

John 5: 9-20; “The Work of the Sabbath”, Sermon # 31 in the series – “That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 19th, 2015, in the Morning Worship Service.

This morning I would like to have the Lord Jesus Himself explain to you what the legitimate work of the Christian Sabbath Day is. This man who had been healed of his lameness was obedient to Jesus’ command to him that he would, “Rise, take up his bed, and walk”. But the Jews thought that He was violating the Jewish Sabbath day. In verse 8 they said to him: “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.” An explanation was needed for their sakes, and so the man said to them: “He who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk’. I told you in my last sermon that the healing of this man is a picture of true conversion to Christ. God, through the word of Christ, causes you to be born again to a living hope; to rise from the dead spiritually. When the power of Christ comes to your dead heart, you hear His command; the command of the gospel to believe in Him; you see the importance of trusting in Him for the forgiveness of all of your sins. You believe in the gospel, the message of salvation in Christ which is preached to you. And then, because of His grace, you become very sensitive to keeping His commands, because your heart has been changed by Him in the giving of regenerating grace. You are eternally thankful for what He has done for you. This is conversion to Christ.

And so, when Christ commands you, as a believer, to pick up your bed, the picture of how you lived your life before He came to you, you pick it up, out of love for Him. You consider what needs to change; you consider what you should do to change to bring your life into conformity to the Word of Christ. You begin to learn what it means to actually repent of all of your sins. You begin to walk in newness of life, seeking to do God’s will; and your greatest desire is to honor Christ by the way that you live. In these verses we that we are studying this morning, we will discover how we can honor Christ in relation to the 4th commandment of the 10 commandments. We will see what the legitimate work of the Christian Sabbath day is. It is 1st of all – To learn to go to church and to sin no more. (verses 13-15) It is 2nd – To learn a right theology of work. (verses 16 and 17) It is 3rd – To seek to promote the glory of God in everything that you say or do. (verses 18 and 19) I hope that you will see, that keeping the Sabbath day holy is a learning process, and that you will respond to the clear teaching of our Lord Jesus which is given to each us here, and learn how you can honor Him on His day.

1st of all – The legitimate work of the Christian Sabbath day is to go to church and sin no more.

Verse 10 says: “The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, ‘It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.’” “He answered them, ‘He who made me well, said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk.’” “Then they asked him, ‘Who is the Man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’” “But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place.” “Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, “ See, you have been made well.” “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.” Going to synagogue or going to the temple on the Sabbath was a customary thing with the people of Israel in Jerusalem. It was also an expectation of the leaders of Israel that it would be so. This man had probably not been able to go up to the temple for the 38 years that he had this disease which produced his lameness. Now I want you to notice that right after this man was healed and converted to Christ that he was confronted by the Jews, probably when he was going up to temple to offer thanks and to joy and rejoice publicly over what had been done for him. It was here that he was confronted by the Jews. When it says “the Jews” it means those religious

authorities of Israel, or their representatives, their informers, who were always on the look out to see who was not keeping the commandments of God.

These Jews knew that God had said in the Old Testament Scriptures that a burden ought not to be carried on the Sabbath day. Look with me over at Nehemiah chapter 13, and verse 15. "In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day." "And I warned them after the day on which they were selling provisions." "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 Israel by profaning the Sabbath." Nehemiah made sure, it says in the verses following, that no one would bring a burden into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. He was the governor of the country at that time, and he had the authority to enforce this, the law of God. Now, we ought to see that this kind of warning and enforcement was a good thing in those days. The commandment of God should not have been ignored, nor the burdens of business come into the city on that day. The Sabbath day was being profaned. Nehemiah was a zealous reformer of the Old Testament people of God. And the Lord blessed him in his reforms in his day. In New Testament times, we are no longer under the Law of God, although we do see the moral law as a rule of life for the believer. It gives us the specifics of right and wrong; it gives us instruction concerning what God expects of us, and it gives us direction on how we should observe the commandments of God. It gives us understanding of what moral commandments are abiding, to all generations, to the end of the world.

This man who had been healed was rejoicing, but the Jews who confronted him at the entrance to the temple, they were not rejoicing, and they did not want him to rejoice. They thought that he was in sin because he was carrying his bed. They thought that this should not be done. It is a very good thing when we as Christians come to greater discernment of how to keep the Lord's Day; that we come to know the intent of the Sabbath day commandment. The commandment was never meant to bind men up, so that they cannot rejoice in God's healing of body or soul; nor should it ever be used as something by which religious leaders bind others up to the keeping of the commandment in legalistic way, by placing upon them some of their own additions to the command. What then, was the intent of the commandment, in terms of its prohibiting the bearing of a burden within the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day? It was that each and every person would abstain from their six-day work; that they would rest from it completely on the Sabbath day. But that does not mean that every work of lifting and carrying was prohibited. There were then, and there are now, exceptions to the commandment which are legitimate; things which do not at all pertain to engaging in our six day labor. "The Sabbath was made for man," Jesus said in another place, "not man for the Sabbath".

The other intent which God has in giving us this commandment is that we would keep the whole day holy. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The day is kept holy when we come to church and worship the Lord. It is kept holy when we give God the glory due His name and worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." (Psalm 27: 4) This is what this man was intending to do; to go the temple and to praise and worship the Lord, and to give Him glory in the presence of others; to tell of what Christ had done for him. "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul." (Psalm 66: 16) But Jesus had slipped away immediately after He healed this man. Jesus knew, that later on, He would go to the temple and give this man an exhortation which would help him significantly in living his Christian life. He sought him out, he found him in the temple; and He said to him, "See, you have been made well." "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." This is one of the great works of the Sabbath day, for us who are living in New Testament times. If you never come to church, it is much harder to

come to a greater understanding of what is sinful. Truly, it is amazing to me, that some Christians do not have a better understanding of what is right and what is wrong. They think that since they under grace and not under the law that they can continue to willingly allow themselves to sin. But the Apostle Paul says: “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” “Certainly not!” “How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Romans 6: 1 and 2)

Sometimes a Christian may not understand the nature of grace. The nature of enabling grace is to transform your life. It design, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, is to lead into a life of living for God and for righteousness. It is therefore important for you to hold this injunction in your heart: “You have been made well.” “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.” Will you not commit to learning what sin is, so that you might avoid it, pass by it, and not harm yourself by engaging in it? Coming to God leads you to learning to do what is right, in all of its particulars, as it is declared in the Bible. I believe that many Christians in our day do not realize that they need to have their senses trained to discern the difference between good and evil; and a great part of that process is when a person will deliberately make a commitment to come to church, and worship the Lord, and give glory to His holy name. But within that framework of worship, a very real part of your worship of God, each and every Sunday, is your placing yourself under the preaching of God’s word, so that you will be instructed in righteousness. How can you become holy without the knowledge that sin is the ruination of all good? And how do learn to avoid it? Listen to Hebrews 5: 12-15 – “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” “For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.” “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, (to the mature) who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

So the ability to discern good and evil is an essential component of becoming righteous in all of your behavior. All mankind have been given the 10 commandments as the righteous standard of what you should and should not do. Yes, the 10 commandments were given to Moses and the nation of Israel on Mt. Sinai, but they were also written on Adam’s heart in the beginning, as a part of Adam’s original righteousness. In our own 1689 Confession it says in Chapter 19, Paragraph 2 – “The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall, and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables, the four first containing our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man.” If you have not memorized the 10 commandments yet, you really should, if you want to make progress in righteousness and holiness. For otherwise, how will you discern what you should or should not do on the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy? This man who was healed, knew what he should be doing after he was healed; he went to the temple and he would praise God and learn the way of righteousness. Jesus had to show him that he would not be able to learn from the Pharisees and Sadducees and the leaders of the people. They would teach him the wrong way to observe the Sabbath day. The wrong way to observe the Sabbath day is to heap up requirements upon men of things they cannot do on this day, instead of calmly examining the matter and learning what you should be doing, and what would truly be of lasting spiritual benefit to you and to your family.

But the intent of the 4th commandment is that you should go to a good Bible-believing church where sound doctrine is preached, and you should remember to abstain from your six-day work so that you might rest and be refreshed in the blessings which God gives to you, so that you can go back to your work on the next day and be strong in it. Let me simply ask, is this what you are doing, dear Christian? Because sometimes Christians fool themselves into thinking that they need to pursue their work on this day, and their pleasures on this day, and their words on every other subject than spiritual things on this day; everything else than speaking words which

would help others to have a greater devotion to God. The Lord, I believe, would have you to think about it, and change what you are doing, if you have allowed your work or your worldly pleasures to rob you of what you could give to God, and what He could give to you.

Now 2nd – The legitimate work of the Christian Sabbath day is – To learn a right theology of work.

Verse 15 – “The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.” “For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.” “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.’” “Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” We see here that Jesus was persecuted because of the mercy which he showed this lame man, having healed him on the Sabbath. Indeed, we find as we read the accounts of Jesus’ healing of people which are found in the gospels, that Jesus always made it a point to deliberately heal people on the Sabbath day. And in each case He was persecuted by the Jews for it. The reason for their persecution is that they did not correctly understand the commandment of God. They did not have a right theology of work. They thought that any and all kinds of burden-bearing were wrong on the Sabbath day; not just the burdens related to the six-day work. Jesus was showing them that in God’s mind there was complete liberty to work all manner of good works on the Sabbath day. In order to prove this to them, He gives them this truth which is found in verse 17 – “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” In other words, The Father is the One who created the world in the beginning and He rested from all of His work on the 7th day. But this does not mean that He ceased from His sustaining and upholding of all that He created, even then, or any time since. He simply ceased from His creative work; not His upholding and governing work. God the Father shows His great mercy in upholding the whole creation day by day, and moment by moment.

So Jesus reasoned with them in this way: If it is a work of great mercy and a great necessity that the Father upholds the whole creation, it is also a work of great mercy, and pleasing to God that this man be healed on this day. “The Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” That is, Jesus had works of healing to do, which were appointed by His Father, for Him to do. Both in the physical healing of this man, and in the salvation of his soul, there was holy work which was taking place there on that Sabbath day, in accordance with the Father’s will. These were no violations of the Sabbath commandment; there was nothing of earthly six day physical labor in the field, or in earthly business, which Jesus was engaging in; only the work of the Great Physician performing the merciful miracles of healing and grace. These works glorified God. There was nothing that the Father was displeased with, in what Jesus was doing. It was in no way disrupting Christ’s remembering the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Instead, He was remembering the day in a perfect way; everything was good and right in His words and His actions.

In fact we could go one step further in this reasoning and say that this was the best of all days for this miracle of healing to take place, because it pictured the work of God in regeneration; the cleansing and renewing of the human nature of this man; a work which has regularly been performed by God, in connection with the instrumentality of preaching, on the Sabbath Day, both Old Covenant and New. This is the legitimate work of the Sabbath day, even today. That is, the preaching of the word of God to needy sinners, and the merciful and powerful, and beautiful works of God attending it. Let us learn, from our Lord Jesus, this good theology of how to observe the Sabbath day.

Now, 3rd - The legitimate work of the Christian Sabbath day is - To seek to promote the glory of God in everything that we do or say.

Verse 18 says: “Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” “Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.’” Here we see the level of wickedness to which legalistic people can rise; these Jews wanted to kill the Lord of glory, the Lord of Sabbath, because He was supposedly breaking the Sabbath. They sought to kill Him even more, when He called God His Father, for they knew that this meant that He was making Himself out to be equal with God. This infuriated them. But this is how the Lord Jesus glorified His Father, even in the face of legalistic killers. He said to them that He the Son could do nothing of Himself, but what He saw the Father doing; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.” So what Jesus was declaring was that He was in perfect submission to the Father’s will, and that He was and is the perfect representation of the Father’s nature. His Father’s power to create, and His own power to recreate, was the very same divine power. He did not at all deny that He was God made manifest in the flesh. But He went on to say that He could do nothing of Himself. He would do nothing independent of the Father’s will, and nothing independent from the eternal counsels which He knew that the Father had purposed.

This holy viewpoint which the Lord Jesus adopted in the days of His flesh, that He would seek to promote the glory of His Father, by not doing anything independent of His purposes or contrary to His will, shows forth the excellence of His being, and the perfection of His obedience, in the way that He lived His life. In this, He has given us not only a perfect pattern of how we should observe the Lord’s Day, He has given us the perfect pattern of how we should live the Christian life. The legitimate work of that Sabbath day, for our Lord Jesus Christ, was to glory in the perfections of the Father in His work of sustaining the whole of the first creation. For Him, it was to act upon the thought, that even though Adam brought sin into the world in the beginning and marred that 1st creation, that the Father had appointed Him, by His works, to bring the New Creation to the sinful hearts of all of the elect; sinners who could not save themselves. His delight has always been in the sons of men. Listen to Proverbs Chapter 8, verse 29. Solomon writing “When God the Father marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in His inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men.” That’s the way that it was from the Beginning of the world for our Lord Jesus Christ. His Father was working and He was working. Whatever the Father did in the 1st Creation, He was right there; all things being created through Him and for Him. In His incarnation He did not lose any of His deity; the Father and the Spirit added His humanity to Him.

On this Sabbath day that we are studying, Jesus sought to promote the glory of God in everything that He did, and everything that He said about the Father, and about himself. And He has given us an example of what we should do on this day. Listen to what He would have His spiritual children, all Christians, do. Verse 32 of Proverbs chapter 8. This is what Solomon says of wisdom personified, who is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. “Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways.” “Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it.” “Blessed is the man who listens to Me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.” “For whoever finds Me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against Me wrongs His own soul; all those who hate me love death.” This is what the Jews of that day were doing; they were sinning against the Lord of glory and wronging their own souls. They were actually the ones who were breaking the Sabbath by persecuting the One who they should have been worshipping and learning from. The persons who are keeping the Lord’s Day, the Christian Sabbath, holy, are the persons who listen to His Word, who keep His ways. They are the ones who hear instruction and pursue wisdom in all that they do and say, by

the grace of their Savior. Ask yourself this question: Am I doing the work of the Sabbath, even as My Lord Jesus did the work of the Sabbath? Am I seeking to promote the glory of God in all that I say and do on this day, and every day?