

The Fourth Commandment

Ex 20:8-11

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. It was school picture day & a photographer was snapping pictures of first graders at an elementary school, making small talk to put the kids at ease.
 - 1. “What are you going to be when you grow up?” he asked one little girl.
 - 2. She replied: “Tired.”
- B. It is so true that we live in an increasingly fast-paced world.
 - 1. Fatigue has many adverse effects:
 - a. Fatigue has been linked to learning difficulties in children & cognitive and memory problems in adults.
 - b. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that annually at least 100,000 traffic accidents & 1,500 deaths are directly related to driver fatigue.
 - 2. God, as man’s Creator, fully understands the consequences of fatigue.
 - a. In tonight’s passage God tells his people they need to take a rest.
 - b. READ TEXT.
- C. I suppose that this is probably the first ever sermon you’ve heard about the Sabbath Day in our brotherhood. I cannot ever remember hearing a sermon on the Sabbath.
 - 1. Typically, when we have mentioned the Sabbath Day, we have rightfully pointed out that it is not binding on today’s Christian.
 - a. Speaking of the separation between Jews & Gentiles, Paul writes, Eph 2:14-16.
 - b. Col 2:16-17.
 - 2. While the Sabbath Day is **not** binding on us today, I’m convinced that we can learn some important lessons from this command.
 - a. Because these words are Scripture, they originated in the mind of God: 2 Tm 3:16.
 - b. Also, we can learn from even arcane, no-longer-relevant sections of Scripture.
 - 1) 1 Cor 10:11.
 - 2) In context, Paul is speaking about the destruction of thousands of Israelites because of idolatry.
 - a) But, notice that Paul says that those events were written down for our instructions.
 - b) Surely, even texts about the Sabbath have been preserved for our instruction.
 - 3. Because a passage does not contain a direct command for us does not mean we cannot learn from it.
 - a. Jesus gave direct commands that are not binding upon us.
 - 1) Jesus directed two disciples to go into Bethphage, find a donkey and her colt, & bring them to him (Mt 21:1-6). We cannot do that for Jesus, but we learn that Jesus had superhuman knowledge & that he fulfills prophecy.
 - 2) Jesus directed a healed leper to tell no one of his healing (Mk 1:40-45). Jesus has never healed us from leprosy & we need to tell others, but we do learn that Jesus had a timing for his ministry.
 - b. There are commands in the epistles we cannot obey.
 - 1) Timothy was to bring Mark to Paul (2 Tm 4:11). While we can’t take Timothy to Paul, we see that Paul doesn’t hold a grudge—Remember that Paul & Barnabas separated after heated words over John Mark.
 - 2) Timothy was to beware of Alexander the coppersmith (2 Tm 4:14-15). While Alexander the coppersmith is dead & buried, we need to understand that people continue to oppose truth & that we need to be cautious of such individuals.
 - c. The purpose in going through those no-longer binding commands is two-fold:
 - 1) We must properly teach the Scriptures.
 - a) 2 Tm 2:15.
 - b) The Greek term translated “rightly dividing” in the KJV refers to cutting in a straight line; when used of teaching, the term refers to teaching properly.
 - 2) We can also learn important truths from such passages as we teach them properly.

4. Tonight, we will seek to teach properly about the Sabbath command while we learn from it. What can we learn? We learn about A SENSE, A SWEAT, & A SLUMBER.

II. A SENSE, v 8.

- A. The Israelites were to keep a sense of the Sabbath day. God says to them, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”
- B. Why would God tell the Israelites to **remember** the Sabbath day?
 1. It is possible that “remember” here simply means to keep it holy.
 2. Yet, I am of the opinion that the Israelites are here commanded not to forget the Sabbath day.
 - a. God had previously commanded the Sabbath when the Israelites gathered manna in the wilderness: Ex 16:22-30.
 - 1) On Friday, the Israelites were to gather up enough manna for two days, because there would not be any on the Sabbath—those Israelites who thought they’d get some extra manna on Saturday found none.
 - 2) The point could be to remember what happened when some of you disobeyed the Sabbath—you went hungry!
 - b. The Israelites also needed to remember what day of the week it was so that they could obey the Sabbath.
 - 1) Can you imagine if I were to forget on Sunday morning that it was the Lord’s Day & that I needed to be prepared to preach?
 - 2) I once interviewed with a church & the congregation told me that they often had to call the preacher on Sunday morning because he claimed that he had forgotten it was Sunday!
 - 3) If we forget what day of the week it is, we cannot honor God the way we should!
 - c. The Israelites are likely also being commanded here not to forget what the Sabbath day represents.
 - 1) The Sabbath day was a reminder of who God is & what God had done.
 - a) The Sabbath day was a reminder that God was the Creator, for God created the universe in 6 days & rested on the seventh.
 - b) The Sabbath day was a reminder that God ceased from his labor on the seventh day.
 - 2) For us, the Lord’s Day is a reminder of who God is & what God has done.
 - a) We assemble to take the Lord’s Supper & thus remember that God is our Savior through the sacrifice of his Son at Calvary.
 - b) We assemble on the first day of the week & remember that it was on this day of the week that God destroyed death & raised his Son.
 - C. The point is that we desperately need a solid memory.
 1. Granted, we all have memory difficulties here & there.
 2. But, we need to keep the Law of God in our remembrance.
 - a. We need to remember God’s expectations about caring for the needy—Acts 20:35.
 - b. 2 Pt 3:1-2.
 3. Do we remember the will of God? Are we able to obey the will of God because we remember?

III. A SWEAT, v 9.

- A. The command God gave the Israelites here was not simply to rest on the seventh day, but it was to work every other day: “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work.”
- B. God expects people to work.
 1. God himself works.
 - a. “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (v 11).
 - b. We think we have busy weeks—God made everything that is within one week.
 2. Man was created for work.
 - a. God put man in the Garden to work & care for it (Gn 2:15).
 - b. It is only by work that man is to eat (Gn 3:19).
 - c. Poverty comes to those who do not work (Prov 6:10-11).
 - d. We are to work in order to share with those in need (Eph 4:28).
 - e. Paul commanded the Thessalonians to work with their own hands & to be dependent upon no one (1 Thess 4:11-12).
- C. Scripture provides several guidelines for our work.

1. We need to work with our strength—Ecc 9:10.
2. When we work for an earthly employer, we need to work conscientiously, as to the Lord & not to men—Eph 6:5-7.
3. The Bible even provides some guidelines about times such as these.
 - a. Throughout the nation, good people are suffering because of the recession. I have no doubt but that many of our brethren are struggling because of this economic downturn.
 - b. But, the Bible gives us some principles:
 - 1) Our trust—even in severe economic situations—must be in God.
 - a) Our trust can be in God, for he is faithful (Ps 37:25).
 - b) If we place reliance in God, he will provide our needs (Mt 6:31-33).
 - 2) For those of us who are still working, there is a very important biblical principle—prepare for days when we may not be working.
 - a) Prov 6:6-8.
 - b) God commanded Joseph to store up grain to have in times of famine—Gn 41:35-36.
- D. Are we working according to biblical principles?

IV. A SLUMBER, vv 10-11.

- A. READ TEXT.
- B. The seventh day was to be a Sabbath to the LORD.
 1. The Hebrew term “Sabbath” itself means to “cease.”
 2. The seventh day was the Sabbath, for it was the day that God himself rested.
 - a. It’s strange that God is spoken of as resting, for God does not become weary—God “does not faint or grow weary” (Is 40:28).
 - b. In Hebrew, God is pictured more as ceasing from his work than resting.
 - 1) In Gn 2:3, the term “rested” really means to “cease” or to “stop.” The idea is that God stopped created after the sixth day.
 - 2) The term used in this passage can mean to “be quiet” or to “depart from.”
 - 3) The idea isn’t that God was weary & needed rest but that he stopped working.
- C. On the seventh day, the Israelites, their animals, & any foreigner in their midst were to do no work.
 1. God, as man’s Creator, knew there were times that people needed rest.
 - a. Working too much has many adverse effects including decreased work performance, coronary artery disease, & depression.
 - b. Japan, which has traditionally worked employees, six or seven days at week for 12-hours a day, has seen an increase in people dying suddenly. In fact, the Japanese refer to the syndrome as “Karōshi” which is literally translated as “Death from overwork.”
 2. Rest is important.
 - a. Jesus commanded his disciples to rest (Mk 6:31).
 - b. Ceasing from the hustle & bustle of life is also necessary for knowing the truth of God—Ps 46:10.
- D. It is important to rest, but Scripture no longer requires God’s people to take a weekly Sabbath rest.
 1. For us, the Sabbath rest remains future.
 - a. Heb 4:9-10.
 - b. Rv 14:13.
 2. Are you prepared to enter God’s future Sabbath rest?