

JULY 30th
REST MATTERS

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” **EXODUS 20:8-11**

The “Blue Laws.” Do you know what that term refers to? If you asked a teenager, they would probably look at you with a look that only a teenager can give. These so called “laws” have been largely passed by. While car dealerships and most factories in our area are closed on Sundays, most other stores are open, even as many close earlier on Sundays. In Michigan, the state where I grew up, alcohol could not be sold before noon on Sundays. Where did the “blue” come from when referencing these laws? It depends on where you go for the information. Some historians connect the “blue” with the color of the paper that was used to write down the laws. Others’ attribute the “blue” with the attitude of those who obeyed the laws as “true blue.” Whatever the case, we don’t see much connection with this tradition today. But God. God does give in his fourth commandment a command to rest from all work. What does God teach us here as His men?

As Phil Ryken (and others) have claimed, this fourth commandment is the first “workers’ Bill of Rights.” It calls workers to work for six days, but to enjoy rest for the seventh day. Ryken does well to describe the nature of this command: “Verse 8 tells us what to do, verses 9 and 10 specify how we are to do it, and verse 11 explains why.” Breaking this command down can be helpful in how we can be faithful in following it. Keep the Sabbath as special. In Moses’ day, Sabbath was a day that was kept special by stopping all work. Thomas Watson, an English Puritan, points out something that maybe you’ve never thought of (I know that I hadn’t): “God could have said that six days were for worship and one day for work. God could have said ‘I’m not a hard master, I don’t resent your time to look after your life...I have taken one day for my service...it is just and rational to set this day aside...’. Watson isn’t wrong here. Today, many regard the Sabbath as “The Lord’s Day,” because Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Therefore, the Lord’s Day is set apart as a special day to worship with other believers. God gives two reasons for the command to rest: He rested and He saves (Deuteronomy 5:15). The Sabbath rest isn’t just reserved for restoration but reminds God’s people of salvation. God sets the calendar. He certainly didn’t have the need to rest; he wasn’t tired from creating the world. He knows the needs that we have to remember who He is and who we are.

Bill Gates made this statement in an interview with Time Magazine in 1997, “Just in terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not very efficient. There’s a lot more I could be doing on a Sunday morning.” We may criticize this statement, but do our actions show any difference than Bill Gates? Yes, we must avoid the Pharisee tendency to make this about dos and don’ts. As Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” We must understand the spirit of the law. Work is created by God as good. And rest is created by God with a purpose...to remember God and remember that we aren’t Him. I need rest. You need rest. I need to remind myself that God is to be my King, and you need the same reminder. Will we commit to remembering our God by resting from our work? This is an older illustration by Robert Rayburn, but it does cause us to reflect: “A man who was approached by a beggar on the street. The man reached into his pocket to see what he had. Finding seven dollars and feeling somewhat sorry for the beggar, he held out six bills and said, ‘Here you go.’ Not only did the beggar take the six dollars, but with his other hand he struck his benefactor across the face and grabbed the seventh dollar too. What do you think of the beggar? Don’t you think he was a scoundrel? Then what do you think of a sinner, saved by the grace of Jesus Christ, who

insists on taking seven days a week—or even six and a half—for himself? The way to avoid this scandal is to remember the Lord's Day by keeping it holy.”

Spend some time thinking about the role of rest and work. How can you be more purposeful to worship God by resting from your work? Ask God for wisdom in being faithful to follow Him.

For Further Reading: Mark 2:23-28