***Lights in the World - PH44-02  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:14-15***

This is the twelfth section in our study on lights in the world where we are studying Philippians 2:14-16 via Exodus 20:1-17. We have come to the fourth moral absolute. The fourth commandment requires the observance of the Sabbath day as a holy day. We have learned that the Sabbath day is the seventh day of the week. It is the day we call Saturday. The basic feature of the Sabbath observance is cessation from all work. The word "Sabbath" itself simply means "to cease" or "to rest." It is the principle of six days of work and one day of rest which is presented.

In practice, the Sabbath day can be very confusing for us here in the age of grace. So we want to clarify that today. However, I do want to establish the fact that the Sabbath was a legitimate and a very specific day in the weekly life of the Jewish people. It was a day that they did not have any options in keeping. It was a day that they had to keep.

**Reasons for Observing the Sabbath Day**

There were certain reasons for the Sabbath day observance, and we'll look at those first.

1. The first reason is because the Sabbath day is a special day, blessed and sanctified by God in memory of completion of His creation. This is what is explained to us in Exodus 20:8-11. After God had completed His recreating work of six days, He looked back upon what He had done. The Bible tells us that He declared it to be very good. Because it was a very good creation, it merited a day commemorating the blessings of grace and peace which were to flow from such a very good creation. One point I want to call your attention to is that God was looking back. The Sabbath day is always associated with looking back. When God finished creating, He looked back. And what He looked back upon, He could very happily declare to have been very good.

The analogy is drawn between God's rest from His creation work and man's rest from his six days of labor. That is, God rested from His labors. So, one day in seven, humanity should rest from its labors. The idea is for man to contemplate what he has done for those past six days, as God contemplated what He did by looking back at those six days. People needed time to think in order to see what had happened to them; where they were going; and, where they had come from. If they had time to think they had the capacity to recognize that which was a threat to their freedom. Freedom and thinking go together. The reason slaves usually do not rise up in riot is because they are too exhausted from being slaves to be able to think about it. All they can do in the Russian concentration camps is get up in the morning; struggle through the misery and the agony and the cold of the day; and, then fall into a bunk at night after an 18-hour day, and try to recoup enough capacity to get up the next morning and survive another day in the worker's paradise.

When you feel like that, you don't have too much time to lie in your bunk to figure out an escape plan. You can't give very much thought to freedom. All you could do is perhaps remember how it used to be, and maybe remember it with agony when people warned you what it would be like to live under a state-dominating power such as communism has; the loss of freedom; and, what misery that would be. Maybe you remember the warnings that you ignored when you yourself enjoyed freedom and could come and go, and do as you please. It takes time for people to think to be able to maintain freedom. People who are too tired just go along passively and submissively with forces that are enslaving them.

People need a day of rest to remind them of the perpetual risks that they once enjoyed in Eden. Eden needed no special day of rest. Every day was a fantastic restful experience. But once sin entered the human realm, then humanity needed a special one day a week for recuperating its capacities. The reason for hard work is to live and to secure the necessities of life. It wasn't necessary to work hard before sin. In the Garden of Eden, they did not have to work hard. Now, because people must work hard and think hard, it is necessary to have a day of rest. However, the day of rest, the Sabbath day, always looked forward to going back to what they once had in Eden--God's perfect rest. Hebrews 4:4-11 describe that looking ahead to God's rest.

1. The Sabbath day is observed because the Sabbath is a reminder to the Jews of the freedom into which God had brought them from slavery in Egypt. Deuteronomy 5:14-15 say, "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you Israel shall not do any work: you; nor your son; nor your daughter; nor your manservant; nor your maidservant; nor your ox; nor your ass; nor any of your cattle; nor the stranger who is within your gates; that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you, and remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out of there through a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

It was a reminder to them of what misery they had once experienced as slaves, and now the glories of freedom into which God had led them at the time of the Exodus. Every Saturday was looking back and remembering how they had once been slaves, and now they were free.

1. The Sabbath day is to be observed because the Sabbath day was designated as a sign of the covenant between Israel and God. We have this in Exodus 31, beginning to read at verse 12: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, 'Speak also unto the children of Israel, saying, verily, my Sabbaths you shall keep. For it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.'" Then you can read on through the rest of that passage through verse 17, which says, "It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever. For in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.

So one of the reasons for the Jews keeping the Sabbath day was because it was a special sign. For that reason, it was a holy day. It was a special sign between the agreement (the covenant) that God had made with them, and with no other nation on the face of the earth. Therefore they were reminded of the particular unique relationship they had with God that no other nation did.

1. A fourth reason is because God promised exceptional prosperity for those who observed the Sabbath day. If you wanted to prosper in life, one of the things, as a Jew, that you wanted to be certain to do was to be respectful toward the Sabbath day--to observe the Sabbath as God had declared it to be observed. Isaiah 58:13-14 say, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the Holy of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words." All of this was respectful observance of the Sabbath. Verse 14: "Then shall you delight yourself in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." God said, "You will live off the fat of the land. You will live high if you observe My Sabbath day.

The point of all this is that God is very serious when he said to them, "If you will observe my Sabbaths, it will be money in the bank for you. I will prosper you for resting." You have to be a four-way idiot to have a deal like that, and want to go out and work. I know you well enough that not one of you would have violated that kind of a deal, including myself.

1. Another reason for keeping the Sabbath, of course, is because the physical body and the soul need a change of pace and rest from work one day in seven for maximum health and mental stability. This, as we have pointed out, is essential to freedom. Your body and your soul need a change of pace. They need a rest from work.

There were severe laws for those who did not observe the Sabbath day, as well as there being great blessing for those who did. For one thing, worship was not required under the law on the Sabbath day. So let's get that clear if that's in your mind. The Sabbath day had nothing to do with worship. Thus, even such a concept as the Christian Sabbath, meaning Sunday as a day of worship, immediately, you know that there's something wrong with the expression. The Sabbath day was not associated with worship. People did not gather to read the Bibles and to study the Word of God. All they did was quit working. They just stayed at home and meditated. They gave the day to thinking. Their thoughts would turn to the Lord. Their thoughts would turn to prayer. Their thoughts would turn to many things that were acts of worship. However, the day was a private matter at home. It was simply no work.

For those who refused to observe the Sabbath day, or who took it lightly, the penalty was death. You have this in Numbers 15:32-35 and in Exodus 31:15. Those who violated the Sabbath day were put to death for doing so, and without mercy. In Numbers, we have the story of the man who forgot to get his firewood together and get his fire going so that he would have heat. The result was he went out to gather up his sticks on the Sabbath day, and that was work. That violated a Sabbath law that they had to keep, and had to keep in a very prescribed way. Consequently, Moses went to the Lord and said, "Lord, what are we going to do with him?" This was because Moses could not get himself to say, "Let's take this man out and execute him because he picked up a few sticks to build a fire." However, God said, "That's exactly what you're going to do, Moses." Moses was ordered to do so, and he did. And the man was stoned.

Life, however, could be saved on the Sabbath day. You have this in Mark 3:4, Luke 6:7, Luke 14:5, and Matthew 12:1. The Sabbath was made for man's blessing and for man's enjoyment. Both animal and human life could be saved on the Sabbath day.

There are no penalties attached, of course, for our day, concerning the Lord's Day. There are no penalties at all. There's nothing that you could do today for which there is a penalty in regard to the Lord's Day. Anything you want to do on Sunday, the Lord's Day, is free of any penalties. That which may be sin bears the penalty with God. That which is illegal bears the penalty of the law. But there are no penalties attached as to how you choose to use the day. That's between you and the Lord, and is to be kept as unto the Lord. However, any profaning of the Sabbath day was viewed with the utmost gravity. It was equated with idolatry and apostasy. Ezekiel 23:37-39. If you violated the Sabbath day, that was the same as if you had bowed down to an idol. It was the same as if you were a heretic and an apostate.

Worship in the synagogue did develop between the writing of the last book of the Old Testament and the time of the New Testament era. Synagogues arose just on their own spontaneously, and the Sabbath day became a day when they would walk to the synagogues; they would listen to the reading of the Old Testament Scriptures; and, they would listen to those who were explaining the Word of God. So in time, worship, in the form of the exposition of the Word of God, did arise on the Sabbath day. But it was not part of God's requirement. It was a custom that developed, and it was a custom which, in the providence of God, of course, God did use. That's why Jesus went to the synagogue, and He would speak to the Jews on the day when they would gather together. He was able to present Himself to them as the Messiah. This is why Paul would go to the synagogues as he would travel around the world, because there he had a concentrated group of Bible students gathered together, and he would speak to them. But going to the synagogue was not required on the Sabbath day. You didn't have to go to church on the Sabbath day.

**Rest for the Land**

As you know, there were other Sabbaths, other rests in terms of years that the Jewish people were also to observe. The Sabbath day principle applied also to the land for the sabbatical year. We have this in Exodus 23:10-11, Leviticus 25:3-4, and Leviticus 26:33-36. Their prosperity depended upon observing the seventh year in a series of seven. The seventh year was also to be a whole year of Sabbaths. It was to be a year that was completely taken off. The Jews became very careless about the sabbatical year. The principle was that they were to sow and reap for six years, but in the sixth year, God said, "I will double your crops. Therefore, you will take in enough not only to eat that year, but to eat the year when you have planted no crops--the seventh year." This would be a total rest from any labors, and the land would best be able to recoup. It was part of an environmental program that God had for restoring the land. Every seventh year, they were to do this.

You would have thought, "That's great." What would you do if somebody came along to you and said, "From now on, you are going to get a sabbatical? Every seventh year you don't have to work. You still get paid, but you just do what you'd like. However, strangely enough, the Jews couldn't keep from being greedy. So for 490 years, mind you, they never observed a sabbatical year once. That meant that 70 sabbatical years went by. What did they do? They said, "We'll just work, and we'll get twice as much." This is like the boss says, "You get two weeks' vacation with pay." You say, "What if I work?" He says, "I'll pay you for working, but I'll also pay you for vacationing." So you never take your vacation. That's what the Jews did. They never took their seventh year of vacation. But God kept chalking it up in heaven, and after 70 years were chalked up, that's when they went into Babylonian captivity.

God said, "For 490 years, you've turned your back upon My rest principle--My one-in-seven principle of rest. You've turned your back upon it. Therefore, I'm now going to send you into captivity. You would not rest as freemen. You will now work as slaves (as captives) in another nation. But my land of Palestine is going to give its rest all at once for 70 years." So, as you know, for 70 years, they were in Babylonian captivity. That's why it was not 69 years. That's why it was not 71 years. That's why it was exactly 70 years until the time was made up that they were supposed to let the land rest. For ignoring this requirement for 490 years, they went into the Babylonian captivity for 70 years. We have this explained in Leviticus 26:33-36, 2 Chronicles 36:20-21, and Jeremiah 25:11-12.

**The Year of Jubilee**

Then after a series of seven sevens (that is, after a series of 49 years), in which you had had seven sabbatical years, then the 50th year was called the year of jubilee. That was another special no-work year. So the year of Jubilee was indeed a very happy year. This had been a year that followed a year's vacation that you had already had. Now you started a second year's vacation immediately following that one. In that time, again, God produced so much previously from your crops that you had ample food to last until your first new crop came back in. But the year of jubilee was a special year. Certain things were done every 50th year as a restoration of God's order--bringing everybody back to rest and peace.

So if you had sold a piece of land, they had to give the land back to you in the year of jubilee. It went back to your family. It went back to the original owners. In other words, if a person bought a piece of land the 49th year, he knew that he could use that land for one year only, and then he had to give it back to you. All debts were canceled. It was very hard to get a loan at the bank in the 49th year. This was because the closer you were to the year of jubilee, the closer you were to not collecting that debt. You could only collect it up to the year of jubilee. Then the year of jubilee, come January 1st, everybody was debt free. They didn't owe a single thing. Of course, the smart Jews made a lot of installment notes that they drew out before that because it was all going to be canceled in the year of Jubilee. If you were a slave, you got your freedom in the year of Jubilee. It was a year of happiness, a fantastic year of rest and of restoration. Leviticus 25:8 and following tell you all about that.

So the essence of the Sabbath was restoration. This was for both the weekly Sabbath as well as the sabbatical years and the year of Jubilee. It was rest to recoup your capacities. In its various expressions, it all reduced itself to that. God said it was important.

This, of course, brings this up to the fact of what are we going to do in the age of the church? That was the next question. This brings up a very critical feature because we are forever having people who are involving the Sabbath day and the Lord's Day, and mixing the two together. Perhaps the best way to make this clear is to, first of all, remind you of some of the distinctions between law and grace. Please remember that law and grace are two ways of life for believers. The law was given exclusively to Jews. It was never a lifestyle for gentiles, nor for Christians. The Bible is very clear on this. Romans 9:4-5, Deuteronomy 4:8, and 1 Corinthians 9:20 all make it clear that the law system given on Mount Sinai to Moses was for Jews only. It was never for gentiles and never for Christians. By the same token, the grace way of life was given exclusively to Christians for the church age. It was never applied to the gentiles. It never applied to Jews. The theme of the New Testament epistles is grace, in order to explain to us our way of life in contrast to that of the Jews.

This immediately should show you that you can neither take anything from the law and mix it with grace, nor can you take anything from the grace and mix it back into the law. Once you do that, you neither have law nor grace, but what you do come out with is religion. Always remember that law plus grace equals religion. That is what most churches operate on: religion. They've got a basis of grace and a lot of mixture of law principles. Consequently, Satan is able to move in with religion because there is no possible expression of the grace of God under such a condition. People are not saved by keeping the law. People are not sanctified by keeping the law. They are not made wholly in their living by keeping the law (Romans 3:19-20, Galatians 3:19-24). The Bible draws many distinctions between law and grace in the Scripture. These distinctions are such as to indicate to us that law and grace are mutually exclusive. If you have one, you cannot have the other.

For example, Romans 6:14-15: "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. What then, shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Paul makes a very clear contrast. You are not under law as you once were. You are under grace. Some people say, "Oh, good. Then I can do all kinds of sin." That's why he said, "Shall we sin and have a great time? God forbid." No, that's not the meaning of not being under law. Right away when you say, "You're not under the law," people think, "Oh, I don't have to obey the moral principles of the Ten Commandments." The Bible never says that. The Bible says you're not under the law as a system of life. Remember that that system of life included sacrifices, Sabbath Day observance, and other things as well as these moral principles. But what he's talking about here is that we as believers still have a moral basis. All the moral principles of the commandments, except this one that we're studying now, are repeated in the New Testament. We're under each one of them. However, law and grace are totally separated. The law is a system of works to secure God's blessing, while grace is a system of freedom from works because we already possess God's blessing. Romans 11:6 tells us that.

The law system was holy in itself. There's nothing wrong with those 613 rules that constituted the law system. They were absolutely perfect in every respect, but they had only human capacity for their fulfillment. While grace achieves righteousness through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the law had nothing but the old sin nature to carry it through. Thus Romans 8:3-4 tell us that the law never had a chance to be realized; to be fulfilled; and, to be obeyed. Romans 8:3 says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." It wasn't that the law was weak, but the human old sin nature was weak. "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." He looked like a man, but He didn't have an old sin nature. "And for sin, condemned in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

So the result was that through Jesus Christ, we fulfill the righteousness of the law which we could not fulfill through the capacities of the old sin nature. You may add to that Philippians 2:13. The law was holy; the law was good; but, the law was weak because it just had human capacities for its fulfillment. Human merit under the law is the basis upon which you receive blessing, while the merit of Christ is the basis of blessing under grace (Deuteronomy 28:1-15, Romans 8:1-2). So we're told that the law system brings spiritual death. The grace system brings spiritual life (2 Corinthians 3:6).

The law system as a way of life was entirely abolished in the age of grace. Your friends who are not educated in the Bible will argue this point with you concerning the Ten Commandments. When you say we are not under law, therefore let's talk about the Bible in terms of the Scriptures that apply to us (the grace Scriptures), immediately they strike you with rejecting the Ten Commandments. As a matter of fact, they would be completely horrified if you should say to them, "We do not live under the Ten Commandments." Of course, we don't, because the Ten Commandments is part of a system that has been destroyed.

I want to take you to 2 Corinthians 3 so that you will know what to say to people when they hit you about not obeying the Ten Commandments, and about the Ten Commandments being the basis of God's dealings with us today. In 2 Corinthians 3:7-8, Paul says, "But if the ministration of death." He's talking about the law here, and a specific part of the law. Would you identify, please, as we read, and see if you can come up with what part of the law Moses is talking about?

The law was in three parts. There were the moral absolutes that we're studying here; there were the social regulations of social relationships between the Jews; and, then there was the ritual relationship, the religious ceremonies. Those three factors constituted the one thing known as the law. The law is never divisible in Scripture. It is always simply the Law of Moses. Either the Law of Moses applies, or it does not apply. If it applies, then all three sections apply: then our relationships between one another must be governed by the social regulations of the Mosaic Law; our morality must be governed by the Ten Commandments; and, our religious practices must be governed then by the requirements of the law--the sacrifices and so on. The whole thing goes together.

But in order to make it clear, the distinction between law and grace, notice what God the Holy Spirit led Paul to write here in 2 Corinthians 3:7: "But if the administration of death written and engraved in stones was glorious." Guess what part of the law was written and graved on stones? "So that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away with, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit (the filling of God the Holy Spirit era), be more glorious." Paul says, "If the Ten Commandments, as Moses walked down with those two tables of stone and just glowed with the magnificent brilliance of the glory of God, so that the Jews couldn't even look at him as he stood there with these tables in his hands, how much more glorious is going to be the marvelous time of the filling of the spirit and all that that empowers us to do?"

Drop down, please to verse 11, and let's see what God says He has done with those two tables of stone: "For if that which is done away is glorious, much more of that which remains is glorious." Notice the critical words: "Done away." What had been glorious in this context? The Ten Commandments written on those two tables of stone. That's what was glorious. That's what was done away with. What remains, which is much more glorious? The era of the filling of the Holy Spirit.

So the Bible is very clear that what was written on stones, the Ten Commandments, is specifically abolished. It no longer applies. You no longer live under the Ten Commandments as an expression. However, God's moral requirements for humanity proceed from His own essence so that God's moral requirements can never be abolished. How God expresses those moral requirements from one dispensation to another, that expression may be abolished, but the actual requirements themselves can never be abolished. The Mosaic Law with its Ten Commandments has been superseded by another expression of God's morality as the standard of grace to the church. His expression of morality is in keeping with that standard. 1 Corinthians 9:21, therefore, says, "Not under the law, but under the rule of grace."

So the principles (the absolutes) of morality that we are studying in the Ten Commandments are restated in the grace teachings of the New Testament for Christians. I want to make that clear. We are not outlaws as Christians. We are in-lawed, the Bible says, to Jesus Christ, and we have God the Holy Spirit fulfilling God's moral absolutes through us. Now you can do it. The Jew could read these ten moral principles, and all he could do was to sigh with hope that he could do it, somehow, the best he could. The truth of the matter, however, was that he could not do it, and he broke them left and right. Whereas, you and I come along, and we not only are happy to do them. We don't have to sigh and wish we could do that. We realize that we can do them. That's why you are able to live better than any Jew could ever dream of living. Your practice is infinitely higher than any Jew of the Old Testament ever could be, because you have what it takes--God the Holy Spirit, and he did not. So the law system has been entirely abolished during the present age of grace. 2 Corinthians 3:7-11 make that very clear.

The only commandment of the Decalogue which is not repeated in the New Testament is this one that we're studying. This is the only standard of morality, this fourth one, about Sabbath day keeping that you never find applied to Christians. We've established the difference between law and grace. What does the New Testament say about Sabbath keeping? Galatians 4:9-10 tell us that there are to be no holy days of any kind in the church age, and that includes the Sabbath day. Therefore, in effect, Christians are told not to worship on Saturday because Saturday was a holy day. Colossians 2:16-17 say there is no ground to condemn a Christian for not observing the Sabbath day. A Christian who does not observe certain holy days cannot be condemned for it, because there are no special holy days in the dispensation of grace. In the church age, every day is of equal sacredness (Romans 14:5). So there is no such thing as a Christian Sabbath. That is a very false and misleading term.

It is Satan who has originated it because he hates grace, and he hates freedom. So he wants to bind people with such a concept as Sunday being lived on the basis of Sabbath rules. The only relationship between the Sabbath day and the Lord's Day is this: that they are one day in seven. That's all. After that, they go their separate ways. Each is one day in seven, and that's all it is. Beyond that, there is no relationship whatsoever between what we call our Sunday, the Lord's Day, and our Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath day. The two are entirely different.

The Jews were warned that part of their discipline for their rejection of God's Word was going to be to lose their Sabbath day. Hosea 2:11 tells them that the time is going to come when God is going to discipline them by causing them not to have their Sabbath day. Of course, that is the case today. The only Sabbath day that they observe in Palestine today is a Sabbath day of unbelief. But it is not a Sabbath day in terms of the biblical Sabbath. Those who travel in Palestine today will discover that on the Sabbath day, the beaches are loaded with Jews who are out and having all kinds of recreation. A few Orthodox Jews will keep it as per the Old Testament, and they will use it as a day of rest. But the Sabbath day is gone for the Jews today. It will be reinstated during the tribulation. That's why God says just pray that when you have to flee as a Jew, it won't be on the Sabbath day because it will be a hard day to travel on and to escape on. It will be reinstated in the millennium after the church age is over. We have this taught us in Matthew 24:20, Isaiah 66:23, and Ezekiel 46:1.

Of course, Jesus Christ lived under the law system, so He observed the Sabbath day. Romans 15:8 and Matthew 5:17-18 show us that He respected the Sabbath day. The thing that Jesus rejected, though, about the Sabbath thing, were all these rabbinical traditions that were added for the keeping of the Sabbath. Matthew 15:1-3 and Mark 7:1-13 give an example of how He condemned the rabbis for the things that they had added to God's laws. They had done it to the Sabbath day as well as to other things.

**Sunday**

The Sabbath was designated for human blessing, but the rabbis made it into a curse (Mark 2:27). The thing I want to point out is that Jesus never taught that the Sabbath day was part of the church age. So the Lord never called upon us, and never indicated even after His resurrection, that they were to observe the Sabbath day. As a matter of fact, there was a new day commemorating the church age--a special day of the church era under grace. That is Sunday. It's the first day of the week. It was observed by the New Testament Christians because it was the day in which Jesus Christ arose from the dead. That's why it's called the Lord's Day. Sunday worship practice is confirmed by the New Testament Scriptures. It's confirmed by the writing of the early church fathers, all of whom let us know that Christians gathered on Sunday from Apostolic Times. It's confirmed throughout church history. The Lord's Day celebrates the new creation of which you and I are a part as the body of Christ, as the Sabbath commemorated the old creation in Adam.

**Reasons for Assembling on Sunday**

Here are some reasons why we assemble on Sunday and not on the Sabbath day.

1. A new day of worship was predicted in the Bible (Psalm 118:22-24, Acts 4:10-11). If you compare those passages, you will discover that a new day of worship was predicted even in the Old Testament.
2. Jesus Christ in His crucifixion is the stone referred to in this passage that is then rejected by Israel. The day of Christ's resurrection made Him the headstone of the corner--the very one that the Jews had rejected. So the day of the Lord's elevation to the headstone of the corner, which had been rejected by Israel, is declared to be a day of rejoicing and gladness. These Scriptures tell us that the day is going to come when Jesus Christ is going to be exalted to be the Head of the corner, and it will be a day of rejoicing. For that reason, we have the expression in Matthew 28:9 when Jesus met his disciples. Do you remember what he said? "All hail." And "All hail" means joy. The key feature of Sunday is happiness--unmitigated happiness.
3. Furthermore, there are various events in the New Testament which revealed that Sunday observance was what was practiced rather than Sabbath observance. For example, Christ rose from the dead on Sunday (Matthew 28:1).
4. Jesus first met His disciples in their new fellowship after His resurrection on Sunday (John 20:19). That's when they were gathered in the upper room in worship. It was Sunday. That's when the Lord first appeared to them.
5. Jesus instructed the disciples after the resurrection on the road to Emmaus on a Sunday (Luke 24:13-45).
6. Jesus ascended into heaven on Sunday as the first fruits of the new creation (Leviticus 23:10-12, John 20:17, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).
7. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit out on His disciples on Sunday (John 20:22).
8. God the Holy Spirit descended to form the church body on Sunday, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).
9. Paul preached in Troas on Sunday. Why on Sunday? Because that's when the Christians gathered for worship. So when he was in Troas, it was a Sunday when he spoke to them (Acts 20:6-7).
10. The Bible tells us about the Christians gathering to commemorate the Lord's Supper. It tells us they did it on Sunday (Acts 20:6-7).
11. It was a day to lay aside an offering (1 Corinthians 16:2). In the Old Testament, you laid your offering by on the Sabbath Day.
12. Christ appeared to John on the island of Patmos to deliver the revelation on Sunday (Revelation 1:10).
13. Circumcision on male babies was practiced among the Jews on the eighth day after the child was born, typifying a new beginning of a completed week. And circumcision is equated in the Scripture with coming into spiritual relationships (Colossians 2:11).

Sunday is the day signifying the grace of God. The Sabbath of the old creation was a day of rest after a week of toil, after human capacities had been doing the best they could.

Let's go back to what we started with in this session. God observed the seventh day by looking back. The Jews observed the Sabbath day by looking back. It was a day when a person came to the end of trying to do the best he could with human capacities limiting him on every move. He looked back on the week, and he saw failures and he saw disappointments, and he didn't see much in the way of hope for next week. He looked back, and that's what he did. He spent Saturday looking back, and regretting, being happy for where he had been a winner, but mostly a loser. The Sabbath was looking back. There was no divine enablement.

However, the Lord's Day, representing the new creation, you notice, precedes, and sets the tenor of the week. Sunday is a day for looking ahead. It's the first day of a new beginning. Like Paul said, "Forgetting the things that are behind. I look forward, pressing to the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus." He is illustrating there the mentality of the Christian, which is looking ahead. You can look ahead with hope, because God the Holy Spirit indwells you, and therefore you are able to be a spiritual winner.

However, it requires the intake of the Word of God to do that. For this reason, it is a grave mistake and it is a bad move for you to absent yourself from the instruction of the Word of God on the Lord's Day. It is that instruction that sets the pace for the whole week. If you miss that instruction, you have denied yourself the divine viewpoint that gives you the orientation and frame of reference for that whole week. It is the daily intake of the Word of God that keeps us moving, but it all starts with Sunday. That gets us going in the right direction.

So forget the past, like Philippians 3:13 says. Look ahead, and keep moving into the things that God has prepared for you that are before us. To skip church is bad business. So Sunday is not a day of cessation (of stopping your work). As a matter of fact, Sunday proved to be a day of activity. Jesus Christ just went here and there and everywhere. It was a day of tremendous activity. Sunday has always been a day of activities. It has not been a day of work. That is because the work of Christ is finished, so our rest is in Him.

The violation of the Sabbath day carried the death penalty. There are no penalties for what you do on Sunday. Sabbath hoped to gain God's blessing. The Lord's Day says that we already have it. The Lord's Day is for believers. Unbelievers are not to have this thing imposed on them. So those of you who say, "I don't believe in keeping my restaurant open on Sunday," that is well and good. But don't go to the city council and say, "I'd like you to pass a rule to close all the restaurants on Sunday." People are always trying to do this. They're forever trying to cause you not to be able to do certain things on Sundays. Why? Well, because it's the Sabbath day, and certain things are not to be done on a Sunday. If you are doing something during the week that you think you should not be doing on Sunday, let me clue you in, friend, then you better stop doing it. Whatever it is, if you're doing it on the rest of the week and you think it's alright, but on Sunday you don't think it's alright to do, you're wrong. Every day is the same.

However, we do need a day of rest. We do need a change of pace. We need this day that sets our sights in divine viewpoint orientation. That's what this thing is for. There's no prescribed manner for observing it. The filling of the Holy Spirit is required to guide each individual, and it is nobody else's business as to how you observe this day as unto the Lord.

However, I want to tell you that it's dangerous business for you not to be here on Sunday morning and Sunday night for the orientation to the Word of God that you need. I highly commend it to you because that's the nature of the Lord's Day. It gets you moving in the right direction. Maybe if you think back in your own experience, you may be able to begin to put your finger on the fact that things go better with doctrine. You may have discovered that things go better with doctrine from the church service than they do without it. You may suddenly realize that a lot of the trouble you're having during the week; a lot of the squabbles you're having in your family; the problems you're having at work; and, the conflicts you're having with your friends may be attributable to the fact that you skip Sunday services. When you're in church on Sunday, the whole week blossoms out for you. There's a reason for it. And this is it.

The Lord's Day gives us a change of pace to give us God's frame of reference for what we do. It's not different from Monday through Saturday, but it does set the viewpoint. It is a day of joyful activities. You cannot determine anything for the Lord's Day from the Sabbath day. The law is gone. Long live the era of grace.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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