

114. The Book of Romans 14:5-6

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

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(2-4-26)

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This evening in our study in Romans we're in Chapter 14 where Paul continues to give some instructions and final exhortations with regard to Christian living and the importance of unity in the Body of Christ.

As Chapter 14 opens up, Paul focuses on something that had divided the Christian Church in Rome—LEGALISM.

Legalism has been a problem in the Church ever since its inception. Legalism attempts to be made right with God based on externals (observing religious holy days, keeping sacraments, punishing yourself as a show of piety, etc.).

One of the main problems with legalism is that—people want to make their *convictions* about spiritual and moral things a *universal* mandate for *all* Christians to adhere to. This gives them a sense of self-worth by making them feel spiritually superior, leading them to look down on others that don't follow their example—just like the Pharisees in Paul's day.

As we said last time, the believers in Rome were dividing over **diets** and **days**.

Last week we looked at the legalism (and the division it caused) that was associated with the eating of certain foods—primarily meat that had been sacrificed to pagan idols.

Romans 14:2-3 (NKJV)

2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

Tonight, we want to shift our attention to the division that had come into the church based on the observing of special days in the worship of God—

Romans 14:5-6 (NKJV)

5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it...

When we talk about the church dividing over special days in their worship of God, the issue in Paul's day was—should Christians keep the Sabbath?

There were many Christians in Paul's day (saved Jews) but also today who believe that as Christians, we are still bound to keep the Ten Commandments (as laws) which includes the Sabbath—let's look at that.

The first time the concept of the Sabbath is introduced in the Bible is in Genesis 2—

Genesis 2:1-3 (NKJV)

¹Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ²And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

When it says that God "**rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done**"—it isn't implying that God rested because He was *tired* or *weary*—

Isaiah 40:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ 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...

God doesn't need to rest in the sense of rejuvenating Himself or replenishing His energy because when God works there is no loss or dissipation of energy and therefore—He can't be fatigued:

Psalm 121:4 (NLT)

⁴ Indeed, he who watches over Israel never slumbers or sleeps.

The Hebrew word translated "**rested**" in Genesis 2:2 (*Shabbat*) simply means to '*cease from activity*.' When applied to God in Genesis 2 it means that—God '*ceased from His creative activities or work*'.

In other words, He had completed all creation, so there was nothing more for Him to create—therefore, He rested from creating.

Even though it says that God rested on the seventh day—the word **Sabbath** isn't used. The first time the word '**Sabbath**' appears in the Scriptures is in Exodus 16:23 when God gave it as a law to Israel.

In fact, we read in the Torah that God gave the Sabbath to Israel as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant—

Exodus 31:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.

The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant and as such was only intended for Israel.

Now there are many who believe that since God singles out the seventh day for special mention in Genesis 2:3 when it says that "*God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work.*"

And that since this predated the Mosaic Covenant by 2500 years—they claim it means that the Sabbath transcends the Mosaic Covenant and applies to all mankind (Jews and Gentiles)—even Christians under the New Covenant.

However nowhere in the Old Testament does God ever give the Sabbath as a law to the Gentiles—He only gives it as a law to Israel under the Mosaic Covenant. For that matter when it says that God *rested* on the seventh day—He doesn't apply that to Adam and Eve—nor is man even mentioned in connection with this seventh day rest (i.e., '*only God rested*').

You see, Man at this point ('Mr. and Mrs. Man'—Adam and Eve) didn't need to rest from their labor because they didn't need to work to feed themselves before the Fall—everything in the Garden grew and brought forth all by itself (Genesis 1).

Again, even though it says that God rested from His creative work on the seventh day and blessed it and sanctified it—He gave no mandate in Genesis 2:3 that man was to observe the Sabbath.

➤ *"Then why did God sanctify the seventh day and bless it if it wasn't to be observed as a day of rest?"*

I didn't say the seventh day wasn't to be observed at all as a day of rest—all I'm saying is that it was not given to all mankind as a law to be obeyed—but rather was intended by God as a principle to be observed:

Exodus 23:12 (NKJV)

¹² Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

Let me say it again, the Sabbath was never given to mankind as a universal law, it was only given to Israel under the Mosaic Covenant.

Nowhere in the New Testament is the Church commanded to keep the Sabbath—on the contrary we read—

Colossians 2:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths,

¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

A shadow contains no substance but is cast by something or someone of substance.

The Old Testament feasts, sacrifices and Sabbaths all pointed to Jesus who is the substance—He said, *"The volume of the Book it is written of Me."* (Psalm 40:7) However, once the reality has come, we no longer live in the shadow—we now live in Christ who is the fulfillment of these things.

You see, there were those in Paul's day that were trying to put Gentile Christians under the Mosaic Law—condemning them for not keeping the Jewish holy days including the Sabbaths.

Paul made it clear in Galatians that New Testament believers are not under the Law of Moses—

Galatians 3:24-25 (NKJV)

²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor [the Law].

Once the law does its job by showing us our sin and proving our inability to keep the law for righteousness and therefore drives us to Christ for His righteousness—the purpose of the law in our lives has been fulfilled!

It's like the initial rockets that were used to propel the space shuttle off the launching pad into outer space free from earth's gravitational pull.

That was their sole purpose, and once they carried the shuttle to that point, they fulfilled their purpose and were then jettisoned—and the same is true with the law.

Once the law has brought us to Jesus for His righteousness—it is no longer needed and is therefore jettisoned (as laws carrying punishment)—but not jettisoned as the character of God to be emulated by His children (we are still not to steal, lie, commit adultery, etc.)!

Paul expounded on the purpose of the law in the believer's life when he said—

1 Timothy 1:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person [it's not made for Christians], but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners...[only for unbelievers]...

Romans 10:4 (NKJV)

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

There are many Christians who believe we are still bound to keep the moral law (the Ten Commandments), which, they say, includes the Sabbath (not for salvation but for sanctification)—the same error that the Galatians fell into which Paul rebuked them for:

Galatians 3:1–3 (NKJV)

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

And yet many Christians today are convinced that we as Christians are still under the Ten Commandments including and especially the Sabbath—what about this?

I think author William MacDonald brings clarity to this issue when he said,

“A common question in a discussion of the believer’s relation to the law is, “Should I obey the Ten Commandments?” The answer is that certain principles contained in the law are of lasting relevance. It is always wrong to steal, to covet, or to murder.

Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament, with an important distinction—they are not given as laws (with penalties attached), but as training in righteousness for the people of God (2 Timothy 3:16b). The one commandment not repeated is the Sabbath law: Christians are never taught to keep the Sabbath (i.e., the seventh day of the week, Saturday).

The ministry of the law to unsaved people has not ended: “But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully” (1 Timothy 1:8). Its lawful use is to produce the knowledge of sin and thus lead to repentance. But the law is not for those who are already saved: “The law is not made for a righteous person” (1 Timothy 1:9).

The righteousness demanded by the law is fulfilled in those “who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:4).

Therefore, the person who trusts in Jesus is no longer under the law; he is under grace (Romans 6:14). He is dead to the law through the work of Christ. The penalty of the law must be paid only once; since Christ paid the penalty, the believer does not have to. It is in this sense that the law has faded away for the Christian (2 Corinthians 3:7–11). The law was a tutor until Christ came, but after salvation, this tutor is no longer needed (Galatians 3:24, 25).

Yet, while the Christian is not under the law, that doesn’t mean he is lawless. He is bound by a stronger chain than law because he is under the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). His behavior is molded, not by fear of punishment, but by a loving desire to please his Savior. Christ has become his rule of life (John 13:15; 15:12; Ephesians 5:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; 3:16).”

As Christians we are now ‘in Christ’ and as such we are partakers of everything Jesus accomplished. He fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17) and since we are in Him the law has been fulfilled in us as well.

You say, “*Including the Sabbath?*”—yes, including the Sabbath—in fact, the New Testament says that Christ *is* our “*Sabbath rest*” (read Hebrews 4).

For the Christian who is in Christ—every day is a Sabbath (a day of worship and rest from our works to get us into heaven). Since Jesus is our “Sabbath rest”—it means as Christians we are not violating the Sabbath by not setting aside one day of the week to rest and worship God.

For the Christian—every day is a perpetual Sabbath by virtue of us being in Christ!

➤ “*Is it wrong for some to set aside one day as a ‘special’ Sabbath to observe?*”

Certainly not! As long as they don’t try to make it a universal law for all Christians to obey—even as Paul said:

Romans 14:5-6 (NKJV)

5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind [i.e., ‘keeping the Sabbath is an individual choice based on personal conviction]. **6** He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it...

If the Sabbath law was still in effect and applicable to the Church Paul wouldn’t have taken such a lax position on those who didn’t set aside one day (the Sabbath) but treated everyday as a special day of worship and communion with the Lord.

In fact, when the Church was born, right from the very beginning, they didn’t worship the Lord on the Sabbath (Saturday)—they worshipped on Sunday which they called the ‘Lord’s Day’ because that was the day Jesus rose from the dead.

As a Christian every day is a Sabbath—a day of rest from our works (keeping holy days, sacraments, lighting candles, praying the rosary and other acts of piety to earn righteousness)—and now we rest in Jesus and worship our King every day!

But again, it’s not wrong to observe one day as a day of rest—but not as a law to be obeyed, but as a principle to be observed—

Warren Wiersbe—

“Jehovah is the God of time as well as the Lord of eternity. It was He who created time and established the rotation of the planets and their orbits around the sun. It was He who marked out the seven-day week and set aside one day for Himself. Every living thing that God has created lives a day at a time except humans made in God’s image! People rush around in the frantic “rat race” of life, always planning to rest but never seeming to fulfill their plan.

It has been said that most people in our world are being “crucified between two thieves”: the regrets of yesterday and the worries about tomorrow. That’s why they can’t enjoy today. Relying on modern means of transportation and communication, we try to live two or three days at a time, only to run headlong against the creation cycle of the universe; and the results are painful and often disastrous.”

Once again, prior to Adam's fall, as one author said, "*There was little if any distinction between labor and leisure, so the pattern of six days' work and one day's rest would have had little significance...until after Adam sinned.*"

Which brings us to something interesting that needs to be pointed out here. Notice that there is something significant that the Holy Spirit purposely leaves out when He mentions the seventh day in Genesis Chapter 2. When it comes to the six days of creation, they all end with the words, "*And the evening and the morning were the [first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth] day*" (*Genesis 2 verses 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31*).

However, those words are not used in connection with the *seventh day*—what is the Holy Spirit saying to us by this omission—what does that mean?

It means that God only intended to create for six twenty-four-hour days—but the seventh day began a rest that He intended to continue on—indefinitely!

One well-known author put it this way—

"The rest that commenced on day seven could have continued indefinitely if it had not been interrupted by Adam's sin. Everything was in a state of pristine perfection. There was no decay. There was no sickness or pain or death. There was no labor, in the sense we think of labor in a fallen world. Adam would have lived in a perpetual Sabbath rest, if he had not fallen into sin. Everything in creation was perfectly delightful, and God was enjoying it—as were all His creatures. What a paradise it must have been! Only sin could have interrupted such a rest, and as we shall see in the following chapter (Genesis 3), that is precisely what happened."

In other words, when man sinned God had to go to work again—this time He would begin the work of the '*second creation*'—which would take a lot longer than six days and be a whole lot harder than the first creation of the physical universe.

The second creation is what Paul refers to as the '*new creation*' in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15—and is another way of saying the work of redemption.

But let me stop and say this—as spectacular as the universe is, do you realize that only 31 verses in Genesis Chapter 1 are devoted to the creation of the physical universe—and the rest of the Bible to redemption!

The Bible tells us that the first (physical) creation was the work of God's fingers—

Psalm 8:3 (NKJV)

³ When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained...

So, the work of creating the physical universe was '*finger work*' for God—but when it came to the work of redemption—He "*bared His arms*" (He rolled up His sleeves).

The second or *new creation* is the one Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 5:17—

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ [saved], he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The work of *redemption* (or as Paul the apostle put it “the new creation”) was far more involved and far more difficult to accomplish (from a human standpoint) than was the original creation of the physical universe. Because you see, in the creation of the physical universe all God had to do was speak and everything came into existence—which means it didn’t cost God anything to create the physical universe.

But when it came to our redemption, He couldn't just 'speak' our sins away—they had to be paid for—a price so great that no human being could pay it:

Psalm 49:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷None of them can by any means redeem *his* brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him—⁸For the redemption of their souls is costly...

The redemption of a human soul is costly because no amount of money can purchase it, nor can another human being die to ransom it because—sinners can't die for sinners.

The only ransom God would accept for the souls of sinful humanity was the life of His sinless Son sacrificed on Calvary's Cross.

The work of redemption climaxed at the cross with the words of Jesus "*It is finished*" and will be fully completed after the thousand-year millennial kingdom when everyone who would be redeemed will have been redeemed—

Revelation 21:3-6 (NKJV)

³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." ⁵Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." ⁶And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End..."

Once again let me state that the Sabbath was never given to *mankind* as a universal law—it was only given to *Israel* under the Mosaic Covenant.

Let me say it one more time—there is nothing wrong with putting one day of the week in a special place of honor to stop from our hurried lives to spend extra time with the Lord.

One pastor has this to say about the wisdom of observing the Sabbath as a practical principle rather than a punitive law—

"At the time the Law was given, no culture had ever taken a day off of work. In agrarian societies, this would have been unthinkable. But here in the very beginning of time, we see the institution of the Sabbath.

"*But I don't need a Sabbath because I'm not tired*," you might be thinking.

Listen, God wasn't saying, "*Whew, am I beat! This creating stuff is really draining.*" No, He was saying to you and me, "*I'm your Creator and your God, and I'm giving you an important key to navigate life successfully: Shut it down one day in seven.*"

"*But I can get ahead if I just do a little bit of work on the seventh day.*"

As an observer, as a Bible teacher, as a pastor, I tell you with surety that if you don't take a Sabbath day, it will catch up with you either mentally, emotionally, physically, or spiritually. Ever wonder how Samson could sleep through the looming of his hair? He was exhausted! I am convinced that many people—men in particular—find themselves sleeping on the lap of Delilah because they haven't kept the Sabbath. I'm convinced many people have physical problems they wouldn't have if they took one day in seven and said, "*I'm going to rest and relax, be refreshed and renewed.*"

I'm convinced many people have collapsed spiritually because the weekend finds them revving up their ski boats rather than finding renewal and refreshment in the Lord.

Be renewed, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. I'm not saying what you should or shouldn't do on the Sabbath day because that's where the Pharisees erred. Instead, I would just remind you that because God rested on the seventh day, we get to as well.

The principle He modeled on the seventh day of creation continues to be a healthy one for us."

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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