

Victory of the Lamb // February 27, 2022 // Pastor Ben Sadler

Series: Top Ten Ways to Live a Better Life // Sermon: Honor God // Sermon Text: Exodus 20:8-10

We are continuing our sermon series through the commandments called **Top Ten Ways to a Better Life (sermon series screen)**. This week we are on the 2nd and 3rd Commandment. But I'm just going to focus on the third commandment: **Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.**

Let's pray.

The Third Commandment is the only commandment you are not required to follow. Here's what I mean. The Third Commandment is different than all the other commandments. It is the only commandment that is not repeated in the New Testament. In fact, it is the only commandment that Paul explicitly says you don't have to keep. Look at what he says in Romans 14: 5 **One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.**

In context, Paul is talking about following the Sabbath Day laws. And He says that one person might consider the Sabbath day a special day. And another person might think all the days are the same. Each one should be convinced in his own mind. One person is not better than the other.

Why is that? Well, the Sabbath is part of the Old Testament ceremonial and sacrificial laws. It was a part of the covenant that God made with Israel. It was a sign that separated Israel from the rest of the world. And all these signs pointed ahead to Christ.

Paul is very specific in Colossians 2: 16,17: **16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

All these laws pointed ahead to Jesus. The Old Testament purity laws pointed ahead to the purity we have in Christ. The Sabbath laws of rest pointed ahead to the rest that we have in Christ. And now that Christ has come, we don't need to follow those Old Testament shadows because we can look at the fulfillment we have in Jesus. So as a New Testament Christian, you are not under the Old Testament laws. **You do not have to follow the third commandment.**

There was another problem with the Sabbath. Leading up to the time of Jesus and after, people were using these laws to create religious classes. For example, if you kept these laws, you were a 1st class follower of Jesus. But if you didn't follow the laws, you were 2nd class. In Jesus' day, the religious leaders called Pharisees made all sorts of extra laws to be absolutely sure that they followed the Sabbath.

Jesus defied their man-made laws. He healed on the Sabbath. He let his disciples pick grain when they were hungry. The Pharisees condemned him. Jesus responded by saying, **"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27)** In other words, God didn't create human beings for the purpose of keeping the Sabbath laws. God gave the Sabbath as a gift for his people. So he was telling the people to stop treating their Sabbath observance like a badge of honor.

Here's my question for you: Is that the same problem we have today? Do we have a bunch of people walk around bragging, "I rest more than you do"? "No, I rest even less." "Do you know what I did on Saturday? Nothing. I just took time to sit and listen to the birds. I just took time to enjoy a cup of tea or coffee."

Is that what we say? No. Instead we brag about our busyness. For example, if I ask you, "How are you doing?" you might respond, "I'm busy." Busyness is a badge of honor. We are proud of how tight our schedules are. We don't know what to do with a moment of rest.

How is that working out for us? We are restless, exhausted, frustrated, weary, and burdened. I also think it is interesting how we try to solve this problem. What do we do? More energy drinks. Remember when there was just one energy drink? Red Bull. Now you have 2 to 3 coolers at Kwik Trip all dedicated to energy drinks.

So what should we do? Well, we have already said we don't need to follow the Sabbath laws. I'm not here to try to force anyone to stop working on a specific day. But here is what I want to do: I want to look at the original commandant and learn the wisdom in what God said to Israel. Then I want as to consider how we might apply that wisdom today.

So here is the question I want to answer today: **What wisdom can we learn from the Old Testament Sabbath Laws?**

Let's go back to the Old Testament where Moses gave the 10 Commandments. Moses has just led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery. He led them through the Red Sea. Now God wants to make a covenant contract with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. If they keep their side of the covenant they will be God's people and God will bless them and give them the promised Land and use them to bless the world. The 10 commandments were part of the stipulations of that Old Covenant.

1st Commandment is: **You shall have no other gods.**

2nd commandant: **Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God.**

And now the 3rd commandment. ⁸**"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. (Exodus 20:8-10)**

So God told Israel to work hard for 6 days. But on the 7th day, they were told to stop. That's what the word Sabbath means: to cease, to stop. Everyone was to stop working: their whole family, their servants and employees, their animals. Everyone. They were not to put foreigners to work who lived among them.

What's interesting about this commandant is that it is the only commandant that gives a reason for the command. All the other commands are self-explanatory.

There is no need to explain why you shouldn't murder or commit adultery. But God does give a reason for the Sabbath.

¹¹**For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**

God points back to Creation as a reason for keeping the Sabbath. When I was starting in the ministry and trying to get our church going in FL, I had a friend who was watch me work. And he said, "God created the world in 6 days and then took a day off. Who do you think you are?"

There is something about how God created this world and its rhythms that demands that we stop. For example, there is a book called *Blue Zone*. The book researched some of the people who live the longest. One of the groups was the 7th Day Adventist who follow Sabbath laws lived an average 10 years longer than the average population.

I know when I don't take a day off I feel it. This has been one of those weeks. I presented at a conference last Saturday, and I have 2 writing projects due in 2 days. This is all my fault; I packed my schedule. And I'm feeling it.

My kids feel it too. For a while we tried to make Saturday special. We would rest and slow down. We would have a special meal, light candles, and eat skillet cookie. My wife would make a big cookie in a skillet and then we would slap big hunks of ice cream on the warm cookie. As I told my kids about this sermon they told me how much they missed that ritual.

Although there is no New Testament mandate to keep the Sabbath, if we don't stop to rest and rejoice in God's goodness, we're going to feel it.

What wisdom can we learn from the Old Testament Sabbath Laws?

Take time to rest and rejoice.

But that is not the only reason to practice the Sabbath. In Deuteronomy 5, Moses repeats the 10 Commandments. This time he is not at Mount Sinai but at the banks of the Jordan River. The 1st generation coming out of the Promised Land has perished in the wilderness. And now the 2nd generation is about to enter.

Moses gives the law a 2nd time. That's what the word Deuteronomy means. And for the most part the 10 Commandments are identical, except for the 3rd commandment. He says. **"Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you... Why?**

¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

So what does Moses give as a reason for observing the Sabbath Day? Redemption.

They were redeemed, which means bought back. They were released from slavery in Egypt. And when they were in Egypt, they had no day off. They had no Sabbath. They were not seen as precious humans but machines to be used to the extreme.

What wisdom can we learn from the Old Testament Sabbath Laws?

Take time to rest, rejoice, and celebrate our redemption.

We rest in order to celebrate our redemption. We are not slaves but sons and daughters. Jesus famously said, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."

We might want to practice the Sabbath to remember that we are redeemed. We are not slaves but forgiven children of God. We don't have to work to prove our value or worth. God bought us with His own blood. He is the one who has provided us with the gift of a job and talents.

So how do New Testament believers practice the Sabbath? I'm not going to give you rules. The Bible says that in the Old Testament, God treated his people like children. When you are a child there are lots of rules about sleep and rest. We had a rule that our kids took a nap every afternoon and they went to bed at a very specific time. But as they grow older and become adults there are less rules about naps and bedtime. That's how God treats you. You are a mature son or daughter in Christ. You have the Holy Spirit. You figure out how you want to practice rest, worship, and redemption.

Here are some practices (not prescriptions or laws) you can consider to take your Sabbath.

- Take a Saturday to walk in creation.
- Take a Sunday to prepare for worship.
- Come to church and then spend time with your family in the afternoon

One way that you can practice the Sabbath is through our app. For about six months, our church has been using the app **Your Daily Victory**. You can find the App on both app stores. Each day I put out a spiritual practice. This is one way that we can find ideas and encourage each other.

We know that our culture prides itself in its busyness. It is a badge of honor. But look at what our busyness has caused us. We are burned out, restless, anxious and lonely. Although we are not obligated to follow the strict rules of the Old Testament sabbath, I believe we still can find ways to practice rest and rejoice in Christ.