

Remember what God did for us

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Let us turn again to that part of God's word that we read in the book of Deuteronomy 5, and we may look again at verse 15. Deuteronomy 5 at verse 15.

15 And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

And we spoke before about the Sabbath day after the fall in the garden of Eden, and again the Sabbath day given to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, at Horeb, and here we have it repeated by Moses when the children of Israel are preparing to enter into the Promised Land, coming to the end of their wanderings now in the wilderness, we could think of these words, as it were, as those that they took into Canaan with them, the Sabbath in Canaan. And we mentioned that the Sabbath was originally to do with the creation when God created the world in six days and then rested the seventh, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it, but as God has done other works, so the Sabbath, as it were, gathered significance and all these other works of God and coming to the Sabbath as well until it culminates in the great work of Christ, God's great work, the greatest work of all, sending his Son into the world to save sinners. So great is that work that the Sabbath day is changed to mark it, change from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week.

So the various things along the way and we mentioned the flood and other things, the calling of Abraham perhaps, and here the Exodus, coming out of Egypt, and in all these matters the purpose of the Sabbath is that we should, in a sense, imitate God, and that is, when God has done a great work he rests and takes pleasure in it. As he rested and was refreshed from his work, when he surveyed it, and we read of Christ in Isaiah 53, that he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied, and the idea is that on the Sabbath day we should do the same but we should, in a measure, withdraw ourselves from the world and direct our thoughts and our hearts all the more toward God and toward eternal things and toward these things that he has done and find our rest and our pleasure in them, that we worship God to whereby contemplating him and his works. As he finds rest

in the contemplation of himself, on his beloved Son and the mighty works that he is doing, so we are to find rest for our souls in the same thing.

So the children of Israel here are getting ready to enter into the land of Canaan and further matters are brought before them in connection with the Sabbath, "remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." So there's been no mention here of creation as there was in Exodus, but it's remarkable that although Moses is reporting the words that God said at Mount Sinai, yet he feels free or the Holy Spirit, as it were, feels free to vary these words. He doesn't give us exactly the same words at all as were given at Mount Sinai, there are quite a number of significant differences. This shows us, as it were, the living nature of the word as we were endeavoring to say this morning, it's not the letter and the outward form that is profitable but the meaning and the meaning can be expressed in various different ways and we can get the meaning from being directed to consider creation in connection with the Sabbath or we can get the meaning as we have it here from being directed to consider the children of Israel being brought out of the land of Egypt. We put the two together and we see we get a wider view of the purpose of the Sabbath day.

So these variations that there are in Scripture are very useful to us and what we want to think about here and some new things, some new matters that the children of Israel had in the land of Canaan when they came to the Sabbath and they could think about what there used to be in the land of Egypt, "remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt," that they had been delivered from that and they could think of the way that the Lord had brought them up through the wilderness, had sustained them so that all the way from, as it were, from Exodus to Deuteronomy they had all that experience of God's care for them, and by the time they were in the Promised Land, they had also the victory over their enemies that God had bestowed upon them and the land that they were now enjoying. And the believer can apply all these things to himself and can remember what he used to be before he was converted, and he can think about all the things that God has done for him since that time, that he's been journeying through the wilderness, and he could think about all the good things that he presently possesses. This Promised Land, as it were, to which God has brought him, he's enjoying these good things and he can consider them and use them on the Sabbath day before God.

So it's this, then, that we want to think about, that on the Sabbath day we are to remember what God has done for us. On the Sabbath day we are to remember what God has done for us, "remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." So we are to remember what God has done for us and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we want to think about three aspects that we mentioned, that they had been delivered from Egypt, that they had been sustained in the wilderness, and that looking ahead a little bit, they had been brought into Canaan. These three things: delivered from Egypt, sustained in the wilderness, and brought into Canaan.

Well, the first thing, then, that they'd been delivered from Egypt. Well, this was the younger generation. By this stage, the older ones, they had been dying in the wilderness and there would be very few who could remember Egypt, at least as adults. By the time they reached the Promised Land, the only two that were surviving, well, Moses is still alive here but he was soon to die, and the only two that survived of the whole lot were Joshua and Caleb, the only two that could remember adult life in Egypt.

Well, there were many, surely, who had been children, they weren't caught up in the guilt. The adults were caught up in the guilt and God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest and they all died except Joshua and Caleb, but the children didn't die and the older ones among them who hadn't been born in the wilderness would remember, if their memories went back, something of what it had been like in the land of Egypt and the bondage in Egypt, and one thing very likely that they could remember was the ongoing danger to the boys, what was that law of Pharaoh? That the boy children were to be killed. I expect like many a persecuting law, it had been pressed for a while and then it had gone into abeyance for it was never actually repealed, but it was there as a threat. It could be brought out at any time. The Egyptians had a right to kill the boy children if they felt like it and that would be one of the memories that they had of Egypt. And the girls therefore would have been like Moses' sister, and they would have had this concern for their brothers, hiding their brothers perhaps in times of danger, trying to conceal them from murderous Egyptians with a murderous intention.

So they might have remembered that and their fathers being beaten if they failed to fulfill their tally of bricks. The cruelty, the oppression, the shame, the misery of the whole thing, the hatred that they had to endure. We have many examples of it since with oppression in different parts of the world where one race, where one nation oppresses another and tries to make the lives of these people a misery and how inventive other people are in causing misery for others. So they could look back, it was not out of their memories yet. They could remember, "remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt." They could remember the unhappiness of their childhood.

Then they could remember that great night when they were brought out, when God judged their enemy and their oppressor, the Egyptians. Every family of the Egyptians was smitten by God. Every family, the firstborn was dead. They had dealt so with others and now it had come upon them by the hand of God and the children of Israel could not but acknowledge the righteousness of God in that matter. He had smitten their enemies and then further when a little bit later he drowned the army of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, they could remember these things. They could remember the first Passover, their parents and the Passover lamb and the fear that they must have had and the solemnity of the occasion, the blood sprinkled upon the door posts and upon the lintels, the angel of death passing over and a wail going up from all the houses of the Egyptians. They could remember that and that they themselves, as it were, being forced out, driven out of the land, the Egyptians begging them to go and the spoiling of the Egyptians as they borrowed silver and gold and jewels off them, and these people pressed wealth upon them, gave them their wages for all the years that they had been in captivity in Egypt.

They could remember these things. They could remember going out of Egypt after so many years and coming to the Red Sea, seeing the Egyptian army pursuing after them, the fear of the occasion, the sea in front, the depths of the sea in front, the army behind, and seeing that God had, as it were, brought them out only to destroy them. Then the wonder of it, the might, the strong wind all night blowing the sea back and through they go on dry land which the Egyptians are saying to do, were drowned, and then coming out on the other side and that separation forever from Egypt.

So these were things that could never be forgotten, the bondage that they had been in and the deliverance that God had wrought for them, fixed in their minds forever. Well, therefore they were commanded to keep the Sabbath day and a picture in this respect to the people of God in all generations. They had that Sabbath day and that Sabbath remembrance that we look back, we were not with them physically, although that Psalm that we were singing speaks of the spiritual union that there is among the people of God, that we in him were glad, written by one long after some Israelite, David, very likely, long after the event but numbering himself, as it were, among those that had passed through the Red Sea and had rejoiced with the people of God there. Likewise, we are not to think of the Red Sea as something that doesn't concern us, but if we are true Christians, if we are of the Israel of God, then that's part of our history and heritage, that night and that deliverance so the possession of the people of God the world over.

But we have our own spiritual experience to look back on and it's pictured to us there in the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. It doesn't have the outward, striking outward features, those memorable features, but it's got its own features when God takes his people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. And not every believer can remember the day or the time that he was converted, some season of his life maybe over a long period of time, but whatever it is, he can narrow it down, he can recognize there was a time before that when he was not converted, when he was very much in the bondage of Egypt. He can remember the misery of that life and the darkness and the uncertainty of that life and the vague fears that he had of death and of hell. He didn't like to think about those things, didn't have any answer to them except the general answer of the world that it somehow might not be true, and we hope that it was not true but nothing more than that. He couldn't go into these things, no answer for his sins. Again, all he could do was try to turn away from them and try to do better in the future. He could remember all these things and the vain purposes in setting his heart on the things of the world and being continually frustrated that even if God gave him a measure of success, it still didn't satisfy his heart. The heart is always crying give, give, as far as the things of this world are concerned. "Wherefore do you labor for that which satisfieth not?" And that was the description of their life that he had before, the meat which perisheth, he could remember that and then he could remember that time, the change. If he couldn't identify the exact night on which he was delivered, at least he could recognize that a great change had happened and old things have passed away and behold all things became new, and the world became a new place to him. When he started to look towards Christ, God shined in his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and he started to take an interest in the things of Christ, to pray, to pray heartily to the Lord, to take pleasure in the prayer and the reading of the word and

the increase in understanding in his soul, and the zeal that he had with the God to the advancing of the kingdom of Christ in the world around him.

All these things, that great change that he had and he was, he could identify himself with the Israelites when they were brought out of Egypt and they stood on the far shore of the Red Sea, and a new world was ahead of him. They were in Egypt no more. The one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. That old life of darkness and ignorance is at an end, and how it's come about and when it happened exactly, I may not be able to say any of these things but I know it's Jesus of Nazareth who is the one who has done the great work in my soul and now I see and now I commence my new life walking in newness of life. And the believer has this and the psalmist says, "Come here and I'll tell what he did for my soul," so we are not to be unduly talkative about these things but we should be ready to do so on occasion, but even if we are not going to tell other people about what the Lord has done for our souls, yet it's very much a subject for consideration on the Sabbath day, "remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day."

One of the things that we should be thinking about on the Sabbath day is the day of our conversion, if that day has come. Remember the work of creation. Remember the work of redemption. But remember also the work the day in which it was applied to your own soul and the Lord brought you out from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. What a wonderful day for your soul when you were brought from condemnation to safety, and from vanity to fruitfulness, when you became a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and not only a servant but a child, a son of God, sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

So that is one thing for the people of God on the Sabbath day, that they have been delivered from Egypt. Secondly, by this time in Deuteronomy, they were a people who had not only been delivered from Egypt but they'd experienced the hand of God, they had a considerable period of time they'd been sustained in the wilderness. God had brought them up and had brought them now to the borders of the Promised Land. He had led them and he had provided for them. He had been faithful. He hadn't brought them out simply to perish in the wilderness, but he brought them out so that in due time they might enter into the Promised Land. He provided for their needs. He fed them with manna. They had spiritual needs, they had natural needs for their bodies. He provided food for their bodies and the believer has the spiritual need for his soul, he needs a heavenly food, and the manna is obviously a picture to us of that heavenly food, the bread from heaven upon which the people of God feed which we now understand to be the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's spiritual meat, Jesus Christ and him crucified which nourishes and strengthens and refreshes and revives the hearts of the people of God as often as they think about these things.

So God had fed them, their bodies, he'd provided for their thirst with the water from the rock. They drank from the water of that rock that followed them and that rock was Christ. The body needs water and the soul needs that which comes from the Lord Jesus Christ,

and it's that which strengthens the body as food and it's that which refreshes the body as drink, and there are both these things found in Christ. There is that which revives the soul immediately. First it has cold waters to a thirsty soul and immediately reviving the effect in Christ, the knowledge of Christ, and communion with Christ immediately revives the soul. Sometimes a drooping plant and within a very short while it's restored when the water is brought on it on a hot day, and so the soul revives and flourishes through communion with Christ.

So God had provided for them in their bodies, in their souls. He had sheltered them with the cloud from the heat. God had sheltered his people from the fierceness of the heat. He had hidden them under his hand, "I will turn my hand upon the little ones." He's provided cover for them all the days of their life. He's not neglected them. He's not driven them out into the heat and provided nothing for them, nor has he left them without direction. The children of Israel were guided. There was a pillar of cloud to shelter them but also it was a pillar of fire to guide them. And they had the ark of the covenant going before them to search out a resting place so they should know when to travel and when to remain. God in this way, apart from sheltering his people, has also directed them and led them all the way. He's led them one sphere of life to another, to a different circumstance of life, sometimes through their own choice, sometimes simply through the terms of providence, but he has remained their God still and they've remained his people still, and now they are that much nearer to the Promised Land and they are not forsaken. They have the ark of the covenant, they have the Lord Jesus Christ still with them as their leader and their commander going before them, watering their course. So there's that provision.

They're not left orphans, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come unto you." They have Christ. They have that which heals them. The children of Israel had the brazen serpent provided when the fiery serpents were biting them on account of their sins, but apart from the chastisement they had the remedy as well, they had the brazen serpent to look to. And the Christian can see that, that God has often, in a way, sent serpents to bite them because of their disobedience, rebelliousness, but at the same time there's a remedy. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous and he is the propitiation for our sins. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

He provided for them even in their clothes and in their shoes. We read a little bit later on in Deuteronomy that they had been preserved all this time. Another standing miracle that they had apart from the manna was that their clothes and their shoes which they couldn't have replaced in the wilderness had not perished. I suspect they disintegrated fairly quickly once they got into the Promised Land and the miracle ceased, as the miracle of the manna ceased, but all the time they were in the wilderness, these things were preserved. Perhaps we can think of that as a picture of our bodies here in this world. God has sustained them. The psalmist could say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." We nourish and we cherish our bodies and, in a way, they are waxing old, yet as long as we are here and we have a purpose to do, the body serves the needs of the soul and

eventually it comes to be left behind for a time. They sleep in their graves until the resurrection.

Well, God had taking care of his people in the wilderness. He preserved them. They had been seeing people dying all around them, the carcasses of those that were under the curse, the older generation, mown down like grass as Moses speaks of it in Psalm 90. They had seen this, people falling on their right hand and on their left, but the ones that were still here had been brought through and the ones who had entered into the Promised Land, and the believer can say that as well. He's seen many that have gone out of this world and many of the people of God among them, but the Lord for whatever purposes has chosen to preserve him thus far. He's been his God and his guide even unto death and he has not forsaken him yet.

So they had much to look back on all the way that the Lord had led them to try them and to prove them and to know what was in their heart, and the Lord had brought out what was in the heart of the children of Israel, the provocations at Massah and Meribah which are often mentioned elsewhere in the Scripture, the rebellion under Dathan and Abiram, the evil report that the spies brought back. When the believer looks back on his life, well, he's got many things, many matters of shame and confusion when he looks back on his errors and his follies, all the evil things, the foolish things that he did, but the Lord has not failed him in these matters, he's brought them through, he's washed away the sins in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and he's still there and he's still a follower of Christ.

This is another thing that the believer can consider on the Sabbath day. He can look back not only to the time of his conversion but to the path by which the Lord has led him since that time and how he's provided for him outwardly in the body and inwardly in the soul, and how the various events of life have taught him concerning himself and concerning his weakness and his sinfulness, and also concerning the fullness and the faithfulness that there is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he can say one thing that he is glad that he was committed to that Good Shepherd, that Christ has indeed taken care off him, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." If he'd been left to himself, he would have perished but under the care of Christ, he has been kept alive.

So the people of God have this also for the Sabbath day, they may reflect on their lives before God, their own lives are part of the work of God, part of the providence of God. God ordained these things from eternity, their own lives, the lives of others, the lives of their families, those around them. They can think about those things too and how the hand of the glory of God is seen in these matters. But thirdly, we want to think of them as brought into Canaan itself which was what lay ahead for these people here to whom Moses was speaking, the generation to which he was speaking was brought into the land of Canaan and, in a great measure, put into possession of it and God gave them the victory. They had to fight against these people, the giants and others that were possessing the land, possessing the cities, and it didn't all go entirely smoothly on account of their sins of various sorts, but whether they won an easy victory or not, they still had the apprehension of going out to battle, and if the Lord gave them the victory, if the Lord himself fought for them, well, that was their faith was still tested in the matter. And there

wasn't any of the people of the whole land that made a pact with them except the Gibeonites, all the rest of them fought to the death but nevertheless they came into the possession of the land.

That good land which the Lord God, verse 31 here it's mentioned, "the land which I give them to possess it." He brought them out of Egypt in order that they might possess their own land in Canaan, the land which he had promised to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob. He brought them out to put them in possession of something else, and when God takes his people out of the hands of Satan, he puts them in possession, they have a heritage given to them. And we could think of that heritage especially as taking the possession of their own bodies and their own souls, that which used to be led captive by the devil at his will, in his possession, the strong man armed, keeping his goods and his house and goods in safety and the whole thing at peace, but Christ now taking possession and appointing a believer as the subordinate, a prince and ruler and king in his own soul.

And the child of God has been enabled to take possession of these things, the faculties of the soul, the memory and the imagination and the love and the purpose, these things are committed to him now. He's stored his memory perhaps beforehand with vanities and things he would willingly forget and perhaps he has forgotten some of those things, he doesn't endeavor to fill up his mind with these things anymore, his imaginations, the evil imaginations, but he uses his memory for other purposes, hiding the word of God in his heart, endeavoring to remember those things which are profitable and useful to him in his Christian life. He uses his imagination, the sanctified imagination, imagining, I suppose, the images that we have of things unseen and eternal. We cannot help but form certain images of them and whatever other uses we may make of our imaginations, putting them to a good purpose, imagining perhaps what the lives of others and how we may help them, as it were, what the circumstances of others so we are not limited in our knowledge but we may use our general knowledge of human life to suppose and understand things concerning the troubles of others, the love that we now have which is directed toward Christ and to his kingdom. A new purpose that they have, God has put these things into their hands to cast out the old sins and vanities and to consecrate these things to the Lord.

So they have a land. The children of Israel were not wholly successful in their possession of the land. Some cities they captured easily but others, particularly that area where the Philistines dwelled and troubled them for the remainder of their time in the Promised Land, they had little success there. Sometimes they subdued them but they never destroyed them completely and that's a picture to us of the believer's life, some sins he gets an easy victory over them, and others continue to trouble him. The flesh lusts against the spirit and he spends maybe the rest of his life in conflict with these certain sins which he is not able to root out, and the desires to do so. Paul himself desiring to be delivered from the body of that death, the covetousness that may be regarded as the root sin in his soul but clearly not a total success yet, that remains ahead in eternity but the spirits of just men made perfect, yet they do have a great measure of success and God has given them something to enjoy. And they can see the hand of God in these things and that's a part of their thankfulness that God has given these things to them, that by the grace of God, says Paul, I am what I am by the grace of God. Though he was not what he would desire to be,

in the words of John Newton, "I'm not what I ought to be, I'm not what I want to be, I'm not what I hope to be, I'm not what I shall be, but I'm not what I used to be. I am what I am." And the believer can say that. He's no longer Saul of Tarsus the destroyer. He's no longer fighting against the Lord Jesus Christ but now he is a servant of God and God has given him that position in the church, whatever position it is in that glorious living temple, that's the one that Christ has chosen for him and he is what he is and he's thankful to God for that.

That's something to remember before God on the Sabbath day, but he's not only got these things but he can now use them. He's been given that part of the land, as it were, that he already has in possession and he can form plans with regard to further battles and conquests in regard to his sins maybe. That's something on the Sabbath day if the children of Israel thought how they might finally root out the Philistines, that would be a useful thing to do, and if we can wage war on our sins, if we see something that we're neglecting to do which we might do, that would be a useful consideration, but also to enjoy those things that we do have, every man under his vine and under his fig tree. And the people of God, as we are saying, have received into their possession their spiritual faculties. God has given them a pure mind. That man who had the devil cast out of him and he was clothed in his right mind and sitting at the feet of Christ, and if you're a Christian, you're in your right mind and you've got the Holy Spirit and, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, and if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him."

So you have these things and we are to make use of them on the Sabbath day and we are to use our possessions and our faculties. It is a day in particular that God is ready to bless his word and whether it's the word of God, whether it's the writings of the saints, very much profit to be gained from the thoughts of others of the people of God and the experiences of others, the history, a biography of the saints. These things have been blessed to many and this is part of the work of the Sabbath day, that we should be gathering together with the people of God to worship, that's a part of it, all the saints want to do that as they are enabled to. There are not that many times maybe when we cannot gather with the people of God but when we can, we are to desire that and we do desire that, and then when we're apart from them, we may use our time profitably for our souls in using that clearness of mind, that spiritual understanding, using it and storing in our hearts the things which will both have a present blessedness, his fruit was sweet to my taste as a present blessedness in the word of God and there's a future usefulness as well, storing it in our hearts with understanding with these things and other duties, the acts of necessity and mercy as well.

So the people of God have that. They can remember that they were in the land of Egypt. They can remember that they've been sustained, they were sustained all the way through the wilderness, and that they have now been brought into the Promised Land, brought into Canaan and God has given good things into their hands and they are to use those good things especially on the Sabbath day. Well, in thinking about these matters, have you been delivered from this bondage? "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of

Egypt." What if you are a servant in the land of Egypt? Well, Christ is calling you to come forth, to come out, to flee from the wrath which is to come, to come to him. He will bring you out of Egypt. And have you been sustained? Can you acknowledge the hand of God in sustaining you? Look back on your life, it's useful to do so. It gives us a clearer view with regard to our souls. We start to see the purpose of God in these matters. It gives the people of God an assurance when they see, when they remember what God has done for them in the past. It gives them a confidence with God to the future, that the one who has delivered them, they believe, shall deliver them and he will deliver them. And remembering the Sabbath day and let us be using it to enjoy if we are Christians, using it to enjoy those good spiritual things that God has bestowed upon us.

May the Lord bless his word to us. Let us pray.

O Lord, help us to hear thy word and to make good use of the revelation thou hast given concerning thyself and concerning our own souls. May we see our duties to thee, and if we are found among the people of God at this time, may we indeed be thankful for that blessed day of deliverance which took our souls away from the clutches of Satan and brought them into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. And may we recognize thy kindness to us ever since, hitherto that the Lord help me, and may we have a confidence regarding what lies ahead, that that which concerneth me the Lord will perfect make. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee and, lo, I am with thee alway, even unto the end of the world." Help us each one, we pray thee, O Lord. Awaken those that are strangers to thee, that are dead in trespasses and in sins. Pluck them as brands from the burning and grant thy blessing from thy word this day and pardon our sins now and help us to sing to thy praise. For Christ's sake. Amen.