

THE JOY OF THE SABBATH

The following is a summary of a sermon by Rod Dean

The Sabbath day is a test. It establishes whether the first three commandments have become part of us. In other words this day, how we react to this day and how we feel on this day reflects whether or not we love the Lord our God with all our heart and all our might and all our soul.

How much does the Sabbath mean to us? Do we view it as God says, as one of the greatest blessings He has given us?

Before we can love our neighbour as ourselves we must experience the love of God in our lives. Before we can have the love for everyone else to the same degree we love ourselves we must love God with all of our hearts and this day is critical to understand whether we love God with all of our hearts.

The Sabbath is the only sign identifying those who are true Christians today. It is the real test command. The people of the world are willing to acknowledge the other nine commandments but the Sabbath command is the only one they positively rebel against. It is the one that is the crucial test of obedience. It identifies those who have surrendered their will to God, who obey God regardless of persecution or cost! And when we started to keep the Sabbath we understood that. It separated us, it identified us and it gave us an understanding of who God is, and what God is doing on this earth.

Notice now Isaiah 58, verses 13-14: "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath from doing your pleasure on my holy day and call the Sabbath **a delight**, the holy day of the Lord honourable and shall honour him not doing your own ways, nor finding your pleasure, nor speaking your own words. Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord." Notice the emphasis is on God.

Now the word I want to focus on today is delight. The word delight originally comes from a Hebrew word where you get the word luxury from, you get the word pleasant or soft or delicate. Now God is telling us that the Sabbath is something that brings a softness, a delicateness, a pleasantness or delight in our lives. The Sabbath is a luxury to the people of God. This day is not a day that the establish our own righteousness on like the Jews. They became embroiled in their own do's and don'ts and they made the Sabbath a burden by their own traditions and not properly observing it as God intended. **This is a day we seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.**

We're going to look at today this day of riches, of delicateness, of luxury God has given us. I'm going to go through several points of how this day is a luxury so we can examine ourselves to see if we have received the full blessings of keeping God's Sabbath. In Exodus 31:17 we read: "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

That word refreshed is an interesting one. It comes from the idea of a cool breeze that comes across your face like when you go on a hike at Summer Camp that they like sticking ministers with and that you're climbing up a mountain in the humidity of a Queensland summer and on a rock face and you're asking yourself, "Why am I here?" And you come around the rock face and a cool breeze comes across your face and you feel refreshed. You feel rejuvenated, you feel renewed and suddenly there's purpose to the hike. Your vision comes back to you and things become clearer. You see the beautiful views and you realize their is value to the hike because that cool breeze came across your face.

Well the Sabbath is just like that. It's a day to be refreshed. It's a day to be renewed. It's a day we need to realize how important is God's purpose and we need to be reminded of that purpose.

It is a day that God has given to us so we can withdraw from the treadmill and the distractions and the hassles and begin to realize their is a meaning. We should make sure in our Christian life that we do understand why God formed the church, why we were called and what it means to be a Christian in God's church and be refreshed in the clarity of that vision and that purpose. It is a day to be physically and to be refreshed in God's way of life and the purpose of human life.

In Isaiah 40 we read in verses 28 to 31: "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth neither faints nor is weary. There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall utterly. But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and be not weary. They shall walk and not faint."

The old eagle, what he does when he sees his beak is not sharp like it used to be, his talons are dull and his feathers are dowdy and when he comes through the air, he is whistling through the air and his prey therefore gets away. What the old eagle does; he goes to a high place, a place of refuge and he starts to pluck out the old feathers. He washes himself in the freshness of a mountain stream and begins to hone his beak on a rock and his talons upon a rock. He's renewed. He's rejuvenated and when he leaves his place of refuge and flies back and he

comes screaming through the sky, not whistling with old feathers; this time he catches his prey.

The Sabbath is also to renew us like the eagle. It's to renew us with the strength of God, to renew us with God's spirit and remotivate us with God's strength and purpose and to keep us going. The physical rest, as well as the spiritual rejuvenation is a wonderful blessing. After a long, hard week how refreshing and wonderful it is to sit down and relax on the Sabbath from all the hassles of the job. The Sabbath is a law of health because it gives us a chance to rest from the stress and worries of life and one of the greatest problems today in health is the emotional stress and anxiety people have. The Sabbath is a day in which we can in absolute confidence and faith have a day of rest physically and mentally. The Sabbath teaches the laws of success especially the first - the right goal, and the last - seeking God's guidance.

The next point about the Sabbath is that it establishes holiness in our lives. It is a day which we begin to focus on the values, the standards, the character of God we are to develop in our lives. On this day we switch off the television set, we withdraw from spectator sports, we calm the environment with relaxing music from time to time and we dress neatly and cleanly for church and we begin to think about our values and what it means to be holy, what it means to be like God.

We seek the character of God on this day. It's a day we consider what God is - His love, mercy and compassion.

The Sabbath helps establish family life. It's a day of family communication. It's a day in which the father can have 24 hours set aside with his family, to laugh with his children, to play with his children, to talk with his children and to share and to listen to his children, to hear what's happening to them in their lives and school and their worries. The Sabbath is a day in which father and mother can share their lives with their children and listen to their children and what friends they're making at school. In that loving environment a child will learn to honour it's parents.

It also is a day in which we experience that which is talked about in Psalm 133: "Behold how good" - how delightful, how pleasant, how wonderful - "it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"(v.1). Isn't it wonderful to meet the love of God flowing when we meet one another. It's a day in which the love of God encourages one another, exhorts one another, inspires one another, shares with one another. So we see how wonderful God is and how wonderful it is to be a part of the family of God.

Notice Ephesians 4, verse 7: "But to each of us grace was given." Grace is gifts - God's blessings poured out on us. Notice some of the gifts He gives us in verse 11: "And he himself gave to some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers."

Sabbath services are a gift. Sabbath services are a luxury where God pours out His gifts unto men to be given to you. Your ministry is a gift. The word of God you hear is a gift because it's going to help you grow in God's character of love.

The Sabbath is a day on which we hear inspiring sermons from the ministry and a day in which we meet with one another, spend time with one another talking and enjoying one another's company and getting to know one another better.

It's a day of wonderful, enjoyable fellowship. It's a day for considering God's works, His character of love. It's a day to be positive and it is one of the most wonderful blessings God has bestowed on mankind.