

## Sermon to the saints of God which are at Topeka – Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015

*There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. – Heb. 4:9*

This morning, beloved, I'd like to spend some time focusing in on a few specific notions, namely:

1. What is the Sabbath – what does it mean and what does that mean for us?
2. What we can and can't say for sure about it, and the observance of it
3. Speak to a larger context concerning what we normally refer to as a differentiation between the moral law and the ceremonial law, and see what help and light is available for us there
4. Speak briefly to what some view as a controversy over what day of the week is the proper day of worship as an assembled body.

The word 'Sabbath' is defined as a day of religious observance and abstinence from work, kept by Jews from Friday evening to Saturday evening, and by most Christians on Sunday. The original Hebrew word is 'sabbat', or literally 'rest'.

We have the commandment of the Lord first expressed to us at Ex. 20:8, on the front side of the children of Israel wandering in the desert for forty years:

*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. – Ex. 20:8*

Genesis 2:2-3 is often used as the proof text to undergird the argument that Christians must keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

*And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. – Gen. 2:2-3*

The concept of 'rest' is vital to honing in on what the Sabbath therefore was, and is, and therefore what proper observance of it is denoted by.

In Gen. 2:2-3, nor anywhere around those verses, does God command a physical Sabbath-day rest was to be observed by human beings. God is the one said to be "resting," and by his act he creates something holy about the seventh day. But at this point in the story we haven't been told what that is.

God, through his holy book, from Adam through the giving of the law beginning at Ex. 20, provides no examples that any of his people, from Adam to Abraham to Job included, observed the seventh day as a holy day or day of rest (like we are assured of in sacrificing unto the Lord for sin and for thanksgiving as acts of obedience, as in the examples given to us of Abel and Job, for instance). Neither did he ever proclaim during that span of time, between Adam and Mt. Sinai, that people broke the Sabbath-day rest and thereby sinned against God. There wasn't even an Israel until, well, Israel (or Jacob). Not until God makes the expression of his covenant with Israel, and sets down the conditions of that covenant, beginning at Ex. 20:1 and literally moving through to the end of Deuteronomy, or the restating of the law, does the Sabbath rest become a command.

Part of what I still don't think we get, through Genesis 2:2-3 or through the first stating of the commandment concerning the Sabbath day, is clarity as to the significance of God resting from his work. We know that God does not become tired, neither is he affected by our marking of time. It seems that a further understanding of what that rest is, or what is

symbolizes, is important to us. That the creation of man and woman was announced just before the making of the holy rest could imply that this “rest” has something to do with the creation in general and human beings in particular. God, as it were, “sits back” after setting his divine creative will in motion and pronounces all of his works as being good. Since God doesn’t literally get tired, we can understand his “rest” as figurative, and as having some larger meaning in his creative purpose. The ‘rest’ will extend to humans in some larger way, as having a larger purpose as objects of God’s creative process.

This ‘rest’ expressed in Genesis 2 is not something that humans enjoyed in a physical sense except, perhaps, for a brief time in the Garden of Eden. Very soon after the creation, Adam and Eve fell in sin. As a consequence of sin, they suffer increased *labor* rather than rest. The notion of labor, the opposite of rest, is meaningful here:

*Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. – Gen. 3:16-19*

Their son, Cain, murders Abel. For his sin, Cain is saddled with a lot of backbreaking labor and a gypsy’s life on the run:

*When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. – Gen. 4:12.*

Fugitives can never rest.

The Jews were in cruel bondage to Pharaoh, prior to being delivered by the hand of God, as was his purpose:

*Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour. – Ex. 1:11-14*

But God, in his mercy, delivered those Jews out of bondage, and made a covenant with them. They were to keep his law, and all the parts thereof, and he would be their God. Part of that law was an expression of the keeping of a Sabbath day, or holy day of rest. Exodus 20:11 explains why God gave Israel the Sabbath day:

*For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. –Ex. 20:11*

In the Deuteronomy account, or restating of the law, the Lord gives a related reason for the Sabbath day ‘rest’ command.

*Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day. – Deut. 5:12-15.*

In the stating of all the law of God that was part of the covenant he made with the Jews, there were also seven yearly “rest” days within three yearly festival seasons that also were celebrated by cessation from labor (Leviticus 23:7-8, 21, 25, 32, 35-36). These were harvest festivals when Israel could give thanks unto God for the crops they had reaped—and when they could rest from their labor.

Beyond that, the land was to lie idle and not be tilled every seventh year (Leviticus 25:1-7). This means that while the land rested, the people could also rest, because they did not need to sow or till. Whatever the land produced on its own could be eaten. Also, each 50th year was a land rest (Leviticus 25:8-12). It was also a year of release:

*And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubile; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. – Lev. 25:10-12*

These do, in effect, rescue us from the curse that we have brought upon ourselves. This curse had required backbreaking toil in unyielding soil. The curse had also brought famine and disease, fighting and war. Life was anything but restful.

These Sabbaths, including the seventh day of rest, as well as the other ‘rest’ days and times, reminded the people of the work of God, that he made us and everything around us, that we owe our very existence to him, of his omnipotence, his omniscience, his mercy in the great salvation wherein he saved the Jews in reality but also as a type of the future, and once and for all, salvation given by the redemptive blood of Christ. That there is no rest for us outside of God.

But this rest is also a type – a type of a better, more enduring rest, more enduring than the observance of a day can bring – and in fact, the only rest that ultimately matters. This rest is provided for, and is, the salvation of Christ. And that salvation is the polar opposite of the destruction to be brought at his hand – that love and hatred is expressed forcefully at Mal. 1:1-3.

*The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. – Mal. 1:1-3*

And this rest, Christ as our Sabbath or rest, is prophesied of forcefully by the Holy Spirit through Isaiah:

*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. – Isa. 11:1-10*

The Branch, the Root of Jesse, the Redeemer Messiah, came as promised, in the person of Jesus. He offered the greatest “rest” the world would ever know – the ‘rest’ of freedom from sin and death—and this was for those who he chose and

foreknew of all nations—and life in the eternal kingdom of God. That rest, though, would be the result of the redemptive work of Jesus, and it would be commemorated not through the seventh day, but it is through Christ that we enter into that rest.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. – Matt. 11:28-30*

Jesus said to his disciples:

*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. - John 14:27.*

This is the ultimate “rest” of God. God’s purpose in Genesis 2:2-3, not completely understood under the old covenant, is now revealed and fulfilled in its final sense through Christ.

In the time of Christ’s ministry upon the earth, the body of law that was expressive of the covenant God had made with the children of Israel, a covenant they broke over and over and over, is called alternatively the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms at Lk 24:44, the law and the prophets at Matt. 5:17, or more simply the law at Jn. 15:25. The books of Exodus through Deuteronomy (along with the circumcision law in Genesis) constituted the basis of the covenantal law between God and Israel that the Jews referred to at the time of Christ’s coming and after his crucifixion and resurrection. But Jesus said that he would die, in a miraculous redemptive act, for the sins of his people - He wasn’t going to redeem them because they had the law of Moses and appeared to obey it – and he wasn’t saving anyone because they were Jews by blood. Though the Jews claimed to have the law unto themselves, and many boasted of their blood as being the righteous pedigree, but Christ said:

*Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet. – Matt. 21:43-46*

He came, ushering in a new dispensation, and a new covenant, or testament, supplanting the old covenant, or testament - one that every minute detail of had been planned and prophesied of all along, but now unveiled in Christ. HIS story. History.

But this new covenant, or testament, was not an act of abolishing the law. Christ said:

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 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. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. – Matt. 5:17-19*

All the scriptures pointed to Christ and his amazing, redemptive work, and were fulfilled in his work:

*Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. – Lk. 24:25-27*

Christ was the object of the Law and Prophets, as even Moses had said:

*The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. – Deut. 18:15*

(By the way, I used to struggle a bit with the notion of Christ ever being referred to as a prophet [merely] and struggled at times with those who were adamant, in passages like these, that Christ is the one spoken of. – But if a prophet is one who foretells events with certainty and accuracy, then Christ is certainly the greatest prophet. History.)

When Christ came, and preached on the law, he sometimes contrasted the outward act, or letter of the law as expressed in his word at the giving of it to the Jews, with the inward motive, or what's 'really going on there' in the hearts of men. Consider the scriptures:

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. – Matt. 5:27-48*

But Christ did not change anything in terms of old covenant worship until his redemptive work was accomplished. In fact, he preached obedience to the law, even telling a man healed of leprosy:

*And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. – Lk. 5:14.*

However, we do know that the redemptive work of Christ put away, as the antitype no longer needing a shadow to typify it, many of what we generally call 'ceremonial laws.' Types in the law gave way to the antitype:

*In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. – Heb. 8:13*

A new covenant had come into force.

So what of the ‘ceremonial law’ – and the doing away of it? What laws are therefore still in force under the new covenant, and what laws, as types, vanish away in the face of their antitype?

Well, we know that all of the millions upon millions of sacrifices made, from Abel forward, were types of the sacrifice and redemptive blood of Christ. That blood has now been shed, so the type is now useless once the antitype has arrived.

We also know that all of the dietary law, including all of the washings, were done away with, as we read of Peter at Joppa in Acts 10. Distinguishing between clean and unclean is seen in terms of God making a thing clean, or the redemptive blood of Christ, as the only meaningful distinction, and thereby giving Peter the understanding of the blood of the Lamb as being shed for the Gentiles too, and not just for the Jews.

We know that the Aaronic priesthood, and all that the law required them to be and do, were nullified at the coming of, Christ, our high priest.

And I think we know that Christ as our rest is typified by all of the expressed Sabbath observances in the Mosaic law. Consider the scripture:

*There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. -Heb. 4:9-11*

But many of these people were still zealous for the Law of Moses (Acts 21:20). This caused problems for the church. Many early Jewish Christians did not see clearly that the new covenant had supplanted the old, and that this had profoundly impacted the authority of the Law of Moses and Israel’s religious system. For example, these former Jewish religious leaders still viewed physical circumcision as a sign between God and his people. They saw the Law of Moses as a binding legal document for anyone who wanted to become part of this people:

*But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. – Acts. 15:5-11*

They didn’t merely say, “Gentiles must keep the Sabbath or the food laws or some other singular law of the Mosaic system”. Rather, the Pharisees said: ‘and to command them to keep the law of Moses.’ The Jews understood that the entire Law of Moses was a unit—and that the authority of this law as a complete and unified legal compact. They also knew that the old covenant did not apply to Gentiles. But if any Gentile wanted to become part of the people of Israel—that is, to become a “full Jew”—he or she would be obligated to keep the Law of Moses. Some of the early Jewish Christians may have erroneously reasoned from this principle that in order to become a part of God’s *spiritual* people, Gentiles must first become God’s physical people by keeping the Law of Moses. Thus, religious Jews who had been converted to Christianity were implying that for Gentiles to be part of God’s people, they would have to be circumcised and keep all 613 laws of the Law of Moses. The issue of contention was not a specific law such as Sabbath-keeping, but the Law of Moses in its entirety. (The argument in Acts 15 wasn’t over Sabbath or festival observance, but over the full Mosaic Law.)

Those laws which typified that which come in fullness have faded away.

*But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. – Rom. 2:29*

*In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. – Col. 2:11*

*Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. – Col. 3:11*

Nonetheless, the question of whether Gentile Christians should keep the Law of Moses continued to be a controversy within the church. The pressure to have Gentiles be circumcised and follow the Mosaic Law came from converted Jews or Judaizers. We can see this controversy in full bloom in the book of Galatians.

In this very strong letter, Paul brands this idea as ‘another gospel,’ which was really a perversion of the true gospel (Galatians 1:1-7). Paul makes several points about this issue. He says Christians cannot be justified by observing the Law of Moses and righteousness cannot be gained through its observance (Galatians 2:16, 21). Those who look to the Law of Moses as their spiritual authority, even though they may ‘believe’ in Christ, are still in bondage (Galatians 4:21-31).

But the book in scripture that most thoroughly deals with the abrogation of the Law of Moses and the old covenant religious system is Hebrews. It begins with a defense of Jesus as the high priest of God’s people (3:1). This implies that the authority of the Aaronic high priest of the Mosaic covenant, who stood as the representative between God and Israel, had been superseded by Jesus. As the mediator of the old covenant, Moses was great, but Jesus is greater. (John 5:39-46 with Hebrews 3:4-6).

In Christ, the physical Sabbath rest is seen to be a metaphor for the spiritual rest of salvation that God’s people now have, as the redemptive work is done and those saved by God are indwelt with his Spirit at their calling:

*Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. – Heb. 4:1-11*

I am convinced that some of the old covenant laws, ones that we refer to as ‘ceremonial law,’ are instructive as symbols and metaphors, but they are not valid as laws that govern Christian behavior at the coming of Christ to bleed for his own. They are superseded by his work. They are types.

In the same way, Hebrews 4 tells us that Sabbath-keeping is of the spirit. It points to the salvation rest we have in Christ.

Hebrews explains that the entire system of the old covenant law as carried out by the high priest and the Levitical priesthood has come to an end. Another High Priest, Jesus, has come in the order of Melchizedek (7:1-11). This necessitates a change in the law.

*For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. – Heb. 7:12-19*

However, some people object to the idea that the Mosaic Law (which includes the Ten Commandments) is “done away.” They retort, “Well, then, does that mean we can kill, steal or commit adultery?” No true Christian would teach or believe such an absurdity. And this then, provides a meaningful distinction between what we call the ceremonial law and the moral law. First the ceremonial law is that part of the law, such as sacrifices, the Aaronic priesthood, circumcision, dietary and washings law, etc., that were types, or typified that which Christ has now fulfilled. The moral law, on the other hand, is that which was preached in the new testament as still having force, and are matters of the heart – you can see these ‘sin lists’ in places like: Matthew 5:3-11; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:32; 6:14-20; Philippians 4:8; 1 Timothy 3:2-13; Titus 1:6-9; Mark 7:21-22; Romans 1:29-32; 13:8-14; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 6:9-10; Ephesians 4:25-31; 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5-9; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

But perhaps another meaningful way to distinguish between the ‘ceremonial law,’ which was done away with, and the ‘moral law,’ which is still in force, has to do with measuring them against those two commandments, both of which were really relatively inconspicuously placed amongst all of the Mosaic law, one at Lev. 19:17-18 and the other at Deut. 6:5:

*Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. – Matt. 22:35-40.*

Here we have the astounding assertion that everything in the Law of Moses and the Prophets does not hang on the Ten Commandments, as most people erroneously assume. The popular preoccupation with the Ten Commandments is somewhat misguided. The essence of the Law of Moses is not in the Ten but in two simple statements buried in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

All of the meaningful laws, those which we are still, as slaves to Christ, bound to do, ‘hang on’ those two commandments. So if you can’t make the fully convince in your own mind that you are loving your neighbor as yourself at the same time you’re reaching into his pocket to take his money or as you are trying to make time with his wife, then don’t do it. That’s ‘Thou shalt not steal’ and ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ hanging off of loving your neighbor as yourself. The two are oil and water. And if you spend more time and have more interest in football, or Christmas, or the American flag, than you do in humbling yourself in obedience toward and the worshipping of, in spirit and truth, the God who made you, then your behavior is not hanging on loving the Lord with all your heart. Showing sincere love for God first, and then your neighbor second, is what all the moral law hangs upon. Not shrimp. Not sacrificing goats. And he has sent us a Paraclete, or Counsellor, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to guide us in the liberty, or rest from the bondage of sin and death, that we were formerly under.

As to the Sabbath, and where it falls in this conversation (of the ceremonial law vs. the moral law), I will say these things:

1. There is no preaching in the new testament, after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, when he proclaimed – “it is finished” - meaning that work of redemption, on the necessity of observing a seventh day Sabbath.

2. Sabbatarians, or those who claim the necessity of the Sabbath, seem to claim that the seventh day Sabbath rest is not something typified in the revealed, salvific work of Christ, and insist Christians must keep it. Many argue – it must be the seventh day, or Saturday. Others argue the necessity of the Sabbath rest, but contend that it can be Sunday.
3. There are those that argue that the seventh day Sabbath rest is perpetually in effect because it is one of the ‘Ten Commandments,’ and that somehow that gives them more weight than all of the others that God expressed as part of his covenant with the Jews. But I don’t believe that there is no legal difference between the Ten Commandments and the rest of the covenantal law. They stand together as the basis of the old covenant to Israel. The law that mandated the delivery of first-born animals to God and leaving the land idle in the seventh year was just as important as the law of Sabbath rest or the law against adultery, in terms of the covenant. They were all, equally, part of the old covenant.
4. As previously stated, there is no evidence in the Bible that God commanded the Sabbath before the giving of the law to Moses. Genesis says that God rested, but nowhere does it say that the first humans were commanded to follow his example. Before Adam and Eve sinned, they lived in a blessed lot, in which they were in a state of peace with God, trustful and obedient. They did not need to labor in the way they later did. They did not need to set aside a day for communion with God, for they had it continually. We have no evidence that the first man was commanded to rest on the second day of his life.
5. Christ, when he preached about the Sabbath, was usually defending the practice of doing good on the Sabbath, in the face of many litigious strivings about the law that the Lord of the Sabbath had to endure. And I strongly suggest we consider that he knew, in his redemptive plan, that he was the rest, or Shabbat (Sabbath)– that the type of the Sabbath rest was ready to vanish away at the crucifixion of Christ.

Hebrews 4 speaks to the rest in Christ:

*Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. – Heb. 4:1-16*

It is in Christ that we enter into rest: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. – Matt. 11:28-30*

The only time that the Holy Spirit, through Paul, mentions the Sabbath by name is in Col. 2:16-17. Consider the scripture:

*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. – Col. 2:16-17*

There is no translation problem here—Paul is talking about the weekly Sabbath. Further, the Paul writes at Romans 14:

*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. – Rom. 14:1-6*

And still further, the Holy Spirit through Luke reports:

*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. – Acts 20:7*

6. Those disciples at Troas assembled together on the first day of the week, which not only seems to allow for the permissibility of assembling together for the sincere worship of God and to be fed on the first day of the week, but it therefore pulls the rug out from underneath the notion of the seventh day being the only proper worship day.

I believe that the Sabbath, or rest, that any God-fearing man or woman enters into, is the rest of Christ, our Sabbath, who is the antitype that is typified in the keeping of the Sabbath in the Mosaic code. I believe that assembling together on Sunday, the first day of the week, is permissible, and that saying otherwise belies an understanding of the meaning of the Sabbath, but also denies plain scripture showing disciples assembling together on the first day, breaking bread, and being preached to by Paul. I believe that anyone who thinks that they are transgressing the law of God by working on either Saturday or Sunday, is weak in their understanding, and needs the encouragement of sound scripture to clear up that mud. That being said, I think it is vital for us not to fool ourselves and be haughty or high-minded in failing to set aside big chunks of time to worship God, pray, consider the things of God, and get away from all of those things that act as stumbling blocks to truly humble submission unto our King:

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. – Rom. 12:2*

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. – Heb. 12:1*

I love you all. Amen.