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(Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11)

**Intro.** How many of you like to take a Sunday afternoon nap pretty regularly? How many of you like to take a Sunday morning nap around 11 am each Sunday while you are seated in the pew? When I visit people in the hospital or at home as they recover, I sometimes find they have had trouble sleeping. They normally say something like, “Pastor, I don’t know what the deal is, but I haven’t had a good night’s sleep in several days/weeks. Could you get me a few of your sermon CDs so I can listen to them at night?” If you like to catch up on sleep on the Lord’s Day, don’t feel guilty about it, because the Lord hard-wired you for a day of rest. As we continue our series in Genesis 1-11, today we look at a few verses in Genesis 2, coupled with a few verses in Exodus 20, on “Building a Foundation for Your Faith: Sabbath—The Day of Rest.”

Theme: Sabbath

Background: Moses recorded Genesis, a book about beginnings, around 1400 BC.

➤ When dealing with the issue of the Sabbath, Christian leaders have differed on their understandings for nearly 2,000 years in terms of if it is still binding (Augustine didn’t think so, as it is the only one of the 10 Commandments not repeated in the NT), what day it is to be kept (Saturday or Sunday), how it is to be observed (reverence & rest or also time for recreation?) & must we do works of mercy on the Sabbath (Jesus did, but is it commanded or simply commended?)

➤ What are some lessons we learn from Genesis 2 & Exodus 20 about the Sabbath & the day of rest?

**1. Resting on the Sabbath indicates a completed week of work (Genesis 2:1-2; cf. Exodus 20:8-11)**

**a. There is a command to work 6 days (Exodus 20:9)**

- Work 6, rest 1
- You may work at your employed place of business 5 days, but you still have to do work around the house & such, which is still labeled as “work” according to Scripture
- The command to “work” should cause us not to be lazy & depend on others for our living, but to work & provide for our families & eat (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:10)

**b. At the end of the work week, you should take a day of rest (Exodus 20:10-11)**

- Just as some of the priests still had to offer sacrifices and perform work in the Tabernacle/Temple (even Jesus acknowledged certain work had to be done on the Sabbath, cf. Matthew 12:11-12), so preachers today work on Sunday (cf. Matthew 12:5-6; more on that later), but should take a rest day during the week (as should health care workers who work on Sunday)

Illus: “One man challenged another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the other fellow had chopped substantially more wood than he had. ‘I don’t get it,’ he said. ‘Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did.’ ‘But you didn’t notice,’ said the winning woodsman, ‘that I was sharpening my ax when I sat down to rest’” (L. S. Chafer, *Grace*)

**2. The Sabbath is for both rest and reverence (Genesis 2:3; cf. Exodus 20:8, 11)**

- Not only should you have a day of rest, but this day is “blessed,” “sanctified,” “holy”—it is a day devoted to the Lord more than anything else

Illus: This principle is an important reminder, because if we aren’t careful, we can rush to gather as the church & while we are supposed to be worshipping, our minds are on all the things we have to get done later—a checklist or “to do” list—and while we may not be “working,” we aren’t reverent to the Lord in such a mode

**3. The old covenant Jewish Sabbath is Saturday, but the new covenant Christian Sabbath is Sunday (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8, 11; cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16-17; Revelation 1:10)**

- The New Testament reveals the early Church began gathering together on the first day of the week, clearly in light of Jesus’ resurrection—at Pentecost (Acts 2:1); at Troas where they broke bread &

listened to preaching (Acts 20:7); at Corinth when they took up a mission offering (1 Corinthians 16:1-2); and John's worship in the Spirit on the Lord's Day while in exile (Revelation 1:10)

- Colossians 2:16-17 teaches not to put too much stock in special holy days, including the Sabbath, but their substance is found in Christ

Illus: Early Church history reveals Christians were gathering on Sunday, not just in the NT texts, but also from multiple church leaders & documents in the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries (from my "Pastor's Point of View: Why Sunday Is the New Sabbath"):

1. Ignatius (d. between 98-117) refers to those who have "obtained new hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath but living according to the Lord's Day on which our life dawned through Him and his death" (Magnesians 9:1). This reference clearly implies Sunday as the day of hope and reason for corporate worship.
  2. Didache 14:1 (early 2<sup>nd</sup> century) refers to the odd expression "Lord's Day of the Lord" for the occasion of Christian worship.
  3. Pliny the Younger (61-ca. 112) says that Christians meet on a fixed day to sing hymns (Letter to Trajan, Epistle x. 96). While he doesn't specifically say "Sunday," it's plausible that, given the above information, Sunday was assumed.
  4. Barnabas 15:9 (early 2<sup>nd</sup> century) brings out the significance of the first day (called the eighth day of the old creation) and connects it to Christ's resurrection.
  5. Justin Martyr (103-165) recounts services that were held on the day of the sun, which he identifies as the first day of creation and also the day of the resurrection (Apology 1.67).
  6. Tertullian (ca. 160-220) argues that anyone who could defer business on the day of the Lord's Resurrection should do so to devote themselves more fully to its proper celebration (On Prayer 23).
  7. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) connects the special nature of the Lord's Day with the resurrection (Epistle 58.4).
- Worshiping on Friday is a distinguishing mark of Muslims; worshiping on Saturday is a distinguishing mark of Jews; worshiping on Sunday is a distinguishing mark of Christians
  - Remembering the Sabbath on Saturday aims to honor God in light of creation, but remembering the Christian Sabbath on Sunday aims to honor God in Christ in light of the new creation
4. **Therefore, worship Christ on Sunday, the Lord's Day, & let your rest & reverence be in Him**
- The author of Hebrews teaches us our ultimate, eternal rest is in Christ—we no longer work & offer sacrifices to cleanse us from sins, because Christ has completed that work—we rest in Him & we reverence Him

Illus: "Do you rush, push, shout and become generally unpleasant on Sunday mornings? Do you complain about church? Are you irregular in your attendance? Are you over-conscientious about matters that are not really important? Do you always criticize the pastor, the choir, the length of services and the usher crew? Then don't be surprised if your children grow up to look at Sundays as the worst day of the week" (Karen Burton Mains)

Illus: Some people say urging families to attend worship service on Sundays is being legalistic, but it's only legalistic if your salvation hinges on it—I'm concerned about the licentious practices of using grace as a license to sin & do whatever you want rather than live out the grace of God in your life—living it out expresses itself in obedience to the Lord

Illus: See the Gospel Coalition blog (4-27-16)—we don't go to church as a chore or because of guilt but we get to gather as the church as a privilege because of grace

**Conc.** I know a man in Apopka who is well-known & although he claims Christ, he & his family rarely attend worship anywhere. His boys are involved in baseball & soccer & they play in both city leagues & travel teams & virtually every tournament. When they were a bit younger, they played during the day on Saturday & they would attend a Saturday evening worship service & he told me, "I wish you would start a Saturday evening service so we wouldn't have to drive so far." A few weeks ago, we chatted & I asked him about their Saturday evening services, but he said they didn't have time for that because their boys' games went into Saturday evening now. He thinks he's doing his kids a service to get them to every game & tourney but he's actually taught them that worshiping Christ isn't that important & is only done when you have time for Him. So here's my question: will you put Christ first in your life & your practice by setting aside the first day of the week to gather as the church (whether here or on vacation)? If not, then the question I have for you is this: have you really put Christ first in your life?