



**Worship – Part 24**  
**Acts of Worship – Part 12**  
**The Sabbath Rest**  
**GCSP – 10/20/2007**

A frantic woman called the church as a last resort. Her adopted teenage son was driving her to the brink and she didn't know where else to turn. Their family was not the church going kind, but after countless attempts to get help everywhere else, the police officer who arrested the young man for shoplifting the night before, suggested seeking counsel from the local pastor. The mom figured she had tried everything else, so she called the pastor and asked for a meeting.

The young man had been verbally and physically abusive, he had dabbled in alcohol and drugs, he often got in fights in school, and he would skip school and be missing from home for days at a time.

The pastor asked for the background that had brought this young man into her home in the first place.

The young man's birth mother had become pregnant as a young teenaged prostitute and had no means of caring for the boy. The father was nowhere to be found, so the boy was moved into foster care after a year or so of trying to make things work. After the boy was five-years old, the birth mother came back and petitioned to get her son back, and child services granted that request. After another year of trying, the birth mother finally gave up for the last time and signed away any rights to the boy – never to be seen again.

The mother explained that up until a couple of years ago everything was fine. But now as a teenager something snapped and the young man was becoming impossible to live with.

The young man simply sat slumped in the chair without a sound as his mother explained their situation. This was simply another in a long series of counseling sessions that had absolutely no effect on his attitude or behavior.

The pastor asked the boy to look at him. "Look me straight in the eyes, I want to make sure you hear what I about to say." You young man finally looked up.

"Have you ever heard of Solomon?" The young man shook his head, no. "Solomon was the wisest man to ever live on this planet and he was also the king of a great nation. He proved his great wisdom one day when two prostitutes came before the king to settle a dispute. Both women had recently given birth to baby boys, but one of the infants died. The mother of the dead infant claimed that the other baby was hers and there was no way to determine who was telling the truth."

"Now if I was the king I would have called for a sweeping and detailed investigation to determine who was lying and who was telling the truth, but not Solomon. Instead of ordering an investigation he ordered a sword! He then commanded that the baby be cut in two with half going to one mother and half to the other." "One of the mothers cried out, "No, please do not harm the child, she can have him!"

The young man was now sitting up straight in his chair and hanging on every word. The pastor asked, "Which woman do you think was the real mother?"

"I would guess it was the one who didn't want him to die."

"Exactly; she was willing to give the boy up to protect him. She did not want to give him up, but she loved him so much that she did what was best for him – even if it meant she would never see him again."

The young man's countenance immediately changed and although there were still a few bumps in the road, he got through his teenage years without further incident.

What did the pastor do? He didn't change the young man's situation one bit. He didn't change his past and he didn't change his current circumstances, but he did change his way of thinking. The young man stopped thinking that he was rejected by his birth mother and started thinking that he was loved. His behavior changed when his thinking changed.

Tonight, I am trusting that the truth of God's Word is going to change your thinking in a particular area of worship – quite possibly the most misunderstood and neglected area of worship for most Christians. Tonight we are going to study the Sabbath or the Sabbath rest as I want us to call it.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Proverbs 14**.

**Proverbs 14:8**

**"The wisdom of the sensible is to understand his way, but the foolishness of fools is deceit"** (NASB).

Let's pray.

The NIV renders this Proverb in this way: **"The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception."**

How important is it to **understand** or to **give thought** to your ways? God thinks it is very important. He says you are wise if you do so and you are a deceived fool if you don't. So I think it would be good for us to understand and give thought to how we view the Sabbath rest.

David says in **Psalms 139:23-24**, **"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way"** (NASB).

If you are open to the Holy Spirit's leading, and you are open to having your heart changed, if necessary, by God's Word, then repeat this Psalm with me as a prayer right now: **"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way"**

God instituted the Sabbath rest when He created the heavens and the earth. Even though He didn't further define the Sabbath until hundreds of years later, He instituted the Sabbath rest immediately after the six days of creation.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Genesis 2**.

**Genesis 2:1-3**

**"Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."**

God blessed the seventh day and He sanctified it, or set it apart. Before He created man and woman, God determined that we should have one day out of seven set aside for rest and reflection.

The Lord God Himself gives us this example; the One who never needs rest because He never tires; the One who never needs to reflect because everything He does is perfect; this same One rested and reflected on the seventh day as an example for all of us to follow. And if His supreme example were not enough, He later puts it in His top ten list of most important principles to follow.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Exodus 20**.

### **Exodus 20:1-17**

Now let me ask you some questions: Is it okay to murder? Is it okay to commit adultery? Is it okay to steal? Is it okay to bear false witness against your neighbor? Is it okay to dishonor your father and mother? Is it okay to take the name of the Lord in vain? Is it okay to worship idols? Is it okay to even make an idol? Is it okay to put anyone or anything ahead of God?

Then where did we ever get the idea that it is okay to ignore the Sabbath? Why have most Christians decided to reduce the Ten Commandments down to the nine? On what basis has Christianity decided to ignore one of God's top ten most important commands? Good God-fearing men and women who would never even think about murdering someone or stealing or worshipping an idol or committing adultery, don't even give it a second thought when ignoring God's command for remembering the Sabbath.

When God laid down His law, He was very serious; and He attached very serious penalties for breaking His law. The penalty for worshipping idols and false gods was death. The penalty for murder was death. The penalty for committing adultery was death. The penalty for disobeying your parents was death.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Exodus 31**.

### **Exodus 31:12-15**

God viewed Sabbath breaking the same as murder, adultery, worshipping idols, and disobeying your parents. All of these infractions against His law required the penalty of death. Breaking the other commandments also had serious consequences but the penalties were not as harsh as death.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Numbers**.

### **Numbers 15:32-36**

Do I have your attention now? Are you beginning to consider your ways? Are you pausing to give thought to your current schedule and pace of life?

A good friend taught me to take a look at the frantic pace of life I had. Our discussion caused me to consider my ways. He encouraged me to give some thought to what I was doing to myself and to have a day set aside to reflect and to seek God and to rest. My friend didn't call it the Sabbath but he sure was describing it. So for the last year I have been fairly consistent at taking a day every week for this very purpose. It is usually Sunday, but occasionally that cannot happen so I choose another day in that week. I have had a change of heart and mind to keep the Sabbath.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Isaiah 58**.

### **Isaiah 58:13-14**

**"If because of the Sabbath, you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word, then you will take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."**

Did you catch the emphasis God made through His prophet Isaiah? – **"your own pleasure"**, **"your own ways"**, and **"your own word"** are the things that keep you from remembering the Sabbath. In other words, selfishness, self-centeredness, and pride are the root causes of Sabbath breaking. We ignore or willingly disobey God's ways and God's good pleasure in favor of our **own ways** and our **own pleasure**. We dismiss God's Word for our **own word**.

And in this we have a great lesson that applies to all of our pursuits – not just the Sabbath. We can easily apply man-made principles to our lives thinking it is of God. Someone will tell a cute story or share a principle that sounds good and feels good, but when push comes to shove, you do not have a Bible verse or a Bible principle to hang it on. It's just a cute story or a feel-good illustration; it is **your own way** or **your own pleasure**, not God's.

As Isaiah is teaching us, and as most of us can attest to, we have gone our **own way** in regards to remembering the Sabbath.

What about the example of Jesus in the New Testament, you may ask? The Pharisees were constantly criticizing Jesus and His disciples for breaking the Sabbath. Doesn't this show us that the Sabbath is no longer valid for the church today?

I'm so very glad you asked.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **John 5**.

### **John 5:2-18**

Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath and He told this man to pick up his pallet and walk. The Pharisees were outraged because healing someone was considered to be work and carrying your pallet was considered to be work, and work was simply not to be done on the Sabbath (notice they do not deny healing and they do not deny that Jesus had miracle power, just that He had broken the rules).

Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 12.

### **Matthew 12:1-2**

**"At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.'"**

On this occasion Jesus and His disciples were walking through a field on the Sabbath and they began to pick off some heads of grain and eat. The Pharisees were again indignant because they were breaking the Sabbath. Picking heads of grain was considered to be work and you cannot work on the Sabbath.

And if we were to take the time we could look at many other instances where Jesus and His disciples were breaking the Sabbath.

But were they really breaking the Sabbath? The answer would be yes and no. Yes they were breaking the Sabbath as the Rabbis and Pharisees had added to and added to and added to God's original Sabbath law until it was unrecognizable.

Let's continue reading in **Matthew 12**.

### **Matthew 12:3-8**

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, meaning because He is God the Son, the Sabbath law was created and instituted by Him. He wasn't breaking the Sabbath as He had designed it to be, He was breaking the Sabbath as the Rabbis and Pharisees had designed it to be.

Let's keep reading.

### **Matthew 12:9-14**

Jesus says, "**It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**"

To further my point, quickly go back a few chapters to Matthew 5.

**Matthew 5:21a** – "You have heard..." **Matthew 5:22a** – "But I say to you..."

**Verse 27**, "You have heard"; **verse 28**, "But I say to you"; **verse 31**, "It was said"; **verse 32**, "But I say to you"; **verse 33**, "Again, you have heard"; **verse 34**, "But I say to you"; and it continues all throughout the Sermon on the Mount.

What's the deal? Jesus is correcting the false teaching of the Rabbis and the Pharisees. They had added and changed so much when it came to God's law. Every time Jesus said, "**You have heard**" He was referring to a law of the Rabbis and Pharisees, every time He said, "**But I say to you**" He was referring to God's law.

Jesus was not breaking the Sabbath by healing, or picking heads of grain to eat, or even by telling the ones He healed to pick up their pallets and carry them. Jesus was breaking religious rules made by men, and He thus has given us the example to be able to do the same. We obey God's laws but we are under no such compulsion to obey the religious laws of men.

So is the Sabbath rest still for us today?

Let me introduce a passage of Scripture to you that we will have to wait until next week to completely develop, because at first glance it is quite confusing to most.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Hebrews 4**.

### **Hebrews 4:9-11**

Now the primary context of this passage, beginning in **verse 1**, deals with salvation (and we will develop that next time). But the statement of Scripture still stands, "**there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God**" (**verse 9**).

Beloved, it cannot be any clearer than that.

**"The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception."**

One of the verses we are studying on Monday nights in the spiritual warfare study is **2 Corinthians 10:5**, which says, "**We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing**

**raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."**

I submit to you that one of the best ways to give thought to your ways or to take every thought captive is to remember the Sabbath; to remember the Sabbath by resting, by reflecting on God's Word, and by reflecting on your progress in becoming a mature disciple of Christ.

There is much more to say and not enough time to say it tonight, so please be back with us next time.

Let's pray.