

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

KEEPING THE SABBATH

Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

Isaiah 56:2

Religious and self-righteous men will always prefer the husk of the grain to the pure meat of the kernel. They will always find their greatest delight in religious duties which can be seen by the multitudes and deemed to be satisfying to their darkened minds. They are generally not content with simply fulfilling those duties themselves, but feel compelled to lay these burdens upon those who are GOD's freeborn children, often making them the standard of conduct by which, they say, the true children of GOD can be identified.

This is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the determination of many to define the commandments which the LORD gave to Moses for the children of Israel, as the law of GOD. It has been my observation that the litmus test of those who would lay these commandments on the backs of GOD's children is most often a magnification of the fourth commandment, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exo 20:8), because compliance with this commandment can be easily scrutinized by them. (as it was by the Pharisees)

We have no doubt as to the veracity and holy nature of this commandment, yet we reject the notion (as did the LORD JESUS) that the GOD of heaven and earth has any regard to days and religious times and seasons. It is vitally necessary for the sons of GOD to view the "keeping of the SABBATH" in the same light in which the LORD has revealed it. If a man misses the purpose of this commandment he cannot have a clear understanding of salvation by grace alone, but will continue to mix in the works of the flesh as if there was some sort of compatibility between the two.

The word "Sabbath" literally means to cease or rest. The LORD first illustrated the principle of the Sabbath when HE rested on the seventh day. "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." (Gen 2:2) HIS work in creation was finished and therefore HE "rested" from HIS labors since there was nothing left to be done.

HE next taught the children of Israel about the principle of the Sabbath when HE instructed them to cease from gathering manna on the seventh day. "Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none." (Exo 16:26) They could not rest from gathering manna on any day but the seventh, it was a unique day which was totally set apart from all others. There were no substitutes for it, for that manna which was held over to any other day "bred worms and stank" (Ex. 16:20).

Then HE gave the "law" to Moses which demanded the observance of the day as holy unto the LORD. No work at all was to be done, it was to be a day of total rest, when all labors ceased and human endeavor was forbidden. "Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is

holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” (Exo 31:14)

The LORD’s anger was stirred against the Israelites for polluting or profaning the Sabbath by performing their own religious observances and other fleshly endeavors on that day which HE said was to be set apart unto HIM, *“they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness.” (Ezek 20:21)* *“Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.” (Isa 1:13-14)*

Then the LORD contrasted the “truth” of the Sabbath with those errors entertained about it by the epitome of religious men, the Pharisees. HE overturned the very basis upon which their understanding of it stood when HE said, *“The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.” (Mar 2:27-28)* They exalted the day as a “holy object”, (actually making it an idol of sorts) counting their religious observance of it to be of more value than the ONE who is the TRUE OBJECT of it. They were too blind to see that the LORD provided it for the benefit of HIS children, HIMSELF being the LORD of it.

The writer of Hebrews (which I believe to be Paul) says *“There remaineth therefore a rest (literally a Sabbath keeping) to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” (Heb 4:9-10)* This rest into which the sons of GOD enter into is a:

Cessation of labor. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph 2:8-9)* CHRIST JESUS is the SABBATH of the sons of GOD. HE has finished the work which HE came to do and is now seated at the right hand of HIS FATHER. The salvation of the sons of GOD is that which is purchased by CHRIST and freely bestowed on them without any labor on their part.

Particular and singular rest. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)* As the LORD said to Thomas, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)*

A Holy righteousness. That which is set apart for the sons of GOD alone, *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (1Cor 1:30)* *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2Cor 5:21)*

A pure SABBATH keeping. There can be no mixture of man’s endeavor included in that which is pure. *“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” (Heb 4:3)* When HE said *“It is finished”* HE spoke of the finality of that which HE determined to perform from the beginning. True faith is that which has found a resting place not in device, creed, or religious observance.

CHRIST JESUS, our LORD is the only SABBATH we desire or recognize. The only fashion in which the Sabbath day (which was a type and foreshadow of the true SABBATH) could be kept without polluting it, was to cease all endeavor and effort. May we be those who are found to be “keepers of this rest” and not those who seem to come short of it by their insistence on their own deeds of righteousness and duty works. *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” (Heb 4:14)*

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