

Theme: Again and Again

Object: Cell phone with apps – Angry Bird

SLIDE

Can you remember a time when you wanted something? I mean REALLY, REALLY wanted something? You wanted it so much that you thought you just couldn't live without it? Perhaps it was that popular new video game, or maybe you wanted your very own cell phone so that you could call your friends any time you wanted to talk to them. When you really want something, what do you do? You ask your parents for it, right? Do you just ask them once and hope that will be enough? No way! You ask them again and again. You keep on asking and hoping that they will get so tired of hearing you ask, that they will give in and give you what you want.

Let me tell you a little secret about your parents. They love to do nice things for you. They also want what is best for you and they are wise enough to know that it isn't always best to give you everything you want. They will let you ask again and again, unless they know it is not best for you. When it is not best for you they will tell you to stop asking.

That is the way it is with our Heavenly Father too. Jesus once told a story that showed us that when we want our Heavenly Father to do something for us - we should keep on praying and not give up.

The story that Jesus told was about a woman who went to a judge and said, "My rights are being violated. Protect me!" At first, the judge refused to do anything, but the woman kept asking him. Finally, he said, "I will see that this woman gets justice because she keeps bothering me! If I don't help her, she will wear me out."

"So what makes you think God won't step in and help His children, when they keep on crying out for help? Won't God stick up for them? "I assure you, He will," Jesus said. God will always give us what is best for us and when it is not best for us He will say "No."

Our Heavenly Father loves to do nice things for us. He also wants what is best for us and He has the wisdom to know what is best. But don't forget, God likes to hear us ask, again and again. God loves hearing our prayers.

Father, we know that You hear us when we pray and You answer in the way that is best for us. Help us to be faithful to pray. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Slide Sabbath

Today I want to examine the second half of verse 9 of John chapter 5, **Slide**

“Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began* to walk.

Now it was the Sabbath on that day.” **Blank** By the words of Christ, words of power and authority the man is instantly healed and picks up his pallet and walks away.

This is followed by a short sentence in verse 9 and in this sentence the Apostle John deals with a major conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. **Slide** “Now it

was the Sabbath on that day.” The Sabbath would become a growing rift to the point that the Jewish authorities would plot Jesus’ death and break their precious laws to do so. As Christians we see the need for Jesus to be foremost in our lives.

As Peter Forsythe, the Scottish theologian from the 19th century said, **Slide** “The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but its Master”. It is not man-made laws that give us our freedom, but it is the giving over of our lives to Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We are to submit to Christ and enjoy His grace. **Blank**

We will spend time this morning to quickly examining the Jewish view of the Sabbath, a view that had grown from a godly biblical gift from God Himself to Israel and Israel had reduced it to a man-made ritual. This issue of the Sabbath, Saturday or Sunday, does not appear to be all that serious for many Americans. However, at the time of Christ the Sabbath was a very serious matter. My teaching this morning is an overview. To deal with the Sabbath in depth and the scriptures needed would require far more time than we have this morning. I will be at “The Pastor is in” Monday evening, as usual, if anyone desires to discuss the Sabbath in greater depth.

As Christ's ministry progressed the Sabbath became a greater and greater dividing point between the egocentric Jewish leadership and Jesus. Jesus' refusal, here at the pool, to observe the legalistic and man-made Sabbath regulations of rabbinic tradition was a growing point of contention between Him and Israel's leadership. Jesus never did anything without purpose and the fact that the Lord deliberately chose to heal this poor man on the Sabbath was designed to confront the superficial and bankrupt Jewish legalism of their Sabbath. This man had been at the pool a long time and his condition was not life threatening – Jesus could have waited until another day. However, Jesus wanted to confront the unbiblical laws that the self-righteous leaders of Israel had placed on the people and call the nation back to God through repentance. Matthew said it well when he quoted Jesus' own words, **Slide** "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:8-9 ESV) Men had taken it upon themselves to add their laws to God's gift of the Sabbath. The Jewish leaders, Pharisees and scribes were teaching that their man-made laws were of God when simply they were not. In truth what they were doing was **Slide** "teaching as doctrines (of God) the commandments of men." Quickly here is the list of thirty-nine laws concerning the Sabbath that had been added to God's word. We will not spend a lot of time on these laws, but you will see the problem they created. They are listed by categories, but are not limited to these categories.

Slide **Field Work** – Sowing, Plowing, Reaping, Binding Sheaves, Threshing, Winnowing, Selecting, Grinding, Sifting, Kneading and Baking

Slide **Making Material Curtains** - Shearing Wool, Cleaning, Combing, Dyeing, Spinning, Stretching the Threads, Making Loops, Weaving Threads, Separating

the Threads, Tying a Knot, Untying a Knot, Sewing, Tearing

Slide **Making Leather Curtains** – Trapping, Slaughtering, Skinning, Salting, Tanning, Scraping and Cutting

Slide **Making the Beams of the Mishkan** **Click** *(Tabernacle)* – Writing and Erasing. This is NOT limited to functions of the Tabernacle, but all writing and erasing.

Slide **The Putting up and Taking down of the Mishkan** – Building and Breaking Down

Slide **The Mishkan's Final Touches** - Extinguishing a Fire, Kindling a Fire, Striking the Final Hammer Blow and Carrying **Blank**

The Old Testament in Exodus prohibited working on the Sabbath, but it did not specify exactly what kind of work that was forbidden. It seems that the Lord was referring to one's normal and customary work or employment. The Israelites were not to continue in their normal weeklong occupations on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath was a gift from God for people to rest and worship Him. The concept of setting one day aside in seven for rest and worship of God is still in effect today. So, if the Sabbath is a day of rest, if it is a gift of God and if Jesus is God; then Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath as is written in Matthew 12.

I want to explore Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath, and the literally meaning of the word Sabbath in the Hebrew as the "day of rest." Jesus being the Lord of the Sabbath is a theme that is always in the background of the next four chapters in John's gospel narrative. As we begin, a crucial question that must be answered is,

Slide "Is the Christian to be ruled by grace or by laws and works?" Dr. Lewis Chafer made this statement from his study of the Sabbath, **Slide** "The distinction between

the reign of law and the reign of grace is at no point more sharply drawn than in the question of the observance of the seventh day of the week or the first day of the week; for these two days are symbolical of the dispensations to which they are related.” **Blank** For many who label themselves as “Christian” the Sabbath is a system of human works that builds character and from this their merit with God increases. By following the strict observance of the Old Testament Sabbath they then have opportunity to prove to God their faith by meritorious works. However, God desires our hearts not outwards works.

Those who claim it is necessary to observe the Sabbath go back to Genesis in which we read, **Slide** “And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” (Genesis 2:2-3 ESV) Many individuals and denominations claim that setting apart the Sabbath day by God began at the end of Creation and was established in the Garden of Eden as a law that is binding on every member of the human race. But Genesis chapter 2 does not say this. God rested and He blessed the day. However, this is not the same thing as sanctifying it. If God had sanctified the seventh day then He would have made sure that Adam and his descendants observed the seventh day as the Sabbath. There is no record in the Bible or elsewhere of the observance of the Sabbath before Moses. Prior to Moses there is evidence of sacrifices, of prayer, of circumcision, but not Sabbath keeping. Beyond this there is no evidence in the Bible or in historical documents that any nation outside of Israel observed the Sabbath. Adding weight that the Sabbath observance was NOT ordained by God from creation is found in the Book of Job. Job is considered the oldest book in the Bible, yet in spite of the fact that 42 chapters

deal with many details of human obligation towards God - the Sabbath is not even mentioned. **Blank**

In the Book of Nehemiah where Nehemiah showed the people how they had sinned and is speaking of God's relationship to Israel it is written, **Slide** "You (God) came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and you (God) made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant. (Nehemiah (9:13-14 ESV)) The establishing of the Sabbath is linked to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. This then implies that the Sabbath was not known or observed prior to this time. So the Sabbath came with the law and the law was for Israel – there is no indication that the laws of Moses were given for all nations.

In Exodus we read of the Sabbath, **Slide** "And the LORD said to Moses, 'You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you...' **Slide** Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.' " (Exodus 31:12-13 and 16 ESV) It is clear from this passage that the covenant of the Sabbath was between God and the nation of Israel. It takes blind determination to describe the Sabbath as anything but a sign between God and Israel. To apply these words of Exodus to any other nation other than Israel or miss the fact that the Sabbath was part of the law and was intended to distinguish the nation of Israel from all other nations is reckless. So God had commanded the Sabbath for the Jewish people, but the leaders had perverted it by transforming the Sabbath into a system of man-made laws by which, they thought, they earned God's

merit by their good works. **Blank** This had reduced the observance of the Sabbath to a horrible form of legalism. The leaders were **Slide** “teaching as doctrines (of God) **the commandments of men.**” As we saw the Pharisees and scribes and had written 39 laws concerning the Sabbath. These 39 laws are in effect to this day for the Jewish people. However these 39 laws could be interpreted in hundreds if not thousands of ways. To demonstrate how far these laws could be taken let me give a couple of examples.

Slide When the man at the pool picked up his mat and carried it as he walked off, was a violated the law, the Sabbath Law forbids “Carrying.” **Blank** The question is then what is a burden of carrying? I have a handkerchief in my pocket, is that a burden? The answer is, “Yes” as defined by Judaism because I am carrying it. **Tie handkerchief around neck.** But the answer would be “no” if I was wearing it as an article of my clothing. So if I had worn my handkerchief to church, (although traveling more than about ¼ mile is a violation of the Sabbath law) and once I got to church took it off and placed it here next to me in case I sneezed that would have been within the law and acceptable. Lets say, I am out walking and I spit, I know that is not a nice thing to do, but let’s say I do spit. Is that work? It depends on what happens to the spit. If it lands on the pavement that is not work. But if it lands on the dirt and makes a small furrow in the dirt, well then, that is “plowing” and therefore it is now work. So you can see for me to observe the Sabbath and be a religious person more or less depends on which direction I spit.

All of these laws and their variations Jesus found to be oppressive to the people and offensive to God’s gift of the Sabbath to Israel. Jesus would show clearly the proper balance by demonstrating that the Sabbath was made for man, and God had never intended that man was made for the Sabbath. Jesus was paving the way and

preparing people for the fuller revelation of God's grace in that He, as the Son of God, had come to earth, by what His impending death and His conquering of death by His resurrection would offer salvation to all people by grace and faith, not by the law.

In Bible we know there were exceptions to Sabbath observance and that these were accepted. The Sabbath is not as ridged as the Pharisees wanted people to believe. Here is just one - the story of King David in Matthew chapter 12 where he and his men were walking through the fields on the Sabbath, a violation of the Sabbath law against travel, and they plucked the heads of grain, a violation of harvesting, rubbed the grain in their hands to separate the chaff, again a violation of Sabbath law, and then ate the gain. David was running for his life from the disobedient people who had turned away from the king that God had ordained. These people had rejected God's anointed king to follow Absalom. Jesus says at the end of the story of King David, **Slide** "If you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." (Matthew 12:7-8 ESV) Problems with the Sabbath had grown up to Christ's time. It was hypocritical of God's gift of the Sabbath for the scribes and Pharisees to insist upon their Sabbath laws while they turned their backs on God's anointed Messiah. Jesus was before them, the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus was greater than their beautiful Temple and they rejected Him based on Old Testament man-made laws, that is truth were meaningless to their relationship with God. Laws may control people's behavior, but laws can do nothing for the condition of the heart.

The Jewish leaders led the people into a system of legalism that blinded them of their need for a relationship with God and substituted ritual for relationship. This is the meaning when Jesus said, **Slide** "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." Because Jesus was telling the people to repent and return to a relationship with God; and

they need not be bound by man-made laws that had been added to the Sabbath.

Blank This is why the Jewish leaders became determined to kill Him in order not to deal with their true need of being in a relationship with God. The problem with this plan was that these Jewish leaders wanted to dispose of Jesus without defiling themselves for the Passover. So they got together and came up with a plan that they had convinced themselves would keep them within the laws, the laws they had written, but not God's law. They would arrest Jesus and the trial would be at night, which was illegal, but not so illegal that people would get upset and somehow they said this would not violate their law or the Passover. Next would follow an early morning trial. They could not get the witnesses to tell the same lies, but convicted Jesus away. From here they went to Pilate, but did not enter his compound, for this would defile a Jew, which in my opinion they were already defiled in their hearts of treachery. Entering Pilate's compound would defile them and they would not be able to eat the Passover meal. Finally they would end this mockery with Jesus' execution. The whole thing would be over by noon and with the nasty business behind them they could be with their families and celebrate the Passover – an empty ritual because of the condition of their hard hearts towards God. They created the rules as they went, which they had been doing for hundreds of years. Let this be a stark reminder of how easy it is for man to take a relationship with God and reduce it to a set of man-made laws, rules and ceremonies that actually take people away from God. We do not seem to have a problem today in defining what are laws or rules and the futile efforts of people to earn their salvation through works. This is exactly what makes false religious systems like the Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Islam and a number of others false religions and they take millions to eternal ruin. But are we not seeing the same thing here with Judaism? This plan of Satan's to get people to focus on anything but directly on God has worked from the time of the Garden. The fashionable return to our Jewish roots,

the rapid growth of Messianic Congregations, **in general**, is not the desire to understand Judaism as a means to better understand the New Testament and the saving grace of Christ, but in truth it is a return to a broken system of men that Jesus came to destroy over two thousand years ago. It is a system that takes our focus off of Jesus as the primary source of our salvation by His grace and replaces it with a broken system of laws and works where we are in control. It did not work for Israel or any other religion and it does not work today. Jesus demands obedience to Him, not to a set of man-made laws. Surrender to Christ and know His grace and mercy.

You see, in contrast to the deadly effects of legalism that the Jewish people had come to live by, Jesus simply showed by His actions that people were more important than rules or laws and the showing of mercy is a far higher obligation for the people of God than regulations. The leaders of the Jews wanted things their way and to preserve their power and control, they had no heart for God. So they used Jesus' acts of compassion and healing as a means to trap Jesus and kill the Messiah.

What they failed to see, because their laws had blinded them to what God had desired Israel to be as a nation, was that Jesus was the Lord of the Sabbath, He established the Sabbath, He was God and the Sabbath was His gift to mankind, He could alter it, He could change it, the Sabbath was Jesus' - not man's. It is the same today. Jesus desires to be the Lord of your Sabbaths, of your habits, of your aspirations, your abilities, your life and to be your hope and future – He desires your heart. We are faced with the same choice the Pharisees had - to develop a set of laws in an attempt to earn our salvation and control our destiny – or - or to allow Jesus to manifest Himself in our lives as our Lord and Savior, saving our broken souls by His grace. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. He is the Lord of all. This is what Christianity is. Everything else is man-made religion and ends in condemnation and separation from God. We do not desire to fight over ritual verses relationship, but

ritual is the natural fallen nature of man. Relationship is the nature of God. Let me conclude this morning with a story and a final reading of the Word of God.

A man wanted to argue with me about the Sabbath. The man said to me, “Bill, I will give you \$100 if you will show me where the Sabbath day has been changed.” I replied, “It has not been changed; Saturday is still Saturday. I know that we now use the *Gregorian calendar* instead of the Jewish lunar calendar, but the seventh day is still Saturday and Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath.” This man smiled and there was a gleam in his eye and he said, “Then why do you not keep God’s Sabbath day if it has not changed?” I responded, “You are right the day had not changed, but you see I have changed. By the grace of God I have been given a new nature, I have a relationship with my Lord Jesus Christ and I am a new creation. My day of worship has become the first day of the week, Sunday, because that is when Jesus, my Lord and my Savior who is God very God rose from the grave conquering death and nailing to the cross the Law which was given to convict men of their sin and Jesus now bears my sin for me.”

In closing I want to read the words of Apostle Paul, words given to him by God the Holy Spirit. Please turn in your bibles to Colossians and read along with me.

Colossians, I believe, makes the point clear that Jesus has nailed the law to His cross along with my sin. This is important, so I will give you a minute to find Colossians chapter 2. Reading from the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians, chapter 2 and beginning in verse 6, **Slide** “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.⁹ For in him the whole

fullness of deity dwells bodily,¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.”

¹¹ “In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. **Slide**¹³ **And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”** We are free in Christ, let us have relationship with Him – not the law.
Amen and Amen!