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The Exclusivity of God's Day – Part 2

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Series: *Loving God in Every Way – The Book of Deuteronomy*

Introduction: Turn with me in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 5, Deuteronomy chapter 5. We have the joy of returning to the 4th commandment this morning. As we have worked our way through these commandments we have found much encouragement and correction as we have seen God more clearly and have been challenged to honor Him more completely. If you have not been with us, or if you just need a helpful reminder, let me review a bit about the 10 commandments. These 10 words are given by God through Moses to the people of Israel. They are the fountainhead out of which the rest of the Law flows which means that we find the heart of God's Law to His people in these 10 words. So, in trying to understand our Old Testament, it is hard to overstate the importance of getting our understanding of the 10 commandments right.

You'll remember that the people of Israel are on the East side of the Jordan River, across from the Promised Land. They are anticipating the day when God tells them it is time to enter the land and overthrow the pagan peoples of the land and take what God has promised to them. And this is true because God has redeemed them from slavery in Egypt by the working of his great power. So, they are to remember this great work of God on their behalf to make them His own people. They are to love God who has loved them so greatly as to redeem them, and they are to show that love for Him by keeping these 10 commandments. So, these commandments are not the way to salvation, but they are the response of the people of God to show their love for Him. But as we will see this morning, this Law of Moses exposed the sinful hearts of God's people and so the Law condemns us rather than saves us.

There has been so much value for us as we have explored the first three commandments. But those have been dealing with universally important and applicable truths – to have no other gods before God, and to not make a carved image of God, and to not take the name of God in vain. But in this fourth commandment we have been forced to deal with how this Old Covenant commandment relates to New Covenant Christians. How is the believer in Christ supposed to relate to the Law given through Moses? And that is the main question we will seek to answer this morning. Before we do, let's read the commandment again as it is found in Deuteronomy 5. *Read 5:12-15.*

We learned last time that this commanded rest in the 4th commandment is holy, universal, and a memorial. So, they are all to observe this rest, and they are to do it as an expression of the holiness of God, and they are to do it as a way to remember God's work in rescuing them from Egypt. So, what are we to do with this command – just adopt it wholesale into the Christian

life? Abandon it altogether and just forget about it? How should we relate to this commandment?

Chuck Swindoll tells the story of a young married couple who were attending a legalistic Christian college. The rule of the college was that you could not do any work at all on Sundays. They transferred the Sabbath command to Sunday – the first day of the week – and they applied it wholesale to the Christian ethic. Well, this young husband was zealous for keeping the rules and so he spied on his wife and caught her hanging out some clothes that she had washed on Sunday afternoon. And so he decided that he needed to turn her in for breaking the school's rule! I am sure that their next week or so of marriage was a real joy!¹

So, rather than being that guy, let's consider what the Scriptures actually say about our relationship to the OT Law, and to this commandment in particular. Last time we established from 6 different New Testament texts that Christ is our Sabbath rest. He came as the ultimate fulfillment of the Law – meaning that all of the Law was pointing to Him and anticipating Him and was perfectly kept by Him. We rest in Him by faith that He has completely kept the Law of God on our behalf. Therefore, we can be counted as righteous before God because we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and so in Christ we can cease from all of our attempts to make ourselves right with God. So, the question this morning is, how does that settled relationship with God through Christ change our relationship to His Old Covenant Law? And the answer to that question is both simple and complex. Some Christians just flippantly say – well, we are not under the law anymore so I don't need to be concerned with it – in fact, I don't even know why my pastor is preaching out of Deuteronomy for crying out loud. And while it is technically true that we are not under the Law anymore, this does not mean that it gets kicked to the curb as useless information from a previous time in the history of God's people. So, what I want to do this morning is to walk you through the most crucial texts in our New Testament which help us develop a right view of the Law and our relationship to it. And then, with that knowledge from the Scriptures I want to close out this morning with some application of how we as Christians should live in light of the 4th commandment. The undergirding belief in this method is that Scripture is its own best interpreter. So, from Deuteronomy I want you to turn to Romans chapter 3.

- I. Christ is Our Sabbath Rest – Mt. 5:17-20; 11:28-30; Lk. 24:44; Col. 2:16-19; Heb. 4:8-10
- II. Christ is Our Law Giver – Rom. 3:20; 5:19-21; 7:4-6; 8:1-4; 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 9:20-21; Gal. 5:13-15; 6:2
 - a. As we try to solve this question about the Christians relationship to the Law, I want to walk you through several texts from the preeminent Law guy of the New Testament outside of Christ – and that is the Apostle Paul. We considered last time together what Jesus had to say about the law, and in particular about the 4th commandment. We saw that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law in that the Law was given in anticipation of Him and He completed its purpose by perfectly

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, pg. 238.

keeping it. It is still useful and should still be taught, as he says in Matthew 5:20, but it is now useful as we look at the Law through Christ. So, to round out that picture we will look at what Paul teaches us about how we relate to the Law now that we are in Christ.

- b. And Paul is a good choice right? Didn't Paul say in Philippians 3 that he was a Jew of the Jews and a Pharisee of the Pharisees? Didn't he claim that according to the Law he was what? Blameless! So, if there is any New Testament author that is going to push for us to continue under the stipulations of the Law then it is going to be Paul. And, if there is anyone who can give us a thorough explanation about this issue as one who really knows and has himself tried to keep the Law before Christ, then it is Paul. So, what does he say about this? What does the New Testament Law expert say to us about how we should now relate to the Law of Moses?
 - i. The Law Brings a Knowledge of Sin – Rom. 3:20
 1. Well, right here in Romans 3:20 we learn that the Law does not ever justify us, but rather through the Law comes knowledge of sin. *Read 3:19-20.*
 2. The law lets us know just how sinful we are because it sets the righteous standard of God and shows us how completely we have missed the mark of God's holiness. The Law then is not the path to being made right with God but the path to knowing just how wrong you are before God. So, the Law leads us to know how much we need forgiven rather than to a knowledge of how right we are before God.
 - ii. The Law Increases Sin – Rom. 5:19-21
 1. Now turn to Romans 5. In verses 20-21 we learn why this is true. The law brings a knowledge of sin because we were born in Adam and were thereby made sinners before God. *Read 5:19-21.*
 2. God gave the Law to expose and even to provoke the depth of man's sinful rebellion against God. This does not make the Law evil or wrong in any way. In fact, in chapter 7 of Romans Paul says in verse 12 that the law is holy and righteous and good. It is not the Law which is at fault, but our sinfulness which is at fault. The law provokes that sinfulness by calling us to obey when we are unable to obey because of our sinful, unregenerate nature.
 3. Do you remember the section of John Bunyan's book *Pilgrim's Progress*, where he enters Interpreter's house? As Pilgrim is on his journey to the Celestial City he enters into this house and as he is in the parlor of this house a man enters and begins to sweep the dust to clean up, but rather than cleaning the parlor the dust is stirred up and great clouds of dust fill the room and everyone begins to choke on the dust. Then Interpreter calls for a maid to bring water and sprinkle the water all over the room to get rid of

the dust. Interpreter goes on to explain to Pilgrim that the parlor represented the heart of an unsaved man and the one who entered and started sweeping was the Law, and the maid who sprinkled water on the room was the Gospel. The point was that the Law can only stir sin up because it is our sinful hearts that are the problem. We need someone to enter and cleanse the dust.

iii. We are Dead to the Law in Christ – Rom. 7:4-6

1. And that cleansing agent is Jesus Christ. In fact, look over at chapter 7 and verses 4-6. The Law increases our sinfulness and proves our condemnation before a holy God. But in these 3 verses we learn the vital truth that we are dead to the law in Christ, and now belong to another. The context in the first three verses is that Paul is using the analogy of a woman who is legally bound to her husband while he is alive. But once the husband dies, she is free to marry another. So, in verse 4 he says – *Read 7:4-6*.
2. So, we are released from the law because we are dead to its authority and its condemnation over us because we are united to Christ by grace through faith in Him. His perfect righteousness has fulfilled the Law on our behalf and in him we are free from the law's power and the law's demands. But does this mean that we are free to not care about godliness and holiness? Can we now just live it up because we are out from under the law? No, the purpose statement in the text is very clear. At the end of verse 4 we are free from the law in Christ in order that we might bear fruit for God. In the resurrection of Christ we too are raised from spiritual death to spiritual life and we now have the ability and the power and the blessed privilege to walk in righteous and good ways before God and unto God. So, in verse 6, we are released from the law and are no longer captive to it because we died to it in Christ, and now we get to serve in the new way of the Spirit of God and not in the old way of the written code!

iv. We can now truly fulfill the Law – Rom. 8:1-4

1. But there is more! Look over at chapter 8, verses 1-4. *Read 8:1-4*.
2. Did you catch all of that? God sent his son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin so that sin is condemned in the flesh – specifically in the body of Jesus Christ. That is what we remembered and rejoiced in last weekend as we looked back on the Cross work of Christ. In his body on the tree, this sinless Son of God was condemned in our place, bore our sin, and died our death under the penalty of the Law that we deserve to die. In his death, burial, and resurrection – the righteous requirement of the Law is dealt with for us. If we are in Christ then we are no longer under the

condemnation of God which we have earned through our breaking of God's law.

3. And since that is all true for the Christian then they can be lawless and abounding in sin so that the grace of God may abound all the more?! No, of course not! Rather, the purpose of all of this is that now we can walk according to the Spirit of God instead of according to the flesh. And did you catch what happens then in verse 4? We fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law. Meaning we are no longer weakened by the sinful flesh which cannot keep the law at all but can only increase in sin. Rather, in Christ, we are raised to newness of spiritual life and can now obey God – saying no to sin and yes to God. We can now walk, empowered by the Spirit of God and directed by the Word of God in ways which actually fulfill the righteous law of God. This is why when Paul turns his attention to practical instruction in the book of Romans, will use 4 of the 10 commandments to teach us to love our neighbor and thereby fulfill the law. So, look over at Romans 13:8-10. *Read 13:8-10.*
4. Before Christ these laws provoke our sinfulness. But in Christ we are enabled to truly keep these laws of God which are summarized by the second part of the Great Commandment of Christ to love your neighbor as yourself. James 1:25 describes this as the perfect law and the law of liberty, and in James 2:8 it is called the royal or supreme law – that you are to love your neighbor as yourself. James' point is that if you have faith in Christ then you will display the righteousness of Christ through your actions thereby proving that your faith is genuine and true. And when you do this, empowered by Christ and led by His Spirit – then you truly fulfill the Law God has given for us to follow.
- v. We are under Christ's Law, and Led by His Spirit – 1 Cor. 9:20-21; Gal. 5:13-15; 6:2
 1. But does this mean then that we as Christians are still in some way under the stipulations of the Law of Moses, and the difference in Christ now is that we can keep those laws rather than not keep those laws? Well, let's stick with Paul to answer that question, and turn to 1 Corinthians 9. While you're turning there, the short answer is no. We are not still under the stipulation of the Law of Moses, but rather we are now under the law of Christ. *Read 9:20-21.*
 2. There is much to say from this classic section from Paul, but I am interested in how he thinks of his relationship to the Law. He is not under the law of Moses, but when he is around Jews who are under the Law, he is free to follow the law so as to not needlessly offend them and thereby be used to tell them of their Messiah, the

Lord Jesus Christ. But when he is around those who are not under the Law of Moses, the Gentiles, then he is free from the stipulations of Mosaic Law. So, he does not need to keep the Sabbath or the dietary codes, for example. But does this mean that he is now lawless because he is out from under the law of Moses? Well of course not! So, in verse 21 he makes clear that he is under the law of Christ now, and no longer under the law of Moses. But what is this law of Christ? So, Paul is not lawless, but what law is he under? Well, the text doesn't specifically say, so it would appear that Paul thinks it is obvious, or can be easily figured out. So, what would be the obvious answer to that question? Wouldn't it be that we are under all that Christ himself said? That we are to obey the word of Christ in all things. And that the Old Testament Law is now to be understood through and in Christ. So, where Christ teaches us that we are to keep aspects of the Law as His followers, then we must seek to do that as we are empowered by His Spirit. But where Christ completes some aspect of the Law and does not call us to continue to follow it, then we are free from that stipulation of the Old Covenant Law. And this principle is summarized in Jesus' summary of our responsibility in the Great Commandment – that we are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and we are to love our neighbor as yourself.

3. This is what Paul says in Galatians 6:2 – that we are to bear one another's burdens and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. This is the keeping of the great commandment, and therefore it is following the Law of Christ.
4. So, to summarize – the law of Moses was given by God to show us our sinfulness and to provoke our sinfulness. This made known to us that the Law good at exposing sin, but not at curing our sin problem. We need a better solution to our sin problem than the Law. We need Christ. And in Christ, the law is perfectly obeyed and the condemnation of the law which we have earned is perfectly satisfied in Jesus' suffering and judgment upon the Cross of Calvary. If we have been born again in Christ we are no longer under the stipulations given in the Law of Moses, but are now freed in Christ to walk in righteous and good ways which please God. And we are now under the Law of Christ and led by His Spirit to live each day in honor of His name and in obedience to His commands.
5. So, what does all of that have to do with the 4th commandment – to honor the Sabbath day and to keep it holy? Well, as I have already told you, Christ is our Sabbath rest. So, in a very unique way, Christ fulfills the 4th commandment, not just by keeping it

throughout his life, but by becoming the substance of which the Sabbath was the shadow. So, when we enter into Christ by faith we are entering into the spiritual rest which the Sabbath was meant to anticipate. And so, of all of the 10 commandments, which are the fountainhead of the Law, the 4th commandment is the only one that is not repeated in the New Testament as a call to believer's in Christ to obey. The other 9 are re-stated and re-applied to the Christian in the New Testament. So, why is the 4th commandment left out? Because it no longer matters? No, but because it is uniquely fulfilled in Christ. He is our Sabbath rest. So, we no longer need to avoid work on the 7th day and not do any work as we remember God's deliverance of his people from slavery in Egypt. Rather, when Christ went into the tomb he took the Sabbath with Him, and as B.B. Warfield says, he brought the Lord's Day with him out of the tomb on that Resurrection Morning! And this is what we see in the Early Church after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. So, as we seek to apply all the truths about the Sabbath and Christ's fulfillment of it, that is what I want to do – I want us to look to the Early Church to see what their practice was. And I want to show you that they no longer kept the Sabbath. And actually, we are not given any instruction about resting or keeping one day holy as different from another in the New Testament. And as we see the Spirit of God come into the church of God in Acts 2, and as we examine their pattern after that, we are not given a lot of specifics about times and rhythms for their gatherings.

III. Christ's Spirit is Our Guide – Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10; Gal. 5:16

- a. So, what should we do with this? Well, my conclusion is that Christ's Spirit must be our Guide as we seek to honor the Lord with every area of our life, and especially with this category of making one day holy or not. So, maybe your family growing up had strict regulations for Sunday – you couldn't mow the lawn or do the laundry or run the vacuum or work at your job. Maybe you couldn't even do homework or read a book unless it was a spiritually instructive book. Maybe you had to rest in the afternoon and for you farmers, you certainly couldn't do any work other than the bare essentials to get your livestock fed and cared for. Or maybe you grew up in a home where that wasn't the tradition at all, and you see it in other's and you can't wrap your mind around it. Well, let's take what we've learned about the Sabbath and let's apply it to our practice and patterns for Sunday. We are no longer under the Mosaic Law. We do not have to keep the stipulations of the Sabbath. In fact, this specific command finds its glorious fulfillment in Christ. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we explicitly told to take Sunday as the Christian Sabbath and make that day set apart as holy and filled with rest. In fact, most of the things I just mentioned about Christian Sabbath principles find their origin in the Puritans rather than in the Scriptures. And so

the temptation for us is to become like the Pharisees who are more interested in keeping the oral traditions of men rather than actually seeking to honor God by hearing and heeding His Word. And so our rhythms could easily become as ritualistic and man centered as those of the Pharisees who thought they were right with God because of all they did and didn't do in keeping their oral traditions.

- b. Does that mean then that we are lawless? That we can now just live however we please here? Well, no! Remember, we learned that in Christ we are freed from the Law so that we can now walk in the new way of the Spirit and bear fruit for God. So, while there is no Christian Sabbath restrictions for Sunday, this does not mean that Sunday is a free for all where we can now walk according to the desires of our flesh and live as we please. No, we must still, as on any other day, we must still be led by the Spirit of God.
- c. But what does that mean as it relates to the Lord's Day? And this is where I am deducing application from the practice of the New Testament church. What did it look like for them to be led by the Spirit in this area? What did the Spirit of God, as he directed their understanding and application of the Law of Christ – what did he direct them to do?
- d. Well, it is interesting to note that they did not meet on the Sabbath. In fact, in the book of Acts, the first 12 chapters are the Jewish section where we are told the account of the Gospel blossoming and growing the church in Jerusalem. And not once is the Sabbath mentioned in those 12 chapters as a day of meeting or as a day for rest or worship – not once. And throughout the book of Acts we read about the Christians meeting and being devoted to the Apostle's teaching and doctrine and pray and fellowship and breaking of bread together. But we are not told much about when they met, or about how often they met.
- e. Finally, in Acts 20 we are told that on the first day of the week, on Sunday, Paul and the missionary team met with the church in Troas. They ate together and Paul preached, in fact, he preached until midnight and poor Eutychus fell into a deep sleep and fell from the window and died. But Paul raised him from the dead! So, we learn that the Spirit of God directed the people of God to get together and to listen to the teaching of the Apostle Paul – at least on that one Sunday evening.
- f. Later in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Paul instructs the church in Corinth to give something on the first day of the week to help with the gift the church will give to Paul to carry to the churches in Judea who are suffering from a severe drought. The implication in the text is that they were regularly gathering on Sunday's and this was when they were to take up this offering for the relief of the Jerusalem church.
- g. And then in Revelation 1:10 John describes for us how he exiled on the isle of Patmos for being a leader in the Church. He says in verse 10 that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and he heard a loud voice like a trumpet behind him speaking to him. The importance of that text is that John by the end of the First Century was referring to Sunday as the Lord's Day. In other words, in his mind, and in the church's practice there was something unique about this day – the first

day of the week. And John was in the Spirit on that day. Certainly there is some apostolic mystery there as to what it meant for John to be in the Spirit because the very next thing that happens to him is that he receives direct revelation from Christ. So, that is not going to be our experience on the Lord's Day. But, like John, I would argue, we should seek to be in the Spirit. And this is true for every day, but this ought especially be true on the Lord's Day. This means that we are not to be led by the Law or by our oral tradition of what is good and right practice on the Lord's Day, but that we should be directed by God's Spirit as He applies His Word to our hearts. And as we are empowered by the Spirit to keep the Law of Christ, this should shape what we do on the Lord's Day week in and week out.

- h. This means that Sunday should especially be a day of love for God and love for one another. Is it wrong for a church to meet on another day? No. It's not ideal and it doesn't exactly follow the pattern of the New Testament Church – but there are places in the world where they can't logistically meet on Sundays. And I certainly don't think that dishonors the Lord for them to meet on Friday when all the Muslims are going to the Mosque – here are the Christians meeting together in the name of Christ – that honors God!
- i. But we can meet on the Lord's Day, and this is our pattern and rhythm. Not just because it is tradition, but because we are compelled by the Spirit of God to gather with the people of God to declare the glory of God as we submit to the truth of God. And in all that we do we are seeking to be led by the Spirit to keep the law of Christ and to bear fruit to God.
- j. So, what about your habits and rhythms on the Lord's Day? Is this a day in which you especially seek to serve the body of Christ and give yourself to the keeping of the one another commands of the law of Christ? On the Lord's Day are you seeking to be especially led by the Spirit of God as he directs you into the people of God? Are you obeying a law, maybe even an oral tradition rather than being compelled by the grace of Christ to walk in love toward God and others? Is the Lord's Day really about the Lord in your life, or is it a day which is partially given to Christ and then mostly given to the desires of your flesh?

Conclusion: Beloved, how can you take the next step in growing in your love for God and your love for others, particularly on the Lord's Day? As elders we have set a rhythm which we constantly evaluate and try to tweak and change as we think helpful. But it is a rhythm for our church family that we think is especially conducive to helping you make your Sunday about the Lord. We call you to meet together in the morning and in the evening on the Lord's Day because we think that bookending this day with public worship as a church helps us love God and love one another more. These gatherings provide an opportunity to bear one another's burdens and seek to serve one another as we exhort one another to love and good works. Hebrews 10 tells us that we must not neglect the regular assembly of the body. So, as you think about those regular assemblies and your current practice, the question is – are you being led by the Spirit of God in your current decisions? Or are you led by your flesh or by a law of your own making? Or are compelled by the great grace of God to do what you do? May Christ be glorified in the church as we seek to honor Him on every day, but especially on the day that weekly reminds us of His glorious resurrection from the dead! Let's pray.