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SABBATH OBSERVANCE | *By John Calvin\**

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*Keep the day of rest, to hallow it as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy business: but the seventh day is the rest of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work therein.*

Deuteronomy 5:12-14.

Now we must come to the second point which emphasizes that the sabbath day was a [type of] civil order for training the faithful in the service of God. For that day was ordained in order that people might assemble themselves to hear the doctrine of the law preached, to participate in the sacrifices, [and] to invoke the name of God. With respect to that, it applies as much to us as to the ancient people. For although the figurative aspect has been surpassed . . . what is said of this order still applies and has its usage. . . . [L]et us acknowledge that this order was not given solely to the Jews in order for them to have a certain day on which they might assemble themselves, but at the same time it applies to us also.

Nevertheless, we have to note that there is more and that indeed it would be a meagre thing to have a rest regarding physical activity but not involving anything else. What is necessary then? That we should strive toward a higher end than this rest here; that we should desist from our works which are able to impede us from meditating on the works of God, from calling upon his name, and from our exercising his Word. If we turn Sunday into a day for living it up, for our sport and pleasure, indeed how will God be honored in that? Is it not a mockery and even a profanation of his name? But when shops are closed on Sunday, when people do not travel in the usual way, its purpose is to provide more leisure and liberty for attending to what God commands us that we might be taught by his Word, that we might convene together in order to confess our faith, to invoke his name, [and] to participate in the use of the sacraments. That is the end for which this order must serve us. . . .

Now from the foregoing we see in what attitude we hold all Christianity and the service of God. . . . [T]he majority hardly care about the usage of this day which has been instituted in order that we might withdraw from all earthly anxieties, from all business affairs, to the end that we might surrender everything to God.

Moreover, let us realize that it is not only for coming to the sermon that the day of Sunday is instituted, but in order that we might devote all the rest of time to praising God. . . . [O]n other days, seeing that we are so occupied with our affairs, we are not as much open to serve God as on a day which is totally dedicated to this. Thus we ought to observe Sunday . . . in a way in which we are neither impeded by nor occupied with anything else, so that we might be able to extend all our senses to recognize the benefits and favors with which he has enlarged us. . . . Thus

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\* From *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*. "The Fifth Sermon . . . Thursday, June 20, 1555, Deuteronomy 5:12-14." Edited and translated by Benjamin W. Farley. Forward by Ford Lewis Battles. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980, pp. 108, 109, 110, 112, 113.

when people profane . . . the holy order which God has instituted to lead us to himself, why should they be astonished if all the rest of the week is degraded?

. . . But in order to apply ourselves to its correct and lawful usage, it is necessary to realize (as we have already said) that our Lord only asks that this day be spent in hearing his Word, in offering common prayers, in confessing our faith, and in observing the sacraments. . . . And when we have spent Sunday in praising and glorifying the name of God and in meditating on his works, then, throughout the rest of the week, we should show that we have benefited from it.

## RECOMMENDED READING

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