

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

◆**Intro:** Recently I saw this: "I'm tired because I'm overworked. The population of his country is over 200 million. 84 million are retired. That leaves 116 million to to the work. There are 75 million in school which leaves 41 million to do the work. Of this total, there are 22 million employed by the government. That leaves 19 million to do the work. 4 million are in the armed forces, which leaves 15 million to do the work. Take from that total the 14,800,000 who work for the state and city governments and that leaves 200,000 to do the work. There are 188,000 hospitals so that leaves 12,000 to do the work. Now there are 11,998 people in prisons. That leaves 2 people to do the work. You and me. And you're standing there reading this. No wonder I'm tired!" -Anonymous.

◆This series of biblical studies will focus primarily on the art of stopping, resting and restoring life, something that many of us today are not very good at. Our foundation is the Fourth Commandment: remember the Sabbath Day, by keeping it holy. That's a whole philosophy of life, not just a one day command, as we shall see.

◆I don't think anyone would deny that the pace of life seems to just get faster and faster. We've got things to produce! Since Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, we don't have to stop at night anymore! So we work into the night and "get more done" as though that is why we are here. Mr. Edison claimed he could exist on 15 minute naps. Well then so can we! We're busy, tired

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

and proud of it. On the other hand, Albert Einstein averaged 11 hours of sleep and was also somewhat productive. Makes you wonder...

◆As a consequence of our drivenness, millions of people are living burnt-out, stressed-out lives. We hustle all week long in order to “thank God, it’s Friday.” And Friday night we are so worn out that God or thankfulness may have little influence on what we do. We are hardly ever off, hardly ever unplugged. Hardly ever quiet. We’re always on, always open for business. The smart phone is a perfect illustration. Remember when no one could call you while you were driving? Remember when you had to trust God to oversee your kids when they went out on a date, and you couldn’t track them, or message them, or FaceTime them? Kids used to go down to the playground, alone, or play in the street at night even. Now we have the whole world in our pocket. If there’s a spare minute at a red light, out comes Facebook. No time to talk in the hall between classes, cuz we gotta check on the tweets, or add an emoji here, or snap a chat there. People in restaurants often don’t even talk anymore. You find whole families each on their own phone. All of them finding out how fantastic everyone else’s life is, which also turns out to exhaust them emotionally in the end.

◆Where have all the quiet moments gone? When does anyone really just stop, and be? When do we slow down to restore the soul? People are racing through life to their deaths, hoping to hit

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

as many ball games, concerts, and appointments as they can on the way. The good news is: we can learn to live by the principle of sabbath rest; and be healthier for it. (Sabbath means "rest" btw! ...Did you notice I saved time by not saying "by the way"?) The Shabat/rest is God's gift, God's rhythm for the world. Six days of work and a day of rest was all in place before the Fall of Mankind ever took place. And the Fourth Commandment points us back to that Genesis reality...

◆ *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God ... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day." Exodus 20:8-11, NIV.*

◆ So I thought it best to set the context for this series on slowing and rest by starting this new year, and this new study with a biblical look at what we are resting from, for both the work, and the rest are of God.

◆ **1. My work is a gift from God.** Let's not get it wrong. Work is not a dirty word. God's command to rest one day out of seven contains the assumption that the other days are for work! God cares about what we do. Eph.2:10. In fact...

◆ **A. All accomplishment begins with God.** This point is made for us in Genesis chapter one. Take a glance at verses 5, 8, 13, 18, etc. They all say the same thing, don't they: "There was evening

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

and morning, the (first/second/third...) day." In the biblical view, a day begins in the evening based on this evening-morning pattern. For a Hebrew, Saturday begins at sundown (evening) on Friday. When Sandi and I travelled in Israel our guide was very concerned to have our hikes and tours over with time enough to bus us back to the hotel before nightfall on Friday, because Shabat starts at sundown! Serious Jews would not be on the road any longer at that time. And the pattern of evening and morning taught God's people that every day, everything -starts with God as sole actor. Nobody could accomplish much of anything in the evening in the ancient world. Only God was the operative force.

◆ "In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat-- for he grants sleep to those he loves." Psalms 127:2, NIV.

◆ *"But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today."* Deuteronomy 8:18, NIV.

◆ The Creation pattern of night-day, reminds us that life, starts with receiving, not with doing. We wake into a world we didn't make, into a salvation we didn't earn. God, and his grace, is always first. And when I quit my days work, nothing that really matters stops, for God is always *before* me. While I was sleeping great creational things, things too marvelous for me to invent, or engineer, were in process. The moon was orbiting

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

earth, controlling the tides, the lion was roaring for it's prey, the earthworms were aerating the earth, proteins were repairing my muscles.

◆ *"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Colossians 1:17, NIV.*

◆ And when I get up to start work, I walk into an operation that is already half over.

◆ **B.** Lets talk about vocation. Our ancestors wisely chose the term because it comes from the root of vocal, meaning to call or speak. We have vocal chords. We use our voice. (at least we did before texting came around). And that a job is called a vocation tells us that God calls us to our place and activity. Work is not a part of the curse. It was a part of Perfection. It was a gift of creation like all the other "good" that God made.

◆ *"the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed...The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."*
Genesis 2:7,8,15, NIV.

◆ Man was made as caretaker of the earth, God's earth. That's why unlike any of the animals or elements, Man is not merely spoken into existence in Genesis 1, but he is *breathed* into life by the Spirit of God himself. He is a vice-regent for the True King!

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

The curse of sin didn't make work. The curse only made work more difficult. Production, accomplishment, were now more stressing, and war-like.

- ◆ Lets talk about why work can feel like a battle. Often it's not the actual work that exhausts us but the stress, the worry, the anxiety –the attitude that believes I am my own provider and my destiny is up to me. This is exhausting! Our mental work often steals even our enjoyment of our physical work. It's now easier for us to become disheartened in our labors, to feel they are irrelevant or insignificant. Our spirits can't rise to the higher level of eventual purpose and delight, but instead languish in the ditches of our momentary sweat and ache.
- ◆ I've told this story before but it makes the point. Two men were working on one of the great cathedrals of Europe. (You might recall that these were not thrown together in 6 weeks. Notre Dame **Cathedral** began in 1163 and was finished 182 years later.) Well each man was approached and asked what he was doing. Though they were both involved in the same labor, one man responded "I'm carrying bricks back and forth all day." while the other's reply was "I'm building a cathedral!" **(picture)**
- ◆ Look at any toddler that observes Mom and Dad doing something. Sooner or later what will come out of their mouths? "Me do." Work gives us a sense of fulfillment and purpose which

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

we all crave. It is a loving gift of God to skill us to a task, and allow us to “do it ourselves”.

◆**2. My work is my gift to God; or my worship of God.** When you and I get up in the morning and the day is half over already because it began with night; and when we go off to school (a student's job is learning) or to the office, or the field...—this good thing we call work is our service to the Kingdom of God. We Christ-followers do not choose our jobs primarily because the amount of money it will make us, or the notoriety it might earn us.

◆A. Believers accept a calling from God based on where the world's needs and our abilities intersect. In fact when these two things cross well, our work becomes a joy to be involved in! From this view, work is also a sacred activity, which is something Reformed theology has always emphasized: all callings of God are sacred. Can washing plates or trimming trees be acts of worship? Can the assembly line, or the laundry room be spiritual? Yes when you do it “as unto the Lord.” Some folks think there is a distinction between secular vocations, and sacred or ministry vocations. This is not very biblical notion. Farmers or data techs, who follow God are called to do their work unto him, just as much as preachers. Martin Luther wrote:

◆“The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays -not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

clean floors. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on his shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship."

◆**B.** Doing our work as unto the Lord means prioritizing God's agenda over our own. That's how we stop viewing what we do as depleting. We are doing it for other reasons now. To honor God, to thank him with our skills, to build part of his cathedral (call it Kingdom) on the earth. This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 6.

◆""Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" Matthew 6:25, 26, NIV.

◆First he notes that so many of us worry and fret our way through the day. Why? Because we imagine ourselves to be God. We imagine that if we don't get to eat all the things we've always wanted we shall not be happy. We imagine that if we don't look modern, or have latest fashion that we shall not be valuable or significant people. But we are wrong! God does provide and you are valuable to him! Jesus concludes like this...

◆"*So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all*

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Matthew 6:31-34, NIV.

◆ When I make the Kingdom my priority in my work day, I can put away worry, anxiety, and the exhaustion of my work. Paul, speaking to Christians who were still slaves in Ephesus said, “Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.” Mark Batterson puts it like this: “Virtually any job, no matter how grueling or tedious—any job not criminal or sinful—can be a gift from God, through God, and to God. The work of our hands by the alchemy of our devotion, becomes the worship of our hearts.”

◆ **Conclusion:** Look. If God created us to work, serve, worship him as our King, then when our work becomes drudgery or repulsive or debilitating, there is something amiss that needs to be lined up again. 1) Our view of it may be off so then we need to remember point number 1: My work is my gift from God. It’s a calling. 2) Something else may be amiss causing our work to become drudgery: the priority we give it may be off. So we need to remember point number two: My work is my gift, my service, my worship TO God. We serve the Lord, even in the worst of callings, for he served us forgiveness in the worst of all tasks,

THE WORK I REST FROM, GEN1:26-2:3

Stop The World! I Wanna Get Off #1

taking our sin upon himself! Next time you're on the job and feel like complaining and saying "Stop the world, I wanna get off", look up and picture God as your boss, for he really is. Ask him if there is anything he would like of you on the job that day? Thank him for bringing you to that place so that you might find a way to bring him there.