

The LORD’s call to keep the Sabbath is key to finding happiness, purpose, and value in your work. By rediscovering that true and undefiled Sabbath-keeping is the divinely designed structure of life, you will understand that God’s way gives power to work and rest well, and to help others experience the same.

Introduction – We called him “Stan the Man.”

I. Sabbath: Who is it For?

A. For you: imitating God’s rest following his creative work

Genesis 2:1-3 is the Sabbath paradigm from which all other biblical doctrine regard work and rest flows. From the beginning God set the pattern of not just an ordinary day, but a holy day of rest from his week of completed creative work. While the entire Mosaic covenant, including the Ten Commandments, is set in the historical context of the Exodus, only the fourth commandment explicitly refers back to the context of creation (Ex 20:8-11; cf. 31:13-17). The Sabbath has always been—even for God himself!—a refreshing gift, not a burdensome duty.

B. For others: maintaining justice and doing righteousness (vv. 1-2)

1. In a fallen world where sinful and broken circumstances surround us on every side, the gift of Sabbath necessarily involves what the Bible calls maintaining justice and doing righteousness. The Bible gives the fourth commandment a new historical context for the second generation of Israelites who are preparing to finally enter their homeland of rest (Dt 5:12-15). Notice this: God’s actions of justice and righteousness are the reasons why subsequent generations must hold fast to the fourth commandment. Isaiah 56:1-2 highlight this aspect: holding fast to the Sabbath requires not only imitating God in his *creative* work and rest, but also and especially in his *redemptive* work and rest. The gift of Sabbath is key because it is the God-given sign of a people who order their entire lives around imitating God their Creator and Deliverer.

2. Biblical justice involves setting things right. It begins with God putting rebel sinners right with himself through the sacrifice for sin by his Son Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21-26). But putting things right doesn’t end until justice and righteousness reign in relationships, in families, in the church, in communities, in societies, and in every corner of creation (Rom 8:19-23). The gift of Sabbath protects us from veering away from covenant keeping and provides us the kind of regularly maintained relationships that lead believers to naturally pursue biblical justice and righteousness so every one of us can work and rest well.

II. Sabbath: When Does it Apply?

A. Not only during the seventh day in the old covenant era

1. Isaiah 56:1 is a verse that synthesizes the main themes from the first section (chapters 1-39) and second section (chapters 40-55) of Isaiah. “Be just and fair” summarizes Isaiah 1-39. “I am coming soon to deliver” summarizes Isaiah 40-55. Israel must maintain justice and righteousness because the LORD’s redemption will soon be revealed. And in chapters 56-66 the prophet reveals the completion of Israel’s mission to be a light to the nations. From whom do they receive the power to fulfill their mission to maintain justice and do righteousness? The Messiah who is both Suffering Servant and Divine Warrior. We need the power of Jesus the same way restored Israel did because the church is living as if in exile just like restored Israel. Furthermore, we experience the nature and timing of our exile as an overlap of two ages (the present age and the age to come). This overlap of the ages is the “when” that is poetically portrayed in Isaiah 56-66.

2. Isaiah only refers to the Sabbath six times: once at the beginning (Isa 1:13), once at the end (Isa 66:23), and four times in chapters 56-58 (Isa 56:2, 4, 6; 58:13). Their careful, purposeful placement demonstrate that true Sabbath-keeping is central to Isaiah's message, since Sabbath functions as the book's thematic frame and the last section's climactic introduction of the Messianic age. From Isaiah's old covenant vantage point, when does the Sabbath apply? In this age and the age to come! That is exactly when we live according to the NT.

B. Not only during the Lord's Day worship service in the new covenant era

1. Doesn't participating in a weekly worship service fulfill my Christian duty? It's not the Lord's hour, it's the Lord's Day. God cares a lot about how we use our Sabbath hours (Ex 16:29; 35:2-3; Num 15:32-36). We must "hold fast" to the Sabbath as a sign of God's lordship over us.

2. Roman 14:5-6. Being a Christian is not about celebrating (or abstaining from) holidays, but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17). This text actually says nothing about the weekly Sabbath day, so we're not warranted to draw Sabbath conclusions from it. Colossians 2:16-19. The Sabbath teaching of which Paul warned threatened to draw Christians back into shadowy practices in order to point them away from Christ. If you hold fast to a practice of Sabbath that obscures or denies the glory of Christ, then you are in danger of disqualifying yourself from Christ. In Hebrews it says as long as you have today, there remains a future Sabbath, so by faith in Jesus keep working and resting—maintaining justice and righteousness—until at last you enter into his rest (Heb 3:7-4:16; 10:23-25; 13:1-19).

III. Sabbath: Why Keep it Today?

A. So faithful outcasts may now receive exalted blessings (vv. 3-6)

The faithful outcasts highlighted are foreigners and eunuchs. As outsiders, foreigners were not sons of the kingdom by birthright or heritage. As those who were "cut off," eunuchs by their imperfect "misfit" condition were prevented by law from being priests or even approaching God's holy temple. In the age to come, outsiders and misfits who by faith join themselves to the LORD of the covenant will not only be included in the gathering of the faithful, but they will be brought to the very center of God's community! And that's not all. The LORD says they will receive high honor and blessing that far surpass what one would reasonably expect based on their earthly status in the church.

B. So self-indulgent oppressors may soon receive their deserved ruin (vv. 9-12)

We should also keep the Sabbath today to testify against those who oppress outcasts, thwart those who oppress others, and guard ourselves from oppressive complicity. When God addresses spiritual leaders who practice Sabbath with a pious religiosity while being indifferent to the plight of outcasts, he doesn't mince words. His deliverance is coming and it will be in the form of swift judgment.

C. So all Christians may eventually receive eternal rest (vv. 7-8)

On the whole, the way to apply this passage is to live the Christian life well. What does that mean? Gather with God's people in God's house. Trust completely and always in the perfect sacrifice of Christ our Savior and Lord. Join yourself in covenant to the LORD and thereby with the outcasts who also belong to him. Hold fast to the Sabbath, even to the point of principled resistance. And be actively involved in meaningful and productive relationships with God's people so you'll be moved to maintain justice and do righteousness.

Conclusion – This is the way Christians must strive to enter the eternal rest Christ has won for us. Not only is the way *of* Christ the only way to work and rest well. The way *through* Christ—by faith in his