

SABBATH PRINCIPLES

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October 4, 2020

Matthew 12:1-14

1. The Hebrew word interpreted Sabbath means an intermission, to rest, or to cease from work.
2. We know from Genesis 2:1-3 that God:
 - a. "...rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done."
 - b. "...blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

NOTE: God did not cease from being God, for if He had everything He had made would have been destroyed. He simply ceased His creative activity.
3. God incorporated the Sabbath principle into the Law. Exodus 20:8-11
"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 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. 11 "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."
4. By the time Jesus walked the earth Jewish tradition had turned the Sabbath from a day of rest to a day of burden, and in the process contradicted God's purpose for the Sabbath. One writer observed, "Baths could not be taken for fear some of the water might spill on the floor and wash it. Chairs could not be moved because dragging them might make a furrow in the ground, and a woman was not to look in a mirror lest she see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out."
5. The actions of Jesus' disciples, and Jesus' healing of a man's crippled hand were clear violations of Jewish traditions, but not violations of God's Law concerning the Sabbath.
NOTE: I think it is significant that the commandment related to the Sabbath is the only one of the Ten Commandments that the New Testament does not recommend to Christians or command for Christians.
6. I personally believe that the principle behind the Sabbath still applies in that the followers of Jesus Christ cannot obey the teachings of Christ, or those of the Apostles, without ceasing from the work related to making a living, and from the ordinary pursuits and responsibilities of life, to spend time in prayer, fellowship, preaching, and other forms of worship and ministry.
 - a. It is strongly suggested in Scripture that the early church gathered on what we call the Lord's Day, or the first day of the week. 1 Corinthians 16:1-3
Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.
 - b. Paul also wrote the following.
 - (1) Romans 14:4-5
Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

(2) Colossians 2:16-1

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 — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

c. At the same time we are commanded, “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Hebrews 10:19-25

NOTE: All of the things mentioned in verses 24 and 25 require an investment of time and effort outside of the normal pursuits, responsibilities, and pleasures of life.

7. In responding to the accusations of the Pharisees Jesus provided some guidelines that should help us keep our priorities straight every day.

I. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, the seventh day, and every other day. 8

God is just as concerned about how we live Monday through Saturday as He is about what we do with our Sundays.

II. God desires compassion and not a sacrifice (empty religious activity). 7

A. The Pharisees cared a great deal about their religious traditions, but very little about people’s real needs.

NOTE: Jesus’ disciples were hungry, and there was nothing wrong with satisfying their hunger.

B. What we do should be the outgrowth of who we are in Christ.

1. Our worship and gathering together should be motivated by our love for God and for one another.
2. Our church calendar should not be more important than acts of compassion and love.

III. A judgmental, critical spirit can blind us.

A. Driven by their legalistic approach to life the Pharisees were simply looking for some reason to accuse Jesus.

B. Many are like them today.

1. They reduce Christianity to legalistic rule following rather than a vital and ongoing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. They are quick to find fault rather than seeking to encourage and support others.

NOTE: This does not mean that we do not hold others accountable, but it does mean we are not to be judges with evil and self-serving motives.

3. Their whole approach to life is a negative application of rules and regulations rather than a joyous journey of discovery, progress, and ministry to others.

IV. What really matters is people.

A. Jesus asked, “How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

NOTE: Jesus was stating a truth rather than asking a question.

1. The Pharisees interpreted the Law in a way that protected their personal interests and property.
 2. Their traditions were misguided because they corrupted God's purpose for the Sabbath.
- B. In Mark 2:27-28 Jesus stated, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
- NOTE: We could say, "The church was made for man, and not man for the church."
- C. God does what He does for His glory and our benefit.

V. To fail to do good is to do harm.

- A. Again in Mark's account we read the following. Mark 3:1-6
- He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. 2 They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3 He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" 4 And He said to them, "**Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?**" But they kept silent. 5 After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.
- B. Jesus's question does not allow for any middle ground.
- C. It was within Jesus' power to help the man with the withered hand right then, and it would have been wrong not to do so.
- D. We need to be constantly available and always ready to be God's instruments in the lives of others.

APPLICATION

1. If Jesus is Lord of our lives we are going to obey Him regardless of how others might interpret our actions.
2. We are going to be led by the Holy Spirit and motivated by compassion towards others and a desire to glorify God.
3. Our lives are going to be lived in conformity with the Word of God and the will of God.
4. The life of Jesus Christ is going to be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Corinthians 4:7-12