***The Sabbath Day is not a Holy Day in Christianity
RO172-02***

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We are studying "The Spirit of Toleration." This is segment number four, and we are looking at Romans 14:1-12.

**Grace**

Christians in the present dispensation of grace have been freed from having to approach God through a system of religious rituals. God's grace has provided the church-age believer with personal salvation and eternal security in that salvation once you have it. God, furthermore, has provided each Christian with Bible doctrine in order to orient his mind to divine viewpoint thinking, and has given us the Holy Spirit to constantly indwell us in order to enable us to live a godly life, and to defeat Satan in his world.

**The Priesthood of the Believer**

The Christian, furthermore, in contrast to the Old Testament order of things, acts as his own personal priest before God, and therefore he is free to live his life as he chooses. He is accountable for how he lives only to his master Jesus Christ. In all non-moral issues, therefore, the individual Christian is free to follow his own preferences. The Christian may, if he so chooses, follow a religious lifestyle which even affects the diet (the foods that he eats), or the religious holidays that he observes. Whatever he chooses is OK with God. That is what the apostle Paul is teaching us here in Romans 14:1-12.

**Some Things are Explicitly Sinful**

However, I must emphasize again, so that you do not get the wrong idea: the Christian in the church age is not free to use his freedom in Jesus Christ to do what is sinful or injurious to other people. The Bible is explicit in defining certain acts (certain conduct) as evil, and as condemned by God. And Christians are not to do these things. The Bible lays out morality in very clear terms.

**Temptations**

Furthermore, a Christian is also obligated not to do something which is non-sinful in itself, but which could tempt him to violate a moral issue. This is where most Christians break down. They know the moral principles of the Word of God. They don't rebel against those. But they fool around with things that open them up to a temptation and a moment of weakness, and then they do break the moral principles.

**The Weaker Brother**

The third factor that we pointed out is that a Christian must not do anything which causes a weaker Christian brother to be offended, and indeed to fall into sin. We must not do anything that would encourage a more immature Christian to ignore his conscience and his sense of right and wrong. He should be sensitive to what is right and to what is wrong. He should not simply pass that off as irrelevant.

**Influencing Youth and Children**

Here in Berean Memorial church, as you know, we are engaged daily, literally, in an extensive ministry, both in the educational and social realm with young people. And here is an area where all of us who work with young people need to be reminded of this principle. We have youth who look up to us leaders, and who properly esteem the wisdom and the experience that we have. We have been their age. They have not been our age. We have been through things that they have never even imagined. So, we have a frame of reference that is enormously greater than theirs. The smart kids know that. The dumb ones never catch on. But the smart ones realize that their elders really do know something a great deal more than they do. For that reason, they are sensitive to our influence, and we should not cause offense to them.

In Luke 17:1-2, the Lord Jesus makes a very important stress upon directing; so acting; and, so influencing a young person that he goes off in the direction spiritually injurious to himself: "Then he (Jesus) said unto the disciples, 'It is impossible but that offenses will come. But woe unto him through whom they come. It were be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should have offend one of these little ones.'" "One of these little ones" includes the weaker, immature Christians, and certainly includes the littlest of the little ones – the young people (the children).

Jesus made it very clear that if you are a spiritual leader, you better take it very seriously how you influence young people. And if you move them in the wrong direction, and if you permit them, in their foolishness, not to be confronted, and not to be alerted to the wrong direction that they're going, then the Bible says, "You would do yourself a great service by finding the biggest rock you can; drive out to Lake Grapevine; and, dive in." That does not mean literally that you should do that. I want to say that, because some of you are flaky, and you might think that's how it should be. But this is one of those examples again that the Lord uses. It's like when He says, "Cut off your arms; knock your eye out;" and, so on. He's saying, "I really mean that you'd be better off without those things. And if you're going to be offending young people in your ministry, you'd be better off not to be around." That is what He's saying.

**Be Unacquainted with Evil**

So, what we are being told is that Christians are not to go out of their way to expose themselves (and others) to the evils of the sin nature. And I have known, and I have heard from, youth leaders in times past that they felt that unless we introduced our children and our young people (through our club programs) to the evils, they wouldn't know what's going on out in the world, and how to deal with it. That, of course, violates a principle that we'll be coming to Romans 16:19, which makes a very dramatic statement. It says, "For your obedience (that is, to the Word of God) is come abroad unto all men. I am glad, therefore, on your behalf. But as good as you have been," Paul says, "I want to remind you that here's a principle of life that you must not violate. I would that you be wise (that you'd be very savvy, and that you know the ins and outs) about that which is good; and, be innocent (simple and unacquainted) concerning evil."

Now that is a statement of life – that you'd be very well-versed in what is morally good and right, as per the standards of the Word of God, but that you be totally uninformed concerning what is evil – referring to your experiential acquaintance with evil. So, what this is telling us is that learning about something which God declares to be evil is personally degrading and dangerous. So, don't lead other people into temptation by exposing them to evil because you think that they're going to learn something from that. Sinfulness is not funny unless you yourself are so spiritually degenerated that you've lost track of godliness, and of orientation of divine viewpoint. So, don't treat sinfulness as a joke. It is not for me. It is not a joke.

**It is Nobody Else's Business**

So, when the Word of God tells us that we have great freedom, we do. We have great freedom in every respect to live our lives, but that freedom is restricted by any injury that we may do to somebody that is under our area of influence. But each Christian, Paul says, must personally decide what is, for him, acceptable conduct before the Lord. And it's nobody else's business.

**There are no Special Holy Days**

There are no special holy days in the Bible to be observed in the church age of grace, even though some Christians choose to treat certain days as holier than others in honor of Jesus Christ, and for other practical reasons. If you didn't have a special day at Christmas, what would you do with your Christmas tree ornaments? You have to observe Christmas so you can do something with your Christmas tree ornaments. That's the only reason you can have a tree – to do something with them. So, there are special days that Christians have for special personal reasons.

**The Sabbath Day**

The Mosaic Law had a calendar of holy days, which has no application to Christians in the church, the body of Christ. You accept that, probably, in this congregation, without too much difficulty, but I should tell you that the vast majority of Christians would gag on what I just said. The Mosaic calendar had a series of holy days which have no application to Christians in the church, the body of Christ. And particularly, they would recoil from the thought that the Sabbath day (the Saturday Sabbath day of Judaism) does not apply to Christians, and is not to be equated with the Lord's Day – Sunday. That is a horrifying thought to most of Christendom, because they do think about Sunday as the Sabbath day. They do treat it like the Sabbath day. And they go back to the Old Testament to find out how they should act on Sunday.

**Sunday**

Some of you, indeed, were reared in homes where you knew that when Sunday came along, it was going to be a real laid-back day. It's going to be no fun. It's going to be no TV. You're not going to go out to do anything. You're going to go to church. You're going to come home. You are not going to be reading the comics. You are going to read the Bible, and you are going to be very restricted in what you do that day. And certainly, you would not dare walk into your sewing room and catch up on a little bit of that stitching that you didn't have time to do all week, or anything else. You grew up, and that was the day. And those were all done very sincerely. But this is because this legalistic impact is upon Christians.

So, while we, on the one hand, said that you can treat each day as you choose, as a Christian, there is among many Christians this concept that there is a legalistic requirement concerning how we deal with the Lord's day. Therefore, I think it is of merit that we look at this subject of the Sabbath day in its practice in comparison to the Christian and the Lord's day. We do not want to offend people, but we are not about to give up the freedoms of Sunday, and our liberties in Christ in Sunday, because we want to satisfy somebody's misconception that Sunday has become our Jewish Sabbath day.

**Why was the Jewish Sabbath Day Observed?**

There were certain reasons why the Sabbath day was observed. As you look at these, you immediately recognize why this no longer applies to us. We could not possibly fit into that system. It is strictly basically a Jewish operation.

1. **In Memory of God's Rest from Creation**

The first reason why the Sabbath day was observed was because the Sabbath day was a special day which was blessed and sanctified by God in memory of the completion of His creation work. In Exodus 20:8, we have this explained in what we call the ten commandments: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it, you shall not do any work: you; nor your son; nor your daughter; nor your man servant; nor your maid servant; nor your cattle; nor your stranger that is within your gates. For in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth; the sea; and, all that is within them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

Here you have in the presentation of the Mosaic code, the principle of one day in seven for rest. Now this had not been observed previous to this. Now God brings it as part of the Jewish lifestyle. And as a matter of fact, He places upon this day a certain sacredness that it did not have before. Suddenly, sundown Friday to sundown Saturday becomes a very special part of Jewish life. And it is, first of all, established in memory of the fact that God created the world in six days of activity. And on the seventh day the job was done, and God (speaking in human terms) rested from His labors. The world that God created was described in the Bible as being very good. And it indeed merited, therefore, a day to commemorate the wonderful things that God had done in that creation, because it was a source of great blessing. It was a demonstration of the grace of God, and great peace flowed to all the creatures that God had made and had placed into His world. But it was, basically a day of looking back: "I've done this, and now I'm turning, and I'm looking back." I want you to notice that it's always a backward look whenever you talk about the Sabbath day.

The idea, then, in the Mosaic code was that man was to contemplate what he had done for six days, as God did – as God looked back and said, "What I've done is indeed very good." This has indeed a basic human value. People need time to think – to preserve their freedom, and to contemplate what they're doing with their lives. You do need time to step aside from the normal routines, and to do some thinking. People who are very tired, and people who are very busy, go along submissively with forces that are actually enslaving them.

The communists learned this a long time ago. They learned that. If you keep people tire (dog tired(. and you keep me busy, standing in line, for example, at stores, as Russians do, for hours every day, just to buy the essentials of life with which to survive, that you will be able to control a vast population of people. They're not going to rebel against you because they don't have the energy, and they don't have the time, and they're struggling to survive. And the communist authorities deliberately treat people and operate on that basis. This is the very thing that God recognized. If you have people that never have a chance to rest, and never have a chance to step away from the normal routine, they're going to be very susceptible to being enslaved.

**Why do we have to Work so Hard?**

People need a day of rest to remind them indeed of the perpetual rest that was enjoyed in Eden. The human race once enjoyed a perpetual rest in Eden. And every day that you take off during the week, as a one-in-seven day, is a reminder of that happy occasion, and which sin destroyed. This is the reason we have to work so hard. This is the reason we have to provide for our own necessities in life, simply because sin came in and ruined a restful situation that God had created. Once God had finished His work, it was nothing but fun and games for the human race until they spoiled it.

The day of rest, of course, does preview (and this Sabbath idea is used in Scripture) to preview the eternal rest which is ahead for all believers in heaven, which lifts the spirits of all of us. Hebrews 4:4-11 tell us about that.

So, the first reason for observing the day of rest is that it is a special day of blessing sanctified by God to commemorate His creation work.

1. **A Reminder of the Exodus**

Then it becomes more Jewish. The second reason is because the Sabbath was a reminder to the Jews or the freedom into which God had brought them from the time of their slavery in Egypt. God established the Sabbath day as a legal holy day, specifically to remind the Jews, once a week, of the freedom into which the nation had been brought from Egyptian slavery. Deuteronomy 5:14-15 tell us about that: "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it, you shall not do any work: you; nor your son; nor your daughter; nor your manservant; nor your maidservant; nor your ox; nor your donkey; nor any of the cattle; nor your 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 from there through a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."

**Cessation**

So, here Moses, as he is reviewing for the nation, their past history, as he is about to move off the scene, reminds them that every Saturday day is a reminder that God has brought them out of slavery in Egypt. And you will notice that the directions here are very explicit. Everybody in the family is supposed to rest – not just some. And not only that, but all the animals (the work animals) were also to be given risk. At the heart of Sabbath is the idea of cessation. And when you think of that, and you connect that, you'll find it easier to understand the difference between the Sabbath day and the Lord's day. The Sabbath day, indeed, meant stopping all activity.

1. **A Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant**

A third reason for observing the Sabbath day in Scripture is that it was designed as a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant which existed between Israel and God. Now you have a great problem for the man who is on television every Saturday morning, telling people that it is a great apostasy if they do not observe Saturday as the special day unto God. He says that it is God's holy Sabbath, and God will bring judgment upon them if they and their family do not observe Saturday. He's got big money. He's got a bigger audience. He's there every Saturday morning, and he'll tell you all about the holiness of the Sabbath day. Unfortunately, anybody who reads the Scripture soon discovers that everything about the Sabbath day is somehow connected with something that is intricately Jewish.

**A Theocracy**

Here God said: "One of the reasons I'm giving you this Saturday day of rest is to remind you that between you and Me (between you Jewish people as a nation and Me), there is a relationship that does not exist between any other people on the face of the earth." And what He was talking about was that they had a theocracy. It was a whole different ballgame. The government was God. That's the way it's going to be in the millennium. Now we have a government by people who think they're God. But the time is coming when the government is going to be God. It was like that under the Jewish order. In the Old Testament, the government was God. He ran things. He had His lines of communication. They went to Him when they wanted to know something. He told them what to do. And the nation prospered. They were a theocracy.

This is pointed out in Exodus 31:12-17. The Sabbath was a sign of God's covenant with this special nation: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 'Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Verily My Sabbath 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 does sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy unto you. Everyone that defiles it shall surely be put to death. For whosoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done, but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest: holy to the Lord. Whosoever does any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore, the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout the generations for a perpetual covenant.''"

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, Moses, here in Exodus, is telling the people that one of the reasons God established the Sabbath day is to remind you that you have a special covenant (the Abrahamic covenant) between you and God, and it doesn't exist between gentiles and God, and it doesn't exist between Christians and God.

1. **God Promised the Jews Exceptional Prosperity**

A fourth reason for observing the Sabbath day is listed for us in Isaiah 58:13-14. The fourth reason is that God promises exceptional prosperity for those who observe the Sabbath day. The Jews who observed the Sabbath day found that his bank account increased: "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasures 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, then you shall 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 says, "You will be living." (I was going to say "high on the hog," but he wouldn't say that to them.) "You'll be living up there in the best of worlds. You'll have it all. You really will prosper just by observing My Sabbath day. Just play square with Me. I want you to quit working. I want you to rest. I want you to lean back. I want you to just lie there under your arbor, plucking the grapes off, and holding them up. Have your wife blow them up, and eat the grapes one-at-a-time – whatever is going to be the change of pace that does it for you.

1. **To Rest the Body and the Soul**

A fifth reason for observing the Sabbath day is obvious – that the physical body and the soul need a change of pace, and a rest from work, one day in seven, for maximum health, and for maximum mental stability. It is essential for your freedom, and to enjoy your life, for you to be rested, and for you to have a change of pace internally and externally.

So, in that respect, we have a principle that we must honor and carry on as a point of wisdom. We don't observe the Sabbath day in its theocratic relationship to the Jewish nation. Nor do we observe the Sabbath day in the way they had to observe it in terms of being a holy day. But this principle, and this concept, behind six days of work, and a day off for rest, is one that is built into the human structure. Other societies like communists to tried to switch that – to have one day off in eight, or one day off in nine. And they find that what it does is deteriorates people, and they are less productive. There are something about this cycle of one-in-seven that brings maximum restoration to a human being who observes it. So, even we Christians find it a point of wisdom to observe that kind of a day off.

The Sabbath day, because it was a holy day, was treated much differently than we would treat Sunday. And, of course, all of the people who are legalists, who want to impose the Sabbath upon Christians, do not want to impose the full regulations relative to the Sabbath day. There were severe laws associated with enforcing the Sabbath day rest.

**The Sabbath Day was not a Day of Worship**

First of all, you should be aware of the fact that you were not required to worship on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath day was not a day for going for instruction in the Word of God.

**Synagogues**

It is true that while the people were in their 70 years of Babylonian captivity (the two Southern tribes), they began the custom of gathering on the Sabbath day for study of the Word of God. And the places where they gathered were called "sunagoge" – the synagogues. The word means "the gathering together." And out of the 70-year captivity came the practice of gathering on the Sabbath day for reading the Word of God, and for hearing the exposition and explanation of the Word of God. That was not, however, a requirement of the Mosaic Law.

**Violation of the Sabbath Day was a Capital Crime**

When they came back from the Babylonian captivity, they kept up that system. And that's why you find, in the time of Jesus and the apostles, the Sabbath day synagogue gathering. But as God established this day, and the rules He made for it, He never told them to gather together for spiritual nourishment. In Numbers 15:32-35, we have instruction on this point of the Sabbath day-keeping, relative to the consequence if you didn't keep it. It was a capital crime if you broke the Sabbath day, and the penalty for it was death.

Numbers 15:32: "And one of the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day. And they who found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation." This man had violated the basic principle of the Sabbath day, which means no activity and no work. Anything that you needed, you had to prepare the day before. For some reason, this man needed some fuel: for warmth; to cook his meal; or, whatever. He said, "Ah, shoot. I forgot that." And he went out, and started gathering up a few sticks and some wood, and the rest of the people observed it. They understood that this was a violation. This was a work activity. They brought him before Moses and before Aaron, the priest.

"And they put him in prison because it was not declared what should be done to him." They were not really clear at this point just how they should carry out the rules of Sabbath-keeping. And because it was a theocracy, they went to the Lord (to God), and asked Him: "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'The man shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.' And all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died as the Lord commanded Moses." In Exodus 31:15, that same principle is reiterated.

How many Christians do you know who believe in Sabbath day-keeping (treating Sunday as the Sabbath day) are out there stoning the people that are washing their cars on Sunday? How many people have you seen rushing out to the golf course to stone the people who are out there playing golf on Sunday? I'm talking about the Christian Sabbath day observers.

One of the things that Jesus made very clear in the New Testament was that the Sabbath was made for man's benefit. Therefore, one of the things that He pointed out was that it's perfectly legitimate to save life on the Sabbath day. Matthew 12:11 points this out in one of His discussions with the religious leaders: "And He said unto them (Jesus said unto them), 'What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, he will not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much, then, is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day.'"

Jesus made it very clear that the Sabbath day was never to be used as a day that was counter to human benefit. Life was to be saved. And any activity; any effort; or, any work that was necessary to save a life, human or animal, was to be done. Obviously, there are no such penalties of death attached to anything relative to Sunday, the Lord's day.

**The Land was to Lay Fallow every Seventh Year**

The whole Sabbath day principle was also applied to the very land of Israel – to the very agricultural lifestyle of the Jewish people; that is, every seventh year you couldn't farm. Every seventh year, the land was to be permitted to rest. We have since, in later times, found that permitting land to lay fallow rejuvenates its nourishment capacity, and makes it better for the next crop. But it was a very serious matter not to permit your land, every seventh year, to rest.

Exodus 23:10-11 point this out: "And six years shall you sow your land, and shall gather in the fruits of it. But the seventh year, you shall let it rest and lay still, and the poor of your people may eat, and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner, you shall deal with the vineyard and with the olive yard," and so on. The principle was that once every seven years, the land was to be permitted to have a total rest.

This is also pointed out in Leviticus 25:3-4, that say, "Six years you shall sow your field. Six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in the fruit there. But the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land – a Sabbath for the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. And that which grows of its own accord of your harvest, you shall not reap, neither gather the grapes of your vine unproved. It is the year of rest unto the Lord. And the Sabbath of the land shall be food for you; for your servant; for your maid; for your hired hand; for your stranger that sojourns with you; for your cattle; and, for the beasts that are in the land, shall all the increase thereof be food." God says, "Every seventh year, you will not tend your vines; you will not tend anything; and, you will not have a formal harvest. But you may go out to the field, and whatever grows naturally, that will be your food supply." Plus there was the fact that God provided them with extra in the sixth year preceding this year.

However, in the seventh year, it was a free-for-all. Anybody walking down the road had access to your land; to eat anything on it; or, to enjoy any of the fruit. Everybody had full access to whatever was growing, because God was providing that.

Now, unfortunately, the Jewish people, as they drifted away from the principles of doctrine, also became very greedy. And for 490 years, they did not observe the sabbatical years. That meant that, out of 490 years, they had cheated the land out of 70 years of rest. They thought, "Hey, this is growing so good. Why should I sit around here letting this thing lay fallow with nothing happening for a whole year? That's a great waste." But God said, "OK. Have it your way. But you're not going to get away with it, and you as a nation will pay for it."

**The Babylonian Captivity**

Suddenly the day came when the Lord appeared at their door with a bill in hand. He knocked on the door and said, "I'm here to collect my Sabbath years of rest. You've cheated Me and My land out of 70 years." You see, God was the king. It was a theocracy. The land was His. The people were tenants. And so God said, "I'm here to collect. And here's how we're going to do it. I'm going to take all of you, and I'm going to transport you to Babylon. Here's a sweet king. His name is Nebuchadnezzar. He's standing outside of the city, and he's about ready to come in, and he has big plans for all of you – *big* plans." And Nebuchadnezzar came in, and indeed, he devastated them. He took them to Babylon; he enslaved them; he destroyed their city; he tore down their temple; and, he devastated the nation. And guess how many years they had to stay in Babylon as captives? 70 years. And when the 70 years was over, God said, "After you've paid Me back for all those years (those sabbatical years) you cheated Me out of, I will let you go back to your land.

Leviticus 26:33-36: "And I will scatter you among the nations, and draw out a sword after you, and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths as long as it lay desolate. And you are in your enemy's land; even then shall the land rest and enjoy her Sabbath. As long as it lay desolate, it shall rest, because it did not rest in your Sabbath when you dwelt upon it. And upon them who are left alive of you, I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies, and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them, and they shall flee as fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when none pursue.

So, the picture here in Leviticus 26, in these verses, reminds them that the land that they would not permit to rest, God is now going to collect on. In 2 Chronicles 36:20-21, this same principle is pointed out: "And those who had escaped from the sword, he carried away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the Word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. For as long as she lay desolate, she kept Sabbath to fulfill 70 years." That is very explicit in Scripture. God said, "I'm collecting on what you cheated."

The Sabbath day and Sabbath-keeping (even the years of Sabbath-keeping) was an extremely serious commandment from God. Now how do you fit that into Sunday? And how do you fit that into the era of Christianity and grace? That takes a real wild stretch of the imagination.

**Nebuchadnezzar**

There is one more Scripture that you can add to this in Jeremiah 25:11-12, that say, "'And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and the nation shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years. And it shall come to pass that when 70 years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation,' says the Lord, 'for their iniquity. And the land of the Chaldeans will make it a perpetual desolation.'" God says, "I'm going to eventually bring you back, and in the process, I'll punish Nebuchadnezzar," because, as always, the people that God used to punish His people would go too far. Had Nebuchadnezzar not gone as far as he had in what he did to the people, all would have been well. He would have been God's instrument of chastisement, and he himself would have been blessed. But since he went too far, God said, "I'm going to bring that empire down," and He did, and the Persians took over.

**The Year of Jubilee**

Furthermore, the sabbatical concept was also included in the series of sevens. After 49 years, the fiftieth year was a special Sabbath year. It was called a Year of Jubilee. And certain things happened. And you may read about this at your leisure in Leviticus 25:8ff. Every 50 years came the Year of Jubilee, which meant that, at that point, if you had sold your land (which you really didn't sell – you just leased it), you got it back. Your family's land title came back to you. You can never lose your land in Israel. If you were a slave, you got your freedom. If you owed money, it was canceled. There were very strict regulations about being unwilling to help a brother who needed a loan from you, because you were sitting there saying, "It's only two years until the Jubilee year. This guy will never pay this money back to me. If I lend it to him, he's going to beat me out of it." God said, "Don't you dare refuse to lend him because you know that Jubilee is coming." It was a year of restoration. Everything was put back in order; everybody had a clean slate; and, everybody started all over again. Wouldn't Congress like to pass *this* law now, and straighten up the nation's economic mess? But God had a way for running His business under the theocracy.

So, I point out all of this to you simply to stress that the Sabbath day, basically, is a day of restoration. And you restore by rest. You restore by inactivity. You stopped doing the normal things you do. You keep the land from doing the normal things it does. And periodically, you have these extended times of rest.

I find it very difficult to put myself in the place of the Jews. If I had a year that I didn't have to work, I'd go for it. Man, I wouldn't be out there grubbing around for that year when I got everything that carried me through that year into the next harvest. And notice that the Jubilee year had three years before that harvest came in. And God said, "The year before Jubilee, you are going to have such a bumper crop, you're not going to know what to do with it, and where to store it. And you're going to have everything you need to carry you through. And then you're going to let the land grow by itself – whatever it wants. There will be plenty for anybody. The poor folks can come in. They can help themselves. Everybody will be amply provided for." And they just couldn't let it alone.

**Do not Impose the Sabbath day upon Christians**

Now what we are facing, then, is the imposition of a day that is part of the legal code of Moses, which in no way applies to the era in which we live, and certainly, in Scripture itself, was always applied to the Jewish people as a theocratic nation, with God as their King. It had nothing to do with the lifestyle of gentiles or Christians today. And any attempt to impose this upon Christians is a total violation of the difference between Israel and the church. The Sabbath day could not be imposed upon Christians without spiritualizing its meaning. And the Sabbath day was not spiritualized in the Old Testament. It was a very literal thing, including the fact that you could be put to death for violating this day.

**Christianity vs. Judaism**

There is a great distinction between the Christian grace way of life and the Old Testament Jewish way of life. And remember that that's what we're talking about. The Sabbath day did not have anything to do with getting you into heaven. It had to do with the Jewish way of life. And the Jewish way of life was everywhere to demonstrate that you had to make it by your own struggles. And it demonstrated to man that he couldn't do it.

The Christian way of life starts from a totally different frame of reference. God Himself has done it all for us, and He will keep carrying you through. He's done the hardest thing. He's got you saved. Now He will provide you with everything else you need to serve Him, and to live your life for His glory. It's a totally different situation. We Christians are not looking to make it with God. We have already made it because of His grace.

**Amillennialism and Reformed Theology**

So, this imposition of the Sabbath day, that is so characteristic in Christendom, is very sad, and it is totally disruptive to the freedoms that we have as Christians in the era of grace. Who would want to go back under this terrible system of bondage, and have to keep all these 613 rules, of which the Sabbath day was just one of them? Who would want to live under that kind of a system? Well, the people who impose it are very careful to select only certain parts, and say, "This goes into the church age." Who am I talking about? I'm talking about amillennialists. I'm talking about Reformed Theology.

If you knew nothing else about those people, they're terribly fouled up about eschatology: end things; and, where history is moving. But if you knew nothing else about them but their imposition of Sabbath day concepts upon Christians, a smart Christian would have red flags flying up in his mind, and he would say, "Wait a minute. If they start with that frame of reference, they are theologically offbeat to begin with. They do not understand the total separation between Israel and the church." And if they don't understand the difference between Israel and the church, they're going to be imposing upon the church the system of Israel. And the mixture never works.

**New Testament Grace**

The New Testament epistles are totally devoted to the grace way of life, which means perfect and complete freedom in Jesus Christ. There is no more burden to carry what Paul calls "the yoke of bondage." That's what he was asking the Galatians. He said, "Why on earth do you people want to try to put yourself under that yoke of bondage that was so burdensome?" And nobody could live under it. Nobody could obey it. And Paul said, "And now you come along, and you want to go back under that system instead of enjoying the freedom from all of that that is yours in Christ." Thank God for the era of the church. Thank God for the era of grace.

Next time, we'll look more closely at the Lord's day, and its relationship to this whole Sabbath concept, and I think that then you will see the thing that Paul is talking about. But let's not miss this point. The apostle Paul is making it very clear that the people who want to follow the Old Testament Sabbath holy day concept are the immature believers. The amillennialists and the people of Reformed Theology are the people who have not yet caught up with what is in Scripture. They're frozen back in the limitations of the reformers who never went very far in separating the church and Israel, and understanding the distinct role of the church in God's plan. Paul says, "Those are the immature people. The people who observe the holy days, and the people who are observing Sabbath days – they are not the more mature, elitist Christians. They're not the more discerning and knowledgeable Christians. They're the kids. They're the people who are uninformed. They're still children in their knowledge of the Word of God."

So, when you realize that mature Christians grasp these differences, you tend to be very handed for somebody who comes along and wants to impose the Sabbath day restriction on your observance of Sunday. You have to remember what Paul is saying, which is: "Take it easy on that weaker brother. He is fouled up about his holy day concepts. He doesn't understand from Scripture how the Sabbath day worked," which is what I tried to do with you in this session: to take you back there, and to be a Jew, and to see what God had to tell you. So, you understood what the Sabbath day was. Then I think you can very readily see at the amillennialists and the Reformed Theology people don't know what they're talking about, to say: "We can take that over and impose it upon the church. It's the same thing, and there is no difference."

Thank God for the era of grace. Thank God for the freedoms that we have in Christ.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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