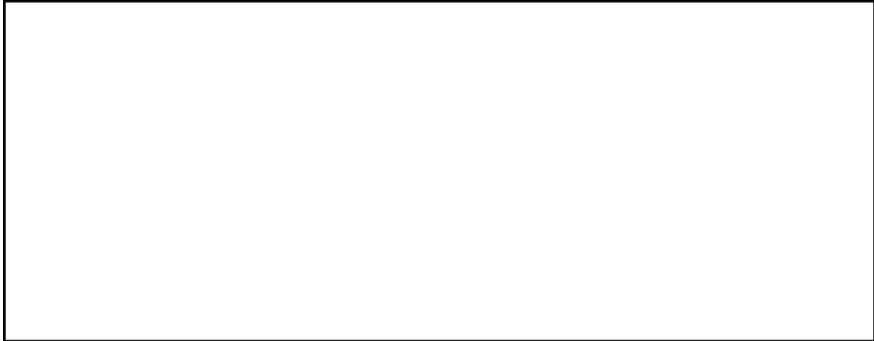
“It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Not a word as to any one’s chances for another opportunity for salvation between these two events. Neither is there any teaching anywhere else in the Bible that holds out such a hope. Of this we will speak in the next paragraph. At this time we desire to call your attention to something that God through Ezekiel teaches us (Ezekiel 18:20-24; read it all): (1) “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” In other words, each one is responsible for his sins. As for the fate of the sinner who shall die in his sins, we shall notice that later. At this time we want to call attention to what becomes of the once righteous man who turns away and dies in his sins: “When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.” This teaching is also sustained in other references found in both the Old and the New Testaments. The whole tenor of Scripture teaches this solemn truth: No matter what the

past record of our lives may have been, the condition of our soul at the time of our death will determine what will be our lot in eternity.

46. There will be no second chance for salvation after death.

Returning to the first thought presented in the preceding paragraph, let no one lose sight of the fact that death ends all, so far as opportunity is concerned. Free agency ends with our earth-life. Earth is but a steppingstone for eternity. The idea that there will still be an opportunity for salvation after Christ comes finds no support in Scripture. When Lazarus died he “was carried by the angels” into the realms of glory. When the rich man died, “in hell he lifted up his eyes,” and began to beg. The warning of Scripture is: “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 3:16 — read also verses 12–15). There are two reasons why we should stress the fact that in this life only can we make the necessary preparations for a blessed eternity: (1) is the teaching of Scripture. (2) To hold out the possibility of a second chance after death tends too much encouragement to those who selfishly cling to their sins in this life, dreaming of an easy salva-

The Pulpit Exchange



tion after the allurements of this world are past. “Behold, now is

the accepted time.”

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