

Is there more to keeping the Sabbath than meets the eye?

The Sabbath: A Shadow - by John Elliott

A pilot’s view from a jet cockpit is quite unique. He sits at the leading edge of the plane with a largely unobstructed view. The takeoff sequence propels the plane briefly through a dense inner-city environment. At the destination, the plane sinks into a similarly highly populated core while on approach to touchdown. During such times it is interesting to observe the aircraft’s shadow racing across skyscrapers, warehouses and freeways filled with vehicles. The shadow has the same form, direction and speed of the real aircraft that casts it, yet it causes no damage to anyone or anything because it’s just a shadow, not the actual airplane.

The Sabbath is such a shadow. “Let no man...judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17, KJV).

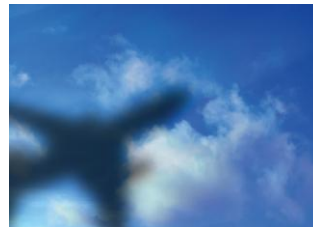
Paul referred in part to the Sabbath as “a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:17). Every shadow is an accurate, partial representation of the source from which it is cast. The Sabbath’s shadow is cast

directly by the Lord of the Sabbath and involves His law, His Church, His second coming, and His Kingdom. Consequently, our response to the Sabbath shows our respect, or disrespect, for all that it represents (Exodus 31:13-17). How you and I feel about the Shadow reflects how we feel about its Lord, His laws, His Church and His Kingdom.

How do you feel about the Sabbath, its Lord, His Kingdom, and His laws? Rather than it being merely a forecast of Christ ruling people in the future, the Sabbath is a special link that you have to those things right now. Keeping the Sabbath speaks volumes about how you feel about the Source of the Sabbath and about the Kingdom of Heaven. Consequently, God is offended by those who feel restricted by it and say, “When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat?” (Amos 8:5).

God wants children who embrace Him and His way of life, as represented by each Sabbath. “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the

LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD...” (Isaiah 58:13-14).



The bottom line is this: If you honor the Shadow, you honor its Source. If you delight in the Shadow, you delight in its Source (Isaiah 58:14). If you remember to keep the Sabbath holy, you remember its holy Source (Exodus 20:10). Conversely, if you casually ignore the Shadow, you casually ignore its Source. If you disrespect the Shadow, you disrespect its Source. God responds in kind to our reverence of Him and His Kingdom: “For those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30).

The Sabbath is a powerful sign between God and His people (Ezekiel 20:12). Never will their relationship be severed, as the Sabbath will always remain a holy day for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

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When looking at our own accomplishments we often forget who we should be.

Sabbath Morning - by Skip Miller

The larger question is, "What am I showing God in how I respond to the Shadow of heavenly things that He's casting?"

With the coming of Each Sabbath, consider your association with it. certainly does. Do you truly love Him and His way of life? The Sabbath is a shadow of Him and His godly way of life for all mankind. How you observe each Sabbath is a sign of how you relate to Him. How you regard the Shadow is how you regard its Source, as the two are inexorably entwined.

For more information on the Sabbath, request the booklet *Sunset to Sunset - God's Sabbath Rest*.

On a Sabbath morning, I found myself standing on my patio mentally criticizing someone. Then I was struck by a disappointing thought: I find it easy to criticize others, but I easily justify and excuse myself. God

My discovery happened this way. I had built a rock garden that included a trickling waterfall. It took years to acquire the volcanic rock needed, years to assemble it, and years to plant everything--perhaps 10 years in all.



Actually, it will never be completely finished because I continue to add to it from time to time. I come across a rock, or a plant, and I can't help myself; I want to add it to the structure.

As I admired my work that morning, I thought about what Nebuchadnezzar had said in Daniel 4:30, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built...by my mighty power...?" Obviously, pagan kings aren't the only ones with proud thoughts! Then I remembered Solomon and after a little effort found Ecclesiastes 2:5-6, "I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of

the grove." Again, I reflected on my work and thoughts and they truly scared me!

As I admired the flowers I had tucked into the nooks and crannies, I decided to take a moment to consider more seriously God's creation. Originally, I had been thinking about what "I" had accomplished!

Why do we do this?

It is only human to take pride in our accomplishments, but that's the problem. We shouldn't really want to be human. We should want to be more like God, but that doesn't come easily.

Like the Apostle Paul discovered, we have to keep our bodies under subjection to our minds, but our minds, which are also human, need to be kept in subjection to the Lord of Hosts (Romans 7:14-25).

All these thoughts came in an instant, and the solution seemed pretty hard to do. I had wanted to turn on the little waterfall and enjoy the coolness of the Sabbath morning, but I was gently reintroduced to a recurring lesson: until Jesus Christ returns we must daily conquer the self and seek God.

In the end, I had forgotten whom I was initially criticizing. I had found another person to

criticize—myself! Then my wife Suzanne told me the coffee was ready and I, somewhat more humbly, went inside the house.

Learn how to become less critical, proud, or selfish? Please request a free subscription to the *Good News Magazine*, which contains many articles on Christian living based on biblical teachings.

As we grow in our spiritual walk, Christians must attune ourselves to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Christian Practice and the Dryer Buzzing – by Katherine Rowland

"Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you...' So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan." (Genesis 12:1,4-5).

There is no record of Abram equivocating, hesitating, or agonizing



over this command to leave his homeland and to set off for parts unknown. Instead, we see God speaking and Abram moving, putting God's word into action immediately. This week, I have been thinking a good deal about promptings and action. We live in a world of promptings from many places: work, school, news reports, magazines, the Internet and the dryer buzzer. The dryer buzzer?

When I started working full time a couple of years ago, it was plain that some of our routines needed to change. The boys and their father took on extra responsibilities, and they do a pretty good job. The boys are pretty good about taking care of their chores and not whining when I remind them, but they still don't do things as I would. I'm not talking about being slap-dash here or refusing to do the work: instead, the biggest issue is that they tend to do only what I assign and remind them to do. They have not yet matured to the point of looking at a room, seeing it needs tidying and then feeling a prompting to tidy. Likewise, when it's

laundry day all of us will hear the dryer buzzing that the load of laundry is finished...but I am the only one to whom that buzzing indicates something should be done.

I was fussing about this a little to myself when I realized this is a reminder of how my Christian walk is being refined, day-by-day. How often, I wonder, does my Father think, "Why isn't she doing what she knows she ought to do? Why, when the Holy Spirit is prompting her to do the right thing, when she knows the right thing to do, why doesn't she do it?" Why don't I always interpret that buzzing dryer as an impetus to do what ought to be done?

When I ponder how I came to understand that household promptings meant I should act on a situation, I realize there are several components. First, an awareness of how things ought to be done, second, an awareness that I had a responsibility to do things, and third, practicing the same routines over and over to strengthen those habits and increase my awareness of the promptings that require immediate attention.

This is how our Christian journey is, too. First, we have to know there is a path that ought to be followed. That has to be joined with the

understanding that because there is a way that things should be done, we have a responsibility to do them. And then we have to practice until we can do it automatically, without hesitation. To put it into social terms, most of us probably don't have to think, "Oh, I should probably say, 'Thank you,' for this gift that I was just given. Should I say it or not? Oh, I guess I could." We automatically say, "Thank you." But this small action is built upon practice that was forced on us and an awareness built into us by our parents or some concerned authority. We learned that "thank you" is what you say when someone does something for you. Now, we don't have to think about it—we just do it.

James 1:22-25 reminds us, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

If we know what should be done, and we know we ought to do it, then what

remains is to follow the laws of God as often as we hear that prompting. Over time, if we pay attention and focus on doing these things, they will become as automatic as thank you, as insistent as a dryer buzzing to call our attention to carrying out a duty. We will begin to do things God's way without constant reminding as part of the process of conversion. Let's listen for those promptings and set our focus on learning what we ought to be doing!

To learn more about conversion, request the booklet, *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

Before a prayer is answered, there may be more required

But I've Prayed About It! - by Robert Berendt

Thirty-five years of being a pastor has shown me many things about people and about God. I love people and I love God. I tell people I will pray for them and people tell me they pray for me. God's people pray a lot and that is a good thing as we see in Paul's instruction to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:17). You can talk with God when you walk, drive, sit, or even lie down, but there should also always be the times when we are on our knees before Him reflecting the respect, awe, and humility

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Prayer by itself can be lacking something

I have had a concern for years that I'd like to share with you. When I counsel people for marriage, they almost always tell me, "we have prayed about this union" (or words to that effect). Sick people would say, "I have left my healing in God's hands." I've had people who need a job say, "God will provide me with a job, because I have prayed about it." There are those who pray for guidance in choosing a career or a home to buy. I have been asked to say a prayer to help students to remember lessons learned before an important exam. I am very happy to hear people say they are praying.

What then is my concern? Did you detect it in the examples? My concern is that far too often those faithful people stop doing anything on their own. It is as though once you've prayed – that's it! Personal thought and personal effort stops. Marriage counseling is meaningless if the decision has already been reached. Encouragement to see a doctor seems like blasphemy to one who has "left it in God's hands." Making a determined effort to improve one's training and really going after a job loses significance. Maybe we've all heard of the person who just sat by the phone and God caused an unknown employer to call and offer an incredible job to someone he's never met and whose credentials do not matter.

My concern is that for some, praying about a problem that would take great effort to solve seems to remove the need for that effort. A man once said we ought to pray as though everything we do depends on God, and we ought to work as though everything we do depends on us. I have found that to be very good advice.

James 2:17, 20 and 26 carry God's message to us that faith without works is dead. Why should we shy away from taking action? Why should we not plan, learn, and apply knowledge and wisdom in all we do? Some feel works of any kind signify a lack of faith. We are to walk hand-in-hand with God, but He expects us to learn to evaluate situations, seek wisdom, get information and make good choices.

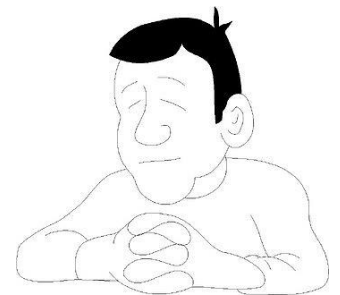
Examples of prayer with action

One personal example is that some feel that carrying some types of protection into the forest shows a lack of faith. I often take young people and children into the mountains for days at a time. We carry our food and cook in the campgrounds. In Canada, there are plenty of animals in the wild. We have powerful grizzly bears, black bears, mountain lions, and wolves throughout the areas in which I travel. I take my shotgun along "just in case." I have never had cause to use it and, with the noise we

usually make, there has never even been so much as a dangerous animal sighted within a half mile of us. The shotgun is only a precaution.

God does not condemn a person who takes precautions. If that were the case, why did God bless David the shepherd boy so powerfully when he decided to take his best weapon (a sling) and chose five stones before he went into the danger zone when facing Goliath? Obviously, God was not displeased. He saw a capable and courageous David doing the best he could and all the while trusting God to be right there with him.

I have always believed that God is far too intelligent to bless stupidity. He does sometimes rescue us from our errors and ignorance, and He may even have mercy on the foolish of this world, but if He consistently blessed stupidity, we would be learning incorrectly.



God blesses good and right choices. Moses wrote about this in the covenant with Israel, and in Deuteronomy 27-30, he outlines some of the curses or blessings that come from the choices we make. God does not make the choice for us, but He

encourages us to learn, think, seek information, gain wisdom, and *then* make the right choices. He tells Israel to “choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19) and through the Bible, He tells us to do the same.

Examples of poor choices

There are some truly tragic stories in the Bible of people who made wrong choices. The results were often disastrous. A beloved king who was a godly man was curious about the army of Egypt that was passing by. Though he was warned not to approach, he decided to dress as a common soldier and go to look for himself. It cost him his life (2 Chronicles 35:20-24). All of Israel suffered from his bad choice.

Abraham and Sarah chose to have a child by a surrogate mother (Hagar) and the result is still echoing in the world today with conflicts in the Middle East. Israel often chose to make its own unwise decisions about life and there, too, we can read and see the results.

On the other hand, there are also wonderful stories of people who made good choices and were blessed for that. Joshua stated that he and his family had chosen God over idolatry (Joshua 24:15). He also told the rest of the Israelites to choose whom they would serve. The very fact that Joshua told them to choose shows us that not all—if any—of the

people of Israel really sincerely made the choices that God advised. In Joshua 24:22, we can read that Israel verbally stated that they would obey God. Words do not carry much weight; it is the deeds that follow those words that show God what is in the heart.

Powerful and effective prayer is possible

Our Almighty Creator loves to bless and give good things to those who worship Him. Worship is profound adoration, admiration, and affection that are reflected in deeds and words. God is worthy of the utmost worship we humans can manage, and that is why our acts and deeds do show our faith.

James wrote that all our prayers are not answered because sometimes we “ask amiss” (James 4:3). When our prayers carry the focus of me, me, me, then we have a problem in communication with God. We are at fault because we are asking for ourselves. People generally do just exactly what they want to do. God is expected to conform to the image they have in their minds about Him. But true conversion displays the opposite attitude.

A converted person does not ask for himself and then bargain with God to answer the prayer. A converted person recognizes God’s majesty and in all humility seeks God’s will. His prayers reflect faith and his actions show his faith by

good choices.

And so I hope people continue to pray a lot, but also to pray correctly. Incessant prayer that is done improperly will produce nothing. One prayer given earnestly and humbly carries more weight than countless prayers that are in error. Have you “prayed about it?” If you have done so and then acted in a manner that pleases God, you will have your answer.

To learn more about true conversion, which leads to a powerful prayer life, please request our free booklets: Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion.

It often comes easy to skip church services, but what does God require?

Assembly Required by Justin Kramer

It was not too long ago, that my wife and I were not attending services on a weekly basis. We only showed up about twice a month. We had several reasons for not coming, but the fact was that by not attending services regularly, we began to suffer spiritually.

This article was inspired by some of our church literature, especially from one called, “Should You Attend Church” (March/April Good News Magazine). I want to discuss a command that God gave us; it’s an extremely important one with far reaching consequences

as well as blessings. It’s the command to assemble together on God’s Holy Sabbaths or to put it more simply, whether going to church is optional or required.

God appointed the Sabbath and His annual festivals as sacred assemblies. Leviticus 23: 1-2 says, “And [the LORD] spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, The feasts of [the LORD], which you shall proclaim, holy convocations, even these are My appointed feasts.” (MKJV unless noted) Another term for holy convocation here means “sacred assembly.” Then Moses continues to list all of the holy day feasts and the Sabbath.

Lions teach a lesson

When I was a small child growing up in the church, my parents used to let us watch nature shows on the Sabbath – mostly “National Geographic.” For some reason I always remember the episodes about lions. I loved watching the lions; they were so powerful, the king of the beasts.



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that when lions hunt, the first thing they do is separate the herd. What's ideal for a lion, as with most predators is to find prey that is weak. This weakness could mean being slower than the rest of the herd, like with a sick animal, but most of the time the prey is just young. During the chase, the lion will separate one individual from the herd, the weakest member of that herd.

As a child, this really began to bother me. I mean I could see this kind of cowardly behavior coming from maybe a hyena, (my least favorite animal) but not from a lion. I had a different image of lions in my mind. Lions were to be feared and respected, but the way these massive beasts picked off the young to devour it, it just didn't seem that magnificent to me anymore.

I think we can learn a very important lesson from the lion. One of easiest ways for Satan to destroy us is to first separate us from our "herd." Get us one on one, feeling alone, scared, and without the protection of our spiritual family. Then he goes in for the kill.

1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sensible and vigilant,

because your adversary the Devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking someone he may devour."

One of the important reasons God gave us the command to assemble together was to protect us from the adversary who seeks to destroy us. We have a very real God, and we also have a very real enemy. If we give Satan a foothold by not keeping the Sabbath commandment and reject the protection that God offers through his church, Satan will use it to try to destroy us spiritually. That's his goal.

Look at a very encouraging scripture, Matthew 16:18. In the second half of the verse Christ says, "... I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (NKJV)

Satan is truly a master of the "Divide and Conquer." We have seen Satan use this tactic time and again to divide the church, but we typically think of this on a larger "church wide" scale, but let's think about how Satan uses this tactic personally, on an individual basis.

Let's look at the second part of the scripture read at the beginning of the article, 1 Peter 5:9. "... whom firmly resist in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions in the world are being completed in your brotherhood." We do share the same sufferings. We are supposed to be

there for each other, to encourage and to serve.

Service versus selfishness

There are many blessings that come from keeping God's commandment to assemble. Fellowship, friendship, instruction, we get counsel, advice, help and the list goes on. It's a tremendous blessing to be able to worship God together with hymns and through prayer. All of these blessings are very, very important and wonderful. They are gifts from God.

Service is a must for us as Christians, and it's even more important as first fruits. Christ calls us laborers. In Matthew 9:37, He said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." What is a laborer if he does not labor? What is a servant that does not serve? God makes it clear through this scripture and others that we will be busy in the Kingdom of God. And that each of us has a job that will involve service to God and to one another. We know that Christ left His throne, came to earth and set an incredible example of service, making Himself a slave, a bondservant, even unto death.

It's according to God's abundant love that keeping His commandment carries with it so many blessings, but that's not the only reason we come to church. If we are able to go to church, to serve

others and God, and then we choose not to--that's selfishness. (Philippians 2:3) God will not have selfishness in His kingdom.

We can't fall into the trap of being selfish with our Sabbath. We have all had long weeks, when the Sabbath rolls around and we say to ourselves, "I just want to relax." Believe me I know. Living in the desert, in the summer, the last thing I "feel" like doing some Sabbaths is throwing on a suit when it's 115 degrees outside and driving 35 minutes to services. It's sometimes easy to convince yourself that listening to a recorded sermon, or catching a web-cast is enough. We can also try to use God's words to condone our selfish actions. Saying things like, "Well, the Sabbath was made for man ... not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27) and I'm tired!" But man was made to serve God and to serve one another wholeheartedly.

Of course, there are times when coming to church may not be possible. This may be due to an illness, advanced age or a distance that is just too far to make it on a weekly basis. But aside from that consider what it says in Hebrews 10:24-26, "*and let us consider one another to provoke to love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as*

you see the Day approaching.”

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins. (NKJV)

It's amazing how our perspective on coming to church changes when we remove ourselves from the picture and focus on loving one another. We begin to see that Christ is looking for faithful and steadfast servants, of one body, in the same place, with the same mind.

Remember to pray for those who can't come to church and seek God's help in bringing them back. Take shelter from our enemy within His flock, relying on one another for encouragement and to remain focused.

Always keep Christ's promise in mind that His church will not fail and continue to learn and prepare for the coming kingdom. Do this by consistently and zealously practicing Godly service

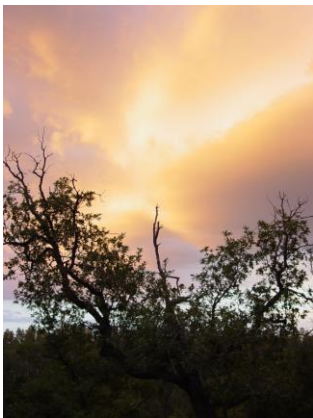
one to another, remembering that we're not gathering at church for ourselves alone. And let's not ever forget that to accomplish all this, and to truly make us ready... Assembly Is Required.

For more interesting reading on keeping the Sabbath and God's Holy Days, request our free booklets: *Sunset to Sunset - God's Sabbath Rest* and *God's Holy Day Plan - Hope For All Mankind*

The Bible speaks of the Sabbath as a memorial, but also as a shadow of the future.

There Remains Therefore a Sabbath Rest for the People of God – by Nathan Albright

Why does God command the Sabbath day to be kept holy? What is it we are supposed to remember on the Sabbath day? Why is the Sabbath valid for Christians today? What is the connection between the weekly and yearly Sabbath? Let's examine these questions, and others, about the continuing validity and value of God's holy Sabbath day.



Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy

God's command to observe the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, has great spiritual

meaning. There are many lessons to be learned from the Bible and from celebrating it each week. It makes no sense that God would ever consider abrogating this precious gift that He "made for man" (Mark 2:27).

The Ten Commandments are listed twice in the Bible and it's significant that the wording of the Fourth Commandment is somewhat different in the two places. We learn from Exodus 20:8-11 that the Sabbath points back to God's creation of the universe, and we learn from Deuteronomy 5:12-15 that the Sabbath also points back to the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt.

Let us first examine what the Bible itself says about the symbolic meaning of creation. In Exodus 20:8-11 we read: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day

is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

The seventh day Sabbath, the Sabbath that God Himself kept (Genesis 2:1-3) and of which Jesus Christ is the Lord (Luke 6:5), points back to the creation. Just as God rested from His labors on the seventh day, so mankind should rest from his on the same day.

We see that the weekly Sabbath rest also has a parallel in the Sabbath rest for the land. According to God's laws for His nation, every

years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food."

Just as we are to rest from our labors at the end of each week on the

seventh day, so the Israelites were to let their land rest every seven years, trusting God to feed them as He fed the Israelites each Sabbath with extra manna (Exodus 16:22-24). This concept of rest, therefore, applies not merely weekly, but also every seventh year, with the same concern shown for servants and strangers that is shown within the weekly Sabbath command.

The Sabbath is also about freedom

Likewise, there was a further component of this land Sabbath command. Just as the land was to be worked six years and then freed in the seventh year, so this was true also of indentured servants, as it says in Exodus 21:2: "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing."

The land Sabbath of seven years did not only deal with rest, but also with freedom. As the Bible says in Leviticus 25:17-19: "Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the Lord your God. So, you shall observe My statutes and keep My judgments, and perform them; and you will dwell in the land in safety. Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill, and dwell there in safety."

The Sabbath rest not only points back to God's rest after creation, but also to the

rest that comes from freedom from slavery. Just as God freed Israel from slavery, Israelites were not to force anyone else to work on their behalf on the Sabbath day. The freedom was not theirs to enjoy alone, but also something that they were to provide to others just as God had shown it to them. Liberty, therefore, is intrinsic in the Sabbath rest itself, whether it is liberty from literal slavery or liberty from the slavery that results from sin from which we are freed at conversion and baptism (Romans 6:18). Therefore, the Sabbath remains as a sign of our freedom as well as a sign pointing back to the rest of God after creation.

A Sabbath rest

But what does the Sabbath point toward? How do we know that the Sabbath is a sign of what is to come and not only of what has passed? We know because the Bible does not only speak of the Sabbath as a memorial, but also as a shadow of something in the future. Let us now examine what the Sabbath points toward.

In Colossians 2:16-17 we read an often misunderstood passage: "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the

substance is of Christ." We know from Paul's own testimony in Acts that he kept the Sabbath regularly, even in heathen lands with Gentiles (Acts 13:14, 42-44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4), and also that he was fully obedient to the law of God and content to be killed if he broke the law (Acts 25:10-11). Therefore, we know that he is not speaking against the Sabbath, new moons and holy days by calling them a shadow, since he faithfully kept those things himself.

What does he mean, then, by calling them a shadow? He means they foreshadow (symbolize prophetically) great things in the future.

The scriptural passage from Hebrews 3:7 to 4:11 is deeply meaningful and inspiring although a little complex. The author (probably Paul) repeatedly quotes part of Psalm 95, widely considered a psalm about the Sabbath. The reason the word "today" is repeatedly emphasized is that it is a reference to the weekly Sabbath. That is the day when we primarily "hear His voice" through sermons, etc. (Psalm 95:7; Hebrews 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7).

The author is intertwining three significant "rests." He is using the weekly

Sabbath rest and the rest which the Israelites enjoyed after they crossed into the Promised Land of Canaan (after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years) to illustrate and emphasize the magnificent future rest for God's people. That future rest will begin with their resurrection into the Kingdom of God at Christ's return.

The author did not write this for the purpose of proving that God's people should continue to honor and observe the weekly Sabbath. The author knew that the people he was writing to at that time already understood that all of God's Ten Commandments were still in effect. The fact that the author uses the weekly Sabbath (as something still in effect) as a powerful illustration of the Millennium (which will be the seventh millennium since the creation of Adam and Eve) is further proof that the Christians at that time were still obeying God's command to observe the Sabbath.

In Hebrews 4:9, the Greek word translated "rest" is different from the other Greek words translated "rest." In this verse, it is sabbatismos—a "sabbath-rest." While the author is undoubtedly referring to our future rest in God's Kingdom, a rest that remains in the future, he would not be calling it a "sabbath-rest" if the weekly Sabbath no longer

had any significant meaning.

The author of Hebrews in chapters 3 and 4 is showing that the entrance of the children of Israel into the Holy Land was a shadow of the rest that is to come, namely the establishment of the rule of God over the earth after Christ's return. Only those who are called as a holy nation, a royal priesthood and who obey His covenant and His laws (Exodus 19:5-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10) will be kings and priests over the earth in that 1,000 year period (Revelation 5:10). This will occur after God frees the entire world from slavery to sin, from the oppression of evil men and the spirit of darkness that motivate misdeeds.

We see that this Sabbath rest of 1,000 years symbolizes freedom from labor and toil, which resulted from man's disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden and the pernicious effects of sin as a result of the world being "under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). It also points to the creation of the new heavens and new earth after that rest is done and judgment has come to all who have ever lived (Revelation 20:11-21:5).

Looking forward to what is to come

Remember that even as each Sabbath day is a reminder of God's creation of the heavens and the earth and of our deliverance from slavery

into freedom through the workings of God's Holy Spirit, the Sabbath also points forward to the 1,000-year reign of Christ. The Sabbath Millennium will end the misrule and corruption that has filled these last 6,000 years of human civilization during which mankind has sought to rule himself without God and without success. There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God as the Bible has commanded consistently throughout. Therefore, as we celebrate each weekly Sabbath, let us reflect on and rejoice over the wonderful lessons the Sabbath teaches us, and let us hope and pray for God's Kingdom to speedily come.

To learn more about God's commanded Sabbath, please request our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*.



If you were suddenly given a large sum of money, would you have the wisdom to manage it properly?

The Five Laws of Gold by Robert Berendt

In a book that I read recently, the tale was told of a young man

in ancient times who was sent out in the world to learn the lessons of life. His father gave him two gifts: a bag of gold and a clay tablet upon which was carved "the five laws of gold." The son was to return in ten years. Most people, like this young man, gladly take the gold but soon find out that gold without the wisdom to guard and use it is soon lost. This young man lost his gold through bitter lessons of get-rich schemes, loans to friends and high living.

He finally realized how important wisdom was and began to study the five laws that were written on the clay tablet. His lessons were painful and disheartening, but he always remembered his father's confidence in him and read very carefully the words of wisdom that his father had written.

Inexperience and the lack of wisdom brought the young man into dire straights. Finally, he managed to get a position managing a crew of slaves working on the new outer wall of a city.

We know the old saying, "A fool and his gold are soon parted." Worse yet is the one who does not learn from his mistakes. All humans make mistakes, but to never learn from those lessons is a disaster. "Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than rubies," states Proverbs 8:10-11.

The Bible is filled with nuggets of wisdom that help us develop a deeper relationship with our Creator.

Two Christian Living Principles By Skip Miller



Occasionally in God's Word, we find short, to the point sayings—"exhortations"—as Bible commentator Matthew Henry calls them. They are really easy to remember and of great benefit to read and do. In 1 Thessalonians 5, we find two such principles.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 says, "Rejoice always." Why? Because we have been given several incredible insights that should change our outlook on life. Our joy should not be based solely on physical comforts.

Do you understand God's plan of salvation? If you can, start with the Passover and explain it and the rest of God's Holy Days; then you have an outline of God's plan of salvation. That understanding should give you much personal joy and relief.

Why rejoice? Because if you understand that outline than chances are awfully good that you were called to be a firstfruit. What is a firstfruit? If you know that answer, then you are well on the way to being one. If you don't know, but want to, God is probably going to let you know soon. To be a firstfruit is an honor beyond comparison.

The blessing in being called by God

In 2 Corinthians 6:1, Paul calls firstfruits, "workers together with [Christ]." What a compliment! And then in verse 2 he says, "...now is the accepted time; behold, now is [our] day of salvation." For firstfruits, their time of education and judgment based on God's standards is *now*. All things we possess come through Christ. Since this is true, 2 Corinthians 6:10 could then be read: Though I am sometimes sorrowful, I am always rejoicing; though I am poor, yet I am rich; though I have nothing, yet in Christ I possess all things.

Two Christian Living Principles Continued...

What about the rest of humanity then? That is where relief comes in. As a firstfruit you now know that God (both Father and Son) intend to have a huge family. That family will include almost everyone who has ever lived. The very word, firstfruits imply seconds! God's plan is that few will be eternally lost. (2 Peter 3:9)

In 2 Corinthians 6:16, Paul quotes from Ezekiel 37:26-27: "...[God] will dwell in them and walk among them. [The true God] will be their God, And they shall be [God's] people." This is true for the firstfruits now, but later it will be true for billions more during the Great White Throne harvest period (Revelation 20:11-12)! Doesn't that give you joy and relief?

The blessing of talking with God

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, we find another Christian living principle: "Pray without ceasing." What is prayer except conversation with our Father and our older brother Jesus Christ? Since we rejoice in the knowledge of them and their truth, would we not want to talk to them about it all the time, in every way, with the understanding that they are concerned about our lives?

Good times to pray are when we arise in the morning and before we retire for the night, but what about in between? When I surf, I thank God aloud often for every good wave I receive. Does God care? I think so. When I see the sunlight strike the hillside chaparral, just west of our home, I thank God for the early morning sharpness of vision that they, both Father and Son, have given me. In the evening, I rejoice in the alpenglow created by the setting sun. Why not rejoice? They have given these physical blessings to us to drink in and enjoy.

There are many on my prayer list that I know, but many others that I don't know personally. I read about their sickness or need and I try to imagine how they occurred, and what their sickness or need means to their loved ones and families. Sometimes they are alone and have no blood family. Can we not reach them somehow through our prayers? We can, and I ask God to help those needing help. I believe that this request can result in some small benefit to those who need prayers, but always (always!) it results in a giant known and realized benefit to those of us who pray for others (Matthew 6:6).

I can read—thank You Father! I have time to write—thank You Father! I have enough to eat and share—thank You Father! Thank You Father for Virtual Christian Magazine! Thank You Father very much for every good thing that has come into my life!

I can enjoy sights and sounds and touch and taste and smell. All these senses have been given us by God to enjoy. What good thing do we have as humans that God, both Father and Son, have not given us? I rejoice in their gifts, and when I do I thank them in prayer.

These two Christian living principles go hand in hand: we should rejoice always, thanking God and Christ for all their blessings, and as we do we will pray without ceasing.

To discover more about being a firstfruit of God and how to better connect with Him through prayer, visit our website to download article and booklets, such as *The Road to Eternal Life*, which will help you on your path to a deeper relationship with God.