



February 12, 2023

Abounding Grace: The Grace of the Law

Enter God's Rest

Exodus 20:8-10

For Discussion and Reflection

1. Jesus tells us that the Sabbath was made for man, "not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27; Isaiah 58:13,14) The day was intended to express God's goodness to his creation, give us time to refresh and reconnect with God and our immediate community. What in our hearts makes us resist "ceasing"? What will you give up or lose by following this rhythm? What does the culture lose by not following this rhythm, especially the poorer worker? Do you control your weekly rhythm? Does the culture? Does God?
2. We live in a culture that treats the Lord's Day as another day off to do what we please. Worship, rest, personal worship, family time, church community, and service are viewed as options not priorities. How much has that attitude affected you? How can you reorient your priorities to enjoy and benefit from the freedom you enjoy on Sunday?
3. God's word ties "ceasing day" (Sabbath) to the creation narrative, where God rested from his labors. He wasn't tired, but his work was "good" and it was "finished" for the time. Scripture also ties "ceasing day" to God's rescue of Israel from their evil masters in Egypt with whom no rest was given. Finally, it connects it with the unique identity of Israel as a people in covenant with God. Look past the legalism of the Pharisees and articulate the foundational principles communicated in this commandment. Have any of those principles changed?
4. The author, writing to the Hebrews speaks of God's rest for his people. If you have time, read the entire thought, Hebrews 3-4. Chapter 3 urges us to "consider Jesus" the apostle and high priest of our confession. We are his household. A warning is given to exhort one another every day, while it is still called "today" lest these Jewish believers fall away from faith alone in Christ alone. The example given is of Israelites who didn't trust God and were denied access to Canaan, the land of rest. Hebrews 4:3, says that we enter God's rest by faith. God appointed another day where his people would enter his rest. His point is that "ceasing day" (Sabbath) is a shadow of a coming reality, like Canaan was a shadow of eternity. Those who believe have entered that rest and "rested from his works." (Hebrews 4:10) Believers strive to enter that rest, by holding on to their confession. All of this comes to conclusion in a discussion about our High Priest, who entered heaven to provide us rest with God, Hebrews 4:14-16. How is Christ's ministry for us manifested in the practice of "ceasing day"? Specifically, how does our practice on the Lord's Day communicate our confidence in the finished work of Christ?
5. The church was an ethnic mix of Jews and Gentiles, which created cultural tension. The Jews were often adamant that keeping the Sabbath (Saturday day of ceasing from labor) was required for all God's people, even the Gentiles. This created no small stir in the church. How does Paul address this tension in Romans 14:1-12 and Colossians 2:16-19?

6. The New Testament believers gathered on Sunday, the Lord's Day. In Jerusalem, this was a workday, as it was in Roman culture. Many, if not most, of the church were not citizens, or wealthy, in fact some were indentured servants. This would make "keeping" the Sabbath difficult if not impossible as servants are not in the position to take off work for religious adherence. Because of this we find the church gathering at the end of the day for worship, 1 Corinthians 11:22,33 and Acts 20:7. What does this communicate about the church's commitment to gather on the Lord's Day?
7. While the practices of the Lord's Day were very different in the New Testament, one thing is sure, God's people gathered for worship. Consider the instruction given in Hebrews 10:25. Remember that this instruction was given to the Jewish believers who might still practice the Sabbath culturally and resist gathering on the first day of the week. How should you prioritize worship on Sunday?
8. What has the Spirit revealed to you that needs to change in your approach to Sunday?