



Truth For These Times



32. HOW TO KEEP THE SABBATH

Isa 58:13,14

Turn away your foot from the Sabbath.



When God's call: "Take your foot off My Sabbath" first comes to us, we naturally ask: How does God want us to keep the Sabbath? In what way should our conduct on this day differ from our conduct on the other days of the week?

God has not left us in doubt on this question. He delights in positive, intelligent, spontaneous Sabbath keeping. He has, therefore, given us a complete set of guidelines to follow in our preparation for, and observance of, the Sabbath day. In this lesson we shall study the Bible's code of Sabbath-keeping etiquette.

Genesis 2:1-3

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended 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.

Here are three basic principles of proper Sabbath observance:

1. It is blessed – or happy. It is not meant to be a burden or a day of drudgery; rather we will delight in the privilege to keep the Sabbath day.
2. It is sanctified – or set apart. God set the Sabbath apart for a holy use. Six days are given for ordinary work, but the Sabbath is a holy day.
3. It is a rest day – a rest from normal employment so that we can devote our worship specifically to God on His day.

Mark 2:27

And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made FOR man, and not man for the Sabbath."



God wants us to keep the Sabbath for our own benefit. The word "Sabbath" means rest, and humans need physical and mental rest from the pressures of normal employment. The 'batteries' need recharging. If they are not, the consequences of poor health will result. Not only will the physical and mental faculties suffer, but also the spiritual. The Sabbath rightly kept, will deeply enrich one's spiritual experience.

Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath day, to KEEP IT HOLY. SIX DAYS YOU SHALL LABOR and do all your work, but THE SEVENTH day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the

sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

God's command forbids ordinary work on the Sabbath because it is a holy day. The commandment also forbids others working for you on the Sabbath, even strangers.

Exodus 34:21 Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; **IN PLOWING TIME AND IN HARVEST YOU SHALL REST.**

The ploughing and harvesting time can be very busy for farmers, yet God said, even in busy times you must rest on the Sabbath. Many, many farmers can testify how they have lost nothing by keeping God's particular command, but they have gained the blessings of the Sabbath. Whatever our business or occupation, we must not engage in it on Sabbath.

Exodus 16:23,25-28 Then he said to them, "This *is what* the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. **BAKE WHAT YOU WILL BAKE TODAY, AND BOIL WHAT YOU WILL BOIL;** and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, *which is* the Sabbath, there will be none." Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, "HOW LONG DO YOU REFUSE TO KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS AND MY LAWS?"



On the day before the Sabbath; called the preparation, God commanded all baking, and boiling to be done. In other words, the housewife is to rest on the Sabbath, and prepare all food on the preparation day (Friday). She needs the blessing of the Sabbath too, so no extensive cooking is to be done on the Sabbath to distract her from the atmosphere of worship. This does not mean food should be served cold. It is perfectly in order to eat warmed palatable food, but it is wrong to do unnecessary cooking. When one considers how the Sabbath should be kept, we must guard against fanatical man-made restrictions, such as those practiced in Christ's time.

Notice in verses 27 and 28 how particular God is concerning Sabbath observance. Some of the people were disregarding the Sabbath, and God was intensely displeased. Interestingly, this event occurred prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Before the Sabbath command was given on the Mount God expected them to observe it properly. This is a clear indication that the command was known even though we have no specific record of it, prior to Sinai. God showed how particular He was about the Sabbath, by sending manna for the Israelites every day for forty years. On Fridays a double portion fell, but none ever fell on the Sabbath.

Mark 15:42 Now when evening had come, because it was the **PREPARATION DAY**, that is, **THE DAY BEFORE THE SABBATH.**

There is no doubt concerning the location of the 'preparation day'. It is the day before the Sabbath, and its purpose is to prepare for the Sabbath. This is the time to do all the weekend shopping, cooking, cleaning etc. so that the Sabbath is free for rest.

Nehemiah 13:16-18 Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and **SOLD THEM ON THE SABBATH** to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, “WHAT EVIL THING IS THIS THAT YOU DO, BY WHICH YOU PROFANE THE SABBATH DAY? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”

Here is another principle of Sabbath observance. It is not a day for business – for buying or selling. These activities, while not wrong within themselves, distract from the holiness of the Sabbath. To engage in buying and selling is to profane the Sabbath. Food, fuel and other needs should be purchased on Friday so there will be no need to go near a shop on the Sabbath.

Jeremiah 17:24,25 “And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully,” says the LORD, “to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but HALLOW THE SABBATH DAY, TO DO NO WORK IN IT, then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this CITY SHALL REMAIN FOREVER.”



If God’s people had kept the Sabbath, Jerusalem would have stood forever. God desires the Sabbath to be different; He is very particular about His holy day.

PERMISSABLE WORK ON THE SABBATH

Matthew 12:10-13 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore IT IS LAWFUL TO DO GOOD ON THE SABBATH.” Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.

There may be occasions when a Christian needs to work on the Sabbath day for the benefit of his fellow human in need. The sick need to be cared for, or an act of mercy may need to be performed. If a man is bleeding to death because of an accident, it is a Christian’s duty to work hard on the Sabbath to save the victim’s life, if it is within his power to do so. This is different from normal employment. It is a necessary work. It is wrong for a Christian to work unnecessarily on the Sabbath. This is a *vital key* to understanding Sabbath keeping: *if it can be done on another day, leave it*. God is against unnecessary work on the Sabbath. It is often necessary to warm food to make it palatable. It is necessary to wash dishes for hygienic reasons, but it is not necessary to sweat over a stove or dig the garden.



Isaiah 58:13 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 *day* of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, NOT DOING YOUR OWN WAYS, NOR FINDING YOUR OWN PLEASURE, NOR SPEAKING *YOUR OWN WORDS*.

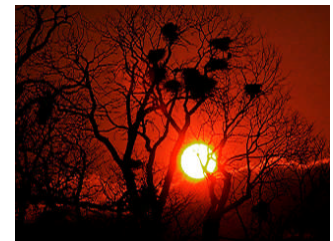
The Christian will call the Sabbath a delight. He will look forward to it each week with keen anticipation. The day is devoted to God – not our own ways, nor seeking our own pleasure, nor even speaking our own words. It is a holy day. We cannot keep this day holy while playing sport, (golf, cricket, tennis etc.). Neither do the watching of television, listening to radio, or reading the newspaper direct our minds toward spiritual things. The Sabbath has been set apart for a holy purpose.

WHY ALL THE RESTRICTIONS?

God is not trying to spoil one's pleasure by His strict requirement of Sabbath keeping. He is asking us to decide who we serve, and to devote more time to spiritual things so that He can give us a blessing. He wants to give us something good, not take anything away. He wants us to keep it holy, and this we cannot do while engaged in our own personal pleasure.

Leviticus 23:32 “It *shall be* to you a sabbath of *solemn* rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth *day* of the month at evening, FROM EVENING TO EVENING, YOU SHALL CELEBRATE YOUR SABBATH.”

Sabbath is to be kept from even unto even, or sunset to sunset. The beginning of the Sabbath was becoming “dark” in Nehemiah 13:19. This means that when the sun sets on Friday, we are in holy time, and when the sun sets on Saturday, the Sabbath is over. At sunset on Friday it is good to welcome the Sabbath with prayer and worship. Friday evening can be a good time to catch up on devotional reading.



Luke 4:16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And AS HIS CUSTOM WAS, HE WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE ON THE SABBATH DAY, and stood up to read.

For Christian fellowship and worship it is vital to attend the services of the church each Sabbath (Saturday). Here Jesus left us an example – each Sabbath found Him in the place of worship.

Hebrews 10:25 NOT FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Here is wise admonition – we should meet together – church attendance is a must, for the growing Christian. God is telling us for our own good. He has promised us a wonderful blessing if we obey Him.

Acts 16:13 And ON THE SABBATH day we went out of the city TO THE RIVERSIDE, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met *there*.

If you are in a place where there is no church, then to worship God amongst nature is ideal. If you are on holidays, you should remember the Sabbath, even if there is no church nearby. The Sabbath, ideally, is a time with God and fellow Christians. It is a time for worship, Bible study, prayer, walking amongst nature, or to think of others and visit the sick and needy. It is also a good time to share your faith by doing some missionary work.

1 Samuel 2:30 Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: “I said indeed *that* your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.” But now the LORD says: “Far be it from Me; FOR THOSE WHO HONOR ME I WILL HONOR, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

When we put God first, He honours us. When we keep the Sabbath holy, we are honouring God by our obedience. Sabbath keeping does not earn us eternal life, but to willingly disobey God will lead to eternal death. A wonderful blessing is in store for the obedient Christian.

Numbers 15:30-36 But the person who does *anything* presumptuously, *whether he is* native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt *shall be* upon him. Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

This death penalty did not apply in later times after Israel moved into the promised - land. But, in the eyes of God, this text does show the importance of keeping the Sabbath holy.

Isaiah 66:22-23 “For as the NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD, “So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass *that* from one New Moon to another, and FROM ONE SABBATH TO ANOTHER, ALL FLESH SHALL COME TO WORSHIP BEFORE ME,” says the LORD.

The Sabbath will be kept by God’s people in the New Earth. God wants us to start keeping it now, in preparation for the time when we keep it with Him in His everlasting kingdom. Do you plan to honour God and keep His Sabbath day holy? If you honour God, He will greatly honour you. He will pour out His blessing upon you now, and also give you a place in the wonderful land beyond tomorrow.



Review Sheet – How to Keep the Sabbath

Assignment – Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

1. When God first made the Sabbath, what three things did He do? Genesis 2:1-3
A) _____ B) _____ C) _____.
 2. For whom was the Sabbath made? Mark 2:27
The Sabbath was _____, _____, _____.
 3. How are we to regard the seventh day? Exodus 20:8-11
Remember the Sabbath _____, _____, _____.
 4. How did God explain that even in busy times His people are to rest on the Sabbath? Exodus 34:21
In plowing time _____.
 5. How did God explain the need for cooking to be done before the Sabbath? Exodus 16:23, 25-28
Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, _____.
_____, _____.
 6. When is the Preparation Day? Mark 15:42
It was the preparation day, _____, _____.
 7. How does the Bible show the wrong of buying and selling on the Sabbath? Nehemiah 13:16-18
Who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, _____ ... what evil
_____?
_____?
 8. What type of work is permitted on the Sabbath? Matthew 12:10-13
Therefore it is _____.”
 9. How particular is God regarding Sabbath observance? Isaiah 58:13
Not doing your _____, _____, _____,
_____.
 10. What example did Jesus give showing the importance of church attendance on the Sabbath day? Luke 4:16
And as His custom was _____.
 11. What admonition is given to believers showing the need of attending the meetings of the church?
Hebrews 10:25
Not _____.
 12. If we put God first in all things, what is His response toward us? 1 Samuel 2:30
For those _____.
- Is it your plan to honour God and keep His Sabbath day holy? _____.