

The Sabbath is Not a Day for Football

Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Isaiah 58:13-14

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Let us hear the word of God. This is the second giving of the law before the people go into the promised land. And here is the fourth commandment. *Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor any stranger that is within thy gates, that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember, that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm. Therefore, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.* Amen. May the Lord bless his word.

And we remember there, as you turn to Isaiah 58, that the Lord's explanation for keeping the Sabbath day is because He saved you in that text through a mighty arm, even the arm of Christ. Isaiah 58, verses 13 and 14. Let us hear of a gracious promise from 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, that is day, of the Lord honorable, and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words. Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* Amen. May God bless this precious promise to us and may we ever meditate upon it and know it.

Well, on this Lord's Day, there is much excitement among many Christians, but for all the wrong reasons. Many consider this really in some ways their high holy day. Super Bowl Sunday. Shockingly, and this is a survey from 2017, so I can only imagine, especially after COVID, things have gotten far worse than this. In 2017, a survey was released where 50%, almost 50%, of churches said their evening service or their evening activities, they were going to modify or do away altogether, or maybe have Super Bowl watching parties in the meeting place where God's people meet for worship. That is utterly outrageous, utterly outrageous. But what it shows is that God's people, they do not delight in and do not have a great sense of joy in their God. Their excitement is not in Christ as it ought to be. We find that our greatest joy and our greatest delight is not in the Lord of heaven, but in the games of men. This is not, first of all, regardless of the billions of dollars of advertising that has tried to prove the contrary. This is not Super Bowl Sunday. This is the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath. This is the day of our Lord's resurrection. This is the day of the greatest victory of all. You want something to cheer about. That is something to cheer about, friends.

This is the greatest victory of all, not the victory of a sports team over another group of men who have thrown a ball around all day. This is the victory of the Son of God who ascended into heaven. This is the victory of the resurrection of Christ by which he won our salvation and

was declared the Son of God in power. This is the victory that we celebrate on the Lord's day. This is the commemoration of the Sabbath, the victory of Christ over, over what? Death, the victory of Christ over sin, the victory of Christ over powers and principalities. It is his day of victory that he himself earned all on his own. It is the Lord's day. He has won a great victory for the sake of his people, and we celebrate him and none other.

So on the Sabbath, Christ sets himself before you and me, asking, will you choose me? Will you choose communion with me? Or will you spend it watching men throwing a ball around from one end of a field to another? Is that what you find worthy of celebration, or is it me? Is it the one who has taken on flesh, who is God in the flesh, come to lay down his life for you so that you can have an everlasting habitation with God? Or is it about a team that you cheer as though you yourself have moved a ball from one end of the field to another? Now, there's nothing inherently wrong with football. I am saying, though, that there is an absurd comparison here when it comes to the Lord's Day and it comes to what men are finding joy in today. And I don't mean just pagan men. I mean Christian men and women. What the Sabbath asks of you and me is, can we say one day out of seven, for just one day a week, I will desire to be with my beloved? Can I spend that much time with him and not grow weary of him? He asks, will you desire heavenly pleasure with me, or will you desire worldly amusements instead? which I on the last day will end anyhow.

Brethren, our text says one of the reasons we don't delight in the Christian Sabbath is because we do not delight in Jesus. We don't delight in him enough to consecrate one day of the week to him and him only. So we need to rediscover, this is actually, don't think that the Sabbath doctrine is a doctrine that is joyless and without pleasures. Instead, the Sabbath doctrine is really one that teaches us that our pleasures and joys are far too base and carnal and earthy, and there are higher joys, there are higher delights, there are higher pleasures at God's right hand. that we could have instead, but we choose the earthy. And that's what the Sabbath teaches us. Greater pleasures than we could ever have in the world. Jesus is calling us to such pleasure and communion. And as our text promises, if we delight in the Sabbath, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord. Those things go hand in hand. So our theme is: The Sabbath as a day to delight in Christ. The Sabbath as a day to delight in Christ. And we divide our time into three heads. First is pleasure, second is promise, third is practice.

I. Pleasure

And most of our time will be spent on our first head, because as we consider our first head pleasure, as I worked on this sermon, I realized I could not launch into the text immediately, sad to say, with where things are in the church, because many today will claim things like the fourth commandment is finished. Others then, you know, who see that the Fourth Commandment is part of the moral law of God, they say, well, the day is still Saturday, and that it is Constantine or Popes have changed the day to Sunday. So I suppose I have to preach an overview of Sabbath doctrine. Some of you are new to the church anyhow, so it seems like a good thing to do. We've

preached several sermons on the Sabbath. Our former minister preached, I believe, a 22-part sermon series on it, so it's very exhaustive. Don't have time for that, but lots of good material on the Sermon Audio for you to dive into if you wish.

First, where do we begin? Well, the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, and it preceded the Law of Moses itself. It came into the world before sin entered the world. It came with marriage and work. Genesis 2:3 shows you the Sabbath day there. In Exodus 16, we see that it was observed before the Ten Commandments were given at Sinai. So even before the law of God comes down Mount Sinai, it was already being observed, which we know makes sense because it is a creation ordinance. But it is second, part of the moral law of God. In Exodus 20, with the other 10 commandments, it was written with the finger of God on tablets of stone showing its permanence. So children, you think about it this way - do we still believe *thou shalt have no other gods before me*? Do you still believe *thou shalt not kill*? If so, we have to believe, *remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*. It's part and parcel of the system of the law of God.

And it regulates, you think of it this way, we have many things regulated, all of our life is regulated by the word of God. Which commandment regulates our time? It is the fourth commandment. Pull it out, and there's no regulation, really, on time for the Christian. In addition, it also, if you want to know the one commandment that prohibits any man from keeping you a slave, it is the fourth commandment. And those, it's really quite interesting and fascinating, right? It was the titans of the Industrial Revolution who wanted this commandment especially erased. Because they understand, how do they keep you working 24-7? Remove the Sabbath.

You'll also notice that the Sabbath begins, the fourth command begins with the words, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." It's one of two positive commandments, isn't it? Rather than thou shalt not, it is positive. Keep it holy. It's telling you what to do on the day. And this is actually why we go wrong when we frame it, I think, in a negative way of don't do this, don't do that, primarily, rather than think on its primary focus, which is to keep the day consecrated to God. And then the "do's" and "do not's", I think, work itself out. But we are to keep it holy. We are to embrace it as a holy day. Think of it as a holiday, a day totally consecrated to God. That's what that means. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And if you think of it in that way, you can think of it as a consecration of yourself to God, but also as you know God in Christ. Right? It's a day in which we have a holiday, so to speak, with Christ, don't we? We get to spend one day with our beloved in his ordinances by faith. It's a holiday from the world. It's a holiday from our work. It's a holiday from all of the base and carnal thoughts and afflictions and trials and tribulations and all the stress and the strain of this world to say, I will spend the day with Jesus. We consecrate ourselves to Jehovah and that is the fundamental principle. A day of holiness, it is not a profane day. And so it is not a day like the other six. It is distinct, it is sanctified, it is different, and it must be different from the other days. That's the principle. It cannot be like the other days.

Not only are we to rest in the commandment, but the commandment also says, and I hope you heard it, that others are to rest. Any under our charge, any we meet with, insofar as it lies in

our power and authority, they are to rest too. Even animals are to rest. You're not to employ others, but the call is to enable them to have a holy rest in Christ as well.

When you might come to this congregation, maybe you're new, maybe you're new to these thoughts, and maybe you've invited somebody to go to the restaurant with you after service. Well, they won't do it because they know not only is it wrong for me to spend my time in worldly recreations, which we'll get to in a bit, but I also don't want these poor people who are slaving over the stove to work for me, being prohibited from going to church and meeting God. You ask anybody, when you go to lunch out there, ask what time they came to start their work. They will tell you, I couldn't go to church because I'm here serving you. You're not to have others work for you because this is the law of charity, isn't it? You want them to enter the same rest that you have entered into.

And the Ten Commandments, in two places, gives two reasons for observing the Sabbath. First, in Exodus 20, the Sabbath is to be observed due to God's pattern of creation. *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*, or set it apart. So you remember this, children, right? In Genesis, God creates in six days, and then he rests on the seventh. But did you notice the other portions of this, right? He hallows the day. He says it's holy, it's distinct, it's separate, not for work. But also, do you remember what else you just heard? He blessed it. He blessed it. Many are forsaking their own blessings. by forsaking the Sabbath day. And that's really what Isaiah 58 is showing as well, isn't it?

There's so much of Christ to have. Christ showers us with every spiritual blessing on this day. It's the day in which we worship Him, but we also worship in His ordinances that are means of grace to bless and nourish our soul, our assurance grows, we know Him better, we delight in Him, and we leave the day blessed if we have approached the day in faith. You know, I was thinking of this, how the devil has twisted our minds to rob us of our blessings, even on the Sabbath. God says it's blessed. The devil in the world says, "What a drain, what a chore that is. How can you even possibly think of spending a whole day with God?" But God says plainly, "I will bless thee." This is a day of blessing. This is how the devil works, friends. He wants you to hate something that God promises blessings.

Second reason for keeping it, we read in Deuteronomy 5, when the law was repeated, God stressed redemption. *And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm. Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.* Now, Christian, think very deeply on that. That shows you that the Sabbath is, in a sense, a gospel ordinance, isn't it? It's a gospel ordinance. The Lord commanded you and I to keep it. Why? Because He redeemed us. Because He saved us. When we think of Christ's mighty arms stretched out on the cross for our salvation, we remember that He redeemed us in that way, and we keep this day holy unto Him. When we think of how Jesus said, "I will give you rest", we link that with the Sabbath commandment of rest. And we hear of rest for our weary soul, that through his work and his travail, we get to enter into his rest on the Sabbath. It is a gospel picture that salvation is not of

works, but by faith. by resting in Christ. That's what it screams. That's what it preaches. And that's why the devil hates it. We cease from work. Children, what happens to the man or woman who works for salvation? They die. They perish. That's why in the Old Testament, the man who works on the Sabbath day dies. Because it's a picture of what happens when a man works for salvation, rather than resting in Christ. So both creation and redemption are part and parcel of our observing of the Sabbath.

Are you created by Christ? Yes. So you rest on the Sabbath day. Are you redeemed by Christ? Yes. If you have faith in him, then you rest on the Sabbath day. Every Sabbath day, and this is why our catechism calls it an "abridgement of religion". You remember the totality of religion on the Sabbath day, from creation to redemption. It's all signified on this Sabbath day. We celebrate as well that there is an eternal Sabbath coming. We are not destined for this world and its system. We are destined for eternal heavenly habitations. an eternal Sabbath is coming. It's a joyous day to remind the Christian that we go to an everlasting holy rest at Christ's bosom.

Speaking of which, we come to our Savior and remember that he called himself...what? The Lord of the Sabbath. Mark 2, Matthew 12, Jesus exerts his claim that he is God through the Sabbath day. And the Sabbath then belongs to him. And this is where it becomes very interesting for the Christian, isn't it? That Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath, because that directly leads to the change of the day. No longer on the seventh day, that is Saturday, children, but the first day, that is Sunday. First day of the week, children, the world's trying to try to convince you it's Monday. It's not. The first day is Sunday, the Lord's day. With Christ's resurrection, the day of observance has changed to the day of the resurrection. The day in which he was raised from the grave. The first day of the week, the day he entered his rest. The day in which his humiliation was over and his exaltation begins. The first day of the week, he enters his rest. The same pattern as Genesis, if you think about it. His resurrection is the first day of the new creation. God finishes his works in the Old Testament and rests on the seventh day. Jesus Christ is raised and enters his rest on the first day of the week. And so the Sabbath day is the first day of the week from the resurrection of Christ.

And you'll notice this in the Bible. If you look at your New Testament intently, think of how prominent the words on the first day of the week are all throughout, signifying there is a distinction now in the Christian church after the resurrection of Christ on when the Sabbath is celebrated. After his resurrection, in fact, after his resurrection, all his dealings with his people are on the first day of the week. In John 20, for instance, the Bible takes great pains to say he visited his disciples on the first day. Pentecost, what day of the week was that? The first day of the week. The Spirit comes in power to the Christian church. The Holy Spirit poured out. The early church worships God, and I don't mean in church history past the close of the canon, I mean literally the early church in the book of Acts. You see that they worship God on the first day of the week in Acts 20, right? Paul famously, every minister, every preacher knows this, preaches until midnight on the first day of the week. He doesn't preach on the seventh day of the week. He preaches on the first. In 1 Corinthians 16, he said the collection is to be taken on the first day of the week. In Revelation 1 verse 10, John receives the final revelation of Christ when

he is in the spirit on the Lord's day. All of the activities that you would imagine occur on the Sabbath day occur on the first day of the week. Worship, communion with Christ, in the book of Revelation, receiving the last words of the canon, all of it happens on the holy day of the Lord, which is now the Lord's day. After Christ's resurrection, there remains a Sabbath rest, but on the first day.

Speaking of which, Hebrews 4:9 says there remains a Sabbath rest for us. The King James [version] says, here, “remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” But your marginal note might say this in your King James, that the Greek word for rest is literally “keeping of a Sabbath”. So “remain it therefore a keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God” is the literal translation there. And I actually believe, and this will be one of the few times I commend a translation like the ESV, it translates it that way.

Now, let me say one word. I don't have time to go through everything on the Sabbath, but one word on the misunderstood “gotcha” text of Colossians 2:16 and 17, which says, *let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of an holy day or of the new moon or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ*. And this is really the place people try to go to say the Sabbath is done away with. But for your edification, there were ceremonial Sabbaths in the Old Testament that were distinct from the weekly Sabbath, which is why they are plural in that text, “Sabbath days”. In fact, Paul, all he is doing is using the formula of the Old Testament that speaks of these ceremonial days distinct from the weekly Sabbath. For instance, 1 Chronicles 23:31, *offer all burnt sacrifices unto the Lord in the Sabbaths, in the new moons and on the set feasts*. So those are ceremonial Sabbaths, new moons, and set feasts connected to burnt sacrifices. The same formula is used in 2 Chronicles 2, verse 4, and Hosea 2:11, for the ceremonial Sabbaths. And so that's what Paul has in view. The ceremonial system, distinct from the moral law of God summarized in the 10 Commandments, those Sabbaths, those are done away with, but not the moral Sabbath.

But what of history? I want to give you history because it's important. It's only very recently that Orthodox Christians would say that the Sabbath is done away with. That's a very recent historical change. You know, in fact, children, you might know this...Texas still has blue laws. They are Sabbath laws that prohibit certain activities on Sundays. You cannot buy liquor on Lord's Day mornings, for instance. And those are remnants of Sabbath-keeping laws. But this goes back all the way to where Christianity was recognized. In the Roman Empire, soon after it legalized Christianity, AD 321, law was passed that said on Sundays, let the magistrate and people residing in cities rest and let all workshops be closed. Now, Seventh-day Adventists make the outrageous claim that Constantine or the Pope changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day. But as you have seen, it is the Bible, it is the word of God that says that the Lord of the Sabbath changed the day after his resurrection, and the apostles in the book of Acts, 1 Corinthians, and elsewhere honored him that way, and we do too.

As Reformed Christians, we are Sabbatarians by confession. The Westminster Confession of Faith and its catechisms are Sabbatarian documents. Our Baptist brethren, who are reformed Baptist by confession, who hold to the London Baptist confession, they are the exact same. They

and we are Sabbatarians. I put an extract of chapter 21 of the confession on your bulletin to read later.¹

Well, as we think on today and the Super Bowl, what of our nation? What of America? You know, she was once, hard to believe, thoroughly Sabbath keeping. Recently, our family visited Jamestown in Virginia, the first permanent English settlement in these United States. Sabbath-keeping laws were from the very beginning of that settlement. No trade, no commerce, no public entertainment or meetings on Sundays. The only legal public meetings were church services. Later, and this is a kind of interesting thing as we move to election day, why was Tuesday and not Monday chosen for election day? Because of the Sabbath. Not many people remember that anymore, but it was the case that Americans kept Sunday holy unto the Lord. And because it was an agrarian society, to get to polling places required travel. They wouldn't travel on Sunday, they would travel on Monday to vote on Tuesday. And sports. This will surprise you. It wasn't until 1933 that football was allowed to be played in places like Pennsylvania. 1933. Because most Christians, especially Presbyterians, were Sabbatarians. Can you think of it? It took almost 300 years to pass a law like that in America. In the years since 1933, it's quite an interesting hinge, isn't it? When you think of liberalism and everything else happening in that time.

Can you say that since Sabbath desecration was established by law, that our nation and our churches have become more moral? Absolutely not. Could we say that our nation is stronger and the church more vibrant? Absolutely not. You know, some say, and we'll make it a campaign slogan even, "Make America Great Again". But what made America great in the first place? We were a Protestant people who worship Jesus Christ. So with that, to establish the Christian Sabbath and a historical view, let us look at Isaiah 58:13. *If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day.* This text, it establishes that as a holy day, not only work is prohibited, which you find explicitly in Deuteronomy and Exodus, but worldly recreation is also prohibited as well. Our confession cites this text to establish that case. And so you might say that seems like an open and shut case. I would say it is. It seems that way. However, when the flesh wants what the flesh wants, it finds or tries to find ways around the Bible, which is what has happened.

Some of our brethren will tell us that the Hebrew word for pleasure here ought to be translated "business". They say our text also is the only one in scripture to claim recreation is forbidden on the Sabbath, so let us not jump to that conclusion. They might even be, you know, Sabbatarian enough to say, I agree on work, let us not work, let us not have others work, but really is play forbidden, is recreation forbidden? Well, what do we say to this? Well, first of all, I find that a strange argument on the Hebrew choice here, because the Hebrew word firstly means "desire" at its root. And all major translations translate it that way. Whether it's the ESV, the

¹ WCF 21.8. This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

NASB, our King James reflects that, or even the, this is interesting, even the NIV, right? The NIV says, and it's very explicit, "from doing as you please on my holy day." saying, don't do what you please on my holy day. And our Jewish forefathers in the Greek translation of the Hebrew in the Septuagint translated as the same way, not to carry out your own desires or wishes. So there's a consistent testimony here from ancient days, from even the best Hebrew scholars in the Jewish church of how to translate this text. Yet I don't think we have to even wrestle over the meaning of Hebrew words and lexicons, because something very fundamental is in view here.

God says, you are to, and I too, are to refrain from doing thy pleasure on - what are the words?- My holy day. My holy day. The idea of a day consecrated to God, as we already heard, is what is in view. It totally then makes sense, right, on His holy day, that our pleasure is not in view. This should just be basic. But sometimes we get tripped up by tiny, minute details and we lose the forest for the trees. It's His holy day. It's not our pleasure in view. Instead, our focus is to consecrate ourselves to a holy God. And that makes the rest of the point of the text obvious. The day is not about our own desires. And that's why the verse says, to turn away thy foot from the Sabbath. This all goes together. What that is, it's kind of a vivid phrase for you, isn't it, children? To say, don't put the Sabbath under your feet. It is holy. Don't trample on it. Don't trample on it. You recall how Moses took his shoes off before the burning bush, for it was holy ground. His awe for God as He comes before God, takes his shoes off before God, having no desire but to completely focus his attention and energy on the one that says, "I am that I am", I am Jehovah. Now, do you think that the thought of play comes into his mind as he comes before a holy God like that? No. I think it's so fitting we heard from our brother this morning on the holiness of God. These things are linked together. This makes the point of the text obvious. The day is not about our desires. The rest of the doctrine applies itself when we see the Sabbath day as a day of profound holiness.

Now, at this point, your flesh probably begins to groan, doesn't it? Are you saying the Sabbath is a day of drudgery and no pleasure at all, pastor? Am I to endure then a day, must I begin my week with a day of misery and drudgery every week? No, God forbid. That is not what is in view at all. And I hope you can't read this text and come to, you can read this text and come to that conclusion. How could you? The Lord does not call you away from pleasure. He calls you away from "thy pleasure", the pleasure that you have invented for yourself. He says, the reason I call you away from it is because I'm calling you to my pleasure, to greater pleasure, to greater delight, to heavenly things. He says, call the Sabbath the delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor him not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words. He says, delight in the Sabbath day. I don't want you miserable. on my holy day. I want you to have pleasure, but in me. It's a day of exquisite delight, a day to delight in the higher things, to honor God, which should be our delight. Something's wrong if honoring God is not delightful to you. To honor God and to delight in Christ, not in your own ways, not in your own pleasure, not even in your own words, but God's words, right? We delight in the things of God. This shows you as well, when it says your own words, that what is at view

is this total consecration to the Lord. Jesus Christ, Lord of the Sabbath, is calling you to honor him this day. He says, why will you not? Did I not create you in love? Exodus 20, did I not redeem you in love? Deuteronomy chapter 5. And beyond all that, am I not a great king worthy to be adored, worthy to be worshiped this day? So he says, come to me. Spend time with me. Delight in me and worship me. Delight in my Sabbath rest from the world and all of the things. Why are you interested in errands and balls and games when you could have me instead? Why do you want recreation and amusement and worldly work when you could have time spent with me? You know, the Sabbath is a delightful day because to be with Christ ought to be delightful. You know, how does verse 14 begin? *Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.* That's what transforms the Sabbath day from drudgery to delight. when our heart can truly say, oh, you've sung it, you've read it, maybe you've memorized it even, but when your heart can say, *there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee, my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* Psalm 73. Is that where you are, brethren?

The Sabbath day really tests your heart in that, doesn't it? It's easy to say it. It's easy to fool yourself into believing it. But when God says, then, if that is so, delight in me one day of the week, and the groans begin, then our profession and our heart are out of tune, aren't they? The Sabbath day tests our profession when even lawful things like work or recreations come into it. Jesus tests you on this day. If you are called, right, like Lot's wife, to leave this world behind, if Christ were right before you now, and he is, by faith you must believe it, and he's beckoning you to come to him, would you rather turn back at your big screen TV on Vanity Fair, on the Super Bowl, or whatever else, or would you say, I will follow thee into heaven, Christ? The Sabbath tests you and tests me as well.

You know, the grace of it is you have today to find out if you are Lot's wife. Jesus says, remember Lot's wife, and she had Sabbath day after Sabbath day. Clearly she didn't sanctify the day because she wouldn't follow God. And she perished with the world. But if you get to the end of your days, you can say, I desired the Lord of the Sabbath more than anything else, worldly labor or recreation. You can say, "oh my soul, how assured I am to enter my eternal rest, my eternal Sabbath rest in the arms of Christ. because that is what I want and that is what I've yearned for in the days of my pilgrimage." And that's a beautiful and glorious thing. You know, I don't quote C.S. Lewis very much, but perhaps the very best thing he might have ever said is this, "it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition,..." (and I would add to his word, sports), "...when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea."

We are far too easily pleased. There are better things than the things of this world, and the Sabbath day shows you that. You see, on the Sabbath, the Lord is not calling you to not have pleasure, but he tests you with two kinds of pleasures. A heavenly pleasure in him versus a worldly pleasure in the things that perish with the world. He asks, do you find pleasure in hearing my voice? And do you say, the voice of my beloved? He says, do you find your pleasure

in fellowshiping with my body that is the church? Do you find pleasure in breaking bread with my people and speaking much of me like the people in Malachi? Knowing that I have a book of remembrance that will note every time you spoke of the Lord while others are getting up on their couch and rooting for a sports team. Do you long for a better world than one with football, drink, restaurants and movies? Do you long for that room that I am preparing for you in my father's house? The Sabbath is a gauge of our soul and our true desires. Even lawful desires like work and recreations can be idols to us. Don't forget it. Don't forget it. Lawful things can be idols. We are so deceived that we can't see it at times. The Sabbath helps us identify and smash by God's grace these idols. Our chief end, remember this children, is both to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The Sabbath shows whether we are just paying lip service to glorifying God and enjoying Him.

Now, some of you have been Sabbatharians for a while now. You may never even think about watching the Super Bowl and maybe like the Pharisee, you're saying, I don't even care for such things. But something else has happened to you. You no longer delight in the day. It's merely just one of your duties that you go about saying, well, God wants me to keep the day holy. And praise God, I'm not like other men. I'm not tempted by sports or drink or whatever else, you know, in the restaurant, drink in the restaurant, stuff like that. But something worse maybe has happened. First love has grown cold. And you no longer delight in the Sabbath day because you don't delight in God. You don't delight in Christ. you are to rekindle your heart's desire for Christ. If so, you must renew your conviction that this is a day to delight in. And let not Saturday or Monday be sweeter than Sunday. Remember who you come to meet this day. Remember who it is that you have time and room given to you in your week to adore and spend time you ask yourself this question, can I consecrate but 14% of my time to the one who gave all of himself to me?

In the garden, God asked, give me one tree. In the week now, he says, give me one day. And our hearts are so cold that we say that is too much to give God. Is it too much to give the one who loved me and gave himself for me? Should I not delight in Him actually knowing these things? And in His cross, at least 14% of my time on this earth? Is God really that miserly? You think in your mind that He says one day, 14% and you go, how awful, how terrible of you, God. You give me six days. You ask for 14%. I can't give it. I don't want to give it. That's where we are.

II. Promise

Well, to help us delight, let's consider our second head - promise. I already warned the elders this will be a longer sermon, but these next two heads will be a bit shorter. Now, to draw us towards a greater love for the Lord's day, God allures us with promises. And we need to keep them in view. He promises rich blessings if you honor him and his day. He has promised elsewhere that them that honor Him will be honored by Him. Verse 14, here is promise if you delight in the Sabbath: *Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the*

mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. You know, regardless of any other promise here, and there are many, The Christian, their soul's great desire and longing is here to delight in God. That if you delight in the Sabbath, you will delight more and more in God. That is his promise. And there's so many Christians who don't delight in God because they don't delight in the Sabbath day. They might claim they delight in God, but they don't really. Or they delight in a version of God who's not the true God of the Bible. But to delight in the true God, to be helped in that, we delight in the Sabbath.

Our problem is we delight in other things. But the Christian, born again, wants to desire and wants to delight in God, even if they struggle with that. Is that where you are? Is there any desire here to delight in Him? To find your deepest and greatest joys in Him? Or is he really just sort of the one who wound the clock, so to speak, of creation, and he's just up there to you? Your redemption, all it is to you is get out of hell, free card, but you don't actually delight in God. That would be a terrible thing. He is to be delighted in because there is no greater thing, there is no greater being, there is nothing perfect but God that you could delight in. And the promise of this is that God will do a work for you and in you. As you delight in the Sabbath day, he will manifest himself to you in a delightful way. He will deal with you more graciously because this isn't something you can drum up in yourself, right, to delight in God? This requires the grace of God.

And he says, if you want to delight in me, delight in my day, and I will manifest myself to you. I will come to you. I will make myself delightful to you. As even you think on this - I spend a day with him. I look into his word. I peer into the face of God in Jesus Christ. And I think on who this God is. And how can you but help but be delighted in who you find? And you will say more and more, it is good for me to draw near God. He will cause you to delight more in his ordinances, to say with eagerness on Saturday, "oh my soul, tomorrow is the Lord's day. I cannot wait to worship God, to hear his word, to be with his body, the church."

Then, as if that isn't enough, he adds another promise: *I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.* There's so many ways that this rings true. First, it's as though he causes, as our affections are lifted heavenward, it's as though we are riding over this fallen world. And it no longer troubles us; it no longer bothers us. Our affections are heavenward, our trials and our tribulations, our light and momentary affairs. And we live for Him, and even as we sang in Psalms, like Psalm 11, we understand God is in His holy throne, and there I am with Him. And what can the world do? Like Psalm 2, I laugh with Christ at it all. If our thoughts and affections be heavenly, it's as though we ride over the earth. And when our consecration is to Him, nothing drags us down, even our hardships and trials. Even those will cause us to be heavenly minded. All things work for good for them that are the called in Christ. And we hold onto the things of this world loosely, right? I can lose my job. I can lose my home. I may even lose my children and my wife. And he says, delight in me and I will cause you to ride in the high places. upon the high places of the earth.

You know, strange it is that today many Christians, after whenever this game is played, are going to be utterly disappointed that a sports team has lost. And that's a profound picture on

the Sabbath day of how earthly and carnal we are. Because the Lord's day is not a day of disappointments. It is a day of rejoicing and triumph. because Christ is risen from the dead. And if you want to know your idols, if your team loses on the Sabbath day and you are crushed, you are worshiping your team and not Christ. God in our text promises the church that if she will recover, the Sabbath day is delightful.

He will cause as well the church to conquer, to ride upon the high places of the earth. That language is often used for the fortifications of God's enemies and their idolatries and their idols. Deuteronomy 33:29: *Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency. And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places.* This is a promise of victory for the church. Christ, through his church, will conquer the nations that rage against him. And what is perhaps the most strange about modern postmillennials that disregard the Sabbath is the millennial glory does not come without restoring Sabbath keeping. Because there's a promise here. You want to ride over the powers in the world? He says, keep the Sabbath and I will cause the church to prosper. Is the church on her back foot and on the retreat? Well, let us recover Sabbatarianism. We may see God's promises come to pass and his church prospering.

In view of that, he also promises, I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father. The heritage of Jacob, you can think of this, all the covenant blessings, right? He says that he will give them to us. They will come to you. The blessings promised not just to you individually, but to the church, the church being built up. I will build my church. The descendants of Abraham will be as innumerable as the stars, and the gospel will go out, and you will see nations, tribes, and tongues come and turn to the Lord. The Jews will turn to Jesus. These are the heritage of Jacob. Won't come without the keeping of the Sabbath. And he caps it off by saying, the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. In other words, try me in this. you can take it to the bank, you have my pledge.

Now, in view of all this, no wonder Satan hates the Sabbath day. Right? No wonder Satan hates the Sabbath day. Because if the church would keep it, look at the blessings that would come the strength, the health, the communion with Christ, the power, and he hates it. No wonder the doctrine's perverted. The strength and health of the church is connected to Sabbath keeping. You know, the now apostate PCUSA, in 1854, her General Assembly passed this resolution: "The proper observance of the Christian Sabbath is essential alike to the purity and progress of the church and to the prosperity of the state. A church without the Sabbath is apostate. A people who habitually desecrate this divine institution have abandoned one of the grand foundations of social order and political freedom." All of that is wrapped up in the Fourth Commandment. And as you look at the decline of the world and the church, I think those are prophetic words, aren't they, of the General Assembly of 1854. She warned herself of Sabbath desecration before she fell away. And so let our denomination and every other denomination that holds to Sabbath keeping take heed lest we fall.

And may those as well who out of ignorance today don't keep it. Many of us, almost all of us probably didn't know about the Sabbath. It was ignorance. But may our ignorance be

removed that we may keep this holy ordinance in view of the great and precious promises in our text.

III. Practice

Well, with that, let's conclude with our final heading, which is practice. Well, how do we keep the Sabbath day? I know it can seem daunting at first, and this won't be exhaustive, but just some thoughts, especially linked to this particular Sabbath day. One of the first things we must never ever say, and this is immediately where the devil tempts us, is to say, well, because I can't keep it perfectly, I cannot keep it at all, and I won't try. Many people will ask, and they'll ask about edge cases, well, electricity and this and that and the other thing. We can talk about that if you'd like offline. But let me just say this. I have not heard of a Christian truly born again who says the same thing about the Seventh Commandment, unless they are self-righteous. In which case they say, absolutely, I keep the Seventh Commandment perfectly every day of my life. Right? No, we wrestle, we are tempted, we know we don't keep it perfectly, but remember that the throne that we come to is a throne of mercy as well as grace. And so we trust in the Lord to save us and to wash us by his blood when we fall short of our duty. But that is not an argument for neglect of duty. All the commandments require divine grace.

I also want you to remember in your practice that this is something to embrace, that it marks you out as distinct in this world. Exodus 31:13, God said, *verily my Sabbaths you shall keep for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you*. Has Jesus sanctified you as he set you apart from the people of this world? Yes. Side note. I'll try not to go too far afield here. This is also a reason for the change of day. The true people of God, be they Jew or Gentile, worship on the first day of the week, whereas the apostates who reject Jesus worship on the seventh. And so, as a sign to Christ that we are sanctified by him, we worship on the first and not the seventh day of the week. If you want to hold to a seventh-day Sabbath, you associate, in other words, with apostates. So yes, Sabbatarianism might make you seem weird in our day and age. However, isn't it bizarre that the Muslim has no problem being strange in our society for Allah, a strange God, when you and I are afraid of being strange for Christ? Their dress, their practices, They're all strange to the world, but they're eager to do it for an idol. Well, we can't keep a day committed unto the Lord for the true and living God, because that makes us weird. This is an opportunity to witness for your sanctity, for your holiness, to even those who invite you to sports games or whatever on the Sabbath, even a Super Bowl party. You say, no, but let me tell you of why I adore my faithful Savior. And that marks you as distinct, that you are a peculiar people, that you are not like the people of this world. And that is a witnessing opportunity that they may know that the Lord thy God has sanctified thee.

So on the Sabbath, put away worldly work, put away worldly recreations. Children, it's not a day for sports and games. It's a day for the Lord of the Sabbath for Christ. At this point, you may want a list of don'ts. Well, as I said, the Sabbath is a positive commandment. The focus is on delighting in the things of God. I love how and I will message this man later, Lord willing, I

love how one Baptist elder put it in keeping the Sabbath. He said it's rather like driving. When you drive, if you keep your eye on the road, you don't need the guardrails. The guardrails are there just to keep you from going into disaster. But I trust many of you, most of you haven't needed the guardrails because you keep your eye on the road. If you keep your eye on the road, that is if you keep your eye on Christ and you keep your eye on the things that please him and his ordinances and his people and everything else, then you don't need the do nots. If you keep your eye on the Lord of the Sabbath, you don't need them.

So you behold his glory this day. You put into your day acts of worship, including corporate worship, AM and PM, private worship as well. You know, how many have I heard in the Christian church have said, "you know, pastor, I'm just too busy to pray." Well, here's a day, Pray, pray. You say, "I'm so busy. I have all these good books I want to read." Read them, edifying books of the Lord. Read them, you have a day to do it. You say, "I love to visit my brethren, but I'm just running to and fro all the week." Well, God knows this, here's a day to do it. Really though, all these things show us what we really desire. Because you're almost always going to hear people say, but I can't go to the restaurant. I can't go and watch the television show. I can't go to the stadium. But you say these other things are important and you don't have time. Now I think you know what you really find important in life. The Sabbath confronts us in these things.

But also consider works of mercy and necessity. The Lord said the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. And he means that it is a day of rich blessing from God to us. And we may in turn bless others. We are so self-centered and self-focused that we always ask, What about me? What can I do to indulge myself on this day and woe is me because I can't indulge myself in these entertainments and amusements and even labors. But we lose the heart of Christianity. Love for God and love for neighbor. Why do we never ask, what can I do for my neighbor who is a shut-in? Can I go now? Oh, the Sabbath is interesting. I can go to the nursing home and I can go cheer those who today have not been able to go worship God. I can just read the Bible to them and I can pray with them. Do you really see where we're at, friends? We're always asking, why can't I watch a bunch of guys go and throw a ball around? But we're never asking, where is the time in my life to go and love God and love neighbor? Why is it seven days a week are all about my pleasure and 14% of my time can't be about loving God and loving neighbor in a heightened way?

Now, certain employments are lawful on this day. We have those who work in law enforcement, even in our midst. We have doctors and nurses. We can talk another time. The Lord Jesus showed us that this is a day of mercy. He desires mercy and not sacrifice. Those are lawful employments on a day like this. As a minister, it's a lawful employment to preach the word. Now some ask things like can I take a walk because I need to get up and get about or I get sluggish. After all, you're sitting a lot and probably more so on this sermon tonight. On the Lord's Day, you say my body needs activity too. And I would say yes, so long as it aids you in communing with the Lord. It's not to terminate on your own pleasure, right? The use of a walk or some sort of bodily exercise like that. And it's not exercise like go to the gym, right? It is bodily exercise

that enables my mind to be fresh, that enables the sluggishness to be removed. But even in all of that, even that walk on the Sabbath ought to have something to do with God in the midst of it. If you're walking outside, you think about the first reason for the Sabbath, the creation of the world. You look on the world and you meditate on its glory or how it shows us the glory of God. The end of your walk is not to please yourself, but to clear your mind and give you strength to pursue Christ better. Look on the heavens then that declare His glory. Think of Christ ascended now and ruling and reigning over all things. Look at the sparrows as we prayed and say, if not one of them is forgotten before God, I am not forgotten before God. You see how you can use even these things to the glory of God and even your own edification. Meditating on the word you know, you look at the ant and you say, look upon the ant thou sluggard, right? Then your body and soul are conditioned to return to worship and further conversation of the Lord and so on. But the end must be to God and the root must be in Christ. That will help you in all you do.

So with these principles, what about worldly recreation? Well, it should be obvious. We should seek to delight in Christ and put them away. What of the Super Bowl? Let's just talk very plainly here. Immediate application - do not watch it. Today is the Sabbath day. You cannot devote a day to the Lord by cheering on a sports team. That is thy pleasure. It's almost like the very definition of it. And we talk about taking our foot away from the Sabbath and well, here's football. It almost seems eerily connected. and it is filled with the world, crass commercialism, halftime shows with sexualized entertainers. It's a monument to man's depravity. God has given his people over to such blindness that they cannot even now recognize and discern the 6th and 7th and 8th commandment issues with it because they don't recognize the 4th anymore. As Romans 1 says, he hands us over to such things when we do not honor him. So it should not be supported as this game and its Sabbath-breaking is a great evil that causes many Christians to neglect and forsake the worship of God.

In fact, the whole Super Bowl smacks of a worship service, if you think on it. It has its singing, it has its cheering, it has its glorifying in something which is not God. The only question is what god is being worshiped, and it is not Jesus. You know, it's an abhorrent thing. I was thinking on our brother preaching of Christ cleansing the Temple this morning. There are many who have taken their meeting halls this evening and made it Super Bowl watch parties. They have canceled their service of worship so that they can cheer on men throwing a ball. But is God not a jealous God? He says, this is my holy day. He says, I am the victor on the day of the resurrection, honor me. And so in light of that, my next application will be even less popular, but I think I will defend it well, which is you ought not to watch it at all, even on Monday. Call me a legalist if you wish, fine. But the reason I say this with all biblical warrant is because of conscience sake. We are told not to ask questions about meat offered in the marketplace for conscience sake, aren't we? Lest it bother our conscience that it may have been offered to idols. So Paul says, don't ask questions. We talked about this in Christian liberty. So your conscience doesn't know. However, with the Super Bowl, you cannot help but know. You know that this was a day played on the Sabbath day and it pulled people out of the worship of God. That's very

different from consuming products or entertainment when you have no idea if the Sabbath is desecrated by their activity or not. But by definition, this game is played on the Sabbath.

So with all that said, choose the better portion on the Lord's Day. Delight in Christ and he will give you the desires of your heart. Do you desire to delight in his day? What can you take from this text? He will grow a desire for himself in you. Psalm 37:4, *Delight thyself also in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.* Don't these all work together? See if the Lord will not give you more of himself on the Sabbath. Never ever countenance the lie that Sabbath keeping is legalism. That's the devil's lie. I hope you've seen throughout these texts how it is not legalism. There are many who, like Pharisees, have added burdens to the day, but the Sabbath is actually about pleasure, the true pleasure and true riches found in Christ, a foretaste, really, of the heavenly delights you will enjoy before the throne of the Lamb. When the Sabbath is your delight, you go to bed, even if you are tired physically, even mentally, filled with marrow and fatness, for the Lord has fed you abundantly on the heritage of Jacob. And when you think of Monday, even if it is filled with the potential of worldly pleasure, you say, even so, come Lord Jesus. That is the heart of those who delight in the Sabbath.

That is what the devil does not want you to know. And what he whispers to you as he whispered to Eve is this word, legalism. God does not want you to have pleasure. It started in the Garden and it continues in the Sabbath. So may you and I respond to the devil with the scripture when he does, that if I call the Sabbath a delight and honor Christ, he will cause me to delight in him, and I will ride in the high places of the earth, and you can full well say in that, the Lord rebuke thee, Satan. May God help us do these things and contend for Christ's claims. Amen.