

Call the Sabbath a Delight

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung – 10/12/2013

The Sabbath Day is one of the greatest blessings that our loving Creator God could bestow upon us. How do we learn to love the Sabbath and truly make it a delight – not only in our eyes – but in God’s eyes as well?

Besides picturing the soon coming Millennial reign of Jesus Christ on earth, the basic reason that we have received this gift of the Sabbath is so that we may draw near to God – worship Him, become like He is and even begin to think as He thinks.

Are we on the same page as He is with regard to the Sabbath Day? What is our Sabbath mindset? What is important in our Sabbath Observance? Where do we find balance?

The Sabbath is meaningful to us when we experience the joy, delight and happiness that comes from serving another person in a way that is profitable – especially in a spiritually profitable way.

But, too many people have learned only that the Sabbath is a “**Don’t do this day**” on the Sabbath. God fully intends for us that the Sabbath be a day of spiritual joy and happiness.

Too many brethren learned incorrectly that the Sabbath was a negative day of boredom, restrictions and abstinence. One of the things that Satan wants to destroy more than anything is the peace, the understanding and the tranquility of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath was never meant to be an ascetic burden, or a day of self-denial or drudgery.

Jesus healed on the Sabbath. When Jesus Christ healed the woman with a spirit of infirmity, He **was teaching** that the Sabbath was a day of freedom and loosening for Christians – not a day of dreadful hampering restrictions – as the condemnatory Pharisaical ruler of the synagogue believed.

The ruler of the synagogue accused Jesus of having a wrong attitude. Jesus was very much against the **restraining** aspects, the **binding** concepts that He encountered with the Sabbath.

Luke 13:

- 10 And [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.
- 11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.
- 12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.
- 13 And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.
- 14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered **with indignation**, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.
- 15 The Lord then answered him, and said, You hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath **loose** his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead him away to watering?
- 16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath **bound**, lo, these eighteen years, be **loosed** from this **bondage** on the Sabbath day?

The ruler of the synagogue was **shame-faced** – and indeed he should have been. This ruler of the synagogue had more feeling and compassion for a donkey than he did for this daughter of Abraham.

Can we begin to see here how Jesus is revealing how He views the Sabbath? Why were so many Pharisees offended over the manner in which Jesus Christ observed the Sabbath? Over and over they took exception with what Jesus said and did on the Sabbath.

If we look closely, we are able to see a trend wherein Jesus was highly criticized for participating in **legitimate** Sabbath activities. The Pharisees were angry, and accused Jesus of being a lawbreaker because they did not understand the **spirit and purpose** of the Sabbath Day.

What is the mood in your home as the Sabbath draws near? Do the young folks cringe and murmur, “Oh no!” because everything goes on “lockdown’ as the Sabbath arrives. Or is there a sense of joyful excitement at the expectation of a Sabbath filled with the wonders of God’s creation and blessings.

Is the Sabbath family time a time of spiritually connecting to all the holy things? How did Jesus keep the Sabbath Day holy?

God is very serious about the Sabbath. He is teaching us to be **like He is**, and more than anything, we want to be in His Kingdom. How should the Sabbath be kept?

Jesus did not exactly answer that question to everyone's satisfaction - by giving us a Talmud of do's and don'ts - because He wants us to **grow in spiritual understanding**. He wants us to have the mind of Christ.

Philippians 2:

5 Let this **mind** be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

The Sabbath is to be kept "Holy," and it comes with a **great promise**.

The title of today's sermon comes from this next verse. God proclaimed through the Prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 58:

13 If you ‘watch your step’ on the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure for personal advantage on my Holy Day; and **call the Sabbath a delight**, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor Him, refusing ‘business as usual,’ and not finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words:

14 Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you **to ride upon the high places of the earth**, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

The Sabbath is a day of worship and spiritual fellowship - and yes **feasting!** What we say and do before Sabbath services is a part of our Sabbath observance. Are we provoking one another unto love and to good works?

The brethren should be centering their attention around scripture and God during Sabbath services. However, some have noted that a great deal of what is on people's minds has little to do with spiritual matters. Mostly it was about their clothes, jobs, sports, what all their children were up to, and where they wanted to eat that evening.

There is nothing wrong in that, but rarely was there a conversation that dealt with holy things, a previous sermon or a spiritual principle.

We can gush out platitudes like: "We are centering on our joyous future with God and Christ."

But that is like saying be warmed and filled - it does absolutely no good except to satiate a Protestant mind - because there is no intention or delineation of how it is to happen or what we need to do to be a part of it. Those churches - those political corporate organizations that are minimizing doctrine and law are like a sinking ship.

There is a dark side of Sabbath observance that I wish to eradicate today.

The doctrine of Jesus Christ that we know of in Hebrews 6:1-2 are salvational.

Hebrews 6:

- 1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,
- 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Repentance, Faith, Baptisms, Laying on of hands, Resurrection of the dead, Eternal Judgment and Going on to perfection.

There is **no salvation** without Repentance.

There is **no salvation** without Faith in Jesus Christ – which is Faith toward God.

God teaches the necessity of Repentance – not **Penance**.

Penance is a voluntary **self-punishment** inflicted on oneself for having done wrong. It is the very basis of self-righteousness.

Penance is paying for one's own sins – and not relying on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We desire not self-righteousness – but the righteousness that comes from God.

Romans 3:

- 25** [Jesus] Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood [to cover our sins], to declare **His righteousness** for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Righteousness follows repentance.

Penance is taught by the Great Roman Catholic Church, and by the Pagans and by the Muslims – to name a few. They believe that God requires our pain, suffering, abstinence, asceticism, depravation etc, **for payment of sin**. That is a purely Pagan concept.

Remember the 450 prophets of Baal – how they cut themselves to please their god.

1 Kings 18:

- 19** Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.
- 20** So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

1 Kings 18:

- 28** And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

Some catholic orders, monks, even the Pope, and Muslims carry this concept to the extreme:

Flagellation is the beating with whips, of the skin, most often on the back, and often drawing blood, as a **bodily penance** to show remorse for sin. They almost always show some examples on TV around Easter time. It has been a widespread practice in some parts of the Catholic Church – where it is taught that this practice is pleasing to God. Pope John Paul II grew up being taught that bodily punishment was seen as pious.

Those with sin sometimes overcompensate with a physical kind of self-sacrifice or penance that is not required by God.

Penance is **not** a pleasing thing in God's sight. Penance is wrong.

It works like this: God forgives upon repentance.

We in God's Church have not resorted to such extremes – but the concept has left its mark on many:

When someone fails to **forgive** them self – and turn to forms of **penance** to pay for their transgressions – it is a rejection of God's goodness and perfect forgiveness.

What does this penance have to do with us in God's Church? Penance is a concept what very slyly sneaks into God's Church.

Abstinence on a Sabbath Day works contrary to God's intentions for that bountiful Day. God wants us to be active on the Sabbath. Sure take a nap – but get out and interact with others – even having a good meal with them. There is nothing in God's Word that remotely suggests that it is improper to purchase your meal on the Sabbath – unless, as in the case of Nehemiah's examples, you are purchasing a month's supply of food at wholesale prices.

When brethren do not properly accept the Sabbath as a **Feast** of God – they sometimes revert into their pre-conversion mindset – and that is that God prefers self-denial and asceticism. That is not what God prefers. **Call the Sabbath a delight** because it is a Feast of the Lord.

Then, rather than accepting the Sabbath as a joyous day of abundance – they revert back to taking away from the bounty that God intends for the Sabbath.

Some brethren have been taught that it is better and safer not to have anything nice to eat on the Sabbath Day. Deliberately eating only cold congealed foods on the **feast of the Sabbath** is akin to self-flagellation. It is not what God intends. God desires that His Children have a Sabbath feast.

For those who subscribe to the notion of 'no warm food' on the Sabbath' – brethren, there is not one Scriptural principle that sustains that argument.

The 'feast' aspect of the Sabbath is meant to convey a bountiful day of spiritual joy and encouraging one another to love and good works – that is what God desires of us on the Sabbath.

Hebrews 10:

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Let's talk about balance for a moment – because we tend to go to extremes in Gods Church.

What about our understanding on "eating out" and doing "business" on the Holy Sabbath Day?

Some will conclude that what I have presented thus far represents a profound lack of respect for the Sabbath Day – and that I am saying that it is okay to eat out, party, work and do just about anything and everything you want on the Sabbath.

Let's start with two examples of "eating out," and, let's see what God means by the spirit of the law.

Romans 7:

6 Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in **newness of spirit**, and not in the oldness of the letter.

First example: Dressed in a dinner tuxedo, a man takes a woman out for a night on the town, in an evening gown, out on a Friday night to an elegant black tie restaurant for a sumptuous candlelight dinner with wine, music and dancing until the early morning hours.

Most people in God's Church would realize right off the bat that there is something about this "eating out" that is not proper in God's sight.

In that situation – the subject of "God and His more perfect way" is probably not the main focus and topic of conversation of the evening. The Sabbath is not for that kind of socializing. That needs to wait until after the Sabbath.

Now the second example: A bunch of guys get together with beer and chips to watch the Superbowl. Obviously that is not the way to keep the Sabbath holy either – because the Sabbath is not party time.

But what about family and brethren meeting for lunch at some point halfway across the state for genuine Sabbath fellowship? Some would say, "That's wrong," because you are **paying** and causing others **to work** for you.

We showed from the Scriptures, in the last sermon, that God is pleased with this kind of Sabbath fellowship. There are no Biblical prohibitions to this Sabbath conduct.

* The specific purpose of this sermon is to demonstrate that those who espouse that it is wrong for brethren to have a **fellowship meal** together in a restaurant on the Sabbath are teaching an improper gospel that is a false gospel. It is not "good news" to teach that God prefers that you eat only cold food brought from home – that you paid for some other day of the week. We showed that positively from the Scriptures in the previous sermon.

They think that they follow the letter of the law while in fact they violating the **spirit of the law**.

They are not more righteous than their brothers and sisters in Christ because they direct the focus of the Sabbath toward the **physical** keeping of the Sabbath – while taking the true focus away from the worship of God.

Do we cherish the Sabbath as God intended? Do we genuinely look forward to it each week, as time to set aside our jobs, concerns, business, and focus on our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ? God certainly approves of having a meal at a restaurant with other brethren for the purpose of fellowship.

Families with children wisely plan Sabbath activities that will help them truly enjoy the Sabbath as God intends.

The word "delight" as here used suggests something that brings spiritual joy and happiness.

Kids on the Sabbath

When our children were growing up we taught them to enjoy the Sabbath. We Christians are responsible for them and God has put our children in our care.

Our Creator God, who made the Sabbath and blessed it, wants us to find **delight** in – and make the Sabbath – the best day of the week for our children. After all, the Sabbath is a delight – at least according to God.

We should certainly seek to find His balance in the keeping of the Sabbath. Because the Sabbath begins with sunset on Friday, we would sometimes invite our children's friends over for a Friday night youth Bible Study.

The concerns that children have – are as important to them as our concerns are to us. They need and deserve to be heard. We tried with all our might to be there for them – and to protect them from the snares of this world.

On a lighter note, we would have a special supper with a nice dessert or treat – ice cream or pop-corn. When they were small we would tuck them in with their favorite stuffed animal – and say goodnight. One game the kids enjoyed was Bible Bowl – it was like a game show based on Bible questions.

Take walks with your children on the Sabbath and point out the beauty of God's creation. Once we convinced our pastor to have services in a state park – with trails, fishing and wild animals. It was a wonderful opportunity to teach the kids all about God' creation.

We wanted to make the Sabbath hours special to our children. We believed that as parents, being present and available to our children was the most important ingredient for a happy Sabbath. It is not correct to turn your children over to others to raise them – or to teach them of God's way – that is our responsibility.

Our children still remember the big Sabbath breakfasts with specialty pancakes summing off the grill.

I remember one time when the kids were getting up well into their teenage years – I heard some music coming from one of their rooms, and I asked: "Is that the kind of music that is appropriate for the Sabbath?" "Well, I guess not," was the answer.

The interesting thing was that I never heard that kind of music again. I think that the lesson they learned was that if that kind of music was not appropriate for the Sabbath – perhaps it was not appropriate at all.

We tried to leave our kids with a treasure trove of happy Sabbath memories. We hope and pray that their own lives will be blessed – even more than ours have been – and we have been blessed greatly.

The Sabbath day is a time for relationships – not only with God but also with our families and brethren.

I remember once when Sharon took one of our daughters out for a walk – and to play in a summer rain.

We endeavored to make Sabbath a very special day with our kids – a day to know God better.

The Sabbath is also a day to visit and encourage those who are no longer mainstream – the sick, elderly, etc., – those unable to attend church services. Write, call, give hope, cheer someone on... then you can say to yourself – “It was a good Sabbath.”

The Sabbath cannot and must not be a boring day for children.

It should be a day of very special Bible study, and creative discovery – pointing to the Millennium with all of God’s solutions to this world’s ills.

Children do not know how to keep the Sabbath **spiritually**, but the striking difference in the special Sabbath activities will impress upon their young minds that God’s day is very special!

The Bible assumes the **SHEMA** – and that the reader knows the Christian Basics.

The Shema is the foundation. It is the A,B,C’s of our Biblical foundation. It is the beginning of our education in knowledge -> understanding -> wisdom -> Godly Wisdom.

Deuteronomy 6:

- 1 Now these are the **commandments, the statutes, and the judgments**, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:
- 2 That thou **might revere the LORD thy God**, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.
- 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.
- * 4 Hear [**Shema**], O Israel : The LORD our God is one LORD:
- 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.
- 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

Teach your children that God is in everything and has created all.

Deuteronomy 6:

- 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.
- 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.
- 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

Jesus taught those with eyes to see to read between the lines. Let me go through one example.

Jeremiah 17 says not to carry a burden on the Sabbath day.

We will see the ban on Sabbath burdens – and then we'll go to the New Testament and see where Jesus seemingly – to the Pharisaical mind **violates** God's law – when in actuality Jesus upholds the higher meaning of the Law. Brethren – this is what God wishes for us to see.

Jeremiah 17:

21 Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, **and bear no burden on the Sabbath day**, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;

That's pretty straightforward – isn't it?

Jeremiah 17:

22 Neither **carry forth a burden** out of your houses on the Sabbath day, **neither do ye any work**, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. [Two things – no **burdens** and no **work**.]

This very example comes up in the life of Jesus Christ.

John 5:

1 After this there was **a feast** [possibly Last Great Day – compare verse :29] of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

John 5:

5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

John 5:

8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

9 And immediately the man was made whole, and **took up his bed**, and walked: and on the same day was the [high] Sabbath.

Did the Jews know the Law – to the very letter of the law? You bet they did!

John 5:

10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day: **it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed**.

11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

John 5:

15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.

16 And therefore did the Jews **persecute** Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father works hitherto, and **I work**.

Brethren, have you come to the point **in your understanding** so that you are able to discern the difference when Jeremiah says **no burdens and no work** on the Sabbath – and yet Jesus says – on the Sabbath – take up **your burden** and **carry thy bed** and, Oh by the way, **I work** on the Sabbath?

We need to be really careful when we find ourselves **on the side** of the Pharisees.

There is a school of thought in God's Church today that says it is "safer" to side with the Pharisees' extreme position, in order not to break the Sabbath – and that God is looking for just the excuse to smite us when we don't know how to conform perfectly.

God does not want us to be like the Pharisees.

Brethren, I often burn more than a tank of gas on the Sabbath to speak in distant areas - and it is not wrong to **pay for it**.

If a member travels a great distance to provide a ride for another member to get to Sabbath services - it is not wrong for him to purchase gas on the Sabbath either. Jesus doesn't intend for us to haul twenty gallons of gasoline in our car, thereby endangering others.

That is not what Jesus expects of us on the Sabbath as that has nothing to do with keeping the Sabbath *Holy*.

"Holy" is a "spiritual" component of the Sabbath, if we can understand that.

In fact, Jesus said that when serving, it is okay to "profane" the Sabbath, **and be blameless!**

Matthew 12:

- 5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?

The Sabbath is a **Feast** day - first a *spiritual* feast.

But it is not wrong to bring food to someone in a nursing home; nor is it wrong for a hospital or a nursing home to prepare hot meals for its patients; nor is it wrong to take an elderly person to a buffet on the Sabbath. We are not making people work for our pleasure.

It is not wrong to fellowship with scattered brethren on the Sabbath - even breaking bread together. We cannot look down on those who do not keep the Sabbath, as though we were better than they are.

This Sabbath concept may prove difficult for those who wish a **Talmud** – a list of do's and don'ts in order to '*righteously*' keep the Sabbath Holy.

It is not God's intent that we look forward to the Sabbath with **dread!**

God has not given us a Talmudic list of do and don't s because that would take away from the spirit, heart and purpose of the Sabbath.

No one would be able to build Godly character because all they would do is go to their check-off list – and be righteous in their eyes.

The weekly Sabbath Day is a feast of the Lord. God did not intend the Sabbath to be an ascetic day of renouncing material comforts in order to spend an austere day of self-denial.

Austerity is not a better way to keep the Sabbath holy. That is the way the Pharisees wanted it to be. Don't be a Pharisee or a legalistic Sabbath-keeper!

Do we understand the difference between the Torah and the Talmud?

The Christian in us seeks the Torah, while the Pharisee in us seeks a Talmud.

Torah vs. Talmud: Do we know the difference?

The **Torah** is God's Law.

The **Talmud** is a collection of ancient Rabbinic writings consisting of a non-Scriptural list of do's and don'ts.

The Torah leads one to righteousness

Psalm 119:

- 1 ALEPH. [because Psalm 119 is an acrostic – A,B,C,] Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the **law** [*Torah – precepts and statutes*] of the LORD.
- 2 Blessed are they that keep His **testimonies** [*Edah - witness*], and that seek him with the whole heart.
- 3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his **ways** [*Derek – course, manner, customs*].
- 4 Thou hast commanded us to keep thy **precepts** [*Piqqud – mandates, the appointed things*] diligently.
- 5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy **statutes** [*Choq – decrees, ordinances, tasks*]!
- 6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy **commandments** [*Mitsvah – law, precepts*].
- 7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous **judgments** [*Mishpat – verdict, determination, sentence*].
- 8 I will keep thy **statutes** [*includes Sabbath, Holy Days, Tithing , etc.*]: O forsake me not utterly.

Drop down and **note the passion** of the Psalmist.

Psalm 119:

- 97** MEM. O how love I thy **law!** it is **my meditation all the day.**
- 98** Thou through thy **commandments** hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.
- 99** I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy **testimonies** are my meditation.
- 100** I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy **precepts.**
- 101** I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy **word.**
- 102** I have not departed from thy **judgments:** for thou hast taught me.
- 103** How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- 104** Through thy **precepts I get understanding:** therefore I hate every false way.
- 105** NUN. Thy **word** is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

This is where we learn to have the mind of Christ – not from our own reasonings – or worse yet, from the world. The Pharisees of Jesus' day kept the Sabbath in a more stringent – letter of the law – manner than anyone in the Church of God does today.

They had hundreds of difficult rules for the sake of keeping the Sabbath **perfectly** – in their eyes. They judged every situation in its most extreme interpretation.

Brethren, that is not what God intends – do we see the difference? What is God's intention for the Sabbath? That is what we must be able to discern. We, Christians, keep the spirit of the law – not the letter of the law as the Pharisees did.

If we want to be in God's kingdom – and we do – we will not keep the Sabbath as the Pharisees did.

The Pharisees were missing the **intent** of God's Law. God does not want us to keep the Sabbath like the Pharisees did.

They kept the Sabbath perfectly in their own eyes – but what did Jesus say?

Matthew 5:

- 20** I say unto you, That unless your righteousness **shall exceed** the **righteousness** of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

End: Call the Sabbath a Delight