

Americans are a restless people. We run on fumes and are frazzled, frantic, frustrated. Distracted and depressed. More than ever. Literally at an all-time high. Even while life is easier than ever. Medical technology is at heights that would not have been visible just 50 years ago. We have more resources and technology and comforts than any generation in history. We can push two buttons on a little 5" device and have goods at our door in two days. We recently cancelled Amazon Prime to save a couple hundred a year. Now we have to wait like 6 days for our stuff now. Its tragic.

Women in particular are less happy than ever in America. 26% of American women are unhappy enough to go the doctor and get a prescription to try to overcome it. One out of every four women.¹ Among teens (13-19 years old), the use of these medications jumped 38%.² / We're restless / Why? Well I think so many reasons: but I think the heart of it is lacking purpose. We are looking in the wrong places. As St. Augustine put it in the 4th C: God, our hearts are restless until we find our rest in you.

We're in the Book of Exodus as a church and today we come to the fourth command, which is about rest. Ceasing from work in order to trust God. He says keep the Sabbath holy. Work six days. But on the seventh day, which is Saturday, you are to do no work. You do no work, your family does no work, your slaves do no work, even the livestock get a day off. I am sure the donkeys appreciated that.

We have already seen the sabbath mentioned in chapter 16, but that was not the full-blown Sabbath, just restricts gathering manna on the seventh day. God gave them a glimpse of what he'd reveal here in the Ten Words. / Notice **v. 11**. The command is rooted in creation. Gen 1-2. The Triune God finishes his work of creation, steps back, and is pleased with all of it. It's all good.

Gen 2:1-3 – God finishes his work and rests on the 7th day. God's rest here is not from exhaustion, but completion. He didn't need a break. His work is done. So God rests, not to relax but to launch his plans for history.³ He blesses and sanctifies the 7th day. Sometimes interpreters try to put a command here about us keeping the Sabbath but that is not here. Some say the Sabbath was a creation ordinance. Do you know what that means? A command that is rooted in creation that is binding for all humanity for all time.⁴ There is not a command for us but a fact about God. The Israelite work week was to be a reflection of the original work week.

The careful reader of Genesis would notice something that was missing from the 7th day? If we were carefully reading it, we would notice. It is like the dog that didn't bark. In Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's short story *Silver Blaze*, Sherlock solves the story by a dog that didn't bark: Gregory (Scotland Yard detective): "Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?" / Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time." / Gregory: "The dog did nothing in the night-time." / Holmes: "That was the curious incident."

On the 7th day, the dog didn't bark. Did you notice what was missing? The silence is blaring when you focus in. Look at verse **5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31**. This closing refrain "morning and evening" is missing on the 7th day. What should we take away from this? This is clearly intentional. God is the author of Scripture. There are no

¹ Rebekah Merkle, *Eve in Exile* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2016), 69.

² <https://www.express-scripts.com/corporate/articles/americas-state-mind-use-mental-health-medications-increasing-spread-coronavirus>

³ Richard D. Phillips, *The God of Creation* (Grand Rapids: EP Books, 2018), 173.

⁴ No condemning the nations, Jerusalem council, Neh 9:13-14:

accidents. Also, the 7th day was the only day to be blessed and made holy. And Moses mentions the number (7th day) three times unlike the other six days.

The 7th day was intended to have no ending. In other words, God resting was him entering into enjoyment with us. Clearly the 7th day is meant to provide the ongoing context which human beings were to operate and relate with God. The good life. Life as it was meant to be. Unbroken fellowship with God. The seventh day of rest with God was meant to last forever but as we know it doesn't last long, does it? The next chapter is a disruption of rest. Rest lost. So one way to summarize the Story of Scripture is the restoration of Sabbath rest. Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you. / But importantly: here there is no commandment.

Now, the question of what the Sabbath means for NC Christians is quite contentious. Today we are entering a theological battle zone. I have been called more names over this issue than any other. Many, especially Reformed Christians are Sabbatarian. They view the Sabbath as a creation ordinance, and they say that the Ten Commandments are the eternal moral law of God. Always for all people. So even pagans are bound to the Sabbath commandment. It is interesting that of all the things the prophets condemn the nations for, the Sabbath is never mentioned. If it were a binding creation ordinance, you'd think it would be.

So the Reformed Confessions are Sabbatarian. For example the WCF says: "This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts, about their worldly employments and recreations; but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy" (21.8). Others follow suit, including The Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 and the New Hampshire Confession. No worldly employment or enjoyment. You shouldn't cook, you shouldn't go out to eat cuz then you make others work, you shouldn't cut your grass, or watch football. Worldly recreation.

Now, y'all know I love the Reformation. I had the 5 Solas on my groom cake, but I don't think these confessions get the Sabbath right, for six reasons. But first, this doesn't mean church is not important. That's a different conversation and category. When you hear Sabbath, you shouldn't think church attendance. Church is about worship not rest and it's on the first day of the week, not the seventh. Listen to Heb 10:24-25: "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." Not coming to church is sin. / And I think it is wise to reserve Sundays to focus on the Lord and focus on the family. And I like CFA's policy except when I am craving it on Sundays! / And I think it wise to take a day off. But wisdom is different than a command from the Lord. / 6 reasons we are not bound to the Sabbath command:

First, look again at verse **10**. This is clearly embedded in an old covenant context because they had slaves. Now, when you think of slavery, you think of our tragic American history and its race-based slavery. This was not that. But slaves were allowed in the OC law. Not promoted but permitted. Tolerated. We don't tolerate it today. So if this command comes forward, it must come with some significant modification.

Second, look at verse **9**. Six days you shall work. You must work six days. No two-day weekends allowed. Most of you work five days, some less.

Third, the seventh day is Saturday, not Sunday. No passage of Scripture anywhere transfers the Sabbath from Sunday. The NT does call Sunday the Lord's Day because of the resurrection but that it is different than saying

the first day is now the Christian Sabbath. That is eisegesis not exegesis. In fact, it was not until the 8th C that Sunday was called the Christian Sabbath. / And Gentile Christians worked on the Sabbath. They didn't have the freedom to not work. They were working class. We see that in Corinth where they had their corporate worship meeting at night because many were working.

Fourth, this command is about rest not worship. This is a common mistake and confusion of categories. Judaism doesn't make this mistake. It is about rest: not working. In fact, if you get caught in an elevator on the Sabbath, you might as well settle in. They are set to stop every floor because pushing the button constitutes work. Men can't spit on the ground because that's too close to watering. Ladies can't pluck facial hair because that's dangerously close to gardening and pulling weeds.

Fifth, the Sabbath is the sign of the covenant, so it only lasts as long as the covenant. **Exod 31:12-17, 35:1-3** (Ezek 20:10-26.) It is a sign of the old covenant and that covenant is now obsolete. Israel broke it. It was between those two covenant parties: God and Israel – not the Gentiles.

Sixth, the clear teaching of the NT on the Sabbath. It helps us see that we are to understand the Sabbath as a type that points forward to true rest.⁵ I want us to look at 5 NT Texts to see this so clearly (yeah I am sneaking in 11 points): **First**, Gal 4. Remember the context of Galatians? The church had been planted, started strong. But then these false teachers tried to say that you had to add the law to truly be pleasing to God. Especially circumcision, the food laws, and the Sabbath. Listen to these shocking verses in Galatians 4:8-10: "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years!" Unbelievable. They were being tempted to observe the Sabbath day in order to be pleasing to God – the sign of the OC – and Paul equates that with paganism. Listen to Martin Luther: "If anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake – if anywhere anyone sets up its observance on a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that shall remove this encroachment on Christian liberty."⁶ We are not bound to obey the fourth commandment.

Second, Col 2:16-17: "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." The Sabbath was a shadow. But the substance is Christ, the reality is Christ. The Greek word is here is *sōma*, which means body. The Sabbath was the shadow but the body is Christ. If your spouse walks up on a sunny day and you try and hug the shadow on the ground instead of their body, something is wrong with you. Jesus has come! The reality is here.⁷ When the sun comes up, you can blow the candle out. Heb 10:1 uses the exact same word for shadow. It says, "For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are

⁵ "The rest God gave his old covenant people on Saturdays is a type, and the rest Jesus gives his new covenant people every day is the antitype. 40 Q's, 262.

⁶ Martin Luther quoted in D.A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Eugene, IO: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 314.

⁷ Craig Blomberg helpfully writes, "No Colossian Christian of any ethnicity, knowing of Christianity's Jewish roots, having just had his or her attention drawn to a distinctively Jewish ritual, could hear Paul's words in verse 16 and reasonably deduce that he was thinking *only* of pagan holidays or special Jewish Sabbaths or certain parts of regular Jewish Sabbaths and not also of what Jews universally meant the overwhelming majority of the time when they used the word *Sabbath* without qualification. Could anyone be expected to conclude from this verse that Paul was in fact simultaneously implying the exact opposite of the straightforward language he used, something like 'but of course you must still observe the *Jewish Sabbath* or the *biblical parts* of the Sabbath or the *non-ceremonial* elements of the Sabbath?" Blomberg, "The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ, 343.

continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.” We are not bound to obey the fourth commandment.

Third, Rom 14. Rom 14-15 is about Jews and Gentiles getting along in the church. Obviously, the Sabbath would be a big point of contention. How will Paul handle this one? Not how we would expect. Not in a way that makes the Sabbatarians happy. Rom 14:5 says “One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” When it comes to keeping the Sabbath, Paul is an individualist relativist. He basically says you do you. Shocking. We are not bound to obey the fourth commandment.

Fourth, turn over to the book of Hebrews. **3:7-4:13**. We can cease from trying to earn our salvation. As George Whitefield put it, earning the love of God is like building a rope of sand and trying to climb it to the moon. We can rest from basing our acceptance on our performance. We can repent from treadmill living. Thinking that we can make God love and accept us by our good lives is like seeking to jog around the block by putting your treadmill on the street and hopping on. A day later you will have made no progress, only crept out your neighbors.

Because of the crucified and risen Jesus, it is finished. The gospel is true. The tomb is empty. The throne is occupied. The King has nail scars in his hands that are there for you – a mark of his love. It is the difference between do and don’t. The gospel says it is done, religion say do. You can never do enough, so don’t try. Put your trust in Christ. “Rock of Ages” is absolutely spot on: not the labor of my hands can fulfill thy law’s demands, could my zeal so respite know (if I were as zealous as I could be all the time, should my passion never fade), could my tears forever flow – all could never sin erase, all my efforts weighed, you must save, all for sin could not atone, you must save and you alone. Nothing in our hands we bring, simply to your cross we cling. Naked we come to him for dress. Helpless we look to him for grace. Wretched, to the fountain fly. Wash me savior or we die.

G Friend if you don’t know this rest but want to, its yours for the taking. A gift you must grasp by faith. Receive what he has done for you and then resolve to live for him all your days. Start that journey with believer’s baptism. / We are not bound to obey the fourth commandment. The rest it pointed back to in the Garden and pointed forward to in the gospel is better.

Fifth, flip back to the gospel of Matthew, the first book in the NT. The Pharisees got all up in arms about his disciples plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath and Jesus puts them in their place, quoting from Scripture when David did something similar, and he says, “For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath” (Matt 12:8). It pointed to him. And we have an unfortunate chapter break between Matthew 11 and Matthew 12. Listen to the final verses of Matthew 11: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt 11:28–30). Your Savior invites you. He bids you come. If you find yourself anxious, depressed, weary, heavy laden. Rest is found in the Lord of the Sabbath.

Christ invites us to come to him and find rest. Jesus says come, and have your guilt removed, as far as the E is from the W. Jesus says come, have your conscience cleansed. Lay your head on your pillow at night with a confident smile on your face, regardless of the kind of day you had, because you know God is for you and if he be for you, none can be against you. There is no pillow as soft as a clean conscience.

John 6:37: whoever comes to me I will never cast out. Jesus says, come, find your identity in me. Gal 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. Jesus says come, find hope, life beyond the grave. Jesus says come, find a family that goes deeper than your blood but is united around my shed blood.

Jesus says come, find your purpose, find your mission. He summons you to live for me. Live the good life. Live the way it was meant to be. Mark 8:35: Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for the sake of Jesus and the gospel will save it. Jesus bids us come, arms wide, nail-pierced hands open, I am where you find rest. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matt 11:28–30).

We can experience Sabbath rest here and now, the fulfillment of what this fourth command pointed to. But not fully. Like so many promises in the NT, there is an already/not yet dimension. True rest comes when Jesus returns. We rest now in Christ, but it is just a foretaste of the rest we'll have at the resurrection. In the gospel, we have the appetizer, but we still await the main course. Where, as the last book of the Bible says, "No longer will there be anything accursed." Resting and rejoicing, in the presence of our great God. Rev 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'"

So how does a Christian observe the Sabbath? Resting in Christ every day. Which is why Justin Martyr, writing his *Dialogue with Trypho* the Jew, in 155AD: "The new law requires you to keep perpetual sabbath" (Ch. 12). We don't look to a day. We look to a person. Continually. Jesus offers us rest. We remember the Sabbath by resting in Christ, ceasing from our self-salvation project, letting him carry our burdens, trusting him alone for full salvation, and abiding in him all our days.⁸ Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in God.

Benediction: Numb 6:24-26

⁸ Blomberg writes, "Because Jesus fulfilled the Law, and thus fulfilled the Sabbath commands, He, not some day of the week, is what offers the believers rest. We obey the Sabbath commandment of the Decalogue as we spiritually rest in Christ, letting Him bear our heavy burdens, trusting Him for salvation, and committing our lives to Him in service, then remaining faithful in lifelong loyalty to Him rather than committing apostasy." 351.