

97-09-21b

Okay, we're back now from our break and what is our biblical basis for worshipping on Sunday? Can we justify that from the scripture? Who has a suggestion on what our scriptural reason is for worshipping on Sunday? What does it say in Romans 14? Having recently been in Romans, some of us should have a good memory of that. One person esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord. He who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. And so forth, none of us lives for himself, no one dies for himself.

Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's, and so forth. So, does this give us a basis for Sunday worship? It talks about whether or not to observe a day. We are free to observe a day or not to observe it.

Is there any biblical reason to treat Sunday as a special day? Well, that's what we're going to tackle in this lesson. Is there a basis or could we just as well say, well, Tuesday is going to be our day of worship. As you recall in our first lesson, we have reviewed many of the passages that deal with the Sabbath for Israel.

It is a part of their covenant. It is an offense punishable by death to break the Sabbath. It's a part of the Ten Commandments.

What about the Ten Commandments argument? What's our view of the Ten Commandments? Thou shalt have no other God before me. Not make unto thee any graven image, and so forth. Do we think that the Ten Commandments apply to us? Partially.

Some of them do. Some of them don't. Let me give you an analogy.

Do you think that there is a law in England against murder? Is murder against the law in England? Well, yes it is. Does that have any bearing on what I do here? Not really. The fundamental issue is that it is a wrong, immoral thing to murder.

England has a law against that, and that's a reflection of a true principle, but their law doesn't specifically apply to me, nor can I draw any conclusions from their law, in the same way that I can't draw conclusions about punishment from the laws in Turkey. Turkey has some pretty harsh punishments for crimes and so on, but the things that go on in Turkey don't pertain to me. What pertains to me is American justice system.

In the same way, the Ten Commandments reflect principles of divine truth, and those principles are always true, and they don't change, but I do not refrain from murder because one of the Ten Commandments says, Thou shalt not murder. I don't worship the

Lord my God with all my heart, soul, and strength because the First Commandment says to do so. Those laws apply to Israel, and many of them reflect universal principles of truth, but I do not observe the truth because it's in that law.

I observe the truth because it is the truth, and that truth is reflected in the law, if you see the difference. So there is an argument made sometimes, which I don't think is valid. I think it's a brave attempt, but it fails because of the point I just made, that of the Ten Commandments, nine of them are repeated in the New Testament, and the one that is not repeated is remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Therefore, we keep nine of the Ten Commandments. Well, that does not wash because then you say, Well, I am under some portion of the Mosaic law. I'm not under any portion of the Mosaic law.

It doesn't mean that I can ignore any truth that is taught in the Mosaic law. It just means that I am not a party to that covenant. I do not inherit its blessings.

I do not fall under its curses. It is a system of law for Israel, which reflects many principles of divine truth, but we go straight to the principle of truth. We don't go to the truth via the covenant with Israel.

So that's why we study the Old Testament, and we study the law to find and clarify for ourselves those truths, but we don't obey those truths through the law. We don't obey the law, and through obeying the law we obey the truth. We go straight to the truth, and we are not under the law.

So we need to pay close attention to the law. We need to understand the principles that it teaches and illustrates, but we are not under the law. So you can't say, Well, we're under the Ten Commandments, but see the Sabbath day isn't repeated, so therefore we don't have to keep it.

It may be true that we don't observe the seventh day Sabbath, but it has nothing to do with whether or not it's in the Ten Commandments. So what does it have to do with, and why do we care? What difference does it really make? Well, first of all, what is God's attitude toward Sabbath keeping? Well, we can see this in His dealings with Israel. We know what happens when they gather manna.

You can go to Exodus 16, 27, where God gave them double portion of manna on Friday, and they were supposed to gather it up and use that to subsist all day Saturday so that they would not have to work by gathering manna. Exodus 16, 27, some of the people, nevertheless, went out on the seventh day to gather manna, but they found none. God didn't put it out there for them to gather.

In Numbers chapter 15, you have the episode of the man who was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath. In Numbers 15, 32, when the Israelites were in the desert, a man was

found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. And in verse 35, after they bring this before the Lord, the Lord says to Moses, The man must die.

The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp. One of the complaints that Nehemiah has when they're trying to institute reform and get back to obedience to the law, Nehemiah 13, 15, In those days I saw men in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath day and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grape, figs, and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath.

Therefore, I warned them against selling food on that day. Israel was warned about this kind of violation. Jeremiah 17, 27, If you do not obey me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying any load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses.

Ezekiel 20, verse 13, The people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not follow my decrees, but rejected my laws. Although the man who obeys them will live by them.

And they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the desert. And they are accused in Ezekiel 22, 8, You have despised my holy things and desecrated my Sabbaths.

And a few verses later he says, I will disperse you among the nations and scatter you throughout the countries and I will put an end to your uncleanness. One of the reasons that Israel is no longer a nation, one of the reasons they went into captivity is that they did not keep the Sabbath. And the strongest argument in favor of Sabbath keeping is that this has a precedent previous to the law of Moses.

It is stated specifically that the reason God asks Israel to keep the Sabbath is that God himself observed a Sabbath on the seventh day in Genesis chapter 2, which is our primary passage. So should we be keeping a seventh day? We can argue that it can be any day we choose, but should it be every seventh day because God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it? Well, first of all, we have the important task of discerning where we are in God's plan. We are in a different age.

It is manifestly clear if you read Galatians, if you read the bulk of Romans, that we are not under the law. We have a different covenant. We have a new covenant in Christ's blood.

And there is no injunction, there is no instruction, there is no teaching in the New Testament to keep the seventh day. Now we have the fact noted that Paul went and preached in the synagogues on Saturday. Why do you suppose he did that? Who is going

to be in the synagogue on the Sabbath? The Jews.

Who is it that Paul labors night and day to try to convince that the Messiah has come and that they need to mend their ways, that they have crucified him on the cross? Where is the most convenient place to address a group of these people who have some interest in worship of God and in obedience to his word? They are going to be in the synagogue on the Sabbath. And so Paul observes the Sabbath and goes and preaches. It is also interesting to note, and this is an argument from silence, which by their very nature are weaker than arguments from a statement of Scripture, but there are many accusations leveled against the apostles in the early days of the New Testament church.

They are accused of being wine-bibbers, just as Jesus was. They are accused of being rabble-rousers, of preaching against many things, of preaching against circumcision later on. One thing they are never accused of is breaking the Sabbath.

Nobody ever says, oh, these evil men don't even observe the Sabbath. Apparently they all continued to do their personal worship on the Sabbath. But the point here is one that we find in a number of passages, including the passage that Joseph mentioned in Romans 14, that Paul makes clear that esteeming every day alike is perfectly fine if you are doing it as unto the Lord.

Or observing a day is perfectly fine if you are doing it as unto the Lord. Another passage we have, you might turn with me to Colossians 2, verse 8. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. He goes on to give a wonderful passage of celebration about Christ and our identification with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Look at verse 14. That we have been made alive together with Him, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Now that specifically was the penalty manifested in the law of Moses. And those handwritings of requirements. Now what kind of requirement would be in handwriting? Well, that's specifically the Ten Commandments on the two tablets of stone.

The Lord God wrote those with His finger. It's handwriting in the most literal sense. And those handwritings of requirements were wiped out, nailed to the cross.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. Look at verse 16 of Colossians 2. So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Now every single one of these things mentioned in verse 16 is a feature of the Mosaic law.

The law specifies food. The law specifies drink. The law specifies festivals.

The law specifies the new moon. The law specifies sabbaths. And it's in the plural because it's not only the seventh-day sabbath, but the seventh-year sabbath, and the 49th-year sabbath, the 50th year.

Every 49 years they were to celebrate a sabbatical year. This was the basis for the length of captivity for the southern kingdom in Babylon. You look at the time period that they had existed where they had not observed those years, and God forced them to observe every one of those sabbatic years.

And that's why the period of captivity lasted as long as it did. So he says in verse 18, Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility, worship of angels or messengers, not holding fast to the head. Verse 20, Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations? Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using, according to the commandments and doctrines of men.

These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. Paul's larger argument is, in Romans and in Colossians and in Galatians, that the law had no transforming power. You could understand the rule.

It's just like people who have an addiction of some sort. Most people who have an addiction, they know that it's bad for them. They know that it produces unhappy results, but that knowledge that they shouldn't be doing it and that it's wrong and harmful, that knowledge alone doesn't have the power to change a person.

They want to put the Surgeon General's warning on every package of cigarettes. Well, people who smoke know all of that. That knowledge that it's bad for you doesn't give anyone the power to quit.

It takes transformation. It takes a new pattern of thinking. It takes a shifted perspective.

In many cases, it takes divine power to change thought patterns in the heart and in the soul, to value new things, to be sustained and motivated and enabled by the living Word of God and the Holy Spirit within. And simple knowledge of a rule doesn't give you the ability to keep it. So, what does Scripture tell us? We are free in Christ.

We are not under the law. We can choose any day. Indeed, we should choose every day.

Remember our Scripture reading this morning in Hebrews chapter 4? Turn back with me to that passage. Hebrews chapter 4. Therefore, since a promise remains of entering his rest. And this refers back to the content of the last part of chapter 3. God promised the

Israelites when He delivered them from Egypt that there was a rest in the land of Canaan, that they could enter.

Since a promise remains of entering his rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. The gospel was preached to us as well as to them. What is this gospel? This is not the gospel of salvation.

This is the gospel of promise. This is the gospel of full and abundant life, of blessing, of reward, of relationship with God in time and in ages future. The word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

And he is talking about the generation that dropped in the wilderness, right? If this idea of gospel being preached is the gospel of salvation, then the picture in the Old Testament is all messed up. Because this generation that he is talking about, who hears the word and it does not profit them, did they all stay in Egypt? Did they remain in bondage? Not at all. These people all came out of bondage in Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb.

And that is the picture of redemption in Christ. These people who dropped in the wilderness did not drop because they were not saved. They dropped because they were not obedient, because they did not trust.

Because when a couple of days went by with no water, they groused and complained and said, Oh, that we were back in Egypt. You brought us out here to die. It was not trusting God for daily life, for daily provision, for the promise of future things, that he would take them to a good land flowing with milk and honey.

They lost sight of that goal. They became caught up in the details of their daily life. Where is my water? Where is my bread? Where is my leeks and garlicks that I used to have? Even when I was a slave, I could have a little garlic with my food.

And here we have got this bland old manna that we gather every day. Something that tastes like coriander seeds. My idea is if you could take all those little seeds, those sesame seeds that are on a hamburger bun, if you could get a whole bunch of those and put it in the food processor and grind it into powder and mix a little water with it, that must be what manna tasted like.

It tasted like coriander seed, which is kind of like sesame seed. So it really was not like steak every day. It was subsistence.

It was a staple. It provided them their nourishment. But they had to mix things.

They would mix honey and other things with it to give it some variety and some flavor. But they were not satisfied with that. Oh no, we need more.

I remember back in the good old days, conveniently forgetting about the taskmasters and the beatings and the maimings and the killing of the infant sons and so forth. Why have you brought us out from Egypt? Short-sightedness as a believer, as a redeemed person, was their failure. This gospel is just like the gospel that we studied in our word study on that word throughout the Bible.

It's the truth that we are to live by as believers. And that truth, that teaching of the word, wasn't important to them. They didn't pay attention to it.

They didn't listen to it. It wasn't an article of faith. It wasn't an object of faith.

They were caught up in the affairs of daily life. That word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. They heard the word.

They had the teaching from Moses and Aaron and the priests. They had the pictures in the tabernacle and the sacrifices and so on. But it didn't become an object of faith.

It didn't matter in daily life. We who have believed do enter that rest. As he has said, I swore in my wrath they shall not enter my rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

This verse 3 is a reference back to our passage in Genesis chapter 2. God's works were finished from the foundation of the world. And he rested on the seventh day. And he wanted them to go into the place of rest in the finished works of God.

In the abundance that God had promised them. It was a certainty. When God promised them the land flowing with milk and honey, it was as good as done.

God had, in essence, provided them a Sabbath rest every day in the land. The opposite of their slavery and their hardship and their toil in bondage in Egypt is peace and prosperity in the land of promise. They go from slavery and toil and bondage to rest and peace and abundant blessing.

That's what God promised them as that rest. Well, how many days a week would you like to enjoy that rest in the power and provision of God, the peace and abundant life that God offers? Do you want to do that one day a week or do you want to do that every day of the week? Well, that's what the author of Hebrews is arguing here. He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way.

God rested on the seventh day from all his works. And again in this place, they shall not enter my rest. The idea is that the same kind of rest that God observed on the seventh day of creation is what he has promised his people.

That is not just one day of rest. That's their existence in the land. And the emphasis here, you don't see it so much in the English, but the emphasis here is on the word my in

verse 5. God promised that they would enter God's rest.

Well, what is God's rest? It's the looking around and seeing that everything is very good and seeing that it's holy and that it reflects the glory of God. And observing that, taking an entire day to do that is what God enjoined Israel to do. But the idea is that once they get into the land, every day should be a day of rest.

Entering the rest here, God's rest, is synonymous with entering the land. But they did not enter in because they had no faith. They didn't live the life of faith.

They didn't look ahead. They were short-sighted, self-centered, interested in what's going to happen today. And they didn't enter that rest.

And so the author here says there remains a rest for the people of God. There is still the possibility of entering God's rest on a daily basis. This is the true Sabbath.

This is the principle that's taught in the law of Moses with the seventh day Sabbath and the seventh year Sabbath and the year of Jubilee Sabbath. By the way, if you study closely, you'll see that every feast day in Israel was also a Sabbath. Passover and first fruits and trumpets and all of the other feast days, Pentecost, booths, these were all Sabbaths in addition to the seventh day Sabbath.

And that's an exceedingly important point when you study crucifixion week and the interval of time between Christ's crucifixion and his resurrection. Why was it that they had to break the bones of the two thieves to get them to die? Because they did not want them to be on the cross on the Sabbath. The day after the crucifixion was not Saturday.

It was a Sabbath. But the confusion has come by not understanding that holy days like Passover and the day following Passover and first fruits are also Sabbaths. And you have a whole row of Sabbaths there.

And of course the great confusion, how can we have Good Friday, which is supposedly crucifixion day, the day after being Saturday Sabbath and then you have Jesus rising on Sunday. Well, what happened to three days and three nights? Jesus said specifically, the sign of Jonah, the son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. I don't care how you slice it, you can't get three days and three nights out of Friday night, all day Saturday, and Saturday night.

Because early in the morning on the first day of the week, Jesus had risen. Now where do you get three days and three nights out of that? That is not the sign of Jonah. But the confusion has come because we don't understand what a Sabbath is.

A Sabbath is any day that God has sanctified and called a Sabbath. And he calls every feast day a Sabbath. But Israel not only often failed to observe those literal Sabbaths, but this generation that failed to enter the land missed the big Sabbath, the biggest

Sabbath of all, God's rest.

And there is still a promise of entering God's rest that remains. And this author here, the author of Hebrews, writing to Jewish Christians in the church age, uses their knowledge of the law and their knowledge of their own history to argue that there is still a rest that remains for the people of God. It's God's Sabbath rest.

And it isn't tied to a day, it's tied to faith. Faith is what allows us to enter that rest. Lack of faith is what prevents us from entering that rest.

And like these ones who dropped in the wilderness, we can miss the Sabbath rest of God. Now what does it mean, faith? Faith is kind of a generic term, have faith. What does faith mean on a daily basis? Well, think about any given day.

Pick a day of the week. Pick tomorrow. What's going to happen tomorrow? It's Monday, a lot of us are going back to work.

How are we going to exercise faith on Monday? We may be in the household, we may be driving somewhere, we may be accomplishing tasks. What does it mean to have faith? Well, why are we doing what we're doing? What is the point? What is the purpose? What am I trying to prove? What am I trying to achieve? What measure am I using to measure that day and say, this was a good day, this was a beneficial day, this was a worthwhile day, or this day was a waste, or this part of the day was a total waste of time. What is the measure? There is one eternal measure for measuring a day, and it's faith.

Did we live in faith? Did we trust God? Did we live that day and perform those tasks because we have a desire to please God? It doesn't really matter what we're doing. Obviously, sin and evil, we don't want to be engaged in that. But as far as the type of task, whether it's housework or computer work or menial work or blue-collar work or white-collar work or medical work or military work or whatever it might be, that's not the issue.

The issue is, how do we do what we do? Why do we do what we do? Am I a faithful employee or am I a beneficent employer because of who I am in Christ? Do I have my eye on the future? Do I have my eye on the evaluation of God? Am I attempting to live in the light of divine truth that's in the Bible? That's faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. It looks to the future.

Things you hope for aren't right now, they're future. If there is no future, there is no hope. That's why Paul argues to these people who think there's no resurrection from the dead, if you think there's no resurrection, then Christ is not raised and we're pitiful because our hope is only for this life and not for the next.

Paul says, if you don't have hope in the next life, your life is meaningless. Hope looks ahead. Hope looks to the return of Jesus Christ.

Hope looks to what God thinks and the eternal glory of God that we can reflect. If that doesn't permeate our day and permeate our thinking, we are wasting our time. Every day in the past that we have failed to do that, that day is gone, we can't get it back.

We did not enter into God's rest because we didn't live that day by faith. However, every one of us is still alive. We're still breathing and we have days ahead of us.

It may be few or it may be many, but we can redeem the time. We can look at the tasks that lie before us, not just as things to be done for their own sake, not as things to be done to please people, not as things to be done for self-gratification or self-esteem, but as things to be done heartily as unto the Lord. This is my row to hoe here and I'm going to hoe it well because I serve the living God and He has promised to sustain me, He has promised to bless me, He has promised that if I will trust Him, He will honor His promises to me, He will provide, He will protect, He will bless, and I will fulfill my calling and fulfill my function.

I will enter into the rest of God. What was the purpose of the original rest of God on the seventh day? For the entire universe to observe and reflect on the glory of God. God has just done the greatest thing anybody has ever seen.

He's created a universe, He has populated it with living creatures and culminating in the creation of man who is made in the image and after the likeness of God with a sovereign free will, with sentience, with self-consciousness, with an immortal soul. And all of the hosts of heaven look on what God has done and see that it is very good. It is a self-expression of God.

It enables us to spend the rest of eternity learning about God, figuring Him out, seeing His attributes and appreciating Him and glorifying Him. It's the greatest thing that's ever happened in eternal history, what God has done in creation. And it's worth stopping and reflecting on and living one's life in the light of.

Nothing else makes any difference. At the judgment seat of Christ, nobody is going to be bringing up their checkbook and saying, Well, here's the balance I had when I departed the life. I really did well.

No one's going to be bringing out snapshots. Well, here's the way my house looked when I left this earthly life. Or here's how many children I raised.

Or here's how long I stayed with the same company. Or any other criteria. What's the criteria going to be? Did we live by faith? Faith is the means of entering into rest.

Faith is the means of pleasing God. And it's not an abstract, it's a concrete. Why do we do what we do? That makes the difference.

Why do we worship on Sunday? We worship on Sunday because it is tradition. We

worship on Sunday because it is the day that Jesus Christ was raised. And we like this day for that reason.

Do we have any scriptural obligation to worship on this day? No. There is not a shred. There is not a hint.

There is not a vague implication anywhere in scripture that Sunday is a day of worship. We worship on Sunday because we choose to. And we are free in Christ to do so.

It is convenient for us that history and the society roots in Christianity allow us to take the day off and not work. And it's a very convenient day to worship. But we have equally important worship on Wednesday night or Friday night or any other day that we get together.

We can study the Word of God and worship God anytime we can find the occasion and have the opportunity. So there is no scriptural warrant. And there need not be any scriptural warrant.

Just as there is no warrant for what your church building should look like or if you should have pews or if you should have a baptistry or if you should have a steeple or if you should have instruments. Some people gather and sing a cappella. I hear a program on KAAM every morning at 8.30 for 15 minutes put on by the Church of Christ.

It's a pretty good program. But all their music is a cappella because the Church of Christ doesn't believe in instruments. Fine.

That's okay. The Bible doesn't say anything pro or con. If you make that a measure and say other people are unspiritual because they use instruments, now you have crossed the line.

But what you do to express your worship is your business. If you do it heartily as unto the Lord, if you're doing it in faith. People that worship on Saturday, great.

I have absolutely no problem with Seventh-day Adventists. If they want to get together and worship on Saturday, that's fine. If they understand why they're doing it and if they don't make it a measure and say these other people are wrong and pagan and unscriptural, that's where it becomes wrong.

We can meet on Saturday. We meet on Friday nights. Not many groups do that.

Friday night is typically party night, date night, movie night or whatever. But our worship is just as valuable and just as meaningful on that day. We are free in Christ.

And you remember in Colossians, the injunction is do not let anyone judge you for what you do and why you do it. Do not let anyone judge you because you do or don't attend church. You shouldn't think any more of yourself because you go to church on a weekly

basis or think any less of yourself because you don't.

However, what we do have to concentrate on is the principle that we are enjoined to make the object of our faith and practice, and that is to put the Lord first. Are we, in fact, honoring God in our life? Are we consistently in His Word? Do we consistently take the time and opportunity to worship with fellow believers? All of those are commands of Scripture. It is convenient because of the way our society and calendar is organized to worship on Sunday and to make it a regular thing.

We often do better if we have a schedule as opposed to working in a free-form fashion. But there is no judgment that you can put on anyone for coming or not coming, for worshiping on any particular day. And Paul specifically says in Colossians 2, don't let anyone judge you.

It's none of their business. You can observe all the Jewish feast days if you want to. Some believers like paying attention to the Jewish calendar and observing Passover.

That's great if you're doing it for the right reasons. Whatever is not of faith is sin. Whatever is of faith enters us into that Sabbath rest, and that's what counts.

And that's a good note on which to close on this Sunday morning. We have freedom in Christ. Knowing the truth sets us free.

Making that truth the object of our faith enters us into the rest of God. And it's a wonderful place of abundance and peace. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege that we have of assembling together and studying your word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make these things real to us. We'll use them as his sharp sword to divide us under the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow, and to discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts so that we may examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith and to be transformed and brought closer to the example that we have in Jesus Christ, that we will fulfill our calling and reflect his glory both now and in the age to come.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.