

BAD RELIGION SAYS AS LONG AS YOU CLAIM TO LOVE JESUS CHRIST, GOD DOESN'T CARE HOW OFTEN YOU GO TO CHURCH (continued)

Exodus 20:8-11 - "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 - "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. [13] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [14] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. [15] You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."

Last Sunday we considered two points regarding the commandment regarding the keeping of the Sabbath. First, *the command is to celebrate the faithfulness and goodness of our creator God*. God studied what He had created and pondered its goodness. We're called to magnify the wonder and bounty and grace of our good God. Second, *the command is to celebrate God's redemptive deliverance of his people*. This is seen most clearly in our opening text from Deuteronomy. The people are told *what* they are to remember about God. He is a *delivering* God. He brought them out of a bondage from which they could never deliver themselves. And the New Testament writers are forceful in their application of this deliverance to the delivering work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Those are the first two points we studied last week. Today we'll consider five more ideas:

3) **THE COMMAND CALLS EACH ONE OF US TO SET APART A DAY TO DEMONSTRATE THE REALITY OF THE FAITH WE PROFESS IN THE POWER AND CARE OF GOD**

Let me quickly take you back to a great story in the Old Testament. I'm going to read a very long passage right through because it bears so directly on the point I want you to see. Stay with me:

Exodus 16:3-6, 11-20, 22-34 - "...and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." [Notice how quickly the people forget the lesson of the Sabbath. They *forgot* the deliverance they were commanded to remember.] [4] Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. [5] On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." [6] So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt....**16:11-20**....And the Lord said to Moses, [12] "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.' " [13] In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. [14] And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. [15] When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. [16] This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.' " [17] And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. [18] But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. [19] And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." [20] But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them."

16:22-34...."On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, [23] he said to them, "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.' " [24] So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. [25] Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. [26] Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none." [27] On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. [28] And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? [29] See! The Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day." [30] So the people rested on the seventh day. [31] Now the house of Israel called its name manna. It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. [32] Moses said, "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I

brought you out of the land of Egypt.' " [33] And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the Lord to be kept throughout your generations." [34] As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept."

Never miss the simple **test of faith** in this passage. It isn't a story about manna. It isn't a story about quail. It isn't even a story of how God fed millions of people all by Himself for forty years. This is clearly a story about obedience. ***It's about whether or not God could be trusted. And here's the central issue of testing: Would the people be materially short changed if they gave one day totally to God?***

Remember the story carefully. ***When they tried to stockpile food overnight out of greed, it went bad. But if they obeyed the Lord with regard to His day, it stayed fresh.***

I wish this could somehow get into the hearts of busy North American Christians. Let me tell you the most important thing I know about honoring God's day. It's a lesson carved right into the heart of this passage: ***God intervened and supernaturally preserved what they gathered on their day, as they honored Him on His day.*** Listen, nothing tests your faith like what you do with Sunday.

"You don't understand, pastor Don. Life is fast and busy. What with ***family, work, travel, some time for recreation and rest***, I can't get everything done that needs to be done now, let alone with losing one full day every week!"

That's why we have conveniently pushed the issue of this command off the agenda in most churches. ***Most Christians would far rather talk about tithing as the proof of the trust we have in God to provide for all of our needs.***

"Give one tenth to the Lord and God will bless the rest of your resources as you honor Him."

I believe that. I teach that. ***I saw a cute bumper sticker - "Tithe if you love Jesus. Any fool can honk." Certainly you **should** tithe. But listen, long before the Bible ever talks about your **money**, it talks about your **days** and how you use them. ***And it says one of them belongs to God Himself.******

And in the same way that God will prosper the rest of your finances as you honor Him with your tithe, He will bless the rest of the days and hours of your week if you will trust Him and honor Him by setting this one day apart.

4) **THE COMMAND IS A GIFT FROM GOD TO FREE HIS PEOPLE FROM THE TYRANNY AND BONDAGE OF SELF RULE**

Mark 2:27 - "And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

There is no question of the ***gracious nature*** of a day set apart for God. Jesus said it was ***made*** for man. It was designed to be a help and a blessing rather than a burden. Nowhere is that blessing clearer than in the way the keeping of God's day ***frees the life from the tyranny of self will and self rule.***

You really can't understand God's heart regarding His day until you look closely at the ***context*** of the command about it. It's a gracious, loving, freeing, life-giving command. ***Look at the first three commands.*** Put God absolutely first in your life. Don't allow the domination of false gods to pollute your passion for God. Don't let your religion get vain and empty.

Christians ***long*** to keep those commands. And that's where this fourth command about the sanctifying of God's day fits in. ***I don't have the strength, just by sheer will-power to keep those commands. My life becomes void of God like pop becomes void of fizz.***

So God calls me apart, to ***restake His claim on my heart*** with an observance that is anything but automatic. He graciously calls me to ***rethink*** something important - to ***remember*** His day. But he does it not to take anything ***from*** my life, but to ***add to it.***

The Lord's Day is how I keep the idols at bay. The Lord's Day is how I stay attuned to God's voice and rule. The Lord's Day is how I realign my life with His Word. The Lord's Day is how I keep the things of God from slipping through the fingers of the rest of my week.

Listen church, ***Sunday isn't bondage. Sunday keeps you free from bondage. It's a gift from God to keep spiritual goals from becoming just empty dreams and wishes.*** Sunday frees the life from self and fills it with God. It's the best thing you can do for your family. It will do something for them that all the trips to the beach or the zoo or the swimming pool never can do.

5) **PUBLIC WORSHIP IS AS IMPORTANT TO GOD AS PRIVATE DEVOTION**

There's a certain kind of ***ugly spirituality*** that we all know about. We hear much about the professing Christian who comes to church to worship God on Sunday, but then lives a shabby, sinful life during the week.

Nobody ever talks about the ***other ugly spirituality***. Nobody warns about the kind of Christian who loves his neighbor, gives to the poor, is faithful to his spouse, doesn't cheat or lie, ***but fails to faithfully obey God in honoring Him on His day.***

And what we have actually come to think in Christian circles is that ***all God cares about is personal devotion. And that isn't true. He cares about faithfulness to public worship and fellowship.***

And to fail Him in this area is just as damaging, just as dishonoring to His Name, as is failing Him morally or in any other area of my personal walk with Him.

That's because the command isn't just about being ***holy*** on the Lord's Day, or being ***pure*** on the Lord's Day. It's all about being ***together*** on the Lord's Day in a way we aren't on the other days of the week:

Hebrews 10:23-25 - "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. [24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

So I learn that while Christianity is ***personal*** it is never ***individual***. Personal piety can never substitute for corporate worship. God ***does*** want me to be personally clean and holy each day of the week. But His passion for that is no greater than His will that I gather ***weekly*** with the church to corporately worship His Name and encourage the Body of Christ. And these two sides of the Christian life can't be played against each other. Both are key in God's plan.

6) **PARENTS HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TEACH CHILDREN TO HONOR THE LORD'S DAY**

Exodus 20:8-10 - "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates."

God clearly throws it upon the heads of families to see that the ***household unifies itself around the keeping of God's day.*** Remember,

it's not just teaching households to **know** the commands. **It's teaching them to observe the commands.** God holds parents accountable for this great task. It is not just **verbal** instruction. It's **visible application** that is required.

7) **THE DAY ISN'T PROPERLY KEPT UNTIL IT IS SET APART FROM EVERYTHING ELSE AND KEPT TO THE LORD ALONE**

Isaiah 58:13-14 - "If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; [14] then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

The ultimate test of God's claim in your life isn't your **profession of faith**, and it isn't your **money and how you use it**. It's your **time**. Your time is your life. And God has made clear claim, in **both testaments**, that **one day a week is His**.

We're told to **sanctify God's day**. In the OT they used various instruments in offering the sacrifices on the altar. There were bowls, and pans and knives, etc. And they were said to be **sanctified to the Lord**.

That meant they couldn't be used for ordinary meals. They weren't for the people to make soup or snacks. **They could only be used for their dedicated task.** That's because they were sanctified to the Lord.

"Well, I just offer my life and my worship to God **every day**, pastor Don."

That's good. You should do that. We should present our bodies as instruments of worship in all we do, all the time. But just because I try to worship God all the time **doesn't mean I'm freed from the duty of regular specific times of corporate worship.**

I'm to pray without ceasing. But that doesn't mean I'm not still called to specific times and seasons of prayer. I'm told that **all** of my material goods belong to the Lord. I'm told that I'm merely a **steward** of them until Jesus returns. But that doesn't mean I'm still not called to honor God specifically with my tithes and offerings.

Jesus is **Lord of your time**. He's Lord of all of it. He longs for your worship and obedience every day. **But each Lord's Day He calls for your worship in a way that is detached from the rest of your life. It's His day alone. It's not your day to go to the office. Or paint your fence. Or go to the lake.**

It's the Lord's day. It's a gift of His love. It's the farthest thing from **legalism**. It takes nothing away from life. It's foundational in your walk with Jesus. When you're offering your life to the Lord, **give Him this day first.** And move on from there.