

Our Freedom in Observing the Lord's Day

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We often have a tendency to think of Sunday activities as a list of do's and don'ts instead of looking at the reasons why we should or should not do certain things. It is very easy for us to go through the motions on Sunday. Temptations surround us on every side. Some of us have friends outside of our churches who think nothing of going out to eat on Sunday or even spending the afternoon out water-skiing or playing other sports. Even when we are together with friends from our churches, we tempt each other to not keep the Lord's Day. Are we properly setting aside one day that is different from all of the other days? Are we helping or hindering each other? Sometimes I look back at my own activities on Sunday when I was a teenager and wonder how I could better have filled that day with spiritual activities. Many of our activities which we do on Sunday, are not wrong in themselves, but in the day as a whole, are we using the day to grow spiritually? Let us all examine how we use the Lord's Day on the basis of the meaning and purpose of the Lord's Day. We have to be careful to stay away from legalism which makes laws where God has not given laws. We must also avoid too much freedom, which causes us to think we can do whatever we please. Then, on the basis of the given principles, put yourself in certain situations which you find yourself. As you go through the questions and situations, think about what you will do in order to properly observe the Lord's Day, and look at the reasons why you will or will not do a certain activity.

- I. The Lord's Day is a day of rest.
 - A. Negatively, the Lord's Day is a day of ceasing from daily labor.
 1. In creation, God rested from His act of creating—He rested. (Genesis 2:3)
 2. God commands us in His law that we should “not do any work.” (Exodus 20:8-11).
 - a. Therefore, we should rest from the work which we do during the week whether it is our work at a job or our school work.
 - b. Because we have liberty in Christ, some works of mercy or necessity are legitimate on the Lord's Day, for Christ also performed works of mercy—for example, healing of the sick.
 - B. Rest is not merely a ceasing from earthly labor, but, positively, resting on the Lord's Day is an activity.
 1. In order to understand this rest, we look unto God.
 - a. God is pure and eternal activity in His life in the Trinity.
 - b. Yet in Him is rest—Rest, therefore, is not idleness.
 - c. God rested from the activity of creation in order to take up a different activity.
 2. Rest for us is the fulfillment of the covenant.
 - a. In Christ we are brought back into covenant fellowship with God.
 - 1) Only for those elected from all eternity (Romans 8:29,30).
 - 2) In Christ we are restored to the image of God, which is true righteousness and holiness (Colossians 3:10, Ephesians 4:24).
 - b. This rest is a heavenly, spiritual rest.
 - 1) It is a rest from the toil of our imperfect work on this earth.
 - 2) But, this eternal rest is also an activity of perfect friendship and love of God so that we praise Him perfectly for eternity.
 3. The Lord's Day is an earthly picture of the heavenly rest.
 - a. The picture
 - 1) Our laboring is a picture of our work on this earth and the rest on the Lord's Day is a picture of the heavenly rest we shall enter at death.

2) This was the same for Christ; He labored on this earth in order to enter into the rest of heaven (Hebrews 4:10).

b. Right now we have a beginning of that eternal rest.

II. Our Observance of this day of rest.

A. Although we must cease from our earthly labors of the six previous days, we must also be active.

1. Ceasing weekly labor is not the only idea of the commandment, nor does it make us holy in itself.

a. This emphasis on ceasing from labor alone was an error of the Pharisees (legalism).

b. The Lord's Day is not merely ceasing from labor so that man can enjoy the pleasures of this world.

c. We cease our earthly labor in order to take up a different activity just as God did in creation.

2. Because rest on the Lord's Day is a picture of the heavenly, spiritual rest, this rest must be spiritual in its activity.

a. In Genesis 2:3, God sanctified the seventh day, which means that He set it apart—we, therefore must set this one day apart from the other six in order that we might concentrate upon praising and glorifying God in spiritual activities.

b. Mark 2:27, says that "the sabbath was made for man," which does not mean that man can use as he desires, but rather it was made for man in order that he might enjoy the things of God's kingdom while laying aside the cares of this world.

3. This spiritual activity is the seeking of the heavenly kingdom in which we have citizenship.

a. To seek this kingdom, we must have a knowledge of this kingdom.

1) We gain knowledge by reading and studying the Bible—this is always a profitable activity for Sunday.

2) Studying Scripture can be aided by reading Christian magazines or good books which help us to grow in knowledge and understanding of God.

b. Our activity in heaven will be that of praising and glorifying God.

1) We must try to praise and glorify God in all that we do on every day, but especially on the Lord's Day because it is a picture of this heavenly rest.

2) We can do this in our discussion and fellowship with each other—we should desire to talk about spiritual things in order to help each other in this activity and so that we grow in knowledge, but our fellowship is not limited to only spiritual things either.

B. Scripture gives to us principles and guidelines for our Sunday observance, but we do have some freedom in the liberty we have as Christians.

1. We have freedom in our observance.

a. This freedom does not allow us to do as we please, but rather we have freedom within the guidelines and laws which God has given us.

b. One person's spiritual activities will differ from another's, for one, taking a walk on Sunday may be a spiritual activity as he sees the earthly as a picture of the heavenly, but for another, it may be a temptation to do the things that he sees the ungodly doing.

2. Necessary elements of proper Lord's Day observance.

a. Obviously we are commanded to cease from our daily labor.

1) This does not mean that we must cease *all* earthly labors for we must eat and sleep, etc.

2) To limit what we can and cannot do by creating new laws is legalism, which is the same thing that the Pharisees did and which Jesus preached against.

- b. It is a day set aside for worship.
 - 1) This does not mean that we avoid spiritual activities on the other days of the week.
 - 2) Yet, God has set aside a certain day in which we are to worship Him, especially by worshipping in a church service.
 - a) God demanded that Israel worship Him on the sabbath.
 - b) God also demands this of the NT church.
 - 3) We must also worship Him in all that we do on the Lord's Day as we seek after spiritual things.
- c. If the Lord's Day is a day in which we must seek spiritual things, with what activities will we fill this day?
 - 1) Our freedom in the activities of this day are governed by the above principles.
 - 2) The question we must ask ourselves in determining what we should do on Sunday is, "Is what I do on Sunday conducive toward making me concentrate upon God and the eternal rest prepared in Christ?"
 - 3) In questioning these activities, let us not focus on with what can we get away with doing, but rather on what we should be doing.

- III. The purposes of our Lord's Day observance should also characterize our Lord's Day observance.
 - A. We fill this day with spiritual activities because we love God.
 - B. The proper observance of this day shows that we are not of this world, but rather that we are pilgrims and strangers passing through.
 - C. Our spiritual activities on this day are an expression of faith and hope for that heavenly rest which we experience in part now.

Questions to Consider:

1. Think of some Sunday activities that could be good spiritual activities, but that could also be done as worldly activities.
2. What about the popular Sunday afternoon nap? Is it legitimate?
3. Many of the young people in our churches get together on Sunday nights. What are we going to do when someone turns on the television, or if someone goes to the store to pick up some pop or chips because there is no food in the house? How are we going to help each other rest on the Lord's Day?
4. When one of our friends asks us to go with them to their cottage over a Sunday and you know that they go to church once but spend the rest of the day skiing and boating, what are you going to do? Will you take responsibility yourself, or will you go to your parents and put the pressure on them?
5. Are we going to do our homework on Sunday? Is homework the work that a student must accomplish in six days and rest from on the seventh?
6. If you have a job, are you resting from your work not only in your actions but also in your thoughts?
7. Think of some other difficult situations which you may face, and determine how you will respond in order to properly keep the Lord's Day. ❖

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