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all delivered unto the saints.*

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Isaiah 58:13-14: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day: and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

We believe that, next to our redemption through Christ, there is no subject of so great importance to Christians as Sabbath Observance. Surely there is no experience of Christian practice which manifests a greater diversity and laxity of conscience than that of Sabbath observance. Perhaps, no two of us will agree in detail as to the proper observance of the Sabbath. Doubtless, all of us will admit that there is greater laxity now than in the days of our fathers. Why? The answer is found in the historical fact that the denominations in existence at the time of and soon after the Reformation were widely divided in opinion as to the moral and perpetual obligation of Sabbath observance. Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists of Europe, Anglicans or Episcopalians, and Mennonites, all held that the obligation to observe the Sabbath as above any other day was not binding. The Puritans of England, Scotland and Ireland held to the perpetuity of the Sabbath. If our Puritan forefather stock had continued unmixed, there probably would not have been now such laxity of conscience in this matter. The intermingling of denominations in America, originating in Europe, resulted in a type of Sabbath observance at variance with that of our Westminster Standards.

God hallowed the Sabbath day, made it pure; that is, set it apart, consecrated it to Himself and to man. Man, created in God's image, should likewise so esteem this blessed day. How then is the Sabbath to be observed; or, in the words of our Catechism, "sanctified?" "The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy."

The Catechism answer may be reduced to three words: **Rest, worship, and service.** In our text we find the same three thoughts. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasures on my holy day . . . not doing thine own ways," refer to the thought of **rest**, ceasing "from worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days." Calling the Sabbath "a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, honouring Him, doing His ways, finding His pleasure, speaking His words," refer to **worship and service**, "spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy,"

I. Rest. We are to rest by abstaining "all that day" from secular pursuits, pleasures and amusements, physical and mental. By secular we mean those employments and recreations which are lawful or permissible on week days. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work." But the Sabbath day is to be reserved as a day of rest for man and for beast.

"Not doing thine own ways" on the Sabbath means one's ordinary duties or employments. A man's way, in scriptural language, is the customary course of his life. The whole point in Sabbath observance is that the customary course of a man's life should be disrupted, changed, left off, on the Sabbath, except for "works of necessity and mercy." The main reason for this is that the body, both of man and of beast, needs a chance to recuperate from the grind and wear of ordinary life.

Some years ago the British Parliament appointed a Commission to study the effects of a stated period of rest for workmen in mines, factories, and other concerns. This Commission of fifteen men reported that those persons who worked six days and rested one day were (1) healthier; (2) more moral; (3) did better work; (4) did more work in the long run; than those who worked seven days out of the week.

Both Abraham and the wandering children of Israel needed this law of rest. Surely men and women today who are a thousand-fold more taxed by secular pursuits and pleasures need the rest far more than did those nomadic peoples.

"Nor speaking thine own words," takes us to the realm of the mind. We profane the Sabbath when we engage in worldly thoughts and conversations. If our minds are intent on our business and amusements, our tongues will certainly discuss those things. Why do thinking and talking about the stock-market, political candidates and governmental policies, the latest Hollywood scandal, in general the news in the Sunday newspaper, profane the Sabbath? Because all these, and kindred things are secular and belong to the customary course of life. Thinking and conversing about secular affairs is the first step towards active participation in them on the Sabbath. The lawyer will make a better plea for his client on Monday if he has put his client out of his mind on the Sabbath. The business man will have a clearer mind for duties on Monday if he has resolutely put away all thoughts of business on the Sabbath. Thus with all of us. Rest, physical and mental, is secured simply by abstaining on the Sabbath from all thoughts, words and actions concerning our customary course in life. If you do not believe this, give it a fair trial.

"Holy resting all that day," by no means refers to idleness. While the Sabbath is not to be spent, generally speaking, in attending to secular affairs, yet it is invariably to be a day of industrious ex-

ertion. Some people salve their consciences by leaving off secular affairs and think that they are at liberty to sleep most of the day, lounge about the house or garden, wander around the farm or town; simply idle and waste away the day. A young man once said to me: "When I work hard six days out of seven, until 11:00 o'clock Saturday night, I think I ought to be able to do as I please on the Sabbath." We did not argue with him, but read to him the words of our text. On God's day there is place for neither idleness nor laziness. There is no real rest in either.

II. Worship. Sabbath observance was commanded not only to secure rest from "worldly employments and recreations," but also it was designed for the proper worship of Almighty God, the studying and teaching of His word, and the bringing of the soul under the influence of heavenly things, unseen and eternal. Hence we find such expressions as these in our text: "Calling the Sabbath a delight"; "the holy of the Lord"; "honourable"; "delighting oneself in the Lord." God is to be the special object of our thoughts, words and actions. But the Christian Sabbath was also designed to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, there should be a recognition of Him and His redeeming work in the worship and exercises of the day. "It is the day in which He is to be worshipped, thanked and praised; in which men are to be called upon to accept His offers of grace, and to rejoice in the hope of His salvation. It is therefore a day of joy. It is utterly incongruous to make it a day of gloom or fasting."

Our Catechism says that we are to spend the "whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship." The Bible does not say how many times one should attend church services on the Sabbath. It does indicate that a part of each Sabbath should be given to public worship. Jesus never neglected the weekly worship of God in the Synagogue. Good men in ancient times entered, on the Sabbath day, into the House of God with praise and prayer. The Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, were read in the Synagogue every Sabbath day. They esteemed "a day in His courts as better than a thousand." Their souls "longed, yea, even fainted, for the courts of the Lord." "Their heart and their flesh cried out for the living God." Therefore, God was with them "as a sun and a shield." He gave them "grace and glory" and withheld from them "no good thing." In a similar manner the early Christians called the Sabbath "a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable." They continued in fellowship, in prayer, in the breaking of bread. They sang songs and spiritual hymns. They prophesied, taught the Scriptures, took up collections. What was their privilege and duty should be ours.

But there is private worship as well. Family worship and that of the closet are the duties of all Christian families and individuals every day. Self-examination, religious meditation, thinking of the perfections and works of God, of the character of Christ, and the wonders of His redemption, the reading of the Bible and devotional books are aids to the proper worship of God. But we are hindered and interrupted in these exercises during the week days; hence on the Sabbath a solemn pause is made in the business of life; we are withdrawn

from all our worldly pursuits, so that we may have time to cultivate more earnestly our souls and those of our children. Every moment of the Sabbath should be seized, anxiously husbanded, as a golden opportunity for the performance of all the duties of our public and private worship of God.

III. Service. In a sense the public and private worship of God is service to Him. But there are other ways of serving God, namely, by "works of necessity and mercy." What are works of necessity? "Such as could not be foreseen, nor provided the day before, nor delayed till the day after the Sabbath." There is a vast difference between necessity and personal convenience. It may become necessary to consult a physician or secure a prescription at the drug store on the Sabbath. But to use a physician or a drug store on the Sabbath because we do not wish to lose time on a week day; or for the drug store to sell all other commodities, cannot be classed as works of necessity.

What are works of mercy? Christ said: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." In application to the law of the Sabbath Christ twice quoted Hosea 6:6: "I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offering." Here then is a general principle, as Dr. Hodge says: "That it is right to do on the Sabbath whatever mercy or a due regard to the comfort or welfare of ourselves or others requires to be done." In general we state the works of mercy as: the moderate refreshment of our bodies; visiting the sick, preparing and administering remedies for them; doing personal work or seeking the lost; striving to win back careless and indifferent church members; feeding our cattle, preserving their lives if in danger; caring for the poor, and making collections for the poor and the various activities of the Church.

IV. The rewards for such Sabbath Observance. We shall mention them without elaboration.

1. A sense of peace, happiness, bodily and mental refreshment. "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord."

2. Exaltation. "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth." Victory over enemies; freedom from false systems of worship.

3. Prosperity. "I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." Abundance of spiritual food. Assurance of final security.

V. The Confirmation. "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." It was not Isaiah speaking. He was merely the mouth-piece. It was God who spoke. He is faithful. He will not deceive. He will do what He has promised.

*Sermon preached before Asheville Presbytery Summer Meeting, Montreat, N. C., July 18, 1944.