



### Isaiah 58:13-14

*“Save the Lord’s Day!”*

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,

14 Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."

I’m sure you are all very familiar with the various “Save the...” bumper stickers and License Plates. *Save the Whales, Save the Manatees, Save Tibet* even *Save the Planet*. My personal favorite and the only one I considered getting is *Save the Baby Humans*.

Now what do these *Save the >FILL IN THE BLANK<* bumperstickers imply? They imply that the thing to be saved is under attack, and in danger of being wiped out. In the case of certain species of animals, the idea is that if we don’t act to conserve them, they will become extinct.

...

Well, I want to suggest to you Brothers and Sisters that there is something of great value that is rapidly becoming extinct in our society and that it is well past the time when we should have acted to conserve it. It is something that one might think that we Christians would treasure and desire to preserve, but in point of fact we have done almost as much as unbelievers to bring about its extinction.

No, I’m not talking about Marriage, *I’m talking about the Lord’s Day*, the Christian Sabbath. Not just Sunday as just another day of the week, but Sunday as a holy day. That one special day in Seven set aside exclusively for rest and worship and upon which only duties of piety, mercy, and necessity are to be performed.

The evidence for it’s extinction is piling up around us:

You see it in the signs outside of retail businesses that proudly proclaim, **“Now open Sunday.”** You see it in the various youth league games that are increasingly scheduled on Sunday morning, you see it in the demands made by more and more employers that their employees be available to work on Sunday, the second busiest day of the week for shopping. You see it in how normal it is to schedule major sporting events, or TV specials, on Sunday. You see it in the switch over to Seven Day a week production at Factories, or in the fact that the few “blue laws” still on the books preventing commerce or recreation are gradually being struck down. One of the critics commenting a few years back on the battle over blue laws noted: “You see it in the switch over to Seven Day a week production at Factories, or in the fact that what few “blue laws” preventing commerce or liquor that are still on the books are gradually being struck down. One commentator on the battle over the last of the Blue Laws in Massachusetts to be done noted ***“both sides agree it’s a further indication that Sunday is becoming just an ordinary day.”***

In the case of extinction, it is often the case that the now rare animal was once very common. For instance the early explorers in the American West reported herds of Buffalo that looked like seas stretching

endlessly to the horizon. When America was first settled, Buffalo were the most numerous single species of large wild mammal on Earth. And yet by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this once numerous animal was almost totally extinct. Now if you'd only ever seen the pitifully small herds of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the idea that there were once millions would seem outrageous.

The same is true of the Lord's Day here in America, the modern observer of the pitiful state of Lord's Day observance today, would probably be astounded at just how common Lord's Day observance in America once was.

I have spoken to people who can still remember all the shops and businesses being closed on Sunday, and how things gradually changed. It really was once the case that here in America, shops, bars, and restaurants didn't open on Sunday, non-essential businesses didn't operate, sporting events were not held, Christians did not go from church to a restaurant for Sunday Brunch. In fact one of the great debates held in congress in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was over whether the mail should move on Sunday.

For instance this was one of the laws from the early days of North Carolina: ***“Whereas in well-regulated governments effectual care is always taken that the day set aside for public worship be observed and kept holy; and, to suppress vice and immorality, Wherefore ... be it enacted ... that all and every person and persons whatsoever shall, on the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday, carefully apply themselves to the duties of religion and piety; and that no tradesman, artisan, planter, laborer, or other person whatsoever, shall upon the land or water do or exercise any labor, business, or work of their ordinary calling, (works of charity and necessity only excepted) nor employ themselves either in hunting, fishing, or fowling, nor use any game, sport, or play, on the Lord's Day aforesaid, or any part thereof, upon pain that ever person so offending, being of the age of fourteen years and upwards, shall forfeit and pay the sum of ten shilling.”***

Now you might be tempted at this point to say, *“well the fact that something was once common practice in America is no argument that it should be preserved, after all hoop skirts and putting people in the stocks were once common in America too.”*

I would agree with you. A tradition doesn't deserve to be retained merely because it is now or was once common, *is* doesn't imply *ought*. And besides no Christian can be compelled to observe the traditions of men even if it can be proved that they are useful. Jesus instructed the church in Matt. 28:18 that she should teach disciples to ***“observe all things that I have commanded you”*** not the traditions and innovations of men.

But you see the observance of the Lord's Day is not a tradition of men, it is a biblical commandment of the Lord of the Sabbath. And that Christian Sabbath is biblical is a point that almost all the denominations of the United States were once agreed upon.

For instance, section 15 of one of the most famous of the American Baptist Confessions of Faith, The New Hampshire Confession of 1833 reads ***“Of the Christian Sabbath - We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath; and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by abstaining from all secular labor and sinful recreations; by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public; and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God.”***

Let me try very briefly to show you from scripture, why the London Baptist Confession is exactly right in everything says there, and then after that to show you how to keep the Sabbath, what the blessings of the Sabbath are, and to warn you what will inevitably happen to us, individually and nationally, if we lose the Sabbath.

Now I realize that some Christians have been taught that the Sabbath – and that word means cessation or complete rest – was a Jewish ceremonial law, that like the temple sacrifices was done away with when Christ fulfilled the ceremonial law and is therefore not binding on Christians, but that simply isn't true.

The Sabbath, like marriage was instituted at Creation, way back in Gen. 2:3 and it rests upon the Divine example, God did the work of creation for six days and rested on the seventh. Now Almighty God, could have done the work of creation in one day, or in an instant, but he spread it over six in order to set a pattern for us. That one out of every seven days should be a day of rest and worship.

We see that Moses makes reference to observing the Sabbath in Exodus 16 when the Manna was given, before the Israelites even reached Sinai and received the Law.

Then when they did get to Sinai, the Sabbath commandment was #4 in the Ten Commandments:

***Exodus 20:8 " Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.***

***9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,***

***10 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.***

***11 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.***

It is part of the Moral Law written in stone by the finger of God and not part of the ceremonial or judicial laws given separately. Certainly we don't think any of the other laws in the Decalogue have passed away, we don't just have Nine Commandments do we? These laws are an abiding expression of the Holiness of God.

We are told for instance, in the NEW TESTAMENT that part of the reason for the giving of the Moral Law was to convict men, all men – Gentiles and Jews alike of sin, *but how could the fourth commandment be of use in convicting men of sin if it no longer possible to break it?*

What about the New Testament? In the New Testament we see Jesus identifying himself as the Lord of the Sabbath, we see him condemning and removing all the sinful additions to the Sabbath that had been made by the Pharisees, and telling us that it was made for man, that is that it was intended by God to be a gift or blessing to us.

And while originally, the Lord's Day was Saturday, the Seventh Day of the Week, and pointed to the work of creation, by completing the work of redemption and rising again on the First day, Jesus forever changed the Sabbath to the First Day of the Week. That is Sunday. That is why the Christians met to celebrate the Resurrection not once a year on Easter, but every week in worship on the First Day of the Week and why they called that day the Lord's Day as John did in Revelation 1:10 – "The Lord's Day."

And this is a memorial that points forward as well as backward, we read in Hebrews 4:9 that there remains a Sabbath or rest for the people of God, and the rest that is beginning spoke of is that eternal Sabbath that we will enjoy in heaven. The Sabbath is a weekly reminder not only of the Joy that all true disciples have at the Resurrection of Jesus, but also of the coming Joy of our own resurrection.

***How should we keep the Sabbath?*** Well those verses we read in the beginning explain that in detail:

*First we turn away our foot from it. We treat that whole day like holy ground, we do not trample on it, or profane its sanctity.*

We turn our foot away, when we do not do what pleases us what seems good in our eyes, but what pleases God. We should think about the Lord's Day not as day of drudgery, but of delight. It is a Holy Day the Lord's day, we are to Honor it as such, by not doing our own pleasure, and that includes not merely our own business but own recreation and our own words. We can and do profane the Lord's Day by all of our idle talk in which we discuss what is entertaining or interesting to us, but in which God is forgotten. As EJ Young puts it "*What is mentioned tends to draw the heart away from God to the consideration of one's own occupations.*"

If you do keep the Lord's Day this way, he himself promises that it will become a delight to you, and that he will bless you, it will be a means of grace to you. And I tell you this, I have never, in all my time as a Christian encountered a family that didn't experience these blessings when they began to keep the Lord's day holy. That was my own experience.

***So why is such a blessed institution disappearing from our society?*** Simply put, because the World, the Flesh, and the Devil hate the Lord's Day. As they expunge it, they are removing the most constant and visible reminder of the resurrection, of redemption, and of Christian religion from our society. They also know that if they can expunge it totally, the practice of corporate worship will become impossible. ***Let me show you what I mean, how many of you have been told by an employer that you have to do non-essential work on a Sunday?*** That is increasingly common, I myself was told that not just in retail, but when I was working in I.T. In fact, the trend now is to assign random days off. One person gets Tuesday, the Next Monday, Wednesday, and so on. Now when are Christians going to worship when Sunday becomes just another work day? Are we going to hold a worship service every day of the week so small groups can assemble on your random day off, rather than corporately on the Lord's Day? Obviously that's impossible. And as the Lord's Day disappears visible Christianity disappears from society. As RL Dabney noted:

***When it is made to appear that this day is the bulwark of practical religion in the world, that its proper observance everywhere goes hand in hand with piety and the true worship of God; that where there is no Sabbath there is no Christianity, it becomes an impossible supposition that God would make the institution temporary.***

Even Secular critics acknowledge what it does, "*The lifting of blue laws, in their own way, seems to de-emphasize religion, as well as close family, community, and neighborhood ties,*" says David Laband, an economics and policy professor at Auburn University in Auburn, Ala. "*It is part of a broader social and cultural trend toward isolation.*"

One critic actually acknowledged how important it was in the midst of being glad it was going away and that pluralism is prevailing, "*The Sabbath was a time for religion, for family, to renew kinship bonds,*" says Dr. Snyder. "*But religion isn't static in this country. Sunday, Christmas, Easter - these aren't necessarily the days of celebration for everybody anymore. [The repeals] show how dynamic society is, and how much things change.*"

As the Lord's day disappears we are hastening the departure of corporate worship *and we Christians are helping!* How you ask? By encouraging the process!

When you go out to eat or to shop today, you may not be working, but you are making other people work. And you show those businesses that it is profitable to stay open, and you punish the companies like Chik-

Fil-A that close on Sunday, by rewarding their less righteous competition. That's why businesses change their policies! If no Christian shopped or ate out on Sunday, do you seriously think those businesses would bother to stay open? When we take our kids to sporting events, we hasten the extinction of the Lord's Day. Recently we were crushed to find out my six year old daughters dance recital was going to be held on a Sunday, and her dance classes are run by a Christian. We were however touched that when we told our daughter that she wouldn't be able to dance because it was on a Sunday, she answered "*That's ok. Obeying God is more important.*"

Christians if you need an image, think about every Lord's Day as a Whale, and every time you go out to eat, or to shop, or to play little league, think of that as an explosive harpoon. Enough harpoons and we eventually run out of whales.

It's been my experience that some do not find the Lord's day to be a delight merely because they have never tested it and kept it, others do not find it to be a delight because they do not know the Lord of the Sabbath, and trust me, it will be a legalistic and impossible drudgery unless you know Christ. There is not one Commandment that you can even begin to keep if you do not know the only man who kept them all perfectly on your behalf – the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Ah but if you know him, then hear how John Elias, the great Welsh Evangelist described the Sabbath and our duty towards it:**

*"The Sabbath is properly termed the queen of the other days; and we may say that faith, hope, and love are her companions and servants. The gates of her palace are open, she invites all her subjects to her presence, and bountifully offers to satisfy all their wants. The Sabbath continues the same, though the ceremonial law has been abolished. Various comparisons in their greatest abundance cannot set forth the full value of the Sabbath to nations, churches, subjects, or particular persons. It is the memorial of the creation of the world, and the remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. It is the ordinance of our God, and the court day of our King. It is the seal of the covenant, and sign of our profession, the castle of the kingdom, the feast of the Church, the shield of the commonwealth; it is an almoner to the poor, a refuge to the weary, a teacher to the child, a guardian to the youth, a comforter to the old, a touch stone of obedience to the professor, a day of jubilee on earth, the forerunner and shadow of heaven."*

*We ought therefore to defend it, as most valiant soldiers, who when in possession of their stronghold will strive for every inch of the land against those who attack them. If the truths of religion are valuable, then the day for teaching them is important. If religion is good to bridle, her commandments to guide, her promises to support, then the Sabbath is of great value. If the public worship of God is to be supported, his Word to be read and preached, the sacraments to be administered, Sunday schools to be maintained, then the Sabbath is very delightful and valuable. Let us bless God for this day, and pray more to him that he may pour out his Holy Spirit to work powerfully, by the means we use on the Sabbath, till infidelity and irreligion are made to blush and are put to flight."*