

## *The Savior and the Sabbath*

### *Luke 6:1-5*

Dewdrops glistened like diamonds on leaves in the lush shade of Eden. Birds sang in the trees. And the first man and woman walked barefoot on the grass. For the sixth time the sun was setting, slanting orange shafts of sunlight through the trees.

God's creation was finished. And so was His workweek.

*By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. Genesis 2:2-3*

Generations later on Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. And the fourth of those commands codified the seventh day as a day of rest.

*Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, Exodus 20:9-10*

For the Jews, the Sabbath was a day dedicated to God. The other six days, they were free to carry out their own activities. But on the seventh day, they turned their attention to the Lord as a sign they belonged to God.

*If because of the Sabbath, you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word, then you will take delight in the Lord, Isaiah 58:13-14*

Christians do not worship on the Sabbath as Jews did in Jesus' day. Instead, since the dawn of the church, believers have celebrated the Savior's resurrection by worshiping on Sunday: the first day of the week.

Quite often, Bible teachers and preachers apply Old Testament Sabbath teachings to that day. But there is a much deeper lesson for Christians in the Sabbath. The writer of Hebrews put it best.

*So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, Hebrews 4:9-11*

Keeping the Sabbath means resting from labor. And that is precisely what every Christian is commanded to do.

By trusting in Christ's cross and resurrection, believers are not only forever cleansed of all their sins. By God's grace, all of the Redeemer's perfect righteousness is also credited to their heavenly account.

Therefore, God's people are not to strive, struggle, and sacrifice to please God. Content and complete as God's adopted children, we serve Him out of love and love alone. That means we are to rest from laboring to please God, just as the Creator rested from His labors that first Sabbath.

Some Christians still squabble over which day is really the Sabbath: Saturday or Sunday. But believers on both sides of that argument are right and wrong at the same time.

Yes, Saturday is the Sabbath for Christians. But so is Sunday and every other day of the week. For those who trust in Christ, every day is the Lord's Day.

We who have found the sweet serenity of trusting in Jesus are to live in a perpetual Sabbath. We are always to worship and serve the blessed Savior who died for us: the God who poured His grace into our lives.

So the lessons our Lord taught in a barley field apply not merely to one day of the week, but to every day.

## *The Sabbath and Compassion*

It was almost harvest time. Jesus and His disciples were back in Galilee after celebrating Passover in Jerusalem. And it was the Sabbath day.

The footpath the Master's men walked that day sliced through a barley field. So Jesus' disciples paused a moment to eat some of the grain.

*Now it happened that He was passing through some grainfields on a Sabbath; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating the grain. Verse 1*

It was a simple act. The men pulled handfuls of grain from the stalks, rubbed it in their hands and blew the chaff away. They were not stealing, either. The Law of Moses specifically sanctioned such snacking on grain.

*When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain. Deuteronomy 23:25*

Some temple scribes of the Pharisees were watching Jesus and His disciples. And they were outraged and incensed at what they saw.

*But some of the Pharisees said, "Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" Verse 2*

The problem with those doctors of the Law was that the disciples plucked grain on the Sabbath. In the minds of the Pharisees, plucking the grain was classified as reaping, rubbing the kernels was considered threshing, and blowing away the chaff was winnowing. And the entire act was regarded as preparing food.

Rabbinical regulations classified all four as work. More important than that, it was work which was specifically prohibited on the Sabbath. It did not matter to the scribes if a man harvested, threshed, and winnowed a barnful, a basketful, or a handful.

Harvesting, threshing and winnowing were work. And work was prohibited on the Sabbath.

Jesus did not eat the grain Himself. But He did answer the Pharisees' objections. To do so, He mentioned what ancient rabbis considered a test case.

*And Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?" Verses 3-4*

Each Friday, twelve loaves of bread were baked and put inside the outer chamber of the temple. After a week, new loaves were baked and the old ones were set outside the temple. And priests were allowed to eat the old bread as they carried out their duties.

That was the bread David was given to feed himself and his men. Rabbinical writings all agreed that infraction was allowed because of the hunger that gnawed within David and his men.

So Jesus specifically mentioned that David and his men were hungry. Like David's men, Jesus' disciples were hungry too. So they were also allowed to break the rabbis' traditional regulations.

Ancient scrolls left by Jewish scholars used that story to define when a man is allowed to disobey a commandment. In their discussions of that same story, one rabbi summed up the principle that applied. The Sabbath is delivered unto you and not, you are delivered unto the Sabbath. And our Savior's words echoed that same statement.

*Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."  
Mark 2:27*

When Moses outlined the Sabbath law, he also gave God's reasons for the command.

*Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves. Exodus 23:12*

God commanded His people not to work on the Sabbath out of compassion for them, their servants, and even their draft animals. He knew they all needed rest and refreshment from their labors.

Every command God gave His people was motivated by love. Ever and always, our Heavenly Father desires what is best for us. And every command He has given us is for our benefit. So we cannot be whole and happy and healthy if we live in rebellion to God's commandments. We disobey God at our own peril.

Our Creator He knows what is best for us. So He has given Christians commandments that govern how we are to live our lives, carry out personal business and order our homes. And since, as redeemed, recreated children of God, we live out our lives in a never ending Sabbath, we must continually obey His commands.

And as we do, we must always remember that God's first concern is our welfare. That is why He wants us to obey Him.

## *The Sabbath and Commitment*

Divine human need was not the only reason rabbinical scrolls stated that David was allowed to eat temple loaves intended only for priests. There was also another, much more important reason the act was permissible.

David and his men were in the act of serving God. And they needed the bread to carry out that service. That was so important, it sanctioned disobeying God's commandment that only the priests were to eat the temple loaves.

Jesus and His disciples were also serving God. Indeed, our Savior's service was immensely and eternally more important than David's ever was.

Our Lord was sent on a mission by the Heavenly Father Himself to bring about the salvation of all mankind. So His disciples were allowed to pluck and eat grain on the Sabbath.

Matthew's account of our Lord's argument in the barley field adds words Luke left out.

*Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? Matthew 12:5*

Priests worked on the Sabbath. And their actions were allowed for the same reason David's was. They were serving God.

The principle for Christians is clear. The Sabbath is also a time to serve God. Therefore, since every day is the Sabbath for saints, the only work we should ever do is serve God.

That means whether we are in a classroom studying, working at a job, or doing housework, we are to labor not for those who supervise us. But always and only for God.

Paul wrote that even applies to men who are held as slaves, kept as captives, and forced to work.

*Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, Colossians 3:23*

David's disobedience was sanctioned because he was on a mission for God. In the same way, Christ's disciples were also serving God.

After all, it was the Sabbath. And the Sabbath was set aside not merely as at time for rest but also as a time to reverence, worship, and serve God. So since we live out our days in a never ending Sabbath, we must always be serving God, not out of necessity, but with hearts full of love and gratitude.

Christ's love for us is constant. And our service is to be the same

## *The Sabbath and Christ*

The priest to whom David came for food was named Ahimelech. And somewhere in the shadows of the tabernacle stood his son, Abiathar. After Saul slaughtered his father, Abiathar became high priest and served God in that position for many years.

Mark's account adds yet another important detail in our Lord's illustration about David.

*...he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, Mark 2:26*

It is both interesting and important that our Lord spoke of what David did in the time of the son rather than the father. The sunny Sabbath morning Christ's disciples paused to eat in a barley field was also the time of a Son, God's Son. And He was not only Lord of the Universe. He was also Lord over the Sabbath.

*The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Verse 5*

Once again, Jesus used the grand and glorious name for Himself the prophet Daniel heard in a night vision.

*I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14*

As the Son of Man, our Lord was given eternal, unlimited dominion and glory. He is Lord over all creation. And that includes the Sabbath.

Indeed, He was the One who both created man and commanded that the Sabbath be kept. And no mere rabbi was qualified to define how it should be kept. Only our Lord has that right.

In the barley field, Jesus was Lord. He was Lord over that Sabbath and every other Sabbath. So if every day is the Sabbath day for saints, Jesus must be Lord over all we do, every way and every day.

He is the one we are to honor. He is the one we are to worship. He is the One we are to praise. He is the One we are to trust. And He is the One we are to serve every day that we live.

As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus did not come to abolish Old Testament Sabbath law. Rather, He defined what it means to keep the Sabbath.

And our Savior wants every one of those who trust in His blood to keep the Sabbath. But not merely on one day of the week.

After all, every day is a Sabbath day for saints. So every day we are to obediently trust in His loving compassion. Every day we are to serve Him and Him alone. And every day we are to uplift, exalt, and adore Him as our Lord and our God.

That is what it means to call Jesus Christ the Lord of our life.

