

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #49, Lord's Day 38, part 2

The Fourth Commandment, part 2



The John Knox Institute
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Sermon #49 Lord's Day 38, part 2

**The Fourth
Commandment, part 1**

*The Gospel of John 15, verse 5
Question and Answer #103*

i. Introduction

- 1. It Calls Us to Worship God – A Review**
- 2. It Calls Us to Live for God**
- 3. It Calls Us to Look for a Future with God**

Introduction

Boys and girls, when I was ten years old, I was visiting my grandparents in Germany. My mother is German, so we would regularly go there. And I remember, one Sunday, that my grandfather took us for a walk. And they lived right at the very edge of town, and so, as we walked we saw a farm field, and there was a farmer who was working his field on the Lord's Day. And my grandfather walked over to him, and simply said this to him, he said, "Sir, what you earn on Sunday, you will lose on Monday." And with that, we continued our walk. And I remember that so distinctly, because, by saying that, first of all, he witnessed to this man. The man was quite surprised. "What you earn on Sunday, you will lose on Monday." And so, what is the principle expressed in that?— simply that the Sabbath, the Lord's Day, is a sacred day, it is a consecrated day. And the Lord very plainly tells us in the Fourth Commandment that we are to do all of our work in six days, and that we are to rest on the seventh day. Because that day, in very special way, belongs to him. And so, if we don't honor that day, if we transgress that day, if we ignore that day, we cannot expect God's blessing upon us. that's what my grandfather meant to express.

That's why the keeping of the Lord's Day is so very central to the life of the Christian. And Calvin understood this well, because it is Calvin¹ who was behind Lord's Day 38. And Calvin, in

¹ John Calvin, or, Jean Calvin, (1509–1564) was a well-known French theologian, pastor, writer, and leading Reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, after whom many Reformers patterned their teachings.

Lord's Day 38, as we have seen already, very uniquely focuses on what God requires on his day. And so, remarkably, Lord's Day 38 does not focus on all that we are not allowed to do, but instead, it focuses on what we are called to do, highlighting the very special purpose of the Lord's Day.

And so, let's open our Bibles again. I looked at it last time, and I want to do it again. Let's turn to Isaiah 58, where the Lord himself gives us such a clear, clear exposition of what his day is all about, and gives us very clear directions for how we are to honor that day. And so, we read at the very end of Isaiah 58, verses 13 and 14: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." And notice what God says about this day. He says, "It's my holy day. It's my day." It is the Lord's Day. And I realize that the Lord's Day is a day of rest, a day in which we rest from our physical labors. And it is a day in which we can visit also with our families. But the Lord's Day is not a family day, though we may visit with our families. But the Lord's Day is the Lord's Day. He said, "It's my Day; it's my holy day." In other words, a day set apart, a day consecrated for a very sacred purpose.

And so, in light of that, let us read again, Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism. And there, we read:

Question #103: *What doth God require in the fourth commandment?*

Answer: *First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God to hear His word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian. Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me; and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.*

So, *The Fourth Commandment*, first of all, *Calls Us to Worship God*. It is a day of worship, a day in which we rest from our weekly activities, rest from our physical labors, and engage ourselves in the holy activity to which we are called on that day. So, it *Calls Us to Worship God*, and we focused on that two weeks ago. Secondly, it *Calls Us to Live for God*, because it says, "*that all the days of my life,*" not just on the Lord's Day, but, *that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me*. And thirdly, it *Calls Us to Look for a Future with God*, and, *thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath*—the everlasting rest that is laid away for the people of God. Thus, *The Fourth Commandment; Calls Us to Worship God, to Live for God*, and it *Calls Us to Look for a Future with God*.

1. Calls Us to Worship God—A Review

And so, very briefly, what we have seen is that the Lord's Day is God's consecrated day, a Commandment that is rooted, first of all, in creation. God himself, as we saw, set the pattern. He created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day, a day in which he delighted himself in the work of his hands; a day in which he beheld, in all of creation, the glory of his only begotten Son; but also a day rooted in redemption. That's why one Lord's Day we read Exodus 20, and then, the Fourth Commandment focuses on the keeping of the Lord's Day as a creation ordinance. And then, the following week, we read Deuteronomy 5, where God reminds Israel that because he has delivered them, that therefore, they are to keep the Sabbath day holy. So, a consecrated day of

worship.

Secondly, we saw that the focus of that worship must be the Son of God. That's why, if you remember, I said we should think of Sunday as the Son's day, the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. And of course, that's highlighted by the fact that we now worship on the Lord's Day. We now worship on the day in which the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead. But the point is this, that God's Son is always the object of worship, and so, it must be especially on Sunday, or, the Son's day. And that's why, of course, we, as ministers of the gospel, have the sacred responsibility on that day to lift up the name of the Son of God, so that in the house of God, the people of God may find rest for their souls in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And thirdly, we saw the pattern of worship—morning and evening, the pattern of paradise, the pattern articulated in Psalm 92. In paradise, God met with Adam and Eve morning and evening in the cool of the day. And then, when God gives the ceremonial law to Israel, he perpetuates that pattern by instituting the morning and evening sacrifice. And if that was true for every day, it certainly was true for the Sabbath. And that's why the "Psalm for the sabbath day" specifically directs us, as we sang together, let me read it again, the opening two verses of Psalm 92, it says, "A Psalm or Song for the sabbath day. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning and thy faithfulness every night."

And so, congregation, we need to realize how very special this day is. What a very special gift it is—a gift that is preserved even in a fallen world. And we see, of course, God's care for us as his creatures. God created us in such a way that there needs to be rest in how we function. That happens every day. We cannot function properly unless we also properly rest. And so, God has seen to it that we also need to rest physically on a regular basis. This is God's pattern. And there have been experiments in the past, where cultures that have utterly rejected the Word of God, ignored this seven-day cycle and quickly realized that the consequences were very detrimental. And this is God's order. But the purpose of the Lord's Day is not merely to engage in physical rest. We need it, but the purpose of the Lord's Day is first and foremost to focus on our Creator. That's why the Puritans were fond of calling the Lord's Day "the market day of the soul"—a day in which God allows us to set aside all of our daily responsibilities, and to focus entirely on him, the living God.

But now we want to continue with what the Catechism is teaching us as it echoes the Word of God. Because, it says here, *Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works.* And so, basically, what the Catechism is saying, as it echoes the Word of God, is that a proper keeping of the Lord's Day should spill over into the week; that our weekly worship should stimulate our daily worship; and thirdly, that our daily conduct must not contradict our Lord's Day worship. So let me address these three things.

First of all, *A proper observance of the Lord's Day must spill over into the week.* I want to remind you of what I said two weeks ago, is that Adam and Eve's existence, the first full day of their life, was the Sabbath. Their life began with a day of worship. That's quite remarkable. That shows us the priority. In other words, that immediately underscores the fact that the life of Adam and Eve during the week would be fueled by what they observed on the Lord's Day. And what a beautiful day that must have been, that first full day of their human existence; that day of worship, worship of their Maker. And so it must be with us. That's why the Lord's Day is not the weekend. It is the week beginning. It is the day that should set the tone for all of the days that follow. And so, what the Lord's Day does is it realigns our focus, and it realigns our priorities. Because we can be so busy, we can be so wrapped up in our daily calling, that were it not for that blessed interruption every single week, we would lose sight of the fact that we are only here for a short time. We would

lose sight of the fact that we are only sojourners. We would lose sight of the fact that, as the people of God, we are called to be pilgrims and strangers. And so, what the Lord's Day wonderfully does every single week is it causes us to refocus. It causes us to realign our priorities once again, so that we can begin another week, having in mind the very Word of God which we have heard. And so, what this is saying is that a faithful compliance with the Fourth Commandment will have a sanctifying effect upon our daily lives. So, the keeping of the Lord's Day should sanctify every aspect of my life in the week that follows. My interaction with the Word of God should sanctify how I function as a husband, how to function as a wife, how to function as parents, how we function as children, how we function as employers, how we function as employees.

And so, what this is emphasizing, and what Calvin wanted to emphasize, is that godly worship on the Lord's Day should translate into godly living. And so, the question for me, and the question for you—Is that a reality in your life? Do you carry with you that which you have received in the house of God? Do you leave the house of God with a fresh impression that life is about God? We were created for him; we were created for his glory; we were created to be doers of his will; we were created to honor his only begotten Son? And so if we worship God faithfully on his day, if we honor that day, if we worship him in the house of God, but also in our homes. But also already, for the children of Israel, God clearly stipulated that the Sabbath should be a day of corporate worship, and of private worship. Listen to Leviticus 23, verse 3. It says, "Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation"—there, you have it, a day of the gathering of the people of God, a day of corporate worship—"ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings." There, you have it. So, a day of corporate worship, and a day of private worship. But the point is this, that what God is saying here is that on that day everything should revolve around the worship of his name. And, of course, if we do not love the Lord, if our heart is still unchanged, then that day will become a burden to us. Because, you see, if there's any, any day that confronts us with who God is and who we are, it will be that day. But if, by the grace of God, we love the Lord, we should also love his day, especially his day.

And so, not only must our observance of the Lord's Day spill over into the week, it must *stimulate our daily worship every single day*. And so, it should stimulate our private worship. What we receive in the house of God should motivate us and stimulate us to be faithful in our private worship, entering into our closet, as we saw a few weeks ago from Matthew 6. And it should stimulate *family worship*. The Puritans were fond of calling the family "a little church of God." Congregation, I hope that all of you, especially the younger families, but that all of us faithfully engage in daily family worship; that every day, we set apart some time to be alone with the Word of God, to focus on that precious Word, to be nourished by that Word. And how beautiful it then is when we see a holy interaction between the Lord's Day and between the week. The Lord's Day will stimulate us to worship God during the week, and our worship of God during the week will stimulate us again to return to the house, and to worship him in the house of God. So then our daily worship becomes the bridge that connects Lord's Day after Lord's Day.

2. Calls Us to Live for God

So, our keeping of the Lord's Day is to spill over into the week; it is to stimulate the daily worship; but also, *our daily conduct must not contradict our Lord's Day worship*. Listen to the language of the Catechism: *That all the days of my life I cease from my evil works*. In other words, if we properly observe the Lord's Day, if we take the proclamation of God's Word seriously, if we engage also in private worship, the Word of God should have such an impact on us that we will leave the house of God with a renewed desire to say "No" to sin. That's why I said, a proper

keeping of the Lord's Day is going to sanctify how I live during the week. Because, when we come to the house of God, we hear the law read; we hear the Word of God proclaimed; God's revealed will is expounded to us; and the result of it should be that as I go back into the arena of this world, when I go back into this dangerous and treacherous world, in which everything conspires against my soul, that I am freshly armed with the Word of God, coming from the house of God, so that it will enable me to say "No" to sin.

I think of those two passages of the Apostle Paul. Galatian 5:24, that very much applies to this. He says, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." And that's what our interaction with God's Word should do. Our hearing of the Word of God on the Lord's Day should stimulate us to crucify our flesh, our wretched flesh, our flesh that is so attracted to sin. Because, let there be no mistake, congregation that the flesh of God's people is as depraved as the flesh of the ungodly. Flesh is flesh, and that flesh has to be crucified. And when we prayerfully and properly take the Lord's Day seriously, when we invest in our souls by means of corporate and private worship, that should motivate us to crucify our flesh with the affections and its lusts. Romans 13, verse 14, where the Apostle exhorts us, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof"—make no provision for the flesh. That's why we read John 15, because that's what the ministry of the Word is intended to do. So that through that ministry, through hearing Christ proclaimed, that we learn to abide in him. Because the only way we can live a godly life during the week is if we abide in the Christ who is proclaimed to us also on the Lord's Day. And Jesus made it very clear in John 15 that we cannot be a fruitful Christian unless we abide in him. But he said, and he promises there, however, "If you abide in me, and I abide in you, you will bear much fruit" (verses 2 to 8). So, hopefully you see there's that blessed interaction between the Lord's Day and the week, the ministry of the Word as it spills over into the week, as it sanctifies us, as it compels us and encourages us to abide in Christ.

And so, the compelling motive for us to keep the Lord's Day holy, to honor that day, it is love for Christ. If we profess that we love him, then we should also honor his day. First John 2, verse 3, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." So, to put it very simply, is that what Calvin understood and communicated, also here through these young men who composed the Heidelberg Catechism, is that our Christianity is to be a twenty-four/seven² Christianity. In other words, what it militates against is what has been called "Sunday Christianity." And God forbid, congregation, that any of us would be "Sunday Christians" only; that who we are on Sunday would differ dramatically from who we are during the week. No, true Christianity is a seven-day-a-week Christianity, a twenty-four/seven Christianity. That's what the Catechism tells us; that's what a proper observance of the Lord's Day should call us to do. And the sad reality that we also see in our very own nation, is that over the past one hundred years, there has been a dramatic shift from honoring the Lord's Day, to now a day where so many Americans, even who profess the name of Christ, who desecrate that day, and use that day for their own pleasure, for their own agenda. And then we should not be surprised that the sanctifying influence of the Lord's Day has also disappeared from our nation. A hundred years ago, most Americans still went to church twice every Lord's Day, and that weekly interaction with God's Word had a sanctifying influence on our land, on our culture. And now we see that an alarming majority in the United States no longer takes the Fourth Commandment seriously, and the results are accordingly. So what we see now, often, is what we would call an Antinomian³ keeping of the Lord's Day. What does that

² Twenty-four/seven – is an American colloquial adverb or adjective meaning that something is twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week.

³ Antinomianism comes from the Greek meaning *lawless*. In Christianity, it is a pejorative term for the teaching

mean again?—Antinomian, antinomos (Greek), against the law. There are those Christians today, professing Christians, who will say, “We are no longer bound to the Fourth Commandment. The New Testament doesn’t even mention the Fourth Commandment.” They fail to realize that the New Testament is but the affirmation of the Old; that the New Testament is but the concluding chapter of the Old Testament. There is nothing in the New Testament even remotely suggests that the Fourth Commandment is no longer valid for the New Testament Christian. And so, you see the sad trend in so many who profess the name of Christ. They no longer take the Lord’s Day seriously, and as a result, they no longer take the Christian life seriously. Because an Antinomian keeping of the Lord’s Day will result in an Antinomian lifestyle.

And notice what the Catechism says here, *That I cease from [all] my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me.* And that’s why God’s children are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit. And we grieve the Holy Spirit if we do not keep the Lord’s Day holy. We grieve the Holy Spirit when our life during the week contradicts what we profess on the Lord’s Day. And so, what the Catechism is saying, and what Calvin is saying is when we live lives that contradict what we profess on the Lord’s Day, we are actually desecrating the Lord’s Day during the week, by dishonoring the Word of God, by contradicting what we have professed on the Lord’s Day. And so, the point here is that our entire life, our entire walk must be an act of worship, a life that honors God in word and deed; a life that honors the living and the written Word of God; a life in which we engage in Christ-centered worship, in order that we might live a Christ-centered life—a life in which the Word of God exhorts us time and again, especially on the Lord’s Day, to rest in Christ, to trust in him, so that we will abide in him as we enter the week. And so, he calls us to live a Christ-like life, in reliance upon the Spirit of Christ.

3. Calls Us to Look for a Future with God

And then thirdly, so we’ve seen that the Fourth Commandment *Calls Us to Worship God*; secondly, it *Calls Us to Live for God*, to live a life that is consistent with the Lord’s Day; and thirdly, it *Calls us to Look for a Future with God*, because it says, *And thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.*

So what this means is this, congregation, is that, when gather in the house of God, and when Christ walks among us in the garments of his Word, that for the people of God, this is the beginning of the everlasting Sabbath. And correctly it says here that that eternal Sabbath already begins here. Already here, God’s children taste that the Lord is good. Already here, our hearts are stimulated to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. And what the Catechism is saying, as it echoes the Word of God, is that our weekly coming to the house of God should remind us that, for the people of God, there is a blessed future that awaits us. It should stimulate in us a holy homesickness, to be delivered from the body of this death, and ultimately to be with Christ, which is far better. And so, a proper observance of the Lord’s Day becomes a foretaste of heavenly bliss.

I think of the wonderful passage in Psalm 36, verses 7 and 8, “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.”—and listen to these words—“They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” And it pleases God to give us already a foretaste of that here, on, and especially on the Sabbath. That’s why we have the sacraments. Because it is God’s desire that his people here would be abundantly satisfied; abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house; abundantly satisfied ultimately with Christ. That’s God’s desire. God’s desire

that Christians are under no obligation to obey the moral law of God, as defined in the Ten Commandments. This teaching was especially propagated during the Protestant Reformation by the Anabaptists and Mennonites.

is that his people would be preoccupied with Christ, preoccupied with his person, preoccupied with his work, to rest in him. “And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” I think of Revelation 22, where it uses that analogy, that metaphor or that river from which the people of God will drink forever. So, it’s God’s desire that his interaction with his Word, on his day, during the week, and the blessed interaction of them both would stir up in us a longing and a yearning for that eternal Sabbath.

And so, one of the blessed effects of a proper observance of the Lord’s Day is that we will not forget that we are strangers and pilgrims here below. Congregation, I have to put my hand in my own bosom. Because I think that we are in danger of forgetting that sometimes. We know better. In former ages, life was so difficult; life was so challenging. Creature comforts that we know today were unknown. People battled with cold homes in the winter. They battled diseases all the time. There was no medical care. Life was difficult; life was filled with sorrow. But as the late J. I. Packer⁴ said in his book, *A Quest for Godliness*, a wonderful book by Packer, in which he focuses on the Puritans’ teachings on holiness. But he made a statement I never forgot. He said, “Why were the Puritans, such spiritual giants?” He said, “They were schooled in the school of affliction.” Their life was filled with affliction. They had to deal with illness, with malady. They lost wives, they lost children. There was always affliction, unlike anything we can even relate to today. Hebrews 11 tells us that’s what we ought to be. It says, “These all died in faith...and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth...But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly” (verses 13 and 16).

I remember, in my first congregation—I told you this before, I know, but I want to do it again—a very successful businessman, doing extremely well, and then he contracted prostate cancer, and he was shaken to the core by that diagnosis. And when he met with me, he was honest enough to say, “But Pastor, I’m not ready to go. I really like it here. I really like it here.” He had everything going for him—prosperous business, beautiful home, everything that this world has to offer, he had. But it’s amazing how God used that illness to sanctify that brother. Because by the end of his illness, he was divorced from all of that, and there was this growing desire to be delivered from the body of this death. God saw to it, he had to afflict him greatly to turn this man into a stranger and a pilgrim here below.

And so, it says here, they “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth...But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.” And that’s what the Lord’s Day is intended to do. It’s intended to remind us there is more to life than going to work; there is more to life than earning money; there is more to life. The Lord’s Day reminds us that life is about God. The Lord’s Day reminds us that we are dying creatures that have an eternal destiny. The Lord’s Day reminds us that we are to live unto God, as strangers and pilgrims here below. And the more that becomes real, the more our desire will come for that eternal Sabbath. And so, the prayer of those pilgrims and strangers is “Come, O come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly.” Listen to the language of one of those strangers and pilgrims, the Apostle John, when he writes in 1 John 3, verse 2. Open your Bibles, please, and read that wonderful passage with me. First John 3, verse 2, where John writes this: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” And so, I would ask you to examine yourself in light of that passage. What does that passage do to you? What does that passage mean to you? Is that the deepest longing of your soul?—to see him; to see him as you’ve

⁴ James Innell Packer, aka J. I. Packer (1926–2020), was an English-born Canadian evangelical theologian, cleric, and author in the low-church Anglican and Calvinist traditions, having been considered as one of the most influential evangelicals in North America, best known for his book, *Knowing God*.

never seen him before? and to be like him? That's what God wants to stimulate in his people, also, by means of the ministry of Word and sacrament.

Oh, an eternal Sabbath, an eternal rest laid away for the genuine worshippers of God's Son. And I say that very, very emphatically. Because that future, that eternal Sabbath is all about God's Son. He will be forever the centerpiece of heaven. Everything in eternity will revolve around him. And that's why it already begins in this life. Because the mark of the true believer is that there is this deep yearning in our soul for him. And I know that that can wane, that can fluctuate. There are times when that desire is more intense than other times. But a true believer is someone who, in the depths of his soul, yearns for that day. A believer is someone who can say, "Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest, in spite of who I am, thou knowest that my soul yearns after thee; that my soul longs for thee; that my soul longs for Christ."

And so, true believers are now heaven-seekers. True believers are Christ-seekers. There are so many in our superficial Christianity in North America whose only interest in believing in Christ is to get to heaven; to stay out of hell, and to get to heaven. And is that not the blessed result of saving faith?—yes, it is. But why is it that the true believer yearns for heaven? Why do they long for that eternal Sabbath, for that everlasting rest? It's because their soul yearns after Christ. That's whom they desire. Heaven is that place, that new glorious reality, that new heaven and a new earth; heaven is that glorious future where Christ will forever be all, and in all. Is that what you desire?

That's why Samuel Rutherford⁵ famously said, "Christ is heaven's heaven." And he had a bunch of Scriptural support for that. I'm just going to read to you a number of passages that highlight exactly what he meant: "Christ is heaven's heaven." John 14, verses 2 and 3: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you."—and listen carefully—"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." There, you have it, "that where I am, there ye may be also." John 17, verse 24: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." Christ is present at the Father's right hand, interceding to bring all of his children home. His desire is to bring us to himself. His desire is that we might be where he is, and that we might behold his glory. Luke 22, verses 29 and 30: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table"—there, you have it—"in my kingdom." Luke 23, verse 43: "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He did not say, "To day, thou shalt be in paradise"—that comes last. He says, "To day shalt thou be with me." Philippians 1, verse 23, Paul says, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." And then finally, Revelation 7, verses 16 and 17, where have this wonderful description of what awaits all those that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." That's the future that awaits the people of God.

Then you can see, there's only room in heaven for those that love Christ. Congregation, boys and girls, do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you say, with utmost honesty, as Peter did, "Lord, thou knowest, thou knowest who I am; thou knowest everything about me; but thou knowest that I love thee." Because, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be [accursed] Maranatha," the Lord is coming (1 Corinthians 16:22). That's the litmus test of our religion, congregation.

⁵ Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661) was a Scottish Presbyterian pastor, theologian, and author of many widely read letters, sermons, devotional and scholastic works. He is known for *Lex, Rex: the Law and the Prince*, a defense of constitutionalism and limited government against the supposed divine right of kings.

That's what it boils down to. God will judge us in terms of our relationship to his Son, and he will only admit into his everlasting presence those that love his Son, who hunger and thirst after his righteousness.

And so, the Lord's Day is meant to be a preview of that. The Lord's Day is meant to stir up in our soul a longing and a yearning for that eternal Sabbath. And that's why the keeping of the Lord's Day—listen carefully—our keeping of the Lord's Day is the real litmus test of our religion; the real litmus test of our religion. Because, if we love the Lord, we will love his day. If we love the Lord, we will love his institutions. If we love the Lord, we will love his house, we will love his Word we will love his ordinances, we will love his Son. Then we understand why David said so beautifully, in Psalm 27, oh, that touching verse, verse 4, he says, "One thing have I desired"... and..."that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD" forever, "to behold his beauty." Congregation, can you relate to that? Can you understand that?

So, may God keep us from dishonoring his day. Our nation is now a land where we see the flagrant desecration of God's day, a very sad commentary on the spiritual state of our nation. Ezekiel 20, verse 16, the Lord says this: "Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols." How many professing Christians today watched a football game, worshipping one of the idols of our age? It's just astonishing how many profess the name of Christ, and think nothing of using that day to indulge in idolatry. Paul writes, in 2 Timothy 4, verses 3 and 4, he says, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." When I lived in Colorado, when I served as an evangelist, and when the Denver Broncos made it to the Super Bowl, there were many churches in the Denver area, who transformed their sanctuary into a place where they could watch the football game, on the Lord's Day, in the Lord's house. That's the idolatry of our culture. May it not be so with us.

That's why I also, for us—and I need to wrap it up, I realize that—it is so important how we model that for our children and our grandchildren. And so, it means, also, when we go on vacation, our children should realize that we don't have a double standard when it comes to the Lord's Day; that even when we're on vacation, we honor that day as much as we do at home. Otherwise, our children are growing up with a double standard when it comes to the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is always holy, also when we are on vacation, we need to realize that. And what I've seen in my lifetime is that an inconsistent observance of the Lord's Day has generational consequences—generational consequences. And I know, one of the great concerns we had as pastors in northwest Iowa, when we were there, and it's not just me, we were very concerned about the fact that so many professing Christians had become "one-timers"⁶ and I doubt whether it's going to be any different in this area—"one-timers." And I've lived long enough to know that often the children of one-timers become no-timers. That's why that morning and evening, that morning and evening pattern that God himself established is so important in the keeping of the Lord's Day, because it forms the framework of the Lord's Day.

And so, congregation, we have much homework—I have much homework. Because I could say this, "Tell me what the Lord's Day means to you, and I will tell you who you are." It is the litmus test of our religion. So, may God give us the grace to honor that day, so that Sunday is the Son's day, the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Let us labor," Paul says, "to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:11). And that so our hearts would

⁶ "One-timers" is a phrase referring to those who only attend one church service on the Lord's Day, instead of attending both morning and evening services.

be stirred up to look for that eternal Sabbath, that glorious future that awaits the people of God, when we shall forever be in the presence of Christ; when he will forever dwell among us; when we will forever behold the glory of the Father in the countenance of his only begotten Son; when that Christ will forever be our Prophet, Priest and King. Oh, what a blessed future awaits the people of God—to close your eyes here, and to open them in the presence of Christ.

I was always so impressed by a story my first wife told me about her great-grandmother, a dear, godly lady. And when she was dying, her daughter was there, she witnessed it. And her mental state was declining, and she said, suddenly, it was as though she revived, and her face lit up, and she said, “There he comes! There he comes!” and she breathed her last breath. She saw him. That’s what mattered to her. That’s who she was looking for. My dear congregation, are you also looking for him? Because to be with him is far better. Amen.

Let’s pray.

Our gracious God, we thank thee for the privilege we’ve had on this thy day, to be in thy house, to be instructed from thy precious Word. And Lord, we pray that what we have heard today would be carried with us into this coming week; that thy Word today will sanctify our lives, in all of our relationships; and that by grace, we would honor this day, by honoring thy Word also during the week. We realize that we live in a hostile world. And so, may we learn to abide in thee, oh, Lord Jesus, that we would daily walk with thee and feed upon thy Word. And oh, we pray that by grace we may belong to those who echo the words of Paul, when he said, “To be with Christ is far better,” that that would be the deep yearning of our soul, that we would examine our hearts in light of this. For if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Forgive us our sins of this day and hour, and gather with us again on the following Lord’s Day. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.