



Worship – Part 25
Acts of Worship – Part 13
The Sabbath Rest – Part 2
GCSP – 10/27/2007

Many years ago, British Columbia was one of the destinations for those who were afflicted with the malady known as "Gold Fever." Those who could afford to continued past British Columbia on up into the Yukon, but many settled further south where the weather was not as harsh and the crowd staking claims was more sparse. Many of the settlers made this beautiful land their permanent home even after the gold rush had subsided. But Gold Fever does not quickly go away – even after generations have passed.

One woman who descended from some of these early settlers was out surveying the condition of the landscape of her property. In the garden area there laid a large boulder that she would have just as soon have removed; but it was too large for her to move and too expensive to hire someone to do it. It was a rather pretty and sparkly boulder so instead she determined to clean it up and make it shine. So she grabbed some sandpaper and got busy.

As the embedded minerals began to glisten in the sunlight she noticed a fine mist of dust that was gold in color. She moistened the tip of her finger and pressed it onto the stone. It was indeed gold dust. Her heart raced as the once dormant fever began to percolate. She sanded harder, leaning her whole body into the task. She was now scrubbing that rock as if she were attempting to rust from a classic car. Gold dust accumulated rapidly.

The fever was in full swing. She was going to be rich!

She stopped a moment to wipe her brow and rest when she noticed her wedding ring felt different on her finger. The topside was still fine but the underside, the part that nestles in the crease where your finger meets your palm, wasn't. The band there was as thin as a wire. She had nearly sanded her wedding ring clean off. All of that gold she was seeing was coming from her ring, not the rock. She had squandered her priceless treasure in pursuit of dust.

Some of you may chuckle at that story and some of you may ache for the old woman, but there is a tremendous lesson here for us all. All of us do the same thing; squander priceless treasure in pursuit of dust.

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

Exodus 20:8-11

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy" (NASB).

Let's pray.

Last week we began to look into the Sabbath and what it means to the 21st century Christian. As we just read, remembering the Sabbath was so important to God that He included it in the Ten Commandments. No place in Scripture do we see any indication that God totally dismissed the sabbath, but we did see a verse that indicates the sabbath is still for us today. **Hebrews 4:9**, says, **"there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God."**

I hopefully gave you the impression last week that remembering the sabbath is still a vitally important command – because it is. But just so we are clear and we true to the Scriptures, we must also see that because of Jesus Christ, the sabbath is viewed in a different light.

Turn with me to **Colossians 2**.

Colossians 2:16-17

“Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (NASB).

Uh-oh, am I now changing course? After all of the evidence I gave last week, have I discovered a passage that proves all of that wrong? Paul lumps the Sabbath in with the dietary laws and the keeping of the Jewish festivals and feasts; doesn't this mean we do not have to remember the Sabbath anymore?

Hold that thought and turn with me to **Romans 14**.

Romans 14:1-9

In this passage Paul again appears to be minimizing the special nature of the sabbath. He doesn't condemn keeping it but he also does not command keeping it. Instead Paul tells us **“each person must be fully convinced in his own mind” (verse 5b)**. And then we see in **verse 6** that the ones who keep the sabbath are doing so **for the Lord** and the ones who regard every day as sanctified unto the Lord are doing so **for the Lord**.

Jesus Himself proclaims that He is **“Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8)**.

So which is it? Are we to obey the command to remember the Sabbath or is it optional for us today?

Let's go back to the passage we wrapped up with last week, and the one I have referred to again this week, and see if we can bring all of this together.

Turn with me to **Hebrews 4**.

Hebrews 4:1-11

There is an abundance of meaning packed into these thirteen verses, and as I mentioned last week, the primary context of the sabbath rest mentioned in **verse 9** is the ultimate rest that comes with salvation. In this rendering of the sabbath rest, the writer of Hebrews is talking about entering into God's rest. The picture is that of God resting on the seventh day from all of His work and you resting from all of your work of disobedience.

Let me try to explain, and trust that the Spirit of God will open your heart and mind to what God is telling us. Concentrate with me. Ask God to illuminate your understanding. This is difficult and this is important.

Some of your Bibles may have a heading for **chapter 4** that says, “The Believer's Rest.” That is a great and profound summary of what God is teaching us. It is the *“believer's”* rest. This rest is exclusive to believers.

Hold your place in **Hebrews** and turn with me in your Bibles to **Psalms 95**.

Psalms 95:8-11

"Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways. Therefore I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into My rest" (NASB).

In this Psalm, God is speaking about those who refused to believe in Him. Specifically He is speaking of a generation of unbelievers from the nation Israel after He had miraculously delivered them from the hands of Pharaoh in Egypt, and then miraculously provided for them in the wilderness for forty years. They had opportunity after opportunity to believe in the God of salvation but they instead hardened their hearts and chose to not have faith in God.

Go back now to **Hebrews 4**.

Verse 3

The writer of Hebrews quotes **Psalm 95:11** in this verse: **"As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest."**

If you are a believer tonight, meaning you have confessed your sins before God, and you have believed that Jesus died for your sins and was raised to life again by God on the third day, and you have submitted to Jesus Christ being the Lord and Master of your life, then you have entered into God's rest. You are experiencing God's salvation now and you will experience His ultimate salvation in heaven for all eternity.

If you are not a believer tonight, then you currently are lumped in with unbelieving Israel of whom God speaks when He says, **"they shall not enter My rest."** And that is a dangerous position to be in. There is still hope if you find yourself in that place tonight. The mere fact that you are here is proof that God has not completely given up on you yet.

So when in **verse 7**, God offers you an olive branch by saying, **"Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts"**, you must make the most of the opportunity and respond to His offer of eternal rest and salvation. And if we were to read verses 12-13 in this chapter you would see that God's Word, meaning the Bible you and I hold in our hands is God's voice! So whenever you read this Bible, and whenever you hear the words of this Bible, and whenever you listen to someone faithfully preaching and teaching the words of this Bible, you are hearing the very voice of God Almighty!

And He pleads with you, when you hear My voice, do not harden your hearts.

Don't miss the opportunity. The people of Israel had opportunity again and again to believe in God's salvation but they rejected God every time. God was patient with them for forty years before He finally rendered His final, foreboding, dooming, and damning judgment – **"They shall not enter My rest."** Their opportunity for salvation was lost, never to return.

So the Sabbath rest in Hebrews refers primarily to salvation but it is also contrasted with disobedience. Let's read **verse 6** and **verse 11**.

"Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience; Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience."

So in this passage, partaking of, entering in, or remembering the Sabbath rest is equated with obedience and not entering into the Father's Sabbath rest is equated with disobedience.

Tying this passage in Hebrews with the passages from the Apostle Paul in Colossians and Romans, we are still left with the question: Are we to obey the command to remember the Sabbath or is it optional for us today?

Remembering that Paul teaches that the choice is to set aside one day as holy unto the Lord or view every day as holy to the Lord, and seeing that the writer of Hebrews speaks of entering into God's rest because the "work" is finished, the actual observance of the Sabbath as God outlined in the Old Testament is no longer a command.

But does that mean it is no longer useful? And does that mean that it is wrong to observe a weekly day of rest and reflection?

Let me ask you this: I think we all agree that God's dietary laws from the Old Testament are no longer required for us or Israel to follow, but are there any physical benefits to following these laws? It has been proven medically and nutritionally that the diet outlined by God in the Old Testament is one that promotes not only good, but great health. But the choice is ours as to what we eat; and most of us suffer the consequences of a bad, or at least not so good, diet.

So before you throw out everything I said last week, and before you remove any thought of observing a sabbath rest in your life on a regular if not weekly basis, and before you remove the word sabbath from your vocabulary, let's quickly consider a few thoughts.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **1 Kings 19**.

1 Kings 19:1-13

Elijah, the great man of God, had just defeated 450 prophets of Baal in a tremendous display of God's power. In the aftermath of this miraculous victory, this man of God is now on the run trying to escape the wrath of one woman.

What was God's prescription for this predicament? Did he tell Elijah to turn back and fight? No, God has him sleep, then he feeds him and has him sleep some more. Then God takes Elijah on a forty-day sabbatical and shows him a great and strong wind, and a massive earthquake, and raging fire. But in all of this activity and turmoil God was nowhere to be found.

Then everything went still and the sound of gentle breeze came drifting in, and in the quietness of the moment the voice of the Lord came to Elijah.

Many of you quote **Psalm 46:10**, even if you don't know it is **Psalm 46:10** – "**Be still and know that I am God.**"

So let me ask you; when are you still? When do you get alone with God for forty minutes, let alone forty days? When do you rest from all of the busyness of this world? Can you remember the last time you weren't in a hurry?

Remember the old woman I spoke of in the introduction? If you are never still, if you are never getting alone with God, if you are never resting both physically and spiritually, you are squandering priceless treasure in pursuit of dust.

Does the Bible command you to take a weekly day of rest on this side of the cross? No. Does the Bible make a strong case for you to do so anyway? Yes. Does it have to be Saturday or Sunday? No.

Let me remind you of two verses I read last week.

Proverbs 14:8

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

2 Corinthians 10:5

"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" (NASB).

If you are always on the run, if you are forever grasping at trying to make this life on earth work out, if you are constantly in a hurry, then there is no possible way that you can obey these two verses. You will never truly be able to give thought to your ways and you will not have a chance to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. And in the context of **2 Corinthians 10:5**, if you do not take every thought captive you are wide open to the attacks of Satan and his demons.

You have to ask yourself: How much do I really care about the things I care about? Otherwise you will constantly be engaged in and consumed by the pursuits of this world that feed your ego but starve your soul.

Is the Sabbath rest required of us anymore? No, it is no longer a command of God for us to obey. Are we foolish if we ignore the wisdom of keeping it? The answer to that is an emphatic, Yes!

Let's pray.