

Jason Upchurch - Get Some (Sabbath) Rest

Well, it is good to be back. And I really do mean that.

As we travelled along we worshipped at different churches all along our route every Sunday and although each one was good in its own way, Dorothy said it best in the Wizard of Oz: there's no place like home.

Thank you to everyone who stepped up and served. From music, to Lord's Supper, cleaning, bulletins, preaching - all of it. I truly am thankful that the ministry of RBC went on while we were away.

This morning and next week I want cover some ground that's been on my mind as we travelled.

I am so appreciative of being able to take a Sabbatical and that's really what it was: a sabbatical. It wasn't entirely without exertion, but for the most part it was very restful. And rejuvenation.

And so I want to talk about Christians and the Sabbath this morning.

Big picture: You need to get some rest. You need weekly sabbath rest.

One of the ways I think my theology is slowly changing is my understanding of Sabbath and how we view the Sabbath as Christians. Years ago I would say that our Sabbath rest is in Jesus - Jesus is our Sabbath. And so the 4th commandment to remember the Sabbath doesn't pertain to us as Christians at all - we can go on with our lives as normal on Sundays. Certainly I reject Seventh Day Adventist theology that we have to observe Saturday sabbath like Israelites. I still reject that.

But the more I look at Scripture the more I see that at least principles of the Sabbath endure.

And what's interesting is that throughout church history most of Christianity has acknowledged that Sunday is a Sabbath to the Lord.

Westminster Confession / London Confession: The 1 in 7 resting endures to the end of the world, binding on all men in all ages. It's not Saturday, it's now Sunday, the Lord's Day.

This is in line with most of church history - until recently.

From creation to cross it was Saturday, from the cross to resurrection it is Sunday. Most Christians have acknowledged that throughout the Church age.

I don't know exactly where I land on every issue in the discussion, but I want to walk you through some of my thinking. Because I do believe we should be resting one day in seven. I've said that before and I'm more convinced than ever.

I don't think the NT explicitly calls worship on Sunday a Sabbath - because in the early church that would mean Saturdays, like the Jews worshipped. **Rom. 14** talks about some people esteem all days alike, others esteem some days more highly.

Col 2:16: says don't let people drag you back into OC stuff like new moon and sabbath.

I think his point is don't go back to the Jewish system. That's gone. But I think it's clear we still need rest. And you can pick whatever day you want - I just think for most of us Sunday, the Lord's Day, is the best option.

Especially coming off of a Sabbatical - intentional rest - I think it's good to think through some of these issues. I didn't feel burned out before, but I do feel very well rested now.

Interestingly, we stayed at a campground and I was telling a guy I was on Sabbatical and he said he took one earlier in the year. I asked what he did and he said he taught dance at a university. And they gave him a

semester Sabbatical which means he had 9 months off. He wasn't a Christian and what he did for a Sabbatical was very different than us. He viewed it as a long government paid vacation.

But biblical Sabbath isn't just a vacation. Vacation is often going somewhere to do as much as we can, pack in all the sights, things and a lot of times by the end we're exhausted. There's no thought at all of rest and spiritual recuperation.

Vacation is usually about making new memories. Sabbath is about remembering what God has done.

Sabbath and vacation can look similar but biblically there is a different focus. Sabbath is ceasing from work. Focusing on the Lord. Resting.

When it comes to work there are usually 2 sins: one sin is laziness - not working hard at all. The other sin is failing to rest - not refreshing yourself in the Lord. It's like riding a bike, you could fall either way.

As I think about our congregation, I don't think our issue is that we're lazy. Maybe it is - maybe some of you need to crank it up a few notches and work hard.

But if I were to put a finger on it I would say our bigger problem is that we don't rest.

We're like the person who has a cell phone that never gets fully charged up. It's perpetually charged to 20% and is always in danger of switching off. You actually have to keep that thing plugged in for a while to make sure it's fully charged. In the same way we need to rest fully in the Lord to make sure we're charged.

So this morning my admonition is for you to rest. Get good, sabbath, refreshing rest once a week - and we'll see it's more than that as well.

1. Pattern of Rest. **Read Gen. 2:1-3**

What does it mean that God rested? How can a sovereign God rest? Does he just not do anything on the 7th day at all? Is he taking a nap, scrolling Facebook, watching football?

No. When God rested what he did was stop creative activity.

God still hears our prayers, he still providentially controls all of creation, he still saves people, provides food and water and life and breath. He sanctifies people.

Jesus did so many miracles on the Sabbath that **John 5** says people tried to kill him for it.

So what does it mean? It means there was no creative activity. He ceased creating. There was no more production. No more labor, no more toil.

He's giving us a pattern to follow. Sabbath is the exact opposite of work. No production, no creation, no work, no labor, no income generation.

As a rule, God expects us to work and work hard. Not half-hearted, not idleness, not just existing. Work - work is intrinsically good and takes up most of our lives. We work 6 out of 7.

Men work the ground by the sweat of our brow and women are called to be workers at home. They labor with kids and home. We're all sweating, it's all hard, it's all labor but it all makes God happy - it's very good.

It's resting that's the minority of our lives but it is special. **Read 3**

God says that it's holy. Holy means set apart for a special purpose. Kitchen Aid mixer is holy, it's set apart for a special purpose. Your tractor is set apart for a special purpose, you don't commute to work in it.

The sabbath is holy, set apart. This is a religious word, which means whatever else happens on the Sabbath should incline us to God. We should look to God.

It's not a sick day or a do nothing day. The physical rest we get should primarily give us spiritual refreshment.

Q: Let me ask you: does what you do on Sundays refresh you in your spiritual life? Do you feel spiritually recharged to tackle the week? Do you feel like you went to a mini Christian conference with singing and praying and preaching and reading the Word and fellowshiping and personal rest?

If not, your day is not holy. It's not then it's not holy. It's common, like every other day.

One of the things we did on Sabbatical and I think should be part of our regular routine is to do things that fuel our awe of God. Go see some stars, go look at some mountains, see a sunrise or sunset. Watch birds and nature.

The word fuels our worship of God, but so does creation. The heavens declare what? The glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. We can rest in the Word and we can rest in creation.

Q: When you think of a time when you felt spiritually refreshed, what did you do? What fanned that into flame? Make sure you're doing that on a regular basis.

A second thing God did on the seventh day was bless it. Observing this rest 1 in 7 is a sure way to be blessed by God. Do you want God to bless you? Remember the Sabbath.

You might say "This is OC, not NC" The OC is not established for another 2,500 years. Sabbath isn't just an OC principle, it's a creation ordinance established millenia before Moses and the Law to bless us and refresh ourselves in him. And God himself gives us the pattern.

Pattern

2. Scope of Rest. Who does this affect and what does it affect? **Turn to Exodus 20:8-11**

The 10 Commandments, the Sabbath is grounded not in seemingly arbitrary laws But in creation. And I think it's also safe to say that if all of these other commands are enduring, we should be very suspicious saying 1 of them isn't. **Read 8-11**

Christians have viewed the 10 commandments as binding in all generations. Well, 9 out of 10 anyway. But what do we do with the pesky 4th commandment? Most of Christian history people simply knew it was the Lord's Day- it's Christian rest. We all know we need rest, refreshment in worship.

We even had laws - blue laws - that limited work which were good. Hobby Lobby and Chick Fil A are outliers now, but it used to be the norm that everyone was closed because our laws were influenced by Christian foundations.

What do we see here that we should do? What's the scope? **Read 8-11**

Remember and Keep. Remember - it's a word tied to building a monument or memorial. We need big billboards to remind us not to work. We need to be intentional.

Takes effort and planning to rest. It takes faith to trust that God will get done in 6 days what we think takes 7.

"I don't have time to rest" - you don't have time not to.

"Keep" - Guard or fend off. God wired us to work so we have to rewire ourselves one day per week. He expects hard work, godly work, sweaty work 6 days a week - that's in our DNA. It's so much in our DNA that even after the fall we have to wire ourselves to rest.

Who rests? **Read** Everybody rests. Men: In your household you're responsible to see that people are resting. Everyone rests. Although, there is someone missing here. Did you catch it? Who's missing in the list?

Wives. Do wives get an exemption? No. Matthew Henry: She is supposed to be one with her husband and present with him and if he honors the Sabbath so shall she." Everyone rests.

Family - kids, aunts, uncles even beasts rest - oxen, livestock. Guests. Not just dad, but wife and kids and everyone.

I'm often surprised when people have guests and family from out of town they skip church and they go do a bunch of stuff. "Well, they're not Christian so I don't want to just leave them home alone."

Brother, tell them that you're going to church and they should too. One of the easiest ways to show your family the gospel is to not compromising on the one day a week God has specifically said is holy and blessed.

They should see that your sabbath rest looks different. You, your neighbors, friends, everyone should be able to tell a distinct difference between what you do on Sunday and what happens in the rest of the week. You have to plan for this. **Turn Exodus 16:4-8, 22-30**

Sabbath is coming, you need to plan for it. You work a little harder the day before so you don't work at all but rest. Even God is like "I'm not feeding you that day - the store is closed." College: Sunday morning begins Saturday night. Are prepared to rest?

Pattern of rest - given by God
Scope of rest - whole family and everyone in your orbit.

3. Frequency of Rest. **Turn to Lev. 25:1-12**

Usually pattern is 1 in 7 - once per week. But there were other rests as well. God is not stingy on rest. He's very generous. Most every festival Israel celebrated was a rest - a sabbath.

Your Christmas and Easter and Thanksgiving, Fourth of July and whatever else you celebrate - those should be a form of rest. Fourth of July? Sure - Israel rested on the Passover when their nation was formed, it's okay that we rest too.

Notice the other rests. **Read 1-7**

So we see 1 in 7 again, but this time in years. God wanted not just the people to rest but the land to rest.

The people were actually on 1/2 rest - they still had to go glean and harvest what they had already planted, but they couldn't touch volunteer stuff. They couldn't prune or plant or work. This is why it's a half rest.

Animals get the year off, slaves get the year off of hard work. Sort of Saturdays for most of us - we don't work, but we're doing some work aren't we? This is a type of rest different from the weekly Sabbath that they'd also be observing.

What's our application? I think there should be extended seasons of downtime. If God was gracious to give the Israelites this rest, I don't think he's less gracious with us.

We don't have to always produce, always hustle, always go. There are times - again it seems like 1 in 7 - where we half-go.

I'm reluctant to use this analogy, but when Covid hit it was a ridiculous joke but in the year reflecting on it I noticed a lot of people were glad that they were basically forced to not do stuff. Nowhere to go, stores closed, activities cancelled. Still had to live life, still met up with people but life was much slower. The reason was bad but the rest was good.

I hope you get my point - I think we need to build in long extended slower seasons. That's not the only one.

Read 8-12

Amazing - more resting for the land. Jubilee was never actually practiced that we know of - was another rest on top of rest: 2 years in a row. It's almost like God doesn't need us to work but focus on him.

God doesn't want us to just stack up and stack up. God is generous with people and land and we should be too,.

Application: your fortunes and your finances are not completely based on your effort. God calls us to work and Solomon makes a clear connection to working hard and prosperity in Proverbs. But sometimes it's simply God's providence to bless us with money and success - or not.

We can't control the big contracts, the huge raise or promotion, Family inheritance, portfolio performance.

Can control that when God says work we work, and when God says rest we rest. Long seasons of hard work mean you should plan long seasons of rest.

I see a lot of people who are spiritually famished because they're giving everything to their job, housework, business, or caring - and there are long seasons sometime. But there needs to be long seasons of sabbath. Half rest or some equivalent to that.

Pattern/Scope/Frequency

4. Seriousness - How much does God care about Sabbath? **Turn to Lev. 15.**

Sometimes people will say all sins are the same. They're not and we know that. One major distinction the Bible makes is between intentional and unintentional sins **Read 27-31**

Many distinctions we could make - but intentional vs. unintentional is clear. **Read 32-36**

Why kill this guy? God says so, why kill him? Because he refused to rest. Lots of objection: just gathering sticks, try to show the Bible is ridiculous. But it's no different than Adam and Eve eating fruit when God told them not to.

This is an intentional sin against God in the sight of everyone. Two sections are connected. God said rest, he said no to God. God says make him rest in peace then.

Psalms 23: God makes us do what in green pastures? Lie down.

When I take kids hiking we have mandatory bottom-time. Rest. Sometimes you have to force people to rest. **Turn 2 Chron 36:17-21**

Judah was taken into captivity for a variety of reasons: idolatry, injustice, trusting in kings. Also: hadn't kept the Sabbath year. **Read 17-21**

Why did God haul Judah off into captivity off the land for 70 years? No 20 not 50 not 100. 70? Because they hadn't kept yearly-long Sabbath. And God was going to make sure the people and the land got rest.

If you do the math, that meant they hadn't kept the yearly Sabbath in 490 years - since the time of Eli in 1 Samuel. God had been patient, but wants his people to rest - the land rested with no one in it, the people rested in captivity in Babylon.,

Why did God do that? Is God some weird despot? Some control freak who just wants everyone to sit down?

5. Goodness of the Sabbath. (Pattern/scope/frequency/seriousness). **Turn to Mark 2:23**

This is Jesus and the disciples confronted with the Pharisees. The religious leaders had all these laws and rules about the Sabbath. How many steps you could walk, what specific things you can do.

I think we need to be careful about how approach this because we could become really legalistic.

Modern day Jews have this same nonsense now: appliances that shut down on Saturday, elevators that go up and down and stop on every floor so you don't have to push a button because pushing the button is equivalent of work, but if you don't push a button it's not work.

What's the purpose of the Sabbath? **Read 23-24**

You're not following the rules! You're not resting! You deserve death like the guy with the sticks! **Read 25-28**

What changed? Well, nothing changed. Jesus was the one in the OT who commanded the guy be put to death. But the intention here is just to eat. Even David ate on the Sabbath when he was hungry. He ate bread that was technically not allowed for him. There are obvious exceptions to rules.

Jesus says if your animal is stuck in a ditch on the Sabbath, what do you do? Get it out.

If your son is 8 days old on the Sabbath what did you do? Circumcise him.

You can help your neighbor who's in trouble, you can go to the hospital, you can eat. There are times when the intentional resting is legitimately interrupted for a higher good.

We don't use that as an excuse to never rest or rarely rest. This should be the very unusual exception. But there are exceptions. The London Baptist Confession says there are duties of necessity and charity that God wants us to do.

But what's the Sabbath for? **Read 27-28**

The Sabbath was made for us. Because we need rest. We've always needed rest - even before the fall we needed a 1 in 7 rest. In the Garden, perfect harmony, no sin, rest 1 in 7.

You know when you're little kids are helping you cook or do some chores and they're not really getting anything done so at some point you're like "Okay, let me finish it up here." You need them to stop because they're kind of in the way. That's not what God is doing on the Sabbath.

He designed this day for us to rest so we can go back to doing what he's called us to do the other 6 days really, really well. That we would be refreshed and filled up. And reminded that the Lord is on the throne - even, especially - of the Sabbath.

When Monday morning rolls around you shouldn't be groaning. You should be sufficiently refreshed in Christ to go work for the glory of God the next 6 days.

I used to think "Well, Hebrews 4 says Jesus is our Sabbath rest so we don't need to take a 1 in 7 rest any more." Well, Jesus is our Sabbath rest. His death on the cross in our place for our sins means there is absolutely no way we can work for salvation, we can't earn it and we have entered into a type of rest as Christians.

But nothing fundamentally physical has changed about our bodies since the cross. It's not like when you're a Christian you're injected with super serum to be able to work nonstop til you die.

No, just like Adam in the Garden before sin needed rest, we need rest as well. That's why **Heb 4:9-10** says there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God.

Usually that rest in on Sunday, the Lord's Day. I think we all know this instinctively. We just don't want to rest.

Maybe we think it's just OC. But the enduring nature of the 10 commandments, the grounding of the Sabbath in creation order, and the early church resting on the Lord's Day all indicate that it still goes on.

Maybe we think rest is legalistic. Well, the commands of God aren't legalistic.

God tells to not do a lot things. Don't get drunk, don't lust, don't lie, don't steal. We don't say those are legalistic.

Don't work: Oh, that's legalism. No. We're not saved by resting. We're saved into God's rest and now we rest so that we can rejoice in what he's him.

"Well, I've got too much to do in life to rest." Then your priorities are not God's priorities. I'll just tell you, most people who's spiritual life is in the toilet don't rest. Burn out usually comes from not resting properly.

People are hustling 7 days a week, they say they don't have time to read the Bible, fellowship with Christians, go to church, serve.

Beloved, make sure your resting in the Lord 1 day in 7. And that the focus of your physical rest is the ultimate spiritual rest that Jesus gave you when he gave you eternal life.

Go rest in the Lord today.

Pray