

The Founders Journal



Committed to historic Baptist principles

Issue 68

Spring 2007



The Ten Commandments
More Than a Symbol

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Cover Photo: Supreme Court, Washington D. C.

The Founders Journal



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The Founders Journal is a quarterly publication which takes as its theological framework the first recognized confession of faith which Southern Baptists produced, *The Abstract of Principles*.

Subscription Price (one year): \$20.00 (\$25.00 outside the USA)

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The Ten Commandments More than a Symbol

Tom Ascol

The Ten Commandments have made a lot of news in America over the last few years. When Roy Moore took office in 2001 as the chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court he commissioned and installed in the state Supreme Court building a granite monument with the Commandments inscribed on it. Despite a federal court order, Judge Moore refused to remove the display. Only after the Supreme Court of the United States heard the case did the 5280 pound monument vacate the premises.

Despite their eviction from the Supreme Court building in Alabama, the Ten Commandments, or at least the public display of them on monuments and placards, have continued to be a source of cultural angst for conservative Christians across our land. The removal of such displays from the public square has become a rallying cry for conservatives whose passion is to “keep America one nation under God,” as the Ten Commandments Commission (TCC) recently put it.

Those behind this commission circulated a petition this spring proclaiming the second annual “Ten Commandments Day” in America. Part of their call included the following:

We, the members of the **Ten Commandments Commission** and supporting people of faith, proclaim **The Ten Commandments Day** on the first Sunday in the month of May, commencing on Sunday, May Sixth of 2007.

Furthermore, we proclaim the **Ten Commandments Day** to be a day dedicated for the display, awareness, commemoration and celebration of the Decalogue which we know to be the divine foundation of the Judeo-Christian faith.

We, the members of the commission, serve as a cohesive group of spiritual leaders representing millions of followers who affirm the beauty and the uniqueness of our differences. We believe that rooted in the **Ten Commandments** is a Divine plan that transcends color and diversity in cultural expression, sanctions brotherhood of man and respects expressions in all of God’s children.

We, who serve as a council of leaders, are committed to utilizing our united passion to provide purpose and direction for reversing the enormous tide of immorality continuing to be released throughout the United States of America, and on all continents of the world. This unified voice will culminate annually on the **Ten Commandments Day** and provide for a united, global, spiritual platform based on the **Ten Commandments**. This platform will respond to the call echoed throughout creation for a true expression of love, harmony and reconciliation among all nations, ethnic diversities and genders through education and rededication to the moral standard as given by our Loving Creator.

Therefore, we are calling on all community and spiritual leaders; churches, synagogues, fellowships, ministries, organizations and all who care about moral values, to celebrate the annual **Ten Commandments Day** by hosting local events in support of the **Ten Commandments** and what they represent.¹

I greatly appreciate the motivation and concerns of those who are behind these efforts. Several years ago our own church went door-to-door in our city giving out frame-worthy posters with the Commandments printed on them. We presented nicely framed wall-hangings to many civic leaders in town.

I do not believe that the gospel can be preached in its fullness and beauty without a clear understanding of God's law. I agree with John Bunyan when he said, "The man who does not know the nature of the law cannot know the nature of sin. And he who does not know the nature of sin cannot know the nature of the Savior." Furthermore, I am not convinced that J. Gresham Machen was overstating the case when he wrote in *What is Faith?*

A new and more powerful proclamation of [the] law is perhaps the most pressing need of the hour; men would have little difficulty with the gospel if they had only learned the lesson of the law... So it always is; a low view of law always brings legalism in religion; a high view of law makes a man a seeker after grace. Pray God that the high view may again prevail.²

Because of my convictions in this area some might find it surprising to learn that I am not a fan of many of the efforts to promote the publication of the Ten Commandments in the public square. My lack of enthusiasm has nothing to do with a lack of appreciation of the law. Neither do I doubt the role of the law in restraining sin in society. I think it would be wonderful if there were a greater consciousness of the Ten Commandments throughout our society. Nevertheless,

efforts like those of the TCC strike me as ill-conceived and ultimately self-defeating for at least two reasons.

First, such efforts seem to confuse the role of both the law and the gospel. In a recent email celebrating the success of the second Ten Commandments Day, the TCC founder wrote, the day “was celebrated nationally by thousands of citizens, Christians and Jews, who seek to keep America One Nation Under God and reaffirmed their commitment to the Word of God by signing the Ten Commandments Proclamation.”

America has never been a Christian nation though it has been a nation tremendously blessed in its past by vital Christianity and faithful Christian citizens. While I love my fellow citizens who are not Christian I cannot pretend that any regard for deity that does not submit to the revelation of God in trinity as revealed by the eternal Son of God is an acknowledgement of the only true God. Linking arms with anti-Trinitarians to make America one nation under a generic, and therefore, unbiblical God is hardly appropriate for followers of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, to suggest that the signature of a faithful Jew on the Ten Commandments indicates his or her reaffirmation of “commitment to the Word of God” means that the “Word” envisioned is something significantly less than the 66 books that Christians regard as inspired. What faithful Jew regards the New Testament as “the Word of God”?

While Jews, Muslims, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons would all affirm the Ten Commandments in some sense, only Christ-followers can possibly understand the real purpose and place of God’s law in the revelation of salvation. As Ken Puls illustrates in his article on “Christ and the Sabbath,” the law of God is all about Jesus Christ (Luke 24:27, 44–45). Apart from this understanding of the law, the best that those who trumpet the Ten Commandments can ever hope for is a moralistic society.

While I suppose that it is indeed better to live in a moralistic society than in an immoral one, neither would constitute living in “one nation under God.” My fear is that many Christians who are getting caught up in the public display of the Ten Commandments do not understand this. What our nation needs cannot be delivered by the law of God. Our situation is so desperate that our only hope is revival and revival will only come through the proclamation of the gospel.

When the gospel comes in power the results will not be moralism but renewal in every realm, including our morality. God’s law will once again be honored but not as an end in itself that is viewed exclusively or even primarily as a standard for outward conduct. Rather it will be seen by Christians as an expression of our gracious God’s will for His people and will be embraced from the heart. They will proclaim it not as a way to get people or nations right with God but as His unchangeable standard of righteousness by which every person will be judged. When Christians live in that way society will be positively impacted far beyond what any “celebration” of the Ten Commandments can ever achieve.

A second reason that recent parading of the Ten Commandments does not excite me has to do with a glaring oversight on the part of those who are leading the cause. Whom has God charged with the responsibility to be the “pillar and ground of truth?” The church (1 Timothy 3:15). The church has a stewardship that involves both defending and proclaiming God’s truth—including the truth of His law. Yet, how can this be done when most of those who visibly identify themselves cannot even name the Ten Commandments, much less explain them?

Antinomianism—both doctrinal and practical—has eroded the biblical teaching of God’s law in many, if not most, of the evangelical churches in our country. It strikes me as odd, to say the least, to see many who theologically have dismissed the law from their theology of grace and salvation line up to bang the drum for getting the Ten Commandments prominently displayed in public places. Various forms of Dispensationalism have little if any use for the Ten Commandments as an abiding standard of God’s righteousness. Yet some of the staunchest defenders of those types of Dispensationalism are also the loudest spokesmen for getting the Commandments back in courtrooms and classrooms.

Nowhere does this inconsistency become more evident than at the point of considering the fourth Commandment. The whole “Sabbath issue” tends to be very divisive among evangelicals who care enough even to think about it. Even among those who believe that the Ten Commandments have an abiding relevance to this Gospel age there are many who balk at taking the fourth Commandment seriously.

Some of that hesitation is understandable. In the new covenant we most certainly are not under any obligations to keep a Jewish Sabbath, as our brothers and sisters under the old covenant were. Throughout history there have been well-meaning teachers who seemingly did not make that distinction very clear in their advocacy of a “Christian Sabbath.” Reactions against teachings that were more suited to the old than the new covenant led to a complete rejection of any abiding Sabbath principle in this new covenant era.

While I am not convinced by the arguments of my brothers who take that position, I do wish that, when they talk positively about the Commandments that they would be consistent enough to speak of the “Nine Commandments” rather than the Ten. How many of those who are championing the public crusade for the “Ten Commandments” in our day have any serious commitment to the fourth one? I doubt if they would constitute even a sizable minority.

The Ten Commandments are more than a symbol. The same God who gave the gospel gave us His law. Those who know God and have been reconciled to Him through faith in Jesus Christ should seek to honor Him by believing the gospel and living according to His righteous requirements summarized in those Commandments. As John Newton wrote, “Clearly to understand the distinction, connection and harmony between the Law and the Gospel, and their mutual subserviency to illustrate and establish each other, is a singular privilege, and a happy

means of preserving the soul from being entangled by errors on the right hand or the left.”³ ☞

Notes:

¹ From the Ten Commandments Day website, <http://www.tencommandmentsday.com/petition.php>, accessed May 7, 2008.

² J. Grecham Machen, *What Is Faith?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1969), 141–142.

³ *The Works of John Newton*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 350.

News

Southern Baptist Founders Conference

Make plans now to attend the **2007 Southern Baptist Founders Conference**, June 26–29, hosted by Bethel Baptist Church in Owasso, OK. This will be the 25th anniversary of the conference. The theme will be “*God’s Truth Abideth Still: Confronting Postmodernism*” with keynote speaker Dr. David Wells.

For more information, see online: <http://www.foundersconference.org/>

Founders Fellowship Breakfast

The Founders Fellowship Breakfast will be held on June 12, 2007 at the SBC in San Antonio, TX. Plan to join us in the Alamo Ballroom A/B/C/D in the Marriott Riverwalk at 6:30 AM. Voddie Baucham, Pastor of Preaching at the Grace Family Baptist Church in Spring, TX, will be speaking on “Southern Baptists at Sardis.”

Register online at: www.founders.org/conferences/ffb/

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Christ and the Sabbath

Ken Puls

Leviticus is a book of law. Almost the entire book is made up of regulations dictated by God to Moses. It begins with the words, “Now the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying...” And then it moves directly to regulations concerning the sacrifices. Chapter by chapter this book reveals to us the pervasiveness of the law in all its detail and precision and rigor. It was committed to the tribe of Levi, who had the responsibility in the Old Testament for caring for the Temple, leading in worship and teaching the people of God the law of God. Leviticus is a manual written down for Israel to teach them how to live and serve and obey a holy God.

Leviticus is a book of law, but it is also a book rich with the gospel. Leviticus speaks of Christ. Christ is proclaimed all through the Old Testament. In Luke 24:44 Jesus told His disciples, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”

In Leviticus 23 God gave Moses an outline of the feasts and festivals that were to shape the yearly calendar of the nation of Israel. The festivals are part of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament that includes the temple and sacrifices—that part of the law that applies the first four of the Ten Commandments to Israel’s worship of God. Through the feasts and festivals God reminded Israel of the great works He had done for them as their Provider and Creator, and He pointed them to the greater work He would accomplish in sending Christ as Messiah and Redeemer.

God instructs Moses in the first two verses of Leviticus 23 to speak to the children of Israel and proclaim to them, “The feasts of the LORD.” But before Moses introduces the list of feasts beginning in verse 4, he inserts a declaration of the 4th commandment in verse 3:

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings (Leviticus 23:3).

As we focus this verse in the context of this passage, we need to ask five questions:

- 1) What does this verse teach us about the 4th Commandment?

- 2) Why is the Sabbath Commandment here in this passage?
- 3) How has Christ fulfilled the Sabbath?
- 4) In light of Christ's fulfillment of the Sabbath and the presence of the 4th Commandment here in this passage, is the Sabbath part of the Old Covenant that has "grown old and vanished away" (Hebrews 8:13)?
- 5) In light of Christ's fulfillment of the Sabbath, do we have an obligation to the Sabbath Commandment as believers in Christ?

What does this verse teach us about the 4th Commandment?

Leviticus 23:3 begins with an exhortation to work 6 days a week. God commanded His people to honor Him with their time by being diligent in their labors for 6 days and then setting apart the 7th day to be a Sabbath. God established this pattern at creation. He marked out 6 days creating and filling the heavens and earth, doing His marvelous work of speaking the world into existence, forming man out the dust of the ground, breathing life into him and creating woman out of man. Then, on the 7th day, He rested from His work.

Following this pattern from creation, man was to keep track of time and take time to do fruitful labor and to regularly in the framework of a week, stop and rest. Notice this verse calls this "a solemn rest." In Hebrew the word "Sabbath" comes from a root meaning "cease" or "rest." That word occurs twice here in this verse, grammatically tied together to intensify the noun (שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן). Literally it is a rest of rest—a Sabbath of Sabbath. The NKJV conveys the intent of the grammar here by calling it a "Sabbath or solemn rest." In other words this was rest with a purpose and holy intention. The verse states, "You shall do no work on it." It is a day to cease from work. But this was not a day to cease from work in order to be idle or lazy or carefree—this was a day to cease from work in order to give time to remembering the works and splendor of God and worshipping and delighting in Him.

Notice also that worship on this day is not described as in terms of just private worship or family worship—it is called a "holy convocation." That is—a gathered assembly of the people of God for the purpose of worshipping Him. Worship on this day was to be corporate.

The idea that one could honor the Sabbath Day by going off somewhere by himself or just spending time with immediate family would have been utterly foreign in Old Testament Israel. This was a day to gather with the people of God and amplify His praise by sharing and hearing testimony with others of what God is doing in midst of His own. The Sabbath is a day for gathering and joining voices—a day for corporate worship.

This is the testimony of the psalms. Consider the words of David:

Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together (Psalm 34:3).

He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;
Many will see it and fear,
And will trust in the LORD (Psalm 40:3).

I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness
In the great assembly;
Indeed, I do not restrain my lips,
O LORD, You Yourself know.
I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;
I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation;
I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth
From the great assembly (Psalm 40:9–10).

I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You
(Psalm 22:22).

Praise the LORD!
I will praise the LORD with my whole heart,
In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation
(Psalm 111:1).

We could go on and on with verses illustrating this point (Psalm 35:17–18, 27–28; 107:31–32; 149:1–2; etc.). The Sabbath is a day to join in and share in the lives of one another. We need this!

Notice also in Leviticus 23:3, the Sabbath is to be a day focused on the LORD. It is a Sabbath of the LORD. It is not a day we can call our own, not a day we should treat like other days and fill with our own agendas. The day is His and He has given it to His people as a stewardship and commandment for our good and for His glory.

The verse concludes with the phrase “in all your dwellings.” This was to be observed wherever God’s people lived, in every household. This is what the verse says concerning the Sabbath, but now we come to our second question—

Why is the Sabbath Commandment here in this passage?

This chapter is a proclamation of the Feasts of the Lord—the festivals and holy days of ancient Israel. Why do we find this commandment here? What is the

significance of the Sabbath to this Old Testament Calendar of worship? I believe it is here, because the 4th commandment speaks of our moral obligation to honor God with our time.

God applied this commandment to Israel, under the Old Covenant by establishing holy days and festivals to help the nation remember Him and focus on Him as their Creator and Provider, and to give them glimpses of Christ and what He would do when He came to serve as our Great Prophet, Priest and King. The Sabbath Day and week, established at creation, serve as a framework in which God places His feasts that He will use in the Old Covenant to prepare for and point toward the coming of Christ. The Sabbath Day, like the feasts and the festivals, is all about Christ.

So we come to our third question:

How has Christ fulfilled the Sabbath?

Christ fulfilled the Sabbath in at least 3 ways. **First, Christ perfectly obeyed the Sabbath Commandment.** Jesus was perfect in His keeping of the law. He did what we could not do. Down to every jot and tittle, in every minute detail, He never failed to do His Father's will. Though the legalists of His day accused Him of breaking this law, He demonstrated perfect righteousness and obedience. In John 5 Jesus healed a man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. The Jews accused Him breaking the Sabbath. Yet He never failed in doing His Father's will. Jesus said in verse 19, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner." Christ alone lived under the law without sin. He and He alone has perfect righteousness.

Second, Christ declared Himself Lord of the Sabbath. In Matthew 12:1-14 Jesus and His disciples went through some grainfields on the Sabbath. When the disciples began plucking heads of grain to eat, the Pharisees complained to Jesus: "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"

The Pharisees had wrongly interpreted and applied the law. Jesus, as the great Law-Giver clarified the meaning of law and declared Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath. He is the One with all authority. He is the One with the infinite insight and all understanding of the depth and breadth and full intention and implications of the law.

Was Jesus breaking God's law by plucking heads of grain to eat and healing on the Sabbath? No! He is the perfect Law-Keeper. He says in verse 7 (quoting from Hosea 6:6), "But if you had known what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless." Christ was guiltless before the law. He knew no sin.

In Deuteronomy 23:24-25, the law teaches:

When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain.

Against the harsh, legalistic interpretation of the Pharisees, Jesus reminded all who heard Him that God never intended His law to usurp mercy and compassion. There was never a time when God said, "enough of mercy, enough of grace, I've tried it already—now let's see how they do under the law." No, God gave us the law to drive us to mercy, as a tutor to bring us to Christ—to show us the glories and beauty of His character and to plumb the depth and wretchedness of our sin so that in Christ He might lift us out of the pit of condemnation and seat us in the heavenlies with our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus.

In Christ we see the law fulfilled and lived out in perfect obedience, proper application and abundant mercy. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath and He commands us, "Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:12).

Third, Christ is our Sabbath rest! We are sinful and fall short of God's glory. Outside of Christ, the law of God can only condemn us. It is a heavy yoke we cannot bear (Acts 15:10). And so Christ graciously calls us to Himself to rest in Him:

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

The book of Hebrews also points us to Christ as our Sabbath rest. Throughout this book the writer of Hebrews demonstrates the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant over the types and shadows of the Old Covenant. Chapter 1 begins:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they (Hebrews 1:1–4).

In contrast to the priests of the Old Testament, whose work was never finished, who could never sit down—Christ, “when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High.” We see this theme throughout the book:

Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (Hebrews 8:1).

But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool (Hebrews 10:12–13).

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

Christ completed His works of righteousness and redemption. He declared on the cross “It is finished” and has now sat down at the right hand of the Most High.

Hebrews 4 draws an interesting parallel between God’s rest after His work at creation and Christ’s rest after His work of redemption. This passage calls us to heed the gospel that we might enter God’s rest. It warns us not to miss the rest that God has provided for us Christ, as so many did in the Old Testament because of disobedience and hardness of heart. Verse 10 points us to Christ’s finished work:

For He who has entered His rest has Himself also ceased from His works as God did from His (Hebrews 4:10).

This is the rest we need. We cannot rest in the unfinished and unholy works of our hands. We must rest in the finished work of Christ for our salvation. And so in the next verse the writer of Hebrews exhorts us:

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience (Hebrews 4:11).

Christ is our Sabbath. He is the rest we need! We must rest in Him! But this brings us to our fourth question.

In light of Christ’s fulfillment of the Sabbath and the presence of this commandment here in this passage, is the Sabbath part of the Old Covenant that has “grown old and vanished away” (Hebrews 8:13)?

To this I would answer, “No.” This is part of God’s moral law that He established at creation and intended for all mankind—not just for Israel under the Old Covenant. The Sabbath is a gift of God made for man. Jesus said in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made [or more literally “created”] for man and not man for the Sabbath. God intended it for our good and His glory. It is not just for Jews, not just for believers in Christ, but it is a command to which all people will be held accountable.

As a part of God’s moral law, it has its foundation at creation, not at Mount Sinai. God told His people on Mount Sinai to remember the Sabbath Day, not establish it. We see the Sabbath in Genesis 2 as God rested on the seventh day. In Exodus 16, where the children of Israel were told to gather manna in the wilderness, we see them working 6 days and observing the Sabbath before they arrived at Mount Sinai to receive the law.

We see the Sabbath displayed at creation and throughout human history because it is rooted in the character and nature of God revealed in His Word. God rested on the 7th day. He did not rest because He was tired. He did not rest because His energy was depleted and He needed to regain His strength. He did not rest because He became distracted or unclear and needed to refocus and get reorganized. God rested because it was His nature to do so. It was His nature to stop, reflect, enjoy and delight in the work of His hands—to manage time in a way that most perfectly revealed and celebrated His glory.

Notice that this is not just a theological principle of rest. It is a practice of rest as well. God took time to rest. The Almighty Creator of heaven and earth put rest in His schedule. He took time to delight in the act of creating for 6 days and on the seventh day he took time to cease and reflect. It was His nature to do so. And as His image-bearers, this moral practice of work and rest should be reflected in our lives as well.

- We need to rest, not just because we get tired and need refreshed (although for us—we need refreshment).
- We need to rest, not just because we get distracted and need to refocus (although for us—we need refocusing).
- We need to rest, not just because we are forgetful and need to remember (although for us—we need to be reminded).
- We need rest primarily because God made us to reflect His own glory and we need time to stop, reflect, enjoy and delight in the works of His hand.

And this is even more true for the Christian who has seen God's work not only in creation and the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage in the Old Testament, but also in the glorious work of redemption in Christ in the New Testament.

This brings us to our final question.

In light of Christ's fulfillment of the Sabbath, do we have an obligation to the Sabbath as believers in Christ?

I would answer this question "Yes" for four reasons. **First, the moral obligation to honor God with our time remains.** The Sabbath is a positive command and an abiding moral principle that teaches us to trust God and honor Him with our time. We are not to lose track of time. We are not to engage in a continuous pursuit of work or pleasure. We are to number our days. We are to regularly stop and refocus and refresh and remember. We are to be diligent to work 6 days and regularly come apart from our labors for appointed times of rest. God graciously gives us one day in seven to devote exclusively to His glory and the good and nourishment of our souls.

Worshiping God (especially corporately) still requires time and planning and intention. The Sabbath is a day for gathered worship, a day for doing good, a day for remembering God. We are to spend the day in works of piety (worship and devotion), works of necessity and works of mercy— honoring God with our time.

Second, the command to rest still remains. We see this most clearly in Hebrews 4. Verse 10 of Hebrews 4 points us to Christ who has finished His work as God did from His and calls us in verse 11 to be diligent to enter that rest. In light of Christ's fulfillment, verse 9 tells us, "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God." The word translated as "rest" here in the Greek is not the same word used for "rest" in the other verses of this chapter. The word here in verse 9 is σαββατισμὸς *sabbatismos* (derived from a transliteration of the Hebrew word for Sabbath). It means "Sabbath-keeping." There remains a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God. This is not just a theological understanding or acknowledgment that our rest is in Christ, it is a practical demonstration in the way we schedule and use our time that we are committed to Him. There remains a Sabbath-keeping for God's people in the New Testament, because just as God completed His work at creation and rested, Christ completed His work of redemption on the cross and rose again and has entered His rest, seated now at God's right hand.

All of history points to Christ. The Old Testament was always looking forward to what He would accomplish as Messiah and Redeemer. And when, in the fullness of time, He came and finished His marvelous work of redemption through His death and burial and resurrection, the completion of His work and the entrance into His rest has refocused the day. It is because of Christ's finished work that the established day of worship and rest has shifted to the first day of

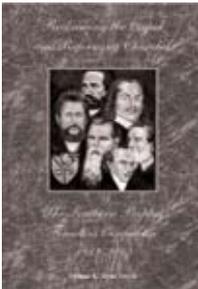
the week. We now look back to the cross and the empty tomb as a finished work in human history.

We rest because God finished His work and rested and because Christ finished His work and “entered His rest.”

Third, the need for rest and refocusing remains. We are forgetful. We are fragmented. We need to remember. Jesus gave us the Lord’s Supper for this very purpose. We eat the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of Him, proclaiming His death till He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). We must keep the gospel constantly before our eyes and in our ears that we might remember. The Sabbath teaches us that our work cannot earn us God’s favor. We must rest from our work. We cannot be good enough for God in ourselves. Only Christ and His perfect righteousness can save us.

We must remember Christ. And we must do this “till He comes.” So, finally, **the hope of Christ’s coming still remains.** We look for the day when the work He began in us will be complete, when we will be glorified and see Him face to face, when we can rest not only from the penalty and condemnation of sin, but from its very presence. Until then, as we are in the battle, fighting against sin and pursuing holiness, let us remember Him and hope for His coming. And let us regularly gather to feed our souls, feast on Him and speak of His works and focus our lives anew in His service. ☞

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Christ the End of the Law

C. H. Spurgeon

*A Sermon Delivered on Lord's Day Morning
November 19th, 1876, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle*

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Romans 10:4).

You remember we spoke last Sabbath morning of "the days of the Son of man." Oh that every Sabbath now might be a day of that kind in the most spiritual sense. I hope that we shall endeavor to make each Lord's Day as it comes round a day of the Lord, by thinking much of Jesus by rejoicing much in Him, by laboring for Him, and by our growingly importunate prayer, that to Him may the gathering of the people be. We may not have very many Sabbaths together, death may soon part us; but while we are able to meet as a Christian assembly, let us never forget that Christ's presence is our main necessity, and let us pray for it and entreat the Lord to vouchsafe that presence always in displays of light, life and love! I become increasingly earnest that every preaching time should be a soul-saving time. I can deeply sympathize with Paul when he said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." We have had so much preaching, but, comparatively speaking, so little believing in Jesus; and if there be no believing in Him, neither the law nor the gospel has answered its end, and our labor has been utterly in vain. Some of you have heard, and heard, and heard again, but you have not believed in Jesus. If the gospel had not come to your hearing you could not have been guilty of refusing it. "Have they not heard?" says the apostle. "Yes, verily" but still "they have not all obeyed the gospel." Up to this very moment there has been no hearing with the inner ear, and no work of faith in the heart, in the case of many whom we love. Dear friends, is it always to be so? How long is it to be so? Shall there not soon come an end of this reception of the outward means and rejection of the inward grace? Will not your soul soon close in with Christ for present salvation? Break! Break, O heavenly day, upon the benighted ones, for our hearts are breaking over them.

The reason why many do not come to Christ is not because they are not earnest, after a fashion, and thoughtful and desirous to be saved, but because they cannot brook God's way of salvation. "They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge," We do get them by our exhortation so far on the way that they

become desirous to obtain eternal life, but “they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” Mark, “submitted themselves,” for it needs submission. Proud man wants to save himself, he believes he can do it, and he will not give over the task till he finds out his own helplessness by unhappy failures. Salvation by grace, to be sued for *in forma pauperis*, to be asked for as an undeserved boon from free, unmerited grace, this it is which the carnal mind will not come to as long as it can help it: I beseech the Lord so to work that some of you may not be able to help it. And oh, I have been praying that, while this morning I am trying to set forth Christ as the end of the law, God may bless it to some hearts, that they may see what Christ did, and may perceive it to be a great deal better than anything they can do; may see what Christ finished, and may become weary of what they themselves have labored at so long, and have not even well commenced at this day. Perhaps it may please the Lord to enchant them with the perfection of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. As Bunyan would say, “It may, perhaps, set their mouths a watering after it,” and when a sacred appetite begins it will not be long before the feast is enjoyed. It may be that when they see the raiment of wrought gold, which Jesus so freely bestows on naked souls, they will throw away their own filthy rags which now they hug so closely.

I am going to speak about two things, this morning, as the Spirit of God shall help me. The first is, **Christ in connection with the law**—He is “the end of the law for righteousness.” And secondly, **ourselves in connection with Christ**—“to everyone that believeth Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.”

First, then, **Christ in connection with the law**. The law is that which, as sinners, we have above all things cause to dread; for the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. Towards us the law darts forth devouring flames, for it condemns us, and in solemn terms appoints us a place among the accursed, as it is written, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Yet, strange infatuation! Like the fascination which attracts the gnat to the candle which burns its wings, men by nature fly to the law for salvation, and cannot be driven from it. The law can do nothing else but reveal sin and pronounce condemnation upon the sinner, and yet we cannot get men away from it, even though we show them how sweetly Jesus stands between them and it. They are so enamored of legal hope that they cling to it when there is nothing to cling to; they prefer Sinai to Calvary, though Sinai has nothing for them but thunders and trumpet warnings of coming judgment. O that for awhile you would listen anxiously while I set forth Jesus my Lord, that you may see the law in Him.

Now, what has our Lord to do with the law? He has everything to do with it, for He is its end for the noblest object, namely, for righteousness. He is the “end of the law.” What does this mean? I think it signifies three things: first, that *Christ is the purpose and object of the law*; secondly, that *He is the fulfillment of it*; and thirdly, that *He is the termination of it*.

First, then, *our Lord Jesus Christ is the purpose and object of the law*. It was given to lead us to Him. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, or rather our attendant to conduct us to the school of Jesus. The law is the great net in which the fish are enclosed that they may be drawn out of the element of sin. The law is the stormy wind which drives souls into the harbor for refuge. The law is the sheriff's officer to shut men up in prison for their sin, concluding them all under condemnation in order that they may look to the free grace of God alone for deliverance. This is the object of the law: it empties that grace may fill, and wounds that mercy may heal. It has never been God's intention towards us, as fallen men, that the law should be regarded as a way to salvation to us, for a way of salvation it can never be. Had man never fallen, had his nature remained as God made it, the law would have been most helpful to him to show him the way in which he should walk; and by keeping it he would have lived, for "he that doeth these things shall live in them." But ever since man has fallen the Lord has not proposed to him a way of salvation by works, for he knows it to be impossible to a sinful creature. The law is already broken; and whatever man can do he cannot repair the damage he has already done: therefore he is out of court as to the hope of merit. The law demands perfection, but man has already fallen short of it; and therefore let him do his best. He cannot accomplish what is absolutely essential. The law is meant to lead the sinner to faith in Christ, by showing the impossibility of any other way. It is the black dog to fetch the sheep to the shepherd, the burning heat which drives the traveler to the shadow of the great rock in a weary land.

Look how the law is adapted to this; for, first of all, *it shows man his sin*. Read the Ten Commandments and tremble as you read them. Who can lay his own character down side by side with the two tablets of divine precept without at once being convinced that he has fallen far short of the standard? When the law comes home to the soul it is like light in a dark room revealing the dust and the dirt which else had been unperceived. It is the test which detects the presence of the poison of sin in the soul. "I was alive without the law once," said the apostle, "but when the commandment came sin revived and I died." Our comeliness utterly fades away when the law blows upon it. Look at the commandments, I say, and remember how sweeping they are, how spiritual, how far-reaching. They do not merely touch the outward act, but dive into the inner motive and deal with the heart, the mind, the soul. There is a deeper meaning in the commands than appears upon their surface. Gaze into their depths and see how terrible is the holiness which they require. As you understand what the law demands you will perceive how far you are from fulfilling it, and how sin abounds where you thought there was little or none of it. You thought yourself rich and increased in goods and in no need of anything, but when the broken law visits you, your spiritual bankruptcy and utter penury stare you in the face. A true balance discovers short weight, and such is the first effect of the law upon the conscience of man.

The law also *shows the result and mischief of sin*. Look at the types of the old Mosaic dispensation, and see how they were intended to lead men to Christ by making them see their unclean condition and their need of such cleansing as only He can give. Every type pointed to our Lord Jesus Christ. If men were put apart because of disease or uncleanness, they were made to see how sin separated them from God and from His people; and when they were brought back and purified with mystic rites in which were scarlet wool and hyssop and the like, they were made to see how they can only be restored by Jesus Christ, the great High Priest. When the bird was killed that the leper might be clean, the need of purification by the sacrifice of a life was set forth. Every morning and evening a lamb died to tell of daily need of pardon, if God is to dwell with us. We sometimes have fault found with us for speaking too much about blood; yet under the Old Testament the blood seemed to be everything, and was not only spoken of but actually presented to the eye. What does the apostle tell us in the Hebrews?

“Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people saying, this is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is not remission” (Hebrews 9:18–22).

The blood was on the veil, and on the altar, on the hangings, and on the floor of the tabernacle: no one could avoid seeing it. I resolve to make my ministry of the same character, and more and more sprinkle it with the blood of atonement. Now that abundance of the blood of old was meant to show clearly that sin has so polluted us that without an atonement God is not to be approached: we must come by the way of sacrifice or not at all. We are so unacceptable in ourselves that unless the Lord sees us with the blood of Jesus upon us He must away with us. The old law, with its emblems and figures, set forth many truths as to men’s selves and the coming Savior, intending by every one of them to preach Christ. If any stopped short of Him, they missed the intent and design of the law. Moses leads up to Joshua, and the law ends at Jesus.

Turning our thoughts back again to the moral rather than the ceremonial law, it was intended to *teach men their utter helplessness*. It shows them how short they fall of what they ought to be, and it also shows them, when they look at it carefully, how utterly impossible it is for them to come up to the standard. Such holiness as the law demands no man can reach of himself. “Thy commandment is exceeding broad.” If a man says that he can keep the law, it is because he does not know what

the law is. If he fancies that he can ever climb to heaven up the quivering sides of Sinai, surely he can never have seen that burning mount at all. Keep the law! Ah, my brethren, while we are yet talking about it we are breaking it; while we are pretending that we can fulfill its letter, we are violating its spirit, for pride as much breaks the law as lust or murder. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" No, soul, thou canst not help thyself in this thing, for since only by perfection thou canst live by the law, and since that perfection is impossible, thou canst not find help in the covenant of works. In grace there is hope, but as a matter of debt there is none, for we do not merit anything but wrath. The law tells us this, and the sooner we know it to be so the better, for the sooner we shall fly to Christ.

The law also *shows us our great need*—our need of cleansing, cleansing with the water and with the blood. It discovers to us our filthiness, and this naturally leads us to feel that we must be washed from it if we are ever to draw near to God. So the law drives us to accept of Christ as the one only person who can cleanse us, and make us fit to stand within the veil in the presence of the Most High. The law is the surgeon's knife which cuts out the proud flesh that the wound may heal. The law by itself only sweeps and raises the dust, but the gospel sprinkles clean water upon the dust, and all is well in the chamber of the soul. The law kills, the gospel makes alive; the law strips, and then Jesus Christ comes in and robes the soul in beauty and glory. All the commandments, and all the types direct us to Christ, if we will but heed their evident intent. They wean us from self; they put us off from the false basis of self-righteousness, and bring us to know that only in Christ can our help be found. So, first of all, Christ is the end of the law, in that He is its great purpose.

And now, secondly, *He is the law's fulfillment*. It is impossible for any of us to be saved without righteousness. The God of heaven and earth by immutable necessity demands righteousness of all His creatures. Now, Christ has come to give to us the righteousness which the law demands, but which it never bestows. In the chapter before us we read of "the righteousness which is of faith," which is also called "God's righteousness"; and we read of those who "shall not be ashamed" because they are righteous by believing unto righteousness." What the law could not do Jesus has done. He provides the righteousness which the law asks for but cannot produce. What an amazing righteousness it must be which is as broad and deep and long and high as the law itself. The commandment is exceeding broad, but the righteousness of Christ is as broad as the commandment, and goes to the end of it. Christ did not come to make the law milder, or to render it possible for our cracked and battered obedience to be accepted as a sort of compromise. The law is not compelled to lower its terms, as though it had originally asked too much; it is holy and just and good, and ought not to be altered in one jot or tittle, nor can it be. Our Lord gives the law all it requires, not a part, for that would be an admission that it might justly have been content with less at first. The law

claims complete obedience without one spot or speck, failure, or flaw, and Christ has brought in such a righteousness as that, and gives it to His people. The law demands that the righteousness should be without omission of duty and without commission of sin, and the righteousness which Christ has brought is just such an one that for its sake the great God accepts His people and counts them to be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The law will not be content without spiritual obedience, mere outward compliances will not satisfy. But our Lord's obedience was as deep as it was broad, for His zeal to do the will of Him that sent Him consumed Him. He says Himself, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God, yea Thy law is within my heart." Such righteousness He puts upon all believers. "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"; righteous to the full, perfect in Christ. We rejoice to wear the costly robe of fair white linen which Jesus has prepared, and we feel that we may stand arrayed in it before the majesty of heaven without a trembling thought. This is something to dwell upon, dear friends. Only as righteous ones can we be saved, but Jesus Christ makes us righteous, and therefore we are saved. He is righteous who believes on Him, even as Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. "There is therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," because they are made righteous in Christ. Yea, the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Paul challenges all men, angels, and devils, to lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since Christ has died. O law, when thou demandest of me a perfect righteousness, I, being a believer, present it to thee; for through Christ Jesus faith is accounted unto me for righteousness. The righteousness of Christ is mine, for I am one with Him by faith, and this is the name wherewith He shall be called—"The Lord our righteousness."

Jesus has thus fulfilled the original demands of the law, but you know, brethren, that since we have broken the law there are other demands. For the remission of past sins something more is asked now than present and future obedience. Upon us, on account of our sins, the curse has been pronounced, and a penalty has been incurred. It is written that He "will by no means clear the guilty," but every transgression and iniquity shall have its just punishment and reward. Here, then, let us admire that the Lord Jesus Christ is the end of the law as to penalty. That curse and penalty are awful things to think upon, but Christ has ended all their evil, and thus discharged us from all the consequences of sin. As far as every believer is concerned the law demands no penalty and utters no curse. The believer can point to the Great Surety on the tree of Calvary, and say, "See there, oh law, there is the vindication of divine justice which I offer to thee. Jesus pouring out His heart's blood from His wounds and dying on my behalf is my answer to thy claims, and I know that I shall be delivered from wrath through Him." The claims of the law both as broken and unbroken Christ has met: both the positive and the penal demands are satisfied in Him. This was a labor worthy of a God, and lo, the incarnate God has achieved it. He has finished the transgression, made an end of

sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. All glory be to His name.

Moreover, not only has the penalty been paid, but Christ has put great and special honor upon the law in so doing. I venture to say that if the whole human race had kept the law of God and not one of them had violated it, the law would not stand in so splendid a position of honor as it does today when the man Christ Jesus, who is also the Son of God, has paid obeisance to it. God Himself, incarnate, has in His life, and yet more in His death, revealed the supremacy of law; He has shown that not even love nor sovereignty can set aside justice. Who shall say a word against the law to which the Lawgiver Himself submits? Who shall now say that it is too severe when He who made it submits Himself to its penalties? Because He was found in fashion as a man, and was our representative, the Lord demanded from His own Son perfect obedience to the law, and the Son voluntarily bowed Himself to it without a single word, taking no exception to His task. "Yea, thy law is my delight," saith He, and He proved it to be so by paying homage to it even to the full. Oh wondrous law under which even Emmanuel serves! Oh matchless law whose yoke even the Son of God does not disdain to bear, but being resolved to save His chosen was made under the law, lived under it and died under it, "obedient to death, even the death of the cross."

The law's stability also has been secured by Christ. That alone can remain which is proved to be just, and Jesus has proved the law to be so, magnifying it and making it honorable. He says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." I shall have to show you how He has made an end of the law in another sense, but as to the settlement of the eternal principles of right and wrong, Christ's life and death have achieved this forever. "Yea, we established the law," said Paul, "we do not make void the law through faith." The law is proved to be holy and just by the very gospel of faith, for the gospel which faith believes in does not alter or lower the law, but teaches us how it was to the uttermost fulfilled. Now shall the law stand fast forever and ever, since even to save elect man God will not alter it. He had a people, chosen, beloved, and ordained to life, yet He would not save them at the expense of one principle of right. They were sinful, and how could they be justified unless the law was suspended or changed? Was, then, the law changed? It seemed as if it must be so, if man was to be saved, but Jesus Christ came and showed us how the law could stand firm as a rock, and yet the redeemed could be justly saved by infinite mercy. In Christ we see both mercy and justice shining full orb'd, and yet neither of them in any degree eclipsing the other. The law has all it ever asked, as it ought to have, and yet the Father of all mercies sees all His chosen saved as He determined they should be through the death of His Son. Thus I have tried to show you how Christ is the fulfillment of the law to its utmost end. May the Holy Ghost bless the teaching.

And now, thirdly, *He is the end of the law in the sense that He is the termination of it.* He has terminated it in two senses. First of all, His people are not under it as a covenant of life. "We are not under the law, but under grace." The old covenant as it stood with father Adam was "This do and thou shalt live": its command he did not keep, and consequently he did not live, nor do we live in him, since in Adam all died. The old covenant was broken, and we became condemned thereby, but now, having suffered death in Christ, we are no more under it, but are dead to it. Brethren, at this present moment, although we rejoice to do good works, we are not seeking life through them, we are not hoping to obtain divine favor by our own goodness, nor even to keep ourselves in the love of God by any merit of our own. Chosen, not for our works, but according to the eternal will and good pleasure of God; called, not of works, but by the Spirit of God, we desire to continue in this grace and return no more to the bondage of the old covenant. Since we have put our trust in an atonement provided and applied by grace through Christ Jesus, we are no longer slaves but children, not working to be saved, but saved already, and working because we are saved. Neither that which we do, nor even that which the Spirit of God works in us is to us the ground and basis of the love of God toward us, since He loved us from the first, because He would love us, unworthy though we were; and He loves us still in Christ, and looks upon us not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Him; washed in His blood and covered in His righteousness. You are not under the law, Christ has taken you from the servile bondage of a condemning covenant and made you to receive the adoption of children, so that now ye cry, Abba, Father.

Again, Christ is the terminator of the law, for we are no longer under its curse. The law cannot curse a believer, it does not know how to do it; it blesses him, yea, and he shall be blessed; for as the law demands righteousness and looks at the believer in Christ, and sees that Jesus has given him all the righteousness it demands, the law is bound to pronounce him blessed. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Oh, the joy of being redeemed from the curse of the law by Christ, who was "made a curse for us," as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Do ye, my brethren, understand the sweet mystery of salvation? Have you ever seen Jesus standing in your place that you may stand in His place? Christ accused and Christ condemned, and Christ led out to die, and Christ smitten of the Father, even to the death, and then you cleared, justified, delivered from the curse, because the curse has spent itself on your Redeemer. You are admitted to enjoy the blessing because the righteousness which was His is now transferred to you that you may be blessed of the Lord world without end. Do let us triumph and rejoice in this evermore. Why should we not? And yet some of God's people get under the law as to their feelings, and begin to fear that because they are conscious of sin they are not saved, whereas it is written, "He justifieth the ungodly." For myself, I love to live near a sinner's Savior.

If my standing before the Lord depended upon what I am in myself and what good works and righteousness I could bring, surely I should have to condemn myself a thousand times a day. But to get away from that and to say, "I have believed in Jesus Christ and therefore righteousness is mine," this is peace, rest, joy, and the beginning of heaven! When one attains to this experience, his love to Jesus Christ begins to flame up, and he feels that if the Redeemer has delivered him from the curse of the law he will not continue in sin, but he will endeavor to live in newness of life. We are not our own, we are bought with a price, and we would therefore glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are the Lord's. Thus much upon Christ in connection with the law.

Now, secondly, **Ourselves in connection with Christ**—for "Christ is the end of the law *to everyone that believeth.*" Now see the point "to everyone that believeth," there the stress lies. Come, man, woman, dost thou believe? No weightier question can be asked under heaven. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And what is it to believe? It is not merely to accept a set of doctrines and to say that such and such a creed is yours, and there and then to put it on the shelf and forget it. To believe is, to trust, to confide, to depend upon, to rely upon, to rest in. Dost thou believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? Dost thou believe that He stood in the sinner's stead and suffered the just for the unjust? Dost thou believe that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him? And dost thou therefore lay the whole weight and stress of thy soul's salvation upon Him, yea, upon Him alone? Ah then, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to thee, and thou art righteous. In the righteousness of God thou art clothed if thou believest. It is of no use to bring forward anything else if you are not believing, for nothing will avail. If faith be absent the essential thing is wanting: sacraments, prayers, Bible reading, hearings of the gospel, you may heap them together, high as the stars, into a mountain, huge as high Olympus, but they are all mere chaff if faith be not there. It is thy believing or not believing which must settle the matter. Dost thou look away from thyself to Jesus for righteousness? If thou dost He is the end of the law to thee.

Now observe that there is no question raised about the previous character, for it is written, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But, Lord, this man before he believed was a persecutor and injurious, he raged and raved against the saints and haled them to prison and sought their blood. Yes, beloved friend, and that is the very man who wrote these words by the Holy Ghost, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." So if I address one here this morning whose life has been defiled with every sin, and stained with every transgression we can conceive of, yet I say unto such, remember "all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ thine iniquities are blotted out, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. This is the glory of the gospel that it is a sinner's gospel; good news of blessing not for those

without sin, but for those who confess and forsake it. Jesus came into the world, not to reward the sinless, but to seek and to save that which was lost; and he, being lost and being far from God, who cometh nigh to God by Christ, and believeth in Him, will find that He is able to bestow righteousness upon the guilty. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth, and therefore to the poor harlot that believeth, to the drunkard of many years standing that believeth, to the thief, the liar, and the scoffer who believeth, to those who have aforetime rioted in sin, but now turn from it to trust in Him. But I do not know that I need mention such cases as these; to me the most wonderful fact is that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness *to me*, for I believe in Him. I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day.

Another thought arises from the text, and that is, that there is nothing said by way of qualification as to the strength of the faith. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth, whether he is Little Faith or Greatheart. Jesus protects the rear rank as well as the vanguard. There is no difference between one believer and another as to justification. So long as there is a connection between you and Christ the righteousness of God is yours. The link may be very like a film, a spider's line of trembling faith, but, if it runs all the way from the heart to Christ, divine grace can and will flow along the most slender thread. It is marvelous how fine the wire may be that will carry the electric flash. We may want a cable to carry a message across the sea, but that is for the protection of the wire, the wire which actually carries the message is a slender thing. If thy faith be of the mustard-seed kind, if it be only such as tremblingly touches the Savior's garment's hem, if thou canst only say "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," if it be but the faith of sinking Peter, or weeping Mary, yet if it be faith in Christ, He will be the end of the law for righteousness to thee as well as to the chief of the apostles.

If this be so then, beloved friends, all of us who believe are righteous. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ we have obtained the righteousness which those who follow the works of the law know nothing of. We are not completely sanctified, would God we were; we are not quit of sin in our members, though we hate it; but still for all that, in the sight of God, we are truly righteous and being qualified by faith we have peace with God. Come, look up, ye believers that are burdened with a sense of sin. While you chasten yourselves and mourn your sin, do not doubt your Savior, nor question His righteousness. You are black, but do not stop there, go on to say as the spouse did, "I am black, but comely."

"Though in ourselves deform'd we are,
And black as Kedar's tents appear,
Yet, when we put Thy beauties on,
Fair as the courts of Solomon."

Now, mark that the connection of our text assures us that being righteous we are saved; for what does it say here, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be *saved*." He who is justified is saved, or what were the benefit of justification? Over thee, O believer, God hath pronounced the verdict "*saved*," and none shall reverse it. You are saved from sin and death and hell; you are saved even now, with a present salvation; "He hath saved us and called us with a holy calling." Feel the transports of it at this hour. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

And now I have done when I have said just this. If any one here thinks he can save himself, and that his own righteousness will suffice before God, I would affectionately beg him not to insult his Savior. If your righteousness sufficeth, why did Christ come here to work one out? Will you for a moment compare your righteousness with the righteousness of Jesus Christ? What likeness is there between you and Him? As much as between an emmet and an archangel. Nay, not so much as that: as much as between night and day, hell and heaven. Oh, if I had a righteousness of my own that no one could find fault with, I would voluntarily fling it away to have the righteousness of Christ, but as I have none of my own I do rejoice the more to have my Lord's. When Mr. Whitefield first preached at Kingswood, near Bristol, to the colliers, he could see when their hearts began to be touched by the gutters of white made by the tears as they ran down their black cheeks. He saw they were receiving the gospel, and he writes in his diary "as these poor colliers had no righteousness of their own they therefore gloried in Him who came to save publicans and sinners." Well, Mr. Whitefield, that is true of the colliers, but it is equally true of many of us here, who may not have had black faces, but we had black hearts. We can truly say that we also rejoice to cast away our own righteousness and count it dross and dung that we may win Christ, and be found in Him. In Him is our sole hope and only trust.

Last of all, for any of you to reject the righteousness of Christ must be to perish everlastingly, because it cannot be that God will accept you or your pretended righteousness when you have refused the real and divine righteousness which He sets before you in His Son. If you could go up to the gates of heaven, and the angel were to say to you, "What title have you to entrance here?" and you were to reply, "I have a righteousness of my own," then for you to be admitted would be to decide that your righteousness was on a par with that of Immanuel Himself. Can that ever be? Do you think that God will ever allow such a lie to be sanctioned? Will He let a poor wretched sinner's counterfeit righteousness pass current side by side with the fine gold of Christ's perfection? Why was the fountain filled with blood if you need no washing? Is Christ a superfluity? Oh, it cannot be. You must have Christ's righteousness or be unrighteous, and being unrighteous you will be unsaved, and being unsaved you must remain lost forever and ever.

What! Has it all come to this, then, that I am to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness, and to be made just through faith? Yes, that is it: that is

the whole of it. What! Trust Christ alone and then live as I like! You cannot live in sin after you have trusted Jesus, for the act of faith brings with it a change of nature and a renewal of your soul. The Spirit of God who leads you to believe will also change your heart. You spoke of “living as you like,” you will like to live very differently from what you do now. The things you loved before your conversion you will hate when you believe, and the things you hated you will love. Now, you are trying to be good, and you make great failures, because your heart is alienated from God; but when once you have received salvation through the blood of Christ, your heart will love God, and then you will keep His commandments, and they will be no longer grievous to you. A change of heart is what you want, and you will never get it except through the covenant of grace. There is not a word about conversion in the old covenant, we must look to the new covenant for that, and here it is:

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them (Ezekiel 36:25–27).

This is one of the greatest covenant promises, and the Holy Ghost preforms it in the chosen. Oh that the Lord would sweetly persuade you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that promise and all the other covenant engagements shall be fulfilled to your soul. The Lord bless you! Spirit of God, send thy blessing on these poor words of mine for Jesus' sake. Amen. ☞

Keeping the Christian Sabbath

David Smith

Several years ago while living in Jerusalem I noticed how the Jews kept the Sabbath. Around 3PM on Friday afternoons the weekend rush hour traffic would increase as workers made their way home. Most of the working moms were trying to arrive at the market in time to buy needed supplies. This frenzied pace would crescendo by 5 PM. By 6 PM everything would be shut down. The stores closed and traffic would slow to a trickle. Not everything closed of course, but for the most part Jerusalem was quiet, at rest. It wasn't until Saturday evening around 7 PM that the bus lines resumed even limited service.

Contrast that to post-modern America. Sunday, it seems, is just another day of the week. Most shops are open. People are busy buying and selling, working and making money. Even Christians are getting caught up in the world's relentless pursuit of profit and gain. Just a few years ago a major Christian book dealer announced that they would be opening their doors on Sunday to take advantage of increased sales to the church. Their argument was that Sunday was a prime day to "minister" to their target market. So they proclaimed that by keeping the doors open on Sunday they were doing a service.

As a pastor, this slide away from the practice of keeping the Sabbath disturbs me. It is understandable that the world would turn away from God's law, but it is heart-breaking to see the church do so. The church has either forgotten or ignored the commandments. If it was important to us to keep the Lord's Day then the retailers in our communities would not find profit on Sunday. The marketplace is simply responding to the consumer.

Today, the Lord's Day is anything but a day of rest. We are busy with shopping and recreation. We are setting aside time for family and friends. Even our children's sporting events are scheduled on Sunday. We sleep late on Sunday because we played late on Saturday. We use the day as a catch-up day for all the things we could not get done during the week. We plan our travel schedule on Sunday so that we are not interrupting the work week. All the while the worship of God is forgotten and there is no rest to be found. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* reminds us that, "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" (Question 60).

So why should we keep the Sabbath day holy? Are we after the approval of God by doing something meritorious? As the Apostle Paul might say, "God forbid." We do not keep the law so as to be right with Him. We all remember Paul's words, "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). The Law points to our need for Christ. It shows us our sinful condition and our inability to win the favor of God by any merit of our own.

Yet, the law plays a role in the life of every believer. If we are to live a life of holiness based on a biblical ethic it must begin with the commands of God. Those commands as framed by the Decalogue make up the foundation of holy living for every believer. That being true, one way holy living is practiced is by keeping the Sabbath. Consider the Lord's words to Moses:

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 (Exodus 20:8–11).

John Bunyan's character "Wiseman" in his book, *Journey to Hell*, correctly points out, "The Lord's Day is a kind of symbol of the heavenly Sabbath above, and it clearly reveals the heart's attitude toward eternal holiness. More is seen in one's observance of the Sabbath than one's performance of earthly activities." What do our earthly activities point out? They certainly seem to suggest that we have no regard for the Lord's Day, and if "Wiseman" is correct then we have lost our way toward eternal holiness.

Can we live a life of holiness if our ignorance or forgetfulness causes us to set aside His commands? We must stop and reconsider where we are. I don't want to go back to the time when Sabbath breaking was punishable by law. However, I would like to hear the pulpits of America cry out against the apathy that relativism has generated in the pews. Could we live a life of simple holiness where the commands are followed as an act of adoration and devotion? I believe that with the Lord's help we could. What a beautiful thing that would be!

I would love to see here in America—at least among believers—the same kind of respect paid to the Sabbath as is common in Israel among the Jews. What can we do? As with most things the answer lies first of all with the pastor. We must watch ourselves because we set the example. Somehow we have reasoned away Sunday as a Sabbath because it has been seen in modern times as a work day for the clergy. We must be the first to make sure we live by our own teaching. Again the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* instructs us, "From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week, ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath" (Question 59). If it is not the Christian Sabbath to us then it will never be to our people.

The second thing that can be done is to catechize the flock over which we have been appointed. We have been for too long silent on this issue. It is time to strengthen our people and feed them truth. Because we have been lax in teaching this doctrine, a weakness has gripped the church. It has hindered our ability to stand for what is right. In *The Reformed Pastor* Richard Baxter describes the very condition that we have allowed. "It is a very sad thing for Christians to be weak: it exposeth us to dangers; it abateth our consolations and delight in God, and taketh off the sweetness of wisdom's ways; it maketh us less serviceable to God and man, to bring less honor to our Master, and to do less good to all about us."

It is time for us to take our positions upon the wall, like Nehemiah, and stand for the keeping of the Sabbath day so that we might follow after eternal holiness.

So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day (Nehemiah 13:19). 📖

Book Reviews

Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, Francisco Orozco, eds., *Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ*. Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005, hb., 376 pages. \$40.00 ISBN 0-9760039-3-7

Reviewed by Eddie Goodwin

Hercules had his labors. Alexander the Great faced the Gordian knot. And for a growing number of Baptists today, there is the great challenge of explaining precisely how one can be committed to both Reformed covenant theology *and* credo Baptist convictions. Thankfully, a ready reply is available in a new compilation work from Reformed Baptist Academic Press entitled, *Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ*.

The bulk of *Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ* consists of two works: a reprint of Nehemiah Coxe's *A Discourse of the Covenants that God made with men before the Law* and John Owen's *An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6–13*. At least two important observations demonstrate the value of these works for contemporary Baptists. The first observation concerns the historical backdrop and content of Coxe's work as a Baptist theologian. The second observation centers on Owen's compelling exposition of the superiority and "newness" of the New Covenant.

To begin with, the historical backdrop of Coxe's work is of vital interest to modern day Baptists. It must be noted that Nehemiah Coxe, though perhaps unknown to many, is a stately giant among our Particular Baptist forefathers. In fact, ample evidence suggests that Coxe served as the chief editor for the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* of 1677/1689. More germane to this review, however, is the fact that Coxe's work on the covenants reflects the overwhelming continuity that existed historically between Particular Baptists and their paedobaptistic brethren with regard to the *progressive nature* of redemptive revelation. As editor James Renihan points out in the introduction to this volume, "covenantal defenses of believers' baptism were the rule rather than the exception" in Coxe's time (2). The practical upshot of this progressive view of redemptive revelation is twofold. On the one hand, it is not necessary, nor exegetically viable, to embrace a dispensational hermeneutic in order to preserve the doctrine of believers' baptism. On

the other hand, a thoroughly Reformed covenantal theology need not and in fact does not lead to the practice of infant baptism.

Of equal relevance is the content of Coxe's work. Over the course of eight chapters, Coxe delivers a step by step survey of the early biblical covenants: from the prelapsarian "covenant of works" to the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham. Readers will take great delight in the thorough, humble and yet penetrating analysis that Coxe sets forth. Without denying the organic unity of Scripture, he consistently examines each covenant on the basis of its *own* nature and terms. As a result of such an exegetically derived covenant theology, Coxe is able to effectively show how the argument for infant baptism as a corollary to circumcision is simply wrong. For example, after discussing the existence of other holy men who lived at the time of Abraham (Lot, Heber, Melchizedek, etc.), Coxe makes the following insightful remarks:

From the whole it appears that, on the one hand, there was a positive command which made it necessary to circumcise many that never had interest in the covenant of grace. So, on the other hand, from the first date of circumcision there were many truly interested in the covenant of grace who were under no obligation to be circumcised. This is how far from truth it is that a new covenant interest and right to circumcision may be inferred the one from the other (118).

Such insight is characteristic of Coxe's entire work. His final chapter, in particular, is of tremendous import as he discusses the nature of the promises made to Abraham, offers explanations of Colossians 2:11 and Romans 4:11 as well as delineates a proper understanding of circumcision as a seal to Abraham's faith.

In light of Coxe's excellent treatment of the early covenants, the reader may wonder why he concluded his treatise with the Abrahamic covenant. The answer is given by Coxe himself and only serves to further highlight the work of grace, humility and biblical catholicity wrought by God in his heart. After explaining his intentions to continue his survey in order to demonstrate that the Old and New Covenants differ both in substance and in administration, Coxe says:

...I found my labor for the clearing and asserting of that point happily prevented by the coming out of Dr. Owen's third volume on Hebrews. There it is discussed at length and the objections that seem to lie against it are fully answered, especially in the exposition of the eighth chapter. I now refer my reader there for satisfaction about it which he will find commensurate to what might be expected from so great and learned a person (30).

Coxe, himself, therefore, provides the rationale for the editors' inclusion of Owen's "An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13."

This brings us to our second observation. If Coxe historically and exegetically lays the foundation for a covenantal defense of believer's baptism, then John Owen masterfully erects the remaining superstructure. Ironically, Owen was a life long practitioner of infant baptism. Nevertheless, he faithfully expounds the "newness" of the New Covenant to such an extent that Coxe (and the editors of *Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ*) felt comfortable in leaving readers in his capable hands. This second work, then, represents nearly 152 pages of well driven nails straight from the Bible's own comparison and contrast of the Old and New Covenants. One brief quote demonstrates the essence of Owen's contribution:

...we may consider that the Scripture does plainly and expressly make mention of two testaments, or covenants, and distinguish [sic] between them in such a way, as what is spoken can hardly be accommodated to a twofold administration of the same covenant (186).

Owen does not exaggerate. He backs this assertion with manifold arguments and observations so that if consistently applied, in the opinion of this reviewer, the case is largely (if not completely) closed in favor of the practice of believer's baptism—*alone*.

The great value of this volume would be diminished, however, were it not for the editorial efforts of Ronald Miller, James Renihan and Francisco Orozco. Initially, Renihan provides a brief apologetic for the value of reprinting Coxe's work. He also grants a biographical sketch of Coxe which makes for interesting and informative reading. Miller renders an invaluable service by modernizing archaic spelling and terminology in Coxe's work, as well as offering helpful definitions and commentary when needed. As with Coxe, Owen's exposition is also preceded by a short biopic. Orozco delivers updates and commentary on Owen similar to that of Miller. Finally, the editors saw fit to include, by way of two appendices, a detailed outline of Coxe's work and a helpful article debunking the claim that Owen is the forerunner of New Covenant Theology—both authored by Richard Barcellos.

In short, *Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ* is not a book to be dutifully read and permanently shelved. Admittedly, some readers may disagree with various particulars of the covenant theology set forth in this book. Others may struggle with the demands that John Owen frequently requires of modern readers. However, these possible deterrents are easily offset by this work's beautiful emphasis on the organic unity of the Scriptures, the thematic unity of the biblical covenants and the humble attitudes displayed by these bondservants of the Lord. This compilation constitutes a stand-alone reference truly worthy of multiple readings. Better still, *Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ* in conjunction with Fred Malone's *The Baptism of Disciples Alone* and Sam Waldron's *A Reformed Baptist Manifesto* will greatly assist both veteran and aspiring Baptist theologians with a powerful, yet peaceable polemic regarding the proper subjects of baptism and biblical ecclesiology. ☞

Susan J. Heck, *With the Master in the School of Tested Faith*. Tate Publishing, LLC, Mustang, OK, 2006, 372 pages. \$25.99. ISBN 1-5988655-9-5

Reviewed by Celest Puls

With *The Master in the School of Tested Faith* is a study on the book of James, written especially for women. The author, Susan J. Heck, is a Bible teacher and a certified counselor with the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors. Her husband, Doug, is a graduate of The Masters Seminary and is pastor of Grace Community Church of Tulsa. This book comes from her personal studies of the Scriptures, as well as her teachings to women in her church and in numerous seminars. This is the first in a series of many studies on books and passages in the New Testament.

In the introduction, the author explains her desire to write more in-depth doctrinal studies for women:

Several years ago after my conversion, the Lord placed within me a deep hunger for the Word of God. My desire was to understand the Word more thoroughly. My husband encouraged me to begin memorizing the Word of God, chapter by chapter, book by book. The Lord used that in my life to whet my appetite to know and to understand what I was memorizing. I began to study the Bible for myself and that led to a deep desire to pass on to other women what I was learning. Writing Ladies Bible Studies, along with homework, and teaching the women in my church, then became my spiritual mission.

This book is well organized and very thorough. Each chapter starts with a contemporary illustration to help the reader identify with the topic of the chapter. Each phrase of each verse in James is included in a subtitle, making the book easy to reference. Each chapter ends with a summary and a list of discussion questions. Some of these refer to other passages of Scripture for further insight and study, and some are questions for personal application.

When I received this book, I had just started teaching a Bible study for women on the book of James. Since I was already using another resource, I used Susan Heck's book as a supplement. Even though I recommended the book to the ladies in my group, I had some reservation about the price. Twenty-six dollars may be more than some can afford, yet the amount and quality of information in it does make it worth the price. I really liked the detailed phrase-by-phrase commentary that included explanations of the original Greek terms. The chapter summaries and questions were convicting. I am looking forward to reading more books in this series when they are printed. ☺

Letters

Dr. Ascol,

I just wanted to write a quick note to mention that I am so thankful for your ministry to our convention. Your ministry through Founders is impacting people around the world in ways that you may not be aware.

I serve with the IMB ... and have only been on the field for a few months. Last year, while in training in VA, I quickly found out that a few of the other couples going career and many of the journeymen were reformed. I knew I had found a good friend when one of our quadmates was sitting in the main room one day reading *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ* by Nehemiah Coxe. We spent many hours late at night discussing the Reformers, Baptist history and our particular convictions. Many knew of your ministry and frequented the blog.

One evening, another Reformed friend and I were talking about your blog after you had posted concerning the then upcoming reprint of Dr. Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology*. Both of us mentioned that we would be excited to get our hands on it since neither of us had studied it. Then one day I realized that neither of us were going to be able to "get our hands on it" since we were going to be on the field when it actually came out and it would be extremely doubtful that it would make it into either of our countries.

Then as I was scanning the Founder's site the other day, I saw that you not only made it available online, but even in PDF format, so that we could read it offline. I have read the blog for awhile and been to the site many, many times, but was not aware of the wonderful online library. I am going to e-mail my friend to let him know about it.

Many ministries, even godly ones, would remove such a link from their website as soon as their published version was available for sale. Thank you for not doing this. By not doing so, you have greatly blessed (at least) two couples on the other side of the world, and we are very grateful!

Thanks so much,

K. E. via email

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