

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:8-11

In our study of the First Commandment, we saw that we are to worship Jehovah, our God, and none other. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In our study of the Second Commandment, we saw that we are to worship Jehovah, our God, directly, without the intervention of images of any kind. In our study of the Third Commandment, we saw that we are to worship Jehovah, our God, sincerely, devoutly, and adoringly. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." We are to worship God; we are to worship Him directly; we are to worship Him devoutly. In the Fourth Commandment, we learn when we are to worship God.

I. Its Authority.

God appointed it. It was preceded both by example and by precept. "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. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." (Genesis 2:2-3). Jehovah blessed and hallowed the Sabbath. Its holy nature comes from God's blessing and hallowing.

II. Its Duties.

1. To work six days.

God commands us to work six days, as well as to rest on the seventh day. Work is man's normal condition. Man is to work for his own sake. Regard with distrust every able-bodied man who is unwilling to work when he has opportunity. Listen to the greatest of all the apostles: "If any will not work, neither let him eat." Man is to work for God's sake.

2. To rest on the seventh day.

God commands the day of rest. Here is the reason which God gave for the command: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Exodus 20:11).

The seventh day is to be a day of rest for the body, jaded with the toils of the week; a day of rest for the mind, jaded with the cares of the week; a day of rest for the heart, jaded with the griefs of the week.

(1) The day of rest is not indolence.

God does not sanction laziness in any form; therefore, the day of rest is not to be considered as an excuse for indulging and the promoting of indolence. It is a day of usefulness.

(2) The day of rest should be sacred.

It is one of the few memorials that is hallowed by the Lord and is therefore precious to the believer. The sacredness of the day needs to be emphasized in these days of gross indifference and irreverence.

(3) The day of rest is divinely warranted.

We must observe the divine ordination of the Lord's Day as a day of rest.

3. To use the Lord's Day for religious purposes.

(1) Reading the Word.

The Word is a great means to sanctify the heart. "Sanctify them through Thy truth." (John 17:17). We are not to read the Word carelessly, but with seriousness and affection. God wants the Lord's Day to be sanctified by the study of the Scriptures.

(2) Meditation.

a. Meditate on the works of creation.

"The Lord made heaven and earth, the sea...." Creation is a looking-glass

in which we see the wisdom and power of God gloriously represented, and he who can create can also provide.

b. Meditate on God's holiness.

"Holy and reverend is his name." (Psalm 111:9). God is essentially and efficiently holy. God loves holiness. He counts holiness His glory and the most sparkling jewel of His crown.

c. Meditate on Christ's love in redeeming us.

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Revelation 1:5). Redemption exceeds creation; the one is a monument of God's power, while the other is a monument of His love. Meditation on Christ's love will kindle our love for Him. How can we look on Christ's bleeding and dying for us and our hearts not be warmed with love for Him?

d. Meditate on the glory of heaven.

Such meditation will raise our hearts above the world. It will quicken affection and add wings to devotion.

(3) Prayer.

Pray for a blessing upon the Word which is to be preached, that by it our minds may be illuminated, our corruptions weakened, and our stock of grace increased. Let us not only pray for ourselves, but for others also. Pray for him who dispenses the Word; that his tongue shall be touched with a coal from God's altar; that God would warm his heart who is to help to warm others. Pray with reverence, humility, fervency, and hope in God's mercy.

(4) Public Worship.

Secret communion is edifying to the individual, but it is not enough. It is a grievous mistake for one to willingly absent himself from church if public services are available. The fellowship of the saints as experienced in public worship cannot be gained by any other method than by attending public worship.

III. Its Necessity.

1. Man needs the Sabbath for his physical nature.
2. Man needs the Sabbath for his mental nature.
3. Man needs the Sabbath for his religious nature.

IV. Its Rewards.

1. Delight in the Lord.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." (Isaiah 58:13-14).

2. Success in the world.

"And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth." (Isaiah 58:14). Real success is promised to those who trust the Lord and obey Him in Sunday observance.

3. Satisfaction in the soul.

"And I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isaiah 58:14). It is a sad day when the heritage handed down by fathers in Sunday observance has been lost by sons in Sunday desecration. Our fathers observed Sunday in heart and home and church. As a result, they found soul satisfaction and handed down a glorious heritage to their sons. Shall we lose this glorious heritage?