

Let's look at it from another perspective by including other elements of the law and making money. The commandment prohibiting stealing obviously has to do with unlawful gain, but it is not the only one. Do not commit adultery prohibits prostitution. The Pharisees distorted the commandment regarding honoring their father and mother so they could keep hold of their money in Matthew 15. Murder is often committed over and even for money. Coveting is all about money. Lies are told over money. And so to is the Sabbath broken over money. To seek profit on the Sabbath is dishonest gain, just the same as stealing and lying. We must come to view Sabbath keeping in this way.

Of course we understand there as some labors that are necessary on the Sabbath. People still get sick and injured on the Sabbath so physicians

and others in medical professions must labor on the Sabbath. Those given the task of public safety such as police and fire fighters will have to work. Farmers will still need to care for their animals. Of course pastors labor on the Sabbath. Those involved in such labor should not see themselves as profiting from breaking the Sabbath.

We must be a people of faith in the Lord for His gracious provision both in our action and in our rest. We must be a people of the Sabbath.

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CEASING LABOR ON THE LORD'S DAY

Rev. Howard Sloan

The Heidelberg Catechism on the fourth commandment states:

103. What does God require in the fourth Commandment?

In the first place, God wills that the ministry of the Gospel and schools be maintained, and that I, especially on the day of rest, diligently attend church to learn the Word of God, to use the Holy Sacraments, to call publicly upon the Lord, and

to give Christian alms. In the second place, that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, allow the Lord to work in me by His Spirit, and thus begin in this life the everlasting Sabbath.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.

But when we read the commandment it focuses on ceasing our labor on the

Sabbath day.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on

the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” Exodus 20:8-11

Among Reformed commentators some seem to place little value on ceasing work on the Sabbath day as an act of worship, with much of the emphasis placed on public and family worship along with works of mercy.

While I by no means intend to diminish the place of worship and mercy on the Sabbath, I think this devaluation of stopping our labors is unnecessary. To illustrate my point let us look at the giving of the manna.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my

law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” Exodus 16:4-5

The Lord God provided for his people food in the desert. The provision was enough for seven days in the span of six days. Why? The Lord is providing for His people so

that they do not have to labor on the Sabbath. In doing that the Israelites were free to be able to keep the Sabbath. But there is spiritual value to ceasing from our occupations (those things

from which we earn a living or are necessary for life) and preoccupations (those other things that take up our time and keep us busy). Ceasing such things is a sign and exercise of our faith.

First, our Sabbath keeping is

First, our Sabbath keeping is a demonstration of FAITH in the Lord for His faithful and gracious provision.

a demonstration of FAITH in the Lord for His faithful and gracious provision. God asks us for one day. On the Sabbath we are called to put aside our occupations (the work that we do the other six days) and our preoccupations (the other things that fill up our time). This is partially so we have time for proper Sabbath worship, but it is also an exercise of faith.

If God has told us to labor six days and rest on the Sabbath, yet we labor on the Sabbath, what does that say about our view of God’s

providence? The Israelites wandering in the desert were provided for every day of the week without laboring on the Sabbath. We think we need to get things done on the Sabbath day. Do we really? Or do we trust God that we will be able to get everything else done on the other six days? Do we need to break the commandment? Don’t we have enough faith in God to set aside one day and let

Him provide for us in the other six?

Our Sabbath keeping is also a sign to the WORLD that our FAITH matters. When we keep the Sabbath, the world sees that we are different. It sees that worship and faithfulness matter to us. It gives us opportunity to let our light shine before men, so that they might see our good works and praise our father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Let me provide a practical example. My wife and I have a shop here in the town where I pastor. We are closed on Sundays. There is a lot of pressure to be open on Sundays. Especially twice a year when there is a huge festival in town over the weekend. We “lose” a big pay day by remaining closed, but we do not see it that way. We see it as a way to place our faith in God, and be a witness to others.

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