

Sabbath School Lesson #9 – The Rhythms of Rest – 21-27 August 2021

Christ would have us experience the blessing of the Sabbath, because “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made” (Genesis 2:3). God does not ask man to make the day holy; He did that Himself. God blessed the seventh day. If men ask, ‘How could God bless a day, so that it would be any more holy than another day?’ That we cannot tell. One might as well ask us how God could create the world. We know nothing about how the thing was done; all we know is the fact. Of that we are very sure, because the Bible tells us. The seventh day, – not simply the Sabbath institution, – is blessed. It and it alone, of all the days of the week, has a blessing placed upon it. It is different from all the other days of the week. Therefore in the keeping of the Sabbath there is a blessing to be found. We do not mean that people may not be blessed upon other days of the week, for not only the Christian, but even the ungodly, will receive blessing from God on every day of the week. The Christian may, and often does, receive a large measure of the Spirit on any working day; but all that does not take the blessing of the Sabbath. On the seventh day, which if it is observed as God designs, there is a blessing to be obtained, that cannot be obtained on any other day.

Sunday: Prelude to Rest – Some people like to strike a happy mean between the idea that the first chapters of Genesis are actual history, and the theory that they are pure fiction, by claiming that they are allegorical. Of all such it may be said, “They know not what they do” (Luke 23:24). They do not realise that any view other than that those chapters describe actual occurrences is a denial of the whole Bible, and of the very Gospel. The third chapter of Genesis tells how sin came into the world, and contains the first promise of the Saviour who should die for the sin. To deny the literalness of that account is to deny the story of the cross. Upon the first and second chapters of Genesis the fourth commandment is based. If they were not literal history, the Sabbath would be gone. This indeed is why those chapters are discredited. But they who discredit the story of creation, and the Sabbath, do not realise that in so doing they are denying sanctification. God says, “I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them” (Ezekiel 20:12). Without the knowledge of creation and the Sabbath there is no knowledge of perfect sanctification. “Thy word is true from the beginning” (Psalm 119:160). It is all “profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Monday: The Command to Rest – In seeking to ignore the Sabbath, many will say ‘we are not justified by the law, but by faith; no works of our own are of any effect whatever.’ In such words many seek to parry the force of the commandment which says: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work” (Exodus 20:8-10). It is true, the Bible says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). How do we reconcile all this? Simple: “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” What for? – “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Romans 8:3-4). Christ has called us unto liberty, but not that we should make that given liberty an occasion to the flesh (Galatians 5:13). To them that seek to ignore the Sabbath on account of liberty in Christ, we may illustrate the fallacy of that excuse. Let us test that same excuse on other commandments. The third commandment says, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Suppose I am a swearer, and as I swear, you remind me of the third commandment. But I reply: ‘Ah! do you not know that we are not justified by the works of the law, but by faith? Christ has set me free from the law, and therefore I swear; I dare not keep that law, lest I be brought into bondage.’ Would you not be shocked at my blindness, which would justly seem to be almost, if not quite, blasphemy? and would you not tell me that Christ died for the express purpose of saving me from the sin of swearing? We are not justified because we do not take the name of God in vain; yet no one would on that account

risk his salvation by swearing. So while we are not justified by the fourth commandment, we are not therefore justified in breaking it. Christ saves men from sin to obedience. We have no more any right to disregard the fourth commandment than we have to disregard the third.

Tuesday: New Circumstances – When the Lord brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt it was so “that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws” (Psalm 105:45). Accordingly when they murmured on account of hunger in the wilderness, a few weeks after leaving Egypt, the Lord said unto Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or no” (Exodus 16:4). Read the entire chapter, and you will find that the people were to go out and gather manna each morning for that day. They were to leave none of it until the next morning, for if they did it would breed worms, and be offensive. On the sixth day of the week, however, they were to gather twice as much as on other days, and the extra portion was to be kept over for the next day’s use, since on the seventh day of the week none fell. And although it was ordinarily impossible to keep the manna overnight, without its utterly spoiling, no such trouble was experienced on the seventh day, for on that day they found that what remained over from the preceding day was sweet and good for food. “And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day” (Exodus 16:27-29). It is clear that the Sabbath is the test of whether or not men will keep the law of God. Whoever will keep the Sabbath in spirit and in truth will keep whole law of God. Whoever refuses to keep the Sabbath of the Lord, thereby shows that his apparent obedience to any of the requirement of the Lord is not out of reverence to God, but because of some selfish motive.

Wednesday: Another Reason to Rest – Deuteronomy 5:15 does not mean that God gave the Israelites ‘another reason’ to keep the Sabbath, but rather not to make their maids and servants work on Sabbath. From Exodus 4:23 and Psalm 105:43-45 we learn that the children of Israel could not serve the Lord in Egypt. In Deuteronomy 5:14-15 we find special emphasis given to that portion of the fourth commandment requiring the man-servant and the maid-servant to rest, and the Israelite was told to remember that he had been a servant in the land of Egypt; also in Exodus 5:5 we learn that Moses and Aaron made the people “rest from their burdens.” From these facts we conclude that the Sabbath was one of the things in which they could not serve the Lord in Egypt; and when Moses and Aaron came with the message of God (Exodus 1:29-31) they attempted a reform, which only increased their oppression. The Israelites were delivered that they might observe the statutes of the Lord, including the Sabbath, and this placed upon them an additional obligation to keep the Sabbath strictly as well as to keep all the commandments (see also Deuteronomy 21:17-18).

Thursday: Keeping the Sabbath – Whatever God blesses He makes a means of blessing. “God blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Genesis 2:3). The Lord sent it forth on its mission of carrying blessing to mankind. It is a truth that God has poured out His blessings freely on all men; the very possession of life is the blessing of the Creator; but it is the Sabbath that makes known to mankind the fulness of God’s blessing. It brings with it to all who accept it for just what it is, the knowledge of such a blessing as they never before dreamed of, no matter how long they have had experience as Christians. It was given in Eden, and pertains to Eden, and brings the joy of Eden with it. It is, in fact, a remnant of Eden left in this sin-cursed world, to win us to Eden restored. In it we find the power of the world to come. “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath,” says the Lord, “from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father [and that heritage is Christ]; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 58:13-14). Oh then, “taste, and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). Let us keep the Sabbath in Christ. Accept His perfect rest, – His Sabbath, – and keep it, and know now the joy of the Lord.