

Son of God, Lord of the Sabbath (*Part 1*)

John 5:9b-18

Thought for the Day. In our zeal for truth and righteousness, we must be careful that we do not become self-righteous, hypocritical judges of others.

In John 5:1-9, Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. He asked him a surprising question: Do you want to be healed? When God works in our lives, changes will come, and with change comes responsibility (John 12:48). Before we can experience healing from the Lord, we must first admit that we are sick, that we are helpless, and that we are totally dependent on Him (Matthew 9:12). Jesus came to save us from our sins, and we must humbly and completely trust in Him to be the Savior of our soul and the Lord of our life.

Jesus deliberately healed this man on the Sabbath in order to challenge the man-made religious regulations that had taken precedence over the Word of God and were suppressing and hindering the love, grace, mercy, and compassion of God in the lives of people (Mark 7:8-9). We must be careful that we do not allow legalism (a strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code –*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*) to destroy love (Matthew 22:34-40).

Now that day was the Sabbath.

- The Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8): “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”
 - There is more additional commentary and instruction added to this commandment than any of the other nine commandments. (Ex. 20:9-11; 31:12-17; Deut. 5:12-15)
 - We fail to grasp how much importance the Jews attached to this commandment.
 - The word “Sabbath” (*shabbath*) means “to rest, to cease from labor, to take an intermission or a break.” It does not mean “seven” or “seventh” (*shebiy`iy*).
 - The commandment was to cease from labor; it was meant to be a day of rest and refreshment. It was not established primarily as a day of worship, although it was quite natural to use this day as a day to worship the Lord.
 - The Sabbath was a symbol of the covenant relationship between God and the people of Israel. It is an essential part of the Old Covenant but not the New Covenant.
 - It was meant to remind the people of Israel that God had set them apart from the nations of the world to be His chosen people.
 - The observance of the Sabbath was to be a continual reminder of God’s deliverance of the Jews from bondage in Egypt, that He had delivered them from slavery to be His covenant people.
- The seventh day of the week is Saturday.
 - Biblically speaking, Sunday, not Monday, is the first day of the week.
 - It was on the first day of the week that God created light. (Genesis 1:3-5)
 - Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, the first day of the week, we gather to worship God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the world, and who came to bring light into this dark world. (John 1:1-18; 3:16-21; 1 John 1:1-10)
- “This miracle should have revealed to the Jews in Jerusalem that the Messiah was finally present, for Isaiah had prophesied, ‘Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the

ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy' (Isaiah 35:5-6 *NIJ*). Instead, they chose to focus on another issue: The day on which this took place was a Sabbath... these religious leaders would not allow God in the flesh to break their rules by healing this man.... We wonder how anyone could be so closed to God's working. But how often do our preconceived notions of how God's work should be done get in the way of it getting done!" (*Life Application Commentary Series*)

- Seven times in the Gospels Jesus healed people on the Sabbath. In doing this, he was challenging the religious leaders to look beneath their rules to the true purpose of the rules—to honor God by helping those in need. This was a very important issue for Jesus! (Mark 1:21-28, 29-31; John 5:1-18; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 9:1-16)
- "John's seemingly incidental note that the healing took place on the Sabbath is in reality the key to this incident. It sets the stage for the open hostility that the Jewish authorities manifested toward Christ [from this point onward]. The fury of their opposition, fueled at this pool, would only escalate throughout the remainder of His earthly ministry, finally culminating in His death." (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*)
- "The Lord deliberately chose to heal this man on the Sabbath to confront superficial and bankrupt Jewish legalism. The man's condition was not life threatening, and he was constantly at the pool. Jesus could have easily chosen another day to heal him. But the Lord not only wanted to show mercy to this man; He also wanted to call the nation to repentance by confronting the self-righteous and unbiblical stipulations that led to their illusion of spiritual life. They had become experts at substituting their traditions for God's commands (Matthew 15:9)." (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*)

10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."

- "There is nothing in God's law to prohibit a person from carrying a mat on the Sabbath... Carrying a mat on the Sabbath did not break any Old Testament law; instead, it broke the Pharisees' legalistic application of God's command. The regulation against carrying something on the Sabbath was the last of thirty-nine rules in the "tradition of the elders" that stipulated the kinds of work prohibited on the Sabbath. This was just one of hundreds of rules the Jewish leaders had added to the Old Testament law." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)
- It would be natural to ask, "What constitutes work?" Over time, the religious leaders formulated a detailed list of what constituted work and what did not.
 - But they came to the point where they lost sight of the Lord's purpose and intention for the Sabbath.
 - They were driven by legalism rather than love and, as is so often the case, legalism resulted in pride, self-righteousness, and cold-hearted, hypocritical judgmentalism.
- When people are hypercritical of others, it is usually because they are trying to cover up the faults and failures in their own lives.
 - We must certainly be careful and discerning, recognizing truth and error; but we must also be careful that in our zeal for the truth, we do not set ourselves up as self-righteous, hypocritical, "judge, jury and executioner" of others.
 - We must be motivated by love rather than legalism. We must always seek to balance truth and love—and we need great wisdom from the Lord in that process! (Matthew 7:1-5)