

yourself in the Lord; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken” (Is 58:13,14).

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REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY

Read Hebrews 4:1-11

The setting was awesome. The mountain was bathed in thick smoke produced by a raging fire. The ground quaked and a trumpet Voice, louder than anyone had previously heard drowned out the rolling thunder while the lightning punctuated the pronouncements of God Almighty. The man Moses made his way up the mountain and disappeared into the inferno. No doubt he too was afraid. It would be only natural if his knees shook and his heart pounded within his chest as he watched the finger of God appear and inscribe His commandments in two tablets of solid stone. The Most High was making it more than plain that He meant business and that His commandments were not to be violated. This dreadful demonstration of God’s power was intended to produce in those who beheld it a solemnity and holy fear which would cause them to obey Him.

Such is the origin of what we know as the “Ten Commandments.” However it is quite evident that they are not held in such high regard today as they were at that time in which they were first spoken. After all, many Christians seem to believe that Jesus came to do away with such frightening decrees and replace them with much more palatable, easier to keep admonitions. In fact, it is often suspected among modern Christians (if not openly taught) that God’s commandments to His people should really be regarded more as “little suggestions” rather than any kind of iron clad ordinances. Furthermore the assumption goes, the consequences of failure - the penalty for breaking any of God’s laws - has been entirely removed

through Jesus, so whether or not we measure up to His standard is not really very important.

Underlying this present lassitude of modern Christendom toward God's instructions and the evident lack of the fear of God among His people is a basic misconception concerning the gospel. What Jesus came to do for us and how He is accomplishing His objectives is not well understood and in fact is often misunderstood by far too many believers. The notion of "consequences" of any sort concerning the behaviour of Christians has been reduced to a fairy tale about how large or small a mansion we will receive or how luxurious a car we will drive when our Lord returns with His reward. This sort of superficial gospel has produced equally shallow adherents. A lack of revelation concerning the Person and purposes of the Living God has resulted in a message which has very little power to change the lives of the hearers. The "fear of the Lord" which should form a kind of foundation in the lives of believers has been explained away and replaced with a broad, easy way which finds no place in any genuine understanding of the gospel.

This then brings us to the purpose of this writing. It is to attempt, in a manner which both scriptural and enlightening, to present the gospel from a fresh perspective which will speak to some of the modern misconceptions so prevalent among us. Let us pray together that God will anoint and use this message towards His eternal ends.

RAISING THE STANDARD

To begin, it is important to state that Jesus did not come to do away with the law. Instead He came to fulfil it. Not only did He not eliminate the demands of God's commandments, He actually raised them! In reality, Jesus' teachings elevated the requirements upon God's people instead of reducing them. A simple examination of a couple of the Ten Commandments will make this fact abundantly clear.

For example, the seventh commandment forbids us to commit adultery. Now it is possible for many people to keep this directive. They may entertain certain desires about particularly attractive members of the opposite sex, they may even have strong urges in this direction, but they are able to suppress them and keep themselves from this sin. This abstinence would have qualified them to be judged as obedient to the law in Moses' day. But when Jesus came along, He made things much more difficult. He declared that even indulging in the thought is just as bad as having actually done the act. This made righteousness all but impossible. If you are honest, you will admit with me that precious few

outward observance of the Sabbath Day, the scriptures teach us that this was simply a "shadow of things to come, but the substance [the spiritual reality of it] is of Christ" (Col 2:17 NKJV). Do you see this? In this light the true Sabbath observance becomes one of the most important revelations of the New Testament. Ceasing from living our own life and yielding our faculties to inspiration of Another is truly at the centre of all the thoughts and intentions of our God. This is why Jesus came and died for us. It was to impart to us the Father's Divine Life so that we could become partakers of His nature and be truly righteous.

No wonder the Sabbath is one of the most prominent of the commandments, being mentioned 137 times throughout the scriptures. It is little surprise therefore that its observance was taken so seriously by God and that it is emphasized again and again by the prophets when detailing the shortcomings of God's people. The importance of this experience, the centrality of this truth is so profound that if a person does not understand it, then he has not begun to really grasp the message of Christ. The keeping of the true Sabbath, which results in the replacement of our old, perishable life with God's new, eternal one is absolutely indispensable.

Do you keep the Sabbath Day? No, I don't mean to ask whether or not you hold a job or work in your garden on Sunday. Neither am I interested in any fruitless discussions about whether Saturday or Sunday is the proper time for worship. These things belong to another realm entirely. If you are caught up in them, you are already in serious danger of missing the spiritual reality about which we have been speaking. The Apostle Paul was fearful of this very thing when he said to the Galatian believers "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have laboured for you in vain" (Gal 4:11). He was concerned that his hearers had only grasped the superficial appearance of the scriptures and completely overlooked the real message. His apprehension was that in keeping an earthly ordinance, they were demonstrating that they had not understood the true meaning of it.

This then dear brothers and sisters is our present consideration. Are we entering into the true Sabbath day experience? Are we truly stopping our own activities and entering into the rest of God? Who is our daily motivation? Whom are we expressing day by day? Jesus is coming soon. Only those who have loved the Sabbath will be ready. Hear the promise of God! "If you turn away . . . from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honourable, And shall honour Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words. Then you shall delight

Christians are required to make a choice. They must continually decide by which life they will live. Which life will they allow to fill them and motivate them - God's or their own? Which life will be their moment by moment inspiration?

Our Heavenly Father, in His great wisdom has not forced His way upon us. Instead, if we do manifest His nature, it will be a result of our perpetually choosing His way. If we do begin to exhibit His nature, it will be because we day by day chose to allow His life to fill and dominate our being. Additionally, it will mean that we at the same time decided to deny our own life its expression. How holy and precious it is that our God and King is so sensitive to our desires. Conversely, how awesome a responsibility we have to choose rightly every day.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY

Now we come at last to the subject of this article, the remembrance of the Sabbath Day. In the Old Testament when Moses received the Ten Commandments, the ordinance of the Sabbath was a requirement concerning the enterprises of the seventh day. God ordered His people to cease from doing most physical activities so that they could focus their minds and attentions upon the worship of Himself. Simply put, they were to stop what they were doing and rest. While this seems like it should be an easy commandment to keep, it proved to be a virtual impossibility. There was always something within the lives of God's people which was stirring them to action, even when it was in violation of His will.

Now if the Old Testament decree was impossible to keep, what of the New Covenant standard? At that time God's followers were forbidden to work one day out of seven, but now in the New Testament, we are required not to work at all. We are admonished to "cease from [our] own works" completely (Heb 4:10). The standard of "resting" has been elevated far beyond the activities of one day. Now it is being applied to our entire existence.

This then brings us to a proper understanding of the real gospel. It is a message which states that there is a "rest" for the people of God into which they need to enter. There is available to us the option to stop living our life by our own motivation and enter into the experience of being animated by God. The genuine experience of the Sabbath is none other than that about which we have been speaking. It is simply to allow God to be our life and cease from living by our own.

When properly understood, the Old Covenant mandates are seen simply as outward types of the coming spiritual realities. They were earthly illustrations given to us by God to help us understand spiritual things. Concerning the

have made it through life without one such thought. Here in just this single law, virtually everyone is found guilty.

The commandment against murder also forms a part of the picture. No doubt there have been times in our lives when others have offended or even egregiously wronged us, and consequently have made us exceedingly angry. Hopefully, we have been able so far to resist the temptation to kill them. Perhaps the restraining influence of law enforcement forces, courts and jails have helped make the job of controlling our feelings somewhat easier. However, this abstinence will not meet our Lord's standard. In the New Testament not only are we not free to liquidate those who bother us, we are required to forgive them. Not only are we not free to harbour hatred and bitterness in our hearts, our Lord actually insists that we love our enemies. How is this possible? Once again, self restraint is not enough but an entire change of character is required.

And so it is with the rest of the Ten Commandments. The New Testament standards are actually much higher than that of the Old. Hopefully, this small sampling will be enough to demonstrate clearly that the righteousness required by Jesus' teaching is far above that demanded by the law.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

I believe that most people's immediate reaction to all this is to inwardly wonder: "How is such a thing possible? How could anyone live in such complete perfection that not one ungodly thought, attitude or action could creep into their life?" We know that the ancient Jews strove for nearly 2,000 years to obey the Ten Commandments. It is also well documented that the history of this effort was one of continual failure. So since it has been clearly proven over millennia of experience, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that man is incapable of obeying God's original ordinances, how are we to understand the fact that Jesus apparently made things even more difficult? What are we to make of the fact that what God today requires of us is so far out of our reach and beyond our abilities as to be entirely impossible?

The answer to this question is quite simple, yet utterly profound. To grasp it, it is imperative that every believer arrive at a deep, unshakable understanding of the following fact: There is only one person in the universe who is capable of measuring up to this incredible criterion - God Himself. His life is the only life which automatically and spontaneously exudes genuine righteousness. He is the only one who meets the test.

Did you realize that God does not have to try to be righteous? He just is! He does not have to try not to look at dirty magazines or keep from indulging in romance novels. He is not straining not to lie, cheat, steal or take advantage of someone for His own profit. He spends no time wishing He had things as nice as His neighbours. The truth is that God cannot even be tempted by sin (James 1:13). He simply isn't interested. In fact, He abhors it. God manifests righteousness simply because He is righteous and it is impossible for Him to be any other way.

It should be no secret to us that at one time in history, this supernatural life was manifested (I Jn 1:2). This incredibly righteous life came to earth in the person of God's Son, Jesus Christ. We read: "In Him was [God's] life*" (Jn 1:4). This man was the repository of the Father's life. Furthermore, while He walked on this planet, He did not function by his own life but simply lived out His existence by the inclinations of the Divine life which was inside of Him. He disclosed this secret when He declared: "I live by the Father" (Jn 6:57). His actions and even His words were not His own but simply an obedient response to the will of Him who lived within Him. He asserted: "the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (Jn 14:10). So we see that Jesus was truly righteous as a result of God's own life within Him which motivated Him.

*The Greek here is ZOE referring to the Father's life.

A LIFE WHICH IS NOT OUR OWN

This then forms an illustration for us today. It is totally impossible for us to meet God's standards. But if we are genuine believers, this same Jesus who lived on earth 2,000 years ago and pleased the Father in every respect, now lives within us. And it is the Father's intention that His own Son, living within us and living the Father's life through us would fulfil all of His righteous intentions. Jesus Himself is to become our motivation. God's own life is to become the source of all our thoughts, feelings and actions. Just as our Lord was animated by the Life of the Father, so we too can be an expression of Himself.

In this way, our lives will manifest righteousness. In this way, we can meet the standards given to us in God's book. Yet it is a righteousness which is not our own. It is not we who are meeting the requirements, but Another who lives in us and through us. The genuine gospel is not a message of self effort. True righteousness is not attained by the improvement of ourselves. Rather it is accomplished by a supernatural substitution. Just as Jesus pleased the Father by allowing Him to live through Him, in this same way we too can be pleasing to Him. This is the true Christian life. It is the narrow "way" of which Jesus spoke.

Any other is just an earthly imitation. God's desire is not that we should "live for Him" but rather that He should live His life through us!

Do you see this? Are you able to genuinely fathom the depths of what this means? What a glorious liberty! What a freedom and enjoyment. We are now free from the bondage of trying to please God. Now Someone who is infinitely more capable is going to do it for us. The living Jesus who pleased the Father while in this world will again please Him in us. This is an essential revelation which every Christian should see. It is also something which should begin to have a profound effect upon their experience. It is a truth which should begin to alter our behaviour on a fundamental level.

On the one hand this great fact provides us with tremendous release, yet on the other it also brings with it awesome responsibility. You see this means that God's people are supposed to be truly righteous. They are meant to be holy. They are actually intended by God to meet not only the standards of the Old Testament law but also the exceedingly elevated standards revealed by Jesus. In truth He did not come to do away with the law. Instead He came to fulfil it more completely and thoroughly than ever before. He came to cause multiplied thousands of men and women to become more righteous than previously thought possible. His intention is that what could not be done by the strength of man in attempting to obey God's law, would now be accomplished by His divine power working through His people. Now God can have multitudes expressing true holiness to the world and defeating the devil through their testimony.

Yet, as we all know, the actual realization of this glorious truth is not quite as simple as it may seem. Somehow, even though we have this supernatural Life living in us, it is not always He whom we express. Far too often, low, earthly thoughts, feelings and actions - sin of every variety - work in us and are expressed through us. What then is the problem? Why is it that we do not always manifest the nature of God in our daily lives?

At the root of this dilemma lies the fact that we still possess our old life. Just as the Life of God is thoroughly and completely righteous, so our own life - the one with which we were born - is unalterably polluted with sin. Therefore, when we allow ourselves to be motivated by it, we naturally express something which is less than supremely holy. When we live our own lives, when we permit "self" to be the source by which we live, the results are inevitably sinful and therefore rejected by God.

This then places the believer who is desiring to be holy and to do God's will, at a kind of crossroads. Every day and in fact every moment of every day,