

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

“It’s time to review.” That’s what a teacher says when she wants to see if her pupils have remembered anything.

That’s what Moses was doing. It had been 40 years since Moses had brought the tablets of stone down from Mt Sinai. In those 40 years a new generation of Israelites had grown up. Now they were about to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

Israel needed to review God’s moral law, the 10 commandments. That’s what Deuteronomy 5 is all about. Today we will focus on the third commandment, **“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”** We will consider this basic truth:

#### SABBATH MEANS REST

I. God desires that we rest our bodies. This was the command for the people of Israel. **“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God.”** It was very simple. They were to work for six days of the week, and rest on the seventh day. This command showed God’s love for his people. He did not want them to overwork their bodies.

This command applied to all who resided in Israel. That meant that the servants didn’t work on the Sabbath. Foreigners who lived in the land were expected to follow God’s will. Even the working animals were allowed to rest on that day.

What God commanded for Israel is still a wise practice for us today. Our bodies need rest because our bodies are a gift from the Lord. The Psalmist makes that clear when he says, **“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”** We agree. Our bodies are amazing instruments, created by our Lord God.

That same wonderful body needs a break from work. It needs time to relax and regenerate. Sadly, some people don’t respect that. But a doctor will tell you if we overwork the body, we leave ourselves susceptible to injury or even disease. Too much stress on the body can cause high blood pressure, heart disease, many other issues.

So what are you doing with your body? Are you overworking it because you think you are indispensable on your job? Are you overworking your body because you are greedy for more money? Have you become a workaholic, which is just as dangerous as becoming a drug addict or an alcoholic?

A certain farmer was convinced that he had to work seven days a week to get all his work on the farm done. He sent his family to church, but he rarely showed up. His pastor took him aside and told him that he would become a more efficient farmer if he rested one day every week, worshiped with his family and relaxed a little. The farmer tried it for a month. Then he thanked his pastor for the good advice. He learned the value of rest.

Work is good, even healthy. But if we ruin our body through overwork, that’s a sin. If we neglect our loved ones by working all the time, that also is a sin. And if we neglect our worship of the Lord and our prayer life because we insist on working non-stop, that is a sin against our God.

If you have fallen into any of these traps, repent of your sins. Look to Jesus who has forgiven all those sins. And ask him for his help so that you can change your ways. Believe me, the Lord will bless you as you take better care of your body.

II. The Sabbath meant rest for the body. But that was certainly not all that God had in mind with the Third Commandment. God also desires that we find rest for our souls.

You see, the Sabbath was a day to be dedicated to God. It was a day to remember God's grace to the people of Israel. **"Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm."** God loved his chosen nation and rescued them. But his grace didn't stop there. He kept them well fed and protected as they crossed the desert. Even when the people of Israel sinned against the Lord, he still loved them. He disciplined them and then forgave them for their sins. The Sabbath was a day for the people of Israel to stop and reflect on God's grace to them.

At the same time, the Lord God wanted them to be looking forward. He had promised them a Savior, a Messiah. The Sabbath was a time for Israel to remember those promises, and to renew their trust in the promises of God.

Of course, that's not all. The Sabbath was a good time for the fathers to teach their children about God's love and his promises. As Moses says here, **"Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."** What more holy thing could they do than focus the family on the coming Savior.

Moses was one of those who promised that the Messiah was coming. He said in Deuteronomy 18, **"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him."** Many of the Old Testament writers said the same thing, pointing the people to the coming Messiah.

The Messiah, that Holy One, is none other than Jesus the Christ. He is the one who came to set us free. We are no longer slaves of the devil, slaves to sin. We no longer have to carry a load of guilt on our backs for all of the sinning we have done. Jesus has come for you and me. He has fulfilled all the laws of God that we have failed to keep. He has earned forgiveness for every one of our sins through his innocent suffering and death. He has relieved us of the guilt we so often feel for the sins we have committed. In his resurrection, we find rest for our souls.

Because he kept all of God's laws perfectly, Jesus could then cancel the written code, the Law, by his sacrifice on the cross. That includes the Sabbath laws. We are not under those laws.

Yet, we still sin and still need rest and renewal for our souls as much as we need rest and renewal for our bodies. That's why Jesus invites us, **"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."** When our sins frustrate us and make us weary, we know where to go. We go to Jesus and in his grace and mercy, he gives us rest for our souls.

This is also why we gather for worship. We want to be reminded of what God has done for us in Jesus. What a joy it is to hear the announcement of the forgiveness of sins. What a joy to receive the Sacrament to assure us that Jesus has taken away every sin. Why do we gather on a Sunday? The reason is simple. That's the day Jesus rose from the dead. We find rest for our souls on the first day of the week.

After all, where else are you going to find rest for your souls? Some people try yoga or exercises in a gym or hitting a ball around a golf course. Others try do-it-yourself religion, thinking that will bring them rest for their souls. Long term, none of that works because it isn't Christ-centered. King David found the secret in Psalm 62: **"My soul finds rest in God alone."**

Find your rest, your spiritual rest, in the one who will give you eternal rest in heaven. This is our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.