

LD 38; Mark 2:23-27; Heb. 10:23-25; Keeping the Sabbath I. The Foundation of this Command II. Keeping the Sabbath Holy III. Avoiding the Misuse of this Day

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sabbath Day's observance is on the decline in our society. In a study completed in 2022, only about 20 percent of Americans go to church on a regular basis. I remember growing up in NW Iowa when some cities had their own Blue Laws- no businesses were allowed to be open on Sundays except gas stations. I am pretty sure that these Blue Laws are no longer enforced today. But is that the extend of our understanding of this day? If we want to keep the Sabbath Day holy, we shut down our shops and then everyone will uphold this day? Surely not. Keeping the Sabbath is more than just not going to your normal job. As we will see today, the 4th commandment is dealing with the day and the duty of proper worship. So as we conclude our study of the first table of the Law, we have seen who, how and when we are called to worship. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ as the Lord of the Sabbath calls His people to attend the assembly of the saints.

I. The Foundation of this Command

As we begin, we start with the foundation of this command. The 4th commandment reads- keep the Sabbath Day holy. Now the word- sabbath- means to rest. And the way in which we are to keep it holy is by setting it apart- seeing it as a special and distinct day of the week. The fact is, God knows our needs. He knows that mankind is prone to extreme- either to laziness or to becoming workaholics. By way of this command we are given balance. When we read this command in Ex. 20, we find that this commandment is rooted in creation. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and He rested on the seventh day. The last day of the week was given to mankind by God as a gift in which to rest and enjoy the fruit of their labor. To rejoice in the work that had been done. Work hard for 6 days, and then rest on the seventh and find enjoyment in the work you have completed. And as we come to Dt. 5, the foundation of this command is located in redemption. You are to rest for you shall remember

that you were slaves in Egypt. As you rest, remember that I brought you out of slavery with my might hand and outstretched arm. Here the goal of the Sabbath was to rest in order to commune with God and give thanks for the freedom that the Israelites had received. This covenantal communion and fellowship was lost at the fall, but restored by Jesus Christ! So when we take these two aspects together we find that this resting on the Sabbath has something to say to both our body and our souls. Rest from physical labor that produces sweat and rest from slavery to sin! The identity of the Israelites is this- they are both created and redeemed- commanded to rest for the sake of their bodies and their souls. So we see that we are creatures who belong- the goal of working 6 days is work unto the LORD and for His glory. But the goal of rest is to reorient ourselves- man was created for more than just physical labor! There is a heavenly rest that remains- remember fellow believer- you are going somewhere! The Sabbath rest points us there! So in this commandment, our heavenly Father not only commands us to rest- He sets the example of rest! He rested- and so must we! Although our God never grows weary or is tired- we do need rest! Our bodies and souls are restless until we find rest in Him!

II. Keeping the Sabbath Holy

Now that we have considered the foundation of this command, in our second point we see the positive keeping of it. As our commandment reads- Observe the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. As I said before, the word Sabbath means rest. And as a positive command in the Decalogue, we start with the positive application of it. For God's people, the day of rest is a day like no other. It is set apart- a day of sacred assembly and celebration. Although the Sabbath Day was on Saturday in the OT, after Jesus Christ rose from the dead the church now gathers on Sunday. The OT was looking forward to Jesus- we look back and celebrate the rest that He has secured for us. So what should we do on this day of rest and gladness? Well, as QA 103 says, especially on the fest day of rest I will diligently attend the assembly of God's people. As we read from Heb. 10:25, do not forsake the assembly- do not neglect to meet together then the church gathers. In other words, gathering with God's people in the corporate place of

worship is to be my highest desire and delight on the Lord's Day. Diligently gathering when called to worship. And what will we do when we gather together? Well, as our QA says, we gather together to learn what God's word teaches, to participate in the sacraments, to pray publicly, and to bring Christian offerings for the poor. We could say it like this- we keep the Sabbath Day holy when we make it our priority to participate in the means of grace with God's people. Sundays should be all about rejoicing in the peace that we have with our God! Jesus has restored to you the gift of physical and spiritual rest! So this day is a reminder of the blessing you have received- and an opportunity to rejoice and give thanks. Just as the worship service centers on the Word of God- so our week should center on the worship service. For us as believers, Sunday should be the high point of the week. We get to start here below what we will continue up above and for all eternity. Worshipping God with His people! But we are so prone to get bogged down in the routine and ruts of life. We forget and get distracted. It is for that reason that Heb. 10:25 reminds us- do not forget- do not neglect to get together- do not forsake the meetings of God's people. We are to have a desire to participate in the means of grace. To be fed by our good Shepherd. But in addition to that, Heb. 10:25 says that by gathering together you are to encourage one another. This simply means that worship is designed to be in person for the good of people. A physical presence accompanied by an audible word- offering encouragement to one another as you worship and speak together! Why else are we to come? Well, as Heb. 10 continues- do this all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Worship serves to remind us that Jesus is coming back! Sundays are a reminder of our future! The gathering together serves to increase our anticipation for Jesus' return! There is a temporary aspect to the Lord's Day- the imperfect will give way to the perfect! We lay aside the things that hold us back- and strive on towards the goal together! To put this another way, when we gather together as a communion of believers, we remind and reinforce each other. We set our minds on things above- seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness as a body. Effectively, coming to church every week puts things in their proper perspective. We learn to live in light of

eternity. There is one more area of focus that our catechism brings to light. Interestingly, QA 103 starts with the gospel ministry and the schools for it to be maintained. This means that keeping the Sabbath Day holy includes our support and dedication to the continuation of the gospel ministry as well as the preparation for that ministry. We could say, if we revere the Lord's Day we will be committed to supporting and funding faithful seminaries and the students that attend them. It is our desire to see the gospel continue to be proclaimed- not only here but in every country. I could ask- would there even be a church if there wasn't a Lord's Day? Such is the connection between the Lord's Day and the Lord's people.

III. Avoiding the Misuse of this Day

Let's continue by moving to our last point- how are we to avoid the misuse of this day. To illustrate this point, I want to echo what a wise old pastor once said. When asked what things can't we do on Sunday, this pastor responded by saying. "If you fill your Lord's Day with what you should be doing, you will not have any time to do the things you should not." There is great wisdom in not producing a list of things we cannot do! If we view Sunday as a day of "things we would rather do but cannot do," we set ourselves up for disappointment! Rather, we should focus on what we have been liberated to do! What are we free to do this day that we cannot easily do other days? How can we make the best use of our time today? Children, I know it is tempting to see Sunday as a day of doing nothing- a boring day. But I challenge you to start rejoicing in what you can do! You get to go to church- to be with God's people- to sing praises to God and hear Him speak! Not only do you not have to go to school- you are set free to spend your day in worship filled rest! So we need to reorient our desires- do not treat Sunday as a drag but rather look for ways to enjoy it and delight in it! As Jesus said in Mark 2:27, The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Our day of rest is a gift from God- redeemed by the Lord of the Sabbath! It is a privilege that we have- not a burden to endure! We will start to see this day as a gift from God- Jesus knows our weakness- He knows our need for a break- for rest- to be refocussed and

encouraged. Then we will avoid misusing this day. Before we close, by way of application, I am going to present 3 hypothetical situations. How would you respond to these?

Number 1- This Monday is the official beginning of vacation season. During this upcoming summer break, how will your family keep the Lord's Day set apart even when you are on vacation or traveling? Will my hobbies or my relaxation time hinder my gathering with the assembled saints Sunday morning and evening?

Situation number 2- During the school's sports season which seems to be a year-round challenge. How will my family keep this day holy? How will I remember the Sabbath Day when coaches expect the team to practice or travel on Sunday? How will you answer?

And number 3- when entering the job market, what priority will I place on the Sunday worship assembly? Will I take a job that keeps me away- or will I be willing to be fired from my job in order to gather when Jesus calls His sheep? These are just 3 of the challenges we face in our world when it comes to remembering the Lord's Day as a day of rest and worship.

To conclude, keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest does not mean that we spend the day inactive!

Resting does not mean lounging or laziness. However, rest is given as a blessing to those who live in a world of laborious toil. Jesus has fully and finally saved you completely! We have found rest under His wing! Jesus Christ as the Lord of the Sabbath calls His people to attend the assembly of the saints. May we, as we gather, be reminded of the privileges we have as created and redeemed children. And may our rest and our worship cause us to delight in and desire the rest that is to come.