

# Sabbath

*Main Idea: Though Sabbath is a wonderful gift from God it is only a shadow of the rest available in Christ and accomplishes nothing toward securing God's favor or increasing our righteousness.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Review Series

For the last couple of weeks we've been in a brief series titled, "The Sabbath: God's Provision for Discovery and Recovery". This is the third and last message in the series.

A couple months ago, when Pastor Stan initially asked me to teach one of the messages in this series, I was excited about it and quickly agreed.

However, as I began studying this subject, I quickly began to get cold feet. It didn't take long for me to realize that I didn't know near as much as I thought I knew about Sabbath and even some of what I thought I knew, was probably wrong.

I also became more aware of the fact that due to the New Testament's minimal teaching or instruction on this topic, there is room for opinions and convictions to vary significantly, among BELIEVERS. And they do!

Throughout this series, Pastor Stan has regularly acknowledged that many have decided to simply ignore the subject, due (at least in part) to the many strong opinions and disagreements over what the Sabbath means and how it should (or should not) be observed.

### Approach

So first I want to again acknowledge that there IS room for differing opinions and convictions on this subject.

I am encouraged by something Paul says in Romans 14. Pastor Stan taught from this passage last week and introduced it by saying, "... Paul is addressing what he calls disputable matters in the church, matters on which Christians disagree, but matters that are *not* essential to the Faith."

He then looked at verses 5 and 6 where Paul talks about viewing one day above the others or all the same. But right before that, at the end of a segment on differing convictions regarding food, Paul says in verse 4, "[Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.](#)"

He WILL BE UPHELD! Why? Because he made the right choice? Had the right convictions? No, he will be upheld no matter which conviction he holds. He will be upheld, not because of correct convictions but because of the Lord! It is the Lord who will make him stand!

**It is in Christ that we stand. Period. Nothing else is a determining factor.**

And that is what we see in Colossians 2, the passage we are looking at today...

## THE WORD

### Colossians 2:16-17

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

#### Context Therefore

Verse 16 begins with, “Therefore”, which means we need to look at what has come before (the reason that has been given for this instruction). So let’s do a quick review of the previous verses ...

- In verse 10, Paul reminds the believers “**you have been filled in Him**”. For the Colossian believers (and all who have put their faith in Christ) Paul is saying... You have been filled; you have been made complete in Christ.
- In verses 11 -13, Paul reminds us that IN Christ we have been spiritually circumcised (the cutting away of the old sinful nature), we have been baptized, raised to new life in Christ, and forgiven all our trespasses (sins).
- In verses 14, we are reminded that, “the record of debt” that stood against us with its legal demands has been CANCELED, SET-ASIDE, and NAILED TO THE CROSS!
- And then in verses 15 and 16, we are reminded that, He (Jesus) disarmed, put to open shame, and triumphed over the spiritual rulers and authorities that would bring accusations against us.

These incredible things are true in regard to YOU, if you have looked to Jesus (put your faith in Him), and thus been united with Christ.

For the entire first part of this chapter Paul is driving home the fact that **Christ is the sole source of salvation and righteousness**.

That brings us back to verse 16...

#### Passage

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

In this passage, Paul is responding to false teaching that is threatening the Colossian believers. The exact nature of this false teaching is unclear. However, it IS CLEAR that the Colossian believers were being told (whether explicitly or implicitly) that Christ wasn’t enough and that they didn’t measure up, they weren’t complete, they would not ARRIVE

SPIRITUALLY without adding some form of religious self-effort to faith in Christ. It wasn't enough to be in Christ. Add-ons were required.

There are a couple of warnings in this passage but the warning in verse 16 appears to be a response to some form of religious, Jewish, law keeping, that they were being told was necessary to make them complete before God.

The things listed here... food and drink, festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths are all things that were part of the law of Moses; they were given by God, they were good, but were never intended (or able) to save or make one righteous.

**They were intended to point to Christ!**

In fact, we see this clearly stated in verse 17, which says...

<sup>17</sup> *These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*

I want to pause for a minute and try to illustrate this "shadow vs. the substance" concept...

### **Illustration: Everett's Ultrasound vs. Everett**

When Christine and I found out that we were expecting, for the first time, my response was far less than satisfactory.

Christine had taken a pregnancy test and when she told me that it was positive, I responded by saying something like, "Oh, ok".

I remember sitting in the waiting room at the doctor's office, where we had gone for confirmation, and having the doctor come out with a giant smile on his face and hand extended to congratulate me. It was at that point that I realized something must be wrong with me because the doctor and the entire waiting room were far more excited about this than me.

Now, I may have a variety of issues that contributed to this lackluster response to such incredible news (if you can help me, let's talk after the service) but there are a couple issues that I think I HAVE identified. First, I was a little bit scared. Second, (more importantly, for our purposes this morning) I had a hard time comprehending something I couldn't yet see or experience.

I didn't really start to get excited about the fact that we were having a baby until we first got to hear Everett's heartbeat. And then, a couple months later, I really started to get excited when Christine had an ultrasound and we got our first glimpse of Everett's face!

I was so grateful for that ultrasound and it was very helpful for me in wrapping my mind around the reality of what was happening and in preparing for Everett's arrival. But as helpful and wonderful as that ultrasound was, it was simply a shadow that pointed to the substance in Everett that we were able to begin enjoying when he was born!

## The Shadows

Coming back to the passage, I would like to look at a couple of the shadows listed in verse 16. We aren't going to take the time to look at how all of these things point to Christ but I do think it would be helpful to briefly look at festivals and then spend a little time on Sabbaths (since that is what we are talking about in this series).

So, first, festivals.

There are seven festivals that are laid out in Leviticus 23.

1. Passover
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread
3. Feast of First Fruits
4. Feast of Weeks
5. Feast of Trumpets
6. Day of Atonement
7. Feast of Tabernacles

Let's briefly look at the first two to as a sample of how these festivals are shadows of the substance in Christ.

### 1. Passover

The Passover was a celebration that remembered the time that the angel of death passed over the Israelite homes that had the blood of a lamb on their doors.

The Passover was a shadow that pointed to Christ as the Passover Lamb. John the Baptist recognized this when he saw Jesus coming and said... ["Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"](#) (John 1:29b)

The Passover was a wonderful shadow God gave to point to Christ!

### 2. Unleavened Bread

The second festival was the festival of Unleavened Bread. When Israel left Egypt they didn't have time to add yeast (or leaven) to their bread. During this feast the Israelites remembered God's deliverance from Egypt but it was ultimately a shadow pointing to God's deliverance from sin through Christ.

Leaven is often used as a symbol of sin or decay. The feast of Unleavened Bread points to Christ's sinless life and the fact that He is the only perfect sacrifice for our sins.

We could go on, but that gives us a taste of how the festivals point to Christ.

Now let's move to the end of the list and look at some ways that Sabbaths point to Christ.

The first component of Sabbath that stands out is REST. After Creation, God RESTED. When the Ten Commandments were given God instructed His people to work six days but the seventh day was to be a day of REST.

So how is this major component of Sabbath fulfilled in Christ?

1. First, in Christ we find rest from the tiresome, never ending, fruitless work (labor) of trying to become good; righteous; acceptable before God.

Jesus lived a perfect life, took the punishment we deserved, and made use **100% acceptable and righteous before God!** We can't add anything to this work.

THE WORK IS FINISHED; THE DEBT IS CANCELLED; THE LOAD HAS BEEN LIFTED. IN CHRIST we find REST!

2. Second, in Christ we are looking forward to the complete fulfillment of Sabbath rest, in Heaven.
  - Sanctification will be complete and we will enjoy rest from the struggle with sin.
  - Also, though we may work in Heaven (like Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden) it will be much different than our experience with work now. Our struggle to make a living and make ends meet will cease.
  - Our bodies will be new and free from decay, illness, and exhaustion.

In Christ we have REST NOW and we look forward to the complete fulfillment yet to come in Heaven!

A Second major component of Sabbath is the enjoyment of God's presence. During the first Sabbath, Adam and Eve had the privilege of getting to know God and enjoy fellowship with Him!

Also, The Sabbath that God's people were instructed to keep was to be TO THE LORD!

Last week Pastor Stan said this...

*"We were created for God—to be in relationship with God. The fact that God set aside the day after He created Adam and Eve as a day to spend with Him in His presence reveals His priority for this relationship.*

*Which suggests to me that Sabbath is, first and foremost, a day of discovery. It is a day on which God is poised to reveal Himself so that we can know Him better and enjoy Him more. It is a day on which we have a greater capacity to relish Him—to explore the depths of His extravagant goodness and grace, to probe the magnificence of His beauty and glory, to savor the splendor of His holiness. I believe part of what it means that*

*God blessed the seventh day and made it holy is that He infused it with greater opportunity than other days to know and enjoy Him.”*

Sabbath has always been about enjoying and delighting in God’s presence!

So how does the Sabbath Component of ENJOYING GOD’S PRESENCE get fulfilled in Christ?

- The Spirit has taken up residence in us!  
We have been given the incredible privilege of and invitation to non-stop communion and fellowship with the God of the universe, who has taken up residence in us through the Spirit! We have been invited into the fellowship that the Godhead has enjoyed for all eternity!
- Second, in Christ, we have access to the throne room and are invited to “draw near the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
- Third, we LOOK FORWARD to complete fulfillment of this component in Heaven, when we **see Him face to face and spend eternity reveling in HIS PRESENCE!**

*Sabbath is a shadow that points to and finds it’s fulfillment in Christ.*

## APPLICATION

As we move to application, I would like to ask a couple questions...

### 1. Are you IN Christ?

Have you looked to Jesus or are you fighting the battle against sin and trying to earn God’s favor on your own? If you are trying to carry that load, I would plead with you to respond to Jesus’ invitation in Matthew 11:28-30...

<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

When you look to Jesus, you are immediately made 100% acceptable and righteous before God. Your trespasses (sins) are forgiven. The “record of debt” that stood against you is canceled, set-aside, and nailed to the cross! The accusers are disarmed. THE WORK IS FINISHED and you can REST IN HIM!

If you have never put your faith in Jesus, you can do it today! All that is required of you is recognition of your sin, recognition of the fact that you can’t fix it, and then simply looking to Jesus. He did the work for you on the cross. It is finished! YOU CAN REST in HIM!

2. If you HAVE put your faith in Christ, are there ways you are still working to try to earn His favor? (Honestly, I don't think I even know all of the ways I do this.) The loving reminder from our Heavenly Father is: the work is done; you have been filled/completed in Him! REST in Christ!

To be clear, there is still work He calls and enables us to do but the yoke is easy, the burden is light, and it isn't work **toward** salvation or acceptance before God. It is work that flows **out** of the rest and acceptance that is already ours in Christ.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to close this series with a simple request...

Would you consider how God might be calling you to enjoy the gift of a weekly day of rest, unto Him; a weekly day of discovery and recovery?

I believe the enjoyment of this gift can be really valuable in remembering we are not God (we don't make the world go around) and we don't serve our culture's gods of busyness, productivity, etc.

Most importantly, enjoying this gift can help us remember and enjoy the rest we have in Christ NOW and provide a taste of what is coming in Heaven!

Keep mind...

*Though Sabbath is a wonderful gift from God, it is only a shadow of the rest available in Christ and accomplishes nothing toward securing God's favor or increasing our righteousness.*

## Prayer

## Benediction

And now to Him, in whom we are complete (100% acceptable & pleasing to God), to Him be all the honor and glory forever and ever!