

Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

¹² *“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but 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 manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. 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.*

Set Apart and Guard Time for the LORD so that...**(1) You remember what the LORD has Done****(2) Your Household Learns about What is Important.**

As the young boy watches his father unpack the truck and the trailer, as he watches his father set up the tent and prepare the grill the boy asks his father, “Why?” “Why do we take this camping trip every year? Dad, you must really love camping!” With a smile on his face the father takes a break from his preparations and sits down next to his son. “I like camping, but most importantly we take this trip every year because I love you. I want to show you how to camp, teach you how to make a fire and fish, but most importantly I want to show you and teach you that you are important to me, and so we make time every year so that we can take this trip. I want you to enjoy and remember these times, but most of all I want you to remember that I love you and our whole family.”

You and I might have similar traditions and similar summer routines that we have developed through the years and now these traditions have become something we really anticipate, especially as the summer months roll around. We circle the date, we make our plans, and we guard that time with all our might. We might have to adjust other plans that come up. We might even pass up on a few things or say no to a few other events as we protect and guard this time that we see as important. We set aside time and guard that time to take a family camping trip, to visit the lake, to take the grandkids fishing or the granddaughters shopping. We make time to take the kids to a ball game, to a concert or a car show, or out golfing. We set aside time and we are careful to guard that time so that we can visit old friends or make it to that family reunion. These are all the traditions that we hold so dear that we make time for them, not just because of the *things* that we do, or the routines that we carry out, but we set apart and guard time for such events because we have a sense that time spent with family and friends is important.

As the LORD established the Sabbath Day for his people he was carefully laying down traditions that would remind his children of what was truly important. As the LORD established the Sabbath Day he was creating a way to remind his people of his love on a regular basis. So as we take a closer look at this commandment of our LORD God we see his

great love as he commands his children then and his children today to Set Apart and Guard Time for the LORD so that (1) you remember what the LORD has done; (2) so that Your Household Learns about what is Important.

As we think about the Old Testament routines that surround the Sabbath day we might easily get caught up in the particulars, the members of the household listed, the limitations, the rules and the regulations. As God established this day of rest he was very thorough in his instructions. ***13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but 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 manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do.*** Our LORD's instructions to his people were very specific and involved every aspect of their home life. As our God unpacks all these regulations before his people, his children might very well ask, "Why?" "Why uphold all these regulations, why go through this routine every week? Why go through all the trouble to make sure that everyone in your household observed this day? Why" Such curiosity, especially in this case can be a good thing, in fact that is the type of thinking that God wanted from his children: to ask why, to consider why they were kept from their regular routine; because what was the answer? Why did God want them to rest from all their labors on the 7th day? Why observe the Sabbath? God tells his children: ***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.***

God had established this law not as some day long inconvenience to humble his people and elicit from them a day of obedience. He had not established this day so that his people would be forced to go through endless rituals or to watch their actions closely in order to please him. No, God's intention for the Sabbath day was not for His own benefit, but for the spiritual benefit of his people. It was to be a day to be reminded of God's love for them. In every ritual, every practice, every regulation there was a subtle or not so subtle reminder that as God had delivered them and cared for them in the past, he would continue to do so in the present and in the future.

The prescribed physical inactivity of the Sabbath day was established to create an opportunity for each person to concentrate on solemn spiritual activity. It was designed to be a day of physical rest and more importantly spiritual rest. It was a day upon which God's people would be refreshed as they remembered what their faithful LORD and their powerful God had done for them.

We too, on this day of rest, pause and praise our God as we realize once again that this same covenant LORD who saved his from Egypt would rescue his people not only from slavery in a foreign land, but slavery from sin, death, and the devil. The LORD, the covenant God, who always keeps his promises, wants his people to set aside time, and guard that time, so that they would consider and remember the goodness and the power of our God.

That time spent away from the stuff of everyday life was to be set apart and guarded for the Lord so that the sinner could consider the love and care of our God. And like that special camping trip or that specially planned golf outing the actual routine of the day serves a greater purpose than the routine itself as it fosters, reestablishes, and strengthens the relationship between God and his children. Now of course, unlike the camping trip this is

more than a mere routine. This is even more than a welcome tradition. We know that the command of God to Remember the Sabbath Day is one of the 10 commandments. This is not a suggestion or some good advice, but God makes this command: Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. That is, we should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.

This is a command of God, but often we often treat it as something else. At times we see it as a mere a suggestion. We might set aside time to consider what the Lord has done, we might not, it all depends on what we have going on. We fail to protect and guard time for our LORD in the way that God wants us to. We treat this command of the Holy God as suggestion; or in our sinfulness we may see it as a nuisance or difficult obligation. We may set aside the time, but we may do it begrudgingly as we think about all the things we could be doing. We set aside the time and go through the motions because this is simply what we are required to do. We treat God's command as a suggestion, we see it as a nuisance, or maybe we take that command that should convict us and we make it into something that might help us look more pious before our peers or somehow appear holier before our God. Like some modern day Pharisee we follow this command to show off, so that others may see how dedicated we are to God rather than using this time as God intended to remember, to consider how gracious our holy God has been to me a poor miserable sinner.

As we look at this command we can see that this law was given not simply to squeeze obedience out of God's people, nor was it given so that believers might build up points or bragging rights with God or those around them, but rather this command was given by our God in his great love for us. For his Old Testament people God established a memorable routine that would regularly remind the people that he loves them. As they paused and took a break from everything in their regular schedules and routines, they would remember - as individuals as well as when they gathered together - they would remember what He had done for them. And in doing so they would learn what was important.

That still holds true for us today. The chief benefit of this day of rest for us is the opportunity it affords the Holy Spirit to work faith in us by the preaching of his Word. Setting aside time to hear God's Word on a regular basis is a command of God. It is a command given in love to help us and to strengthen us. It is a command that reminds us that time spent in God's Word is important. And so regularly, and weekly we observe spiritual rest. Because Jesus has fulfilled the Old Testament Law we are not bound to the 7th day or any particular day to worship our Lord. You and I can observe spiritual rest each day as we are reminded through personal Bible Study, daily devotions, as well as public worship offered on a variety of days that we are sinners and God sent his son to save us. I a sinner, who so easily loses sight of this simply truth in the midst of the distractions and frustrations and temptations of daily life am reminded again and again to remember, to consider what my God has done for me. God remembered me. He saw me in all my wretched sin and in his great love for me he reached out his saving hand to rescue you and me. Even though Christ has fulfilled the Sabbath by giving us eternal rest the basic principle remains: Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. We are to take time out of our busy schedules to consider what our God has done for us. We are to set aside and guard time to hear God's Word, and to worship our LORD and Savior.

This command, however, serves as more than a personal reminder, but it also has a much more far reaching effect. Notice how this command was given in a way that affected the entire household. The Sabbath routine would make it clear from the head of the household down to every member that something important was going on. Servants and sons, maids and daughters, young and old, everyone in the house was made aware that this remembering of what God has done was important.

This can be another place where modern day believers would do well to take a closer look at God's command. On one hand sometimes believers today (especially parents dealing with their children) can make church attendance into a cold practice of outward obligation which leaves members of the household with a work righteous attitude toward setting aside time for God. While on the other hand, (perhaps in an effort to offset such a heavy handed approach) some believers deemphasize the importance of church attendance to the point that the impression is given that our LORD and his word are not as important as other things.

God established the Sabbath Day to be a day of rest for his people. He established this command to be a blessing for his children. It is a good thing to set aside time to be in God's Word on a personal basis, but public worship is important as it is the most obvious and public way that we encourage one another in the faith. As parents encourage their children, as a husband encourages his wife, or friend her neighbor, coming to this place of worship, gathering together as believers, setting aside time to gather together to remember what our God has done for us is part of an established tradition that is a blessing for believers of all ages, for individuals, and entire households. Yes, we have to be careful not to make coming to worship an empty routine or simply a pious practice. But it is vital that we make it a priority, that we follow God's command to remember the Sabbath day. Setting aside this time for worship, guarding this time to consider what the LORD has done might mean getting up early on a Sunday morning in the summer. It might mean going through all the effort to drag the kids out of bed, getting them dressed, piling everyone in the car. It might mean making that trek over to church on a regular basis. All this may be part of a memorable routine that instills in God's people that hearing God's Word is important. It might even mean adjusting your plans to make it to worship before or after a trip, finding a place of worship while on vacation, making a point to come to worship on a Monday night, a Saturday night, or a Tuesday night. Such efforts serve to remind us and teach those in our household and those around us, the importance of God's Word.

Remember the Sabbath Day, by keeping it holy, sacred, set apart. "Why?" Because of Heavenly Father wants us to take time to remember and recall how much he loves us. He remembered us and in love sent his Son into this world. Our faithful LORD, our powerful God, extended his mighty arm to save us, and now He gives us his promises to sustain us. Coming to public worship to be reminded of God's love is not some empty exercise in piety, but it is part of following a command that our God gave to us for our benefit and out of his love for us. Remember the Sabbath day, by keeping it holy, and you will be blessed with rest for your souls. Amen.