

# Sermon Notes

Galatians 4:9-11

“Do Not Observe Days”

A Sermon Series on Rest and the Sabbath

September 1, 2019

## Introduction

- 1) We are looking at the Sabbath and rest in the Bible.
- 2) The Sabbath itself holds a very unique and complex place in Scripture.
  - a) It has its origins in the very beginning of Creation. Gen 2:1-3
    - i) God created everything in six days.
    - ii) And on the seventh day, the last day of the week, He rested.
    - iii) This is to illustrate we need to find rest and refreshment (in Him). Ex 31:17
  - b) The Sabbath is part of the Ten Commandments. Ex 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15
    - i) It is the last of the first four commandments that deal with loving God.  
(The next six deal with loving our neighbor.)
    - ii) It was a strict day of no work for the ancient Jews, Lev 23:3;  
with some focus on worship. Ps 92
    - iii) Its violation brought the death penalty. Ex 31:14-15; 35:2; Num 15:32,35
  - c) In the Gospels, however, we read that Jesus proclaimed Matt 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-3:6;  
He is the Lord of the Sabbath.<sup>1</sup> Luke 6:1-11
    - i) He taught that the Sabbath was made for man,  
and not man for the Sabbath.
    - ii) Jesus Himself is the purpose of all history Matt 28:18; Mark 12:7;  
and the creation itself. John 1:1-5; Heb 1:1-4; 2:8
  - d) Christ's Lordship over the Sabbath can be seen in two very different ways.  
(As found in the key post crucifixion NT texts about the Sabbath.<sup>2</sup>)
    - i) First, there are texts by Paul that speak negatively Rom 14:5-9;  
about the Sabbath, implying that it's in some Gal 4:9-11;  
way part of the civil/ceremonial law. Col 2:13-17
    - ii) Second, in Hebrews (3-4) where we read that our rest is in Christ, Heb 4:11  
and that we have to diligently strive to enter into that rest.
- 3) Today we will look at the “negative” Sabbath texts by Paul, but first let us briefly recap what exactly is the law.

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<sup>1</sup> For the Gospels teaching about Jesus and the Sabbath see: Matt 12:1-14; 24:20; 28:1; Mark 1:21; 2:23-3:6; 6:2; 15:42; 16:1; Luke 4:16; 6:1-11; 13:10; 13:14-16; 14:1-6; 23:54-56; John 5:9-18; 7:22-23; 9:14-16; 19:31.

<sup>2</sup> The Book of Acts also speaks about the Sabbath. In particular, how Paul, a good Jew, would go into the synagogues on the Sabbath and preach the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles from the Scriptures.  
See: Acts 1:12; 13:14,27,42,44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4.

- 4) The “Law” is any command of God; the “do’s” and “don’ts” of the Lord.<sup>3</sup>
- a) The OT (Old Testament) Law is viewed as having three different aspects:
    - i) **Moral Law** – Laws about basic morality.  
Such as worshipping idols and stealing, i.e. the Ten Commandments.
    - ii) **Civil Law** – Political laws that govern ancient Israel.  
Such as how someone could be drafted in the army.
    - iii) **Ceremonial Law** – OT worship laws, especially about how the priests should offer sacrifice.
  - b) All three parts of the Law, as a means of earning one’s right standing with God, are fulfilled by Christ’s work on the cross.
  - c) The Moral Law still applies a guide for sanctification (our daily walk in holiness).
  - d) All three parts of the Law are helpful in showing the holiness of God and our constant need for Christ and His Gospel. Gal 3:3:15-29
  - e) One of the great debates is in what category should we put the Sabbath? Civil/ceremonial (Lutherans), moral (Puritans) or both?

### Paul and the Sabbath

- 1) Paul teaches that (at least some part of) the Sabbath is part of the civil/ceremonial law and thus fulfilled by Christ and His cross.
- 2) There is a problem for modern readers, however.
  - a) Paul was dealing with Christians who were overzealous about applying God's Law, especially as a means of righteousness (instead of diligently resting in the Gospel).
  - b) Zealousness for applying God’s Law is hardly a problem today, even in the church.
  - c) In fact we have the opposite problem: far too liberal and lax.
  - d) It is like writing to a friend that has been putting fitness and dieting above all else, and then a different lazy friend reads the letter and thinks it is advice for him.
- 3) We are justified by faith in Christ alone, and freed from the condemnation of the Law and trying to earn our righteousness by works.<sup>4</sup>
  - a) We, however, have not been freed to live in sin and licentiousness! Rom 6:1-2,15  
(That is hardly freedom.)
  - b) We have been freed to live in the Spirit and the fruit He produces in our hearts. Rom 5-8; Gal 5
- 4) It is critical to note Paul's different reaction to the use of the Law as a means of justification compared to a means of sanctification.
  - a) Justification is when we first have saving faith in Christ and are instantaneously declared righteous and adopted by Christ's righteousness credited/imputed to us alone. Rom 3:21-4:25 Eph 2:4-7

<sup>3</sup> The relationship between the Law and Gospel is a major theme in the NT. In particular, study Romans, Galatians and Hebrews.

<sup>4</sup> Matt 16:16-17; John 6:28-29; Acts 8:22; 13:39; 15:11; 16:14; Rom 1:16-17; 3:20-21,24,28; 10:3-4; Gal 2:16; 3:11; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; 3:9; 2Tim 1:9; 2:25; Heb 12:2; 1Pet 1:5.

- b) Sanctification ALWAYS follows justification, and is that daily walk with Christ and His Spirit, dying to sin, living in holiness and resting in Christ's righteousness proclaimed to us in the Gospel. Rom 5:1-8:39 Eph 2:8ff
- c) Martin Luther described it as being like a harlot who now has been married by a great and good king. We are now royalty, solely because of the King's doing, but we still have our daily work of no longer acting like our old self, but behaving like royalty.
- 5) For Paul, to add the works of the law to one's justification is a grave sin that is a rejection of Christ.
- 6) To add works of some of the civil/ceremonial law to one's sanctification is allowable, but not the best way, and can be problematic if one is too zealous and judges other believers.
- 7) You can see the difference by comparing **Galatians 4:9-11**, which is about justification and the law, and **Romans 14:1-9**, which is about sanctification and the law.

### **Galatians 4:9-11 – Justification, the Law & the Sabbath**

- 1) Galatians, in some ways, is Paul's most harsh letter.
- a) He isn't dealing with immorality, as in 1Corinthians.
- b) But with one problem in Galatia: Some Christians think that one has to add obedience to the Law to be justified as testified by requiring circumcision and thus the obligation to keep all of the OT laws.
- c) The usually charitable Paul states those that believe in such heresies are not Christians and he wishes they would go mutilate themselves! Gal 3:1-4; Gal 5:1-4,12
- d) Paul, correctly, is the most rigid when it comes to defending the Gospel.
- 2) Look at Galatians 4:9-11.
- a) In verse 9 Paul states the Gospel and then the problem.
- i) The Gospel – *“But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God”*
- ii) The problem – *“how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?”*
- b) What are these *“weak and worthless elemental things”*?
- i) From the context, it is clearly the civil/ceremonial OT law. Gal 4:3,9; Col 2:8,20; Heb 5:12
- ii) Is Paul against the Law? No! May it never be! Rom 3:31
- iii) As a means of justification, however, it is fundamentally against the Gospel.
- 3) In the following verse (v.10) Paul states the main problem.
- a) *“You observe days and months and seasons and years.”*
- b) This is a reference to the OT civil/ceremonial law.
- i) *“Days”* refers to the Sabbath.
- ii) *“Months”* refers to the New Moon celebration for the beginning of each lunar month. Ex 40:2,17; Ps 104:19 Num 10:10; 28:1-10; 11-15

iii) “Seasons” refers to the annual feasts such as Passover,  
Pentecost and the Feast of Booths.

2Chr 8:13;

Zech 8:19

iv) “Years” to the Year of Jubilee, the Sabbatical  
Year and the New Year celebrations.

Num 29:1; Lev 23:15-16; 25:1-55; 27:14-24

1Kgs 8:2; Jer 34:8,14-17; Is 61:1-2

c) So the legalists in Galatians are teaching that in order to be justified, a believer must obey these OT holidays.

d) This, whether they understand it or not, is a fundamental attack on the Gospel.

4) This use of the Law (as a means of justification) is a direct attack on Christ and His Gospel.

a) But what about using the Law, especially some of the civil/ceremonial law, as a means of sanctification?

b) That is Romans 14.

### **Romans 14:5-9 – Sanctification, the Law & the Sabbath**

1) Paul writes in Rom 14:1 – *“Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.”*

a) The person who “is weak in faith” is the one being zealous about applying the civil/ceremonial laws as a means of sanctification.

b) We know this by the context.

i) Verses 2-4 are about the OT food laws.

ii) While verses 5-6 are, again, about OT holidays.

2) Paul writes, *“One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.”* – Rom 14:5-6

a) Note, Paul is far less harsh in Romans than in Galatians.

b) Why? Difference context.

i) Galatians is all about justification.

ii) Romans 14 is about sanctification.

3) If a believer, for their own personal walk with the Lord, wants to rigorously follow the OT rules about food and holidays, they can.

a) This is being “weak in the faith” however, because there are better things to focus on.

b) However, this should not be heard by modern readers as allowing Christians to be lazy, or to think the worship of the Lord on the Lord’s Day is a minor thing!

4) Keep on reading!

a) *“For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”* – Rom 14:7-9

b) Again, we have been freed from the Law to live by the Spirit.

- c) Much better to live daily by faith in Christ, which creates in us hope, and produces love: love for God, our fellow Christians, and our neighbor.
  - d) To think Christ has freed you from the worship of God with His saints, where you receive the Gospel, the very power of God, means you really don't understand the Gospel, and are not trusting and resting in Christ.
- 5) This freedom is wonderfully expressed in Paul's other text about the Sabbath: Colossians 2.

### **Colossians 2:13-17 – Gospel Foundation**

- 1) Not surprisingly, Paul begins with the Gospel.
- 2) *“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.” – Col 2:13-15*
- 3) Note the order of Paul's thinking . . .
  - a) First, sin: That we were “dead” in our transgression.
  - b) Next, salvation: Which is an act of God.
    - i) God has made us *“alive together with Him.”*
    - ii) This is only by God's grace.
    - iii) Which is found only in Christ, thus the “with Him”.
    - iv) And because salvation is all of God we have full assurance that *“all our transgressions”* have been canceled by *“the cross,”* and Christ has *“disarmed the rules and authorities”* and *“triumphed over them.”*
  - iii) Therefore we are new creatures in Christ.
- 4) Because we are new creatures and live a new covenant, we shouldn't go back to the old ways.
  - a) In the next two verses Paul writes: *“Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”*
  - b) Sounds like Romans 14, right?
    - a) Focus on the civil/ceremonial laws.
    - b) Especially the food and holiday laws.
- 5) It is critical to realize, however, it is not just that they have been removed as a means of justification, and we have freedom with regards to sanctification, but they are about Christ!
  - a) All the Old Covenant is a “mere shadow” of the substance we now have in Christ!
  - b) It is not that we just ignore the civil/ceremonial laws, including the Sabbath, but we now turn to Christ for their meaning and fulfillment.
  - c) We are a new creation, in a new covenant, because the Gospel tells us so.
  - d) And we receive the Gospel on the Lord's Day through biblical preaching and the Supper.
  - e) We see this in the very next chapter (Col 3:1-10) where we are called to live in new self.

**Galatians 3:1-10**

- 1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.
- 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.
- 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
- 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.
- 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.
- 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,
- 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.
- 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.
- 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,
- 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him