

## **Heidelberg Catechism 103 – Proper Worship: On The Sabbath**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: In most congregations church **attendance** on December 25 usually beats any Sabbath attendance. **The “Christmas” holiday has become, in many ways, more special than the Holy Day.** Men have chosen the holly over the holy. And it ought not to be!

God gave the 4<sup>th</sup> law from the very beginning of creation and codified it in the 10 laws. In fact, God spent more time on this law than any other and even expanded it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> rendering of the law. You will hear from God concerning his true Holy Day.

Our headings are:

**Prescriptions of Law 4**

**Prohibitions of Law 4**

Our goals are: **That you properly understand the 4<sup>th</sup> command, that you return it to its proper place, and that you learn to hallow it for Christ’s glory and your good.**

Let us read what the 4<sup>th</sup> law is.

**Exodus 20:8** "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 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. 11 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.

**103 Q. WHAT IS GOD’S WILL FOR US IN THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT?**

**A.** First, that the **gospel ministry and education for it be maintained**, and that, especially on the **festive day of rest**, I regularly **attend the assembly of God’s people** to learn what God’s Word teaches, to **participate in the**

**sacraments**, to **pray to God** publicly, and to **bring Christian offerings for the poor**. Second, that every day of my life **I rest from my evil ways**, let the Lord work in me through his Spirit, and so **begin already in this life the eternal Sabbath**.

### **Prescriptions of Law 4**

#### **1. The 4<sup>th</sup> command requires that you make the Sabbath Day holy by your thoughts, words, and actions.**

The word “holy” comes from the verb “to hallow.” The sky doesn’t change on Sundays. The sun rises and sets. **It is like any other day, except for what you do (worship) and don’t do (buy, sell, work)**. All men are bound by this law. God’s law cannot change. Heaven and earth will pass away but not one jot or tittle from God’s law will pass away. Matthew 5:18.

#### **2. God requires that you prepare in order to make the Sabbath day holy.**

**a. You must prepare your body.** You need to rest well and not eat too much before worship. Lack of sleep limits your ability to gain full benefits of worship. Fathers and older children should help mothers who are caring for young ones...to make sure mothers get enough rest. Fathers could wake up Saturday nights to help with the baby. Students should get their house work and homework done before the Sabbath. Moms can plan your meals.

**In the Old Testament animals that had been yoked were not fit to be sacrifices, and if you are yoked with duties, you are not fit to serve.** Of course there are emergencies, but God requires planning. Remember, **if you donkey keeps falling into the hole on the Sabbath, either fill the hole or sell the donkey.** And be assured if you work for 6 and rest for one you will be more productive.

**b. You must prepare your heart.** Someone said: When the heart is more spiritual, the mind will be less feathery. For example: If you are prepared, when you pray the Prayer of Confession, you will think of the true meaning of the words and your mind won’t wander. **If you are not spiritually prepared, what should be your potatoes will become your poison.** Positively, **the one who is prepared will leave worship with more joy.**

**Psalm 119:103 - How sweet are Your words to my taste,** Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

### **3. God requires worship on the Sabbath?**

**a. Learn what God's Word teaches.** Good preachers will bring the Gospel every time they preach and educate people how they are to live. (Sermons are for salvation and sanctification so Christ will be glorified.)

Hebrews 10: 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some...

**b. Regularly participate in the Sacraments, the other means of grace, with joy.** There are no private sacraments for the rich.

**c. Bring prayers and offerings on the Sabbath...through which God is glorified and for which he blesses you!**

Acts 2:42 - And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Psalms 50:14 Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High.

### **4. God requires that for you to properly worship him on the Sabbath you must work for 6 days.**

The law is not "Six days you shall loiter." You cannot get the full sense of the Sabbath unless you work hard for 6 days. Labor gives the Sabbath a proper meaning. Of course it does not mean that you have to go to a job site –but you must work. It is a sin for able-bodied men to retire and play shuffleboard all day. You were put in this world to work, regardless of what the Government of Canada says or what the RRSP people say.

### **5. The civil government must see that the Sabbath is maintained as a day of rest in public places.**

God will hold it responsible if it encourages and supports Sabbath breaking. What dangers are ahead for our leaders!

## **6. God requires that you rest even in body and mind on the Sabbath.**

When your mind rests on God, you will reflect on God's greatness and his goodness to you.

Deuteronomy 5:15 And **remember** that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Rest also puts your mind on the future blessings.

Hebrews 4:9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

Today, you are to remember your deliverance from your past conditions. If you forget to make the Sabbath holy you are forgetting your creation, your re-creation in Jesus Christ, and your glorification in heaven.

## **7. God requires that you do works of mercy and charity on the Sabbath.**

So invite someone over for a meal, collect donations for the poor, or visit a nursing home. Visit a family Sunday evening.

## **8. But you realize that you are not able to keep the law, and this is why you need the Savior.**

Jesus fulfilled all of God's law for you so you are credited with perfect obedience and adopted as God's child. As God's child you start to learn how to keep the Sabbath.

## **Prohibitions of Law 4**

### **1. God prohibits you from ignoring the Sabbath or treating it with contempt.**

There are many who argue that keeping the Sabbath is no longer required – that the Sabbath was only for those who lived during the Jewish dispensation. They use passages like these!

Romans 14:5 One **person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike.** Let each be

fully convinced in his own mind.

Colossians 2:16 So **let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival** or a new moon **or sabbaths**, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Did Jesus really say the Sabbath is passé? Isn't Jesus' teaching clear?

Matthew 5:17 "**Do not think that I came to destroy the Law** or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy **but to fulfill**. 18 "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by **no means pass** from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 "**Whoever therefore breaks one** of the least of these commandments, and **teaches men so**, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven...

**Jesus threatened those who broke any of the 10 laws** and threatened any who taught others to break his law. It would be illogical to conclude that Jesus was teaching that the Sabbath law, one of the 10, was being abolished. And since the Sabbath is God's creation gift to the church, to abolish it would be like a woman taking off her wedding ring and throwing it into the ocean in front of her husband.

**Now the context of Romans 14**, was not whether to keep the weekly Sabbath or not. It was dealing with the weaker brother and with the liberty that Christians had. Some ate vegetables, some ate meat. Some preferred to keep some feast days from their Jewish past, others didn't. Christians were given liberty. **There is no such liberty concerning the 10 commands**. No one is ever free to break any moral law.

**The context of the Colossian passage was also Christian liberty from Jewish ceremonies.** Apostle Paul taught that the Jews could maintain certain traditional days (Hanukkah), etc. if they wanted) but they could not impose those celebrations on the Gentiles. So the Sabbath stands!

**2. God prohibits you from using the Sabbath legalistically.**

“Legalistic” means that you make a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” and demand that others follow it. Jesus warned against legalism. The Sabbath is governed by principles, not a long list of restrictions like: “Walk so many steps on the Sabbath,” “Kill a chicken that provably laid an egg on the Sabbath.” Legalism continues today for Jews: They have timers on stoves so they will turn on so they can cook and not be guilty of “lighting fires” on the Sabbath... Consider Christ’s teaching!

Matthew 12:1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" 3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 "how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?"

### **3. God prohibits unnecessary working, buying, and selling on the Sabbath.**

**It is common to treat the Sabbath as any other day** by citizens, businesses, and the civil government. But can the government, businesses, or citizens expect to flourish if they continue to treat the Lord’s Day with contempt?

**Also, you might hear individual attempts to justify Sabbath breaking:** “I am struggling financially so I need to work.” “I could lose my business if I don’t work on the Sabbath.” “I could get better bargains if I shopped on Sundays.” “I could get double pay if I worked on Sunday and have more money to give to the poor.” But would you accept money from a thief? That is what the person who steals the Lord’s glory on the Sabbath Day is doing. Consider the severity of God’s judgment on Sabbath breakers.

Numbers 15:32 Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. 33 And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. 34 They put him under guard, because it

had not been explained what should be done to him. 35 Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp."

2Chronicles 36: 20 And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

**But it is not Sabbath breaking if you need to buy medicines for the sick or do works of mercy.** Even some jobs are necessary for Sunday. You are obeying the spirit of the law if you do necessary work.

#### **4. God forbids making other people the focus of your Sabbath.**

**So be careful about celebration of birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day, Father's Day, or such things.** The Sabbath is not "their" day. It is the Lord's Day. Don't abuse it. Nothing must take your focus away from God's worship. God is jealous for his worship. If you visit family and friends for a meal it must not be to celebrate them but to encourage and strengthen them in Christ. Christ is the focus of the Sabbath.

#### **Conclusion:**

You must make the Sabbath holy. This will honor God. This will cause men to glorify God. This will bring blessings to you and your family.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

**1. It is easy to accuse the civil government and universities of desecrating the Sabbath. But most churches today - have stopped keeping the Sabbath. Churches need to return to the Lord in repentance.**

**2. Personally, if you ignore the Lord's Sabbath, you will lose his approbation on earth and in heaven. Hear these words of warning, and yet, words of encouragement from the Lord:** Isaiah 8:13 "If you turn away

your foot from the Sabbath, **From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable,** And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, 14 **Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD;** And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father...

**3. Be assured that because you are the blood bought children of Christ you have the ability to start keeping the Sabbath again.** Don't rob yourself of these blessings!

Finally, if you are not a believer you cannot enter that eternal rest nor can you enjoy the first tastes of it in this life unless your sins are taken away and you believe that Jesus Christ took your sins on the cross. Will you ask him to take away your sins today?