

Reverence For the God of the Covenant

Scripture Reading: **Exodus 20:8-11**

Introduction:

1. **The book of Exodus contains the Ten Commandments, one of which is the commandment to observe the Sabbath day.**
 - A. **The Lord commanded:
Exodus 20:8-11**
2. **Additional revelation was given regarding the observance of the Sabbath day.**
 - A. **The Sabbath observance was commanded to provide a rest for man and animal from their labors.**

Exod 23:12 "Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

- B. **Not even the busy times of the agricultural season, earing and harvest, were justification for not observing the Sabbath!**

Exod 34:21 "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.

- C. **The repetition of the Sabbath commandment in the context of instructions pertaining to the building of the Tabernacle points to the conclusion that the urgency in building the Tabernacle was not justification for neglecting the Sabbath.
Exodus 31:12-17; 35:1-3**

Punishment of the Sabbath Breaker:

- 1. God ordained that the man who violated the Sabbath was to be punished with death:**

Exodus 31:15

- A. During the wanderings in the wilderness, a man broke the Sabbath law by gathering sticks on that day.**

- 1) The record of his sin was given to illustrate presumptuous sin.**

--- **PRESUMPTUOUS: forward; showing overconfidence; taking liberties.** (Webster's New World Dictionary)

- 2) Regarding presumptuous sin, the Lord revealed:
Numbers 15:30-31**

- B. Immediately following these verses which describe the punishment for presumptuous sin, the record of the Sabbath violator is given.**

Numbers 15:32-36

- 2. To some people the death penalty for violation of the Sabbath law seems too harsh.**

- A. Even though we may never understand why God demanded the death penalty, we should have enough reverence for the Lord's revelation not to criticize the Lord's judgment.**

3. The reason for the death penalty can be better understood when we recognize the seriousness of the offence.

A. Writing in the Pulpit Commentary, George Rawlinson described the seriousness of the sin and God's justice in making the punishment so harsh:

- 1) The penalty of death for breaking the sabbath seems to moderns over-severe; but the erection of sabbath-observance into the special sacramental sign that Israel was in covenant with God made non-observance an offence of the **gravest character**. The man who broke the sabbath destroyed, so far as in him lay, the entire covenant between God and his people -- not only broke it, but annulled it and threw Israel out of covenant. (Exodus, p. 318)

B. The Sabbath breaker showed a **WILLFUL disregard for the Sabbath day, the covenant which God made with Israel and the God who made the covenant.**

- 1) **This was a presumptuous (Willful) sin punishable by death.**

New Testament Parallels:

1. Someone may say "Hold on preacher - that was in the Old Testament and that Sabbath law doesn't apply to me today".

A. You're right. The Sabbath along with the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross.

Colossians 2:14-17

B. Christians are not bound by the Law of Moses to observe the Sabbath.

- 1) **But that is not to say there are no covenant requirements equal in importance in the New Testament.**

2. Let's look at a few N.T. covenants we must observe.

A. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. The blood of Jesus is the blood of the New Covenant.

Matt 26:28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

B. He commanded Christians to remember His death for sin by partaking of the Lord's Supper.

1 Cor 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; **do this in remembrance of Me.**"

C. The Lord's Supper is to be observed regularly:

Acts 2:42 And they **continued steadfastly** in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

1) It is to be observed upon the first day of every week.

Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.....

**2) The collection is done on the same day.
1 Corinthians 16:1-2**

3. The person who willfully misses the first day of the week assembly to remember the Lord's death **shows a disregard for the covenant and Him who died for that covenant to be established!**

A. For one to place temporal matters such as RECREATION, SLEEP, FAMILY, ETC.) above the covenant, shows a contempt for the Lord who made that covenant.

4. The NEW TESTAMENT shows us that the forsaking of the assembly is treated as a most serious offence!

A. The writer **COMMANDED the Hebrew Christians not to forsake the assembly saying:**

Hebrews 10:25

1) forsaking the assembly is purposefully missing the assembly. It can become a habit. When it becomes a habit - total apostasy has occurred (a falling away).

B. Following the command not to forsake the assembly, (willfully missing the service) he added:

Hebrews 10:26-29

Hebrews 6:4-6

Matt 26:24 "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but **woe to that man** by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

5. Let us understand - Forsaking the worship of the Lord and the observance of the Lord's Supper, is a serious offence.

A. It is a presumptuous sin, **a willful sin, a showing of disregard for the covenant and the God who made it!**

Would You Allow This?

* A husband was away from home for several weeks. There was no justifiable reason for him to be gone. One day he just left and never came home. Numerous inquiries were made, but his absence remained unexplained. And then one day he wandered back home. He sat down at the supper table and acted as though nothing had ever happened. Would you allow this?

* A worker walked off his job. He did not obtain his employer's permission, he just disappeared. He remained gone for a couple of months. Other employees had to take up the slack and fill-in for him, covering his work while they tried to do their own. Then he showed up on a payday. He offered no explanation, asked for all his back wages and proceeded to take up his former position as if everything was normal. Would you allow this?

* A student failed to attend classes for a number of weeks. School officials attempted to locate him and discover the cause of his absence, but to no avail. The other students progressed in their studies, leaving the absent student far behind in several important subject areas. The truant student returned one day. He had no excuse. There was evidence that his absence was deliberate and that he had been involved in a good bit of mischief. Amazingly, he expected to be welcomed without question and even requested that the entire class back-track and cover the subject matters that he missed. Would you allow this?

* A Christian did not attend services for several weeks. The elders, the preacher, and a number of other church members tried to find out what the problem was, but without success. Others had to take up the slack caused by his absence. The congregation proceeded with its program of work and teaching. Then one day he showed up for services again. There was no explanation - no confession of wrongdoing. He wanted to immediately retake to his former status, to be counted as a faithful member, to be called on for prayer and to be used in the services. Would you allow this? Think!!

Greg Gwin
Columbia, TN