

Marching to a Different Drumbeat

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning. We're going to read Deuteronomy chapter 15 and 16. And if you have one of the church visitors' Bibles, you'll find that on page 158.

And we read these two chapters together, which you'll see the heading in the Bibles begins the sabbatical year. These are two chapters that are expanding for us the implications, the real meaning of the fourth commandment, the commandment of the Sabbath.

And we'll see here that it's much, much more than merely about a day. Indeed, it's about a whole way of life, a sabbatical way of life, the way of release and rest of the people, of the God of release and rest.

So chapter 15, verse 1, at the end of every seven years, you shall grant a release. And this is the manner of the release. Every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the Lord's release has been proclaimed.

Of a foreigner, you may enact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother, your hand shall release. But there will be no poor among you, for the Lord will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess, if only you will strictly obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandment that I command you today.

[1 : 34] For the Lord your God will bless you, as he promised you. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.

If among you one of your brothers should become poor in any of your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother. But you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart. And you say, the seventh year, the year of release is near. And your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother and you give him nothing. And he cry to the Lord against you and you be guilty of sin. You shall give to him freely. And your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this, the Lord your God will bless you in all the work and in all that you undertake.

For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore, I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in your land. If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you or sells himself to you, he shall serve you six years.

[2 : 51] And in the seventh year, you shall let him go free from you. And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty handed. You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock and out of your threshing floor and out of your winepress.

As the Lord your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were once a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you.

Therefore, I command you this today. But if he says to you, I will not go out from you because he loves you in your household, since he's well off with you, then you shall take an awl and put it through his ear to the door and he shall be your slave forever.

And to your female slave, you shall do the same. It shall not seem hard to you when you let him go free from you. For at half the cost of a hired servant, he has served you six years. So the Lord your God will bless you in all that you do.

All the firstborn males that are born of the herd and flock, you shall dedicate to the Lord your God. You shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. You shall eat it, you and your household, before the Lord your God, year by year at the place that the Lord will choose.

[4 : 02] But if it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish, whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God. You shall eat it within your towns. The unclean and the clean alike may eat it as though it were a gazelle or a deer.

Only you shall not eat its blood. You shall pour it out on the ground like water. Observe the month of Aviv and keep the Passover to the Lord your God. For in the month of Aviv, the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God from a flock or the herd in the place that the Lord your God will choose to make his name dwell there. You shall eat no leavened bread with it.

Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction. For you came out of the land of Egypt in haste. That all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.

No leaven shall be seen with you in your territory for seven days. Nor shall any of the flesh that you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain all night until morning. You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the Lord is giving you, but at the place that the Lord your God will choose to make his name dwell in it.

[5 : 15] There you shall offer the sacrifice in the evening at sunset at the time you came out of Egypt. And you shall cook it and eat it at the place the Lord your God will choose.

And in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. For six days you shall eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the Lord your God. You shall do no work on it.

You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. And you shall keep the feast of weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the Lord your God blesses you.

And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow who are among you at the place the Lord your God will choose to make his name dwell there.

You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and you shall be careful to observe these statutes. You shall keep the feast of booths or tabernacles seven days when you've gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your wine press.

[6 : 27] You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and daughter, your male servant, your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow who are within your towns. For seven days you shall keep the feast to the Lord your God at the place the Lord will choose because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands so that you will be altogether joyful.

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose at the feast of unleavened bread, at the feast of weeks and at the feast of booths.

They shall not appear before the Lord empty handed. Every man shall give as he is able according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given to you.

Amen. May God bless to us this his word. Let's take up our Bibles at Deuteronomy chapter 15, page 158 in the Church Visitors Bibles.

A chapter all about marching to a different drumbeat from the world around. Let me ask the question, what does it mean to keep the fourth commandment today?

[7 : 50] That's been a vexed question for many throughout church history. We can't go into all the issues this morning, but what I do want to do is to begin to get clear about this, to show that to begin to get clear about this, we have to see what understanding how to keep the Sabbath truly meant right back at the very beginning.

And it was much, much more than just about one day. And that's what these two chapters really open up for us, because these chapters expand and apply the fourth commandment.

We've seen that pattern already. Deuteronomy goes through the Decalogue, expanding and expanding and applying the implications of these commands. And so what these chapters show us is that the Sabbath command is about a whole rhythm of life, very distinct from the world around. It's about living lives not as slaves to this material world, a world which is under the curse, but living as God's free people. It's about marching to a different drumbeat.

It's about living the liberating rhythms of a redeemed life. And that's why Israel's whole calendar was sabbatical. Look at verse 1 of chapter 15.

[9:12] It speaks of a Sabbath year, the year of rest, the year of release. Leviticus chapter 25, which has more detail about all of this, also speaks about the jubilee year, the 50th year, the Sabbath year of Sabbath years, the great, great release year.

This was a people for whom Sabbath was a whole way of life. And this chapter shows us that that was a life to be full of compassion and care and generous love.

And note that that is what real Sabbath concern is all about. It's not a niggardly thing. It's not a spoiling thing. It's not a negative thing.

And sometimes that is the attitude that has prevailed when it's been perverted. That happened in Israel of old. It happens in some of the Scottish islands even today.

But no, rather, Sabbath is about a whole pattern of life that is suffused with generosity, with giving, and with grace, giving gladly back to God and giving generously to others.

[10:19] And the great themes of these chapters are rest, yes, but rest that is filled with release, with restitution, with restoration. Just look at verses 1 and 2.

It's all about release. Five times that word release dominates those opening lines. And that's what God's people are redeemed for. For release, for liberty, from the curse of being in bondage to a world, in bondage to decay, release from being slaves to sin and death itself.

And so we are to be people who live the liberating rhythms of a redeemed life, not a life of slavery. We're to have a wholly different, a wholly distinct lifestyle in our earthly lives because we're no longer slaves to this passing world.

We're marching to a different drumbeat from the greed, from the gain, from the getting that calls the tune all around us in the pagan world. We're to live lives that are permeated with Sabbath thinking. Rejoicing in work life that is not in vain. It's what Paul says to the Corinthians. None of your work is in vain because it's not just passing, it's for the Lord. God. And rejoicing in the release from so much of the drivenness of our world, or and about.

[11:44] So that we are able to be people who bring compassionate release and restoration to other people. And that's what these chapters, I think, help us to see and to embrace. We need to take the two chapters together because they're two sides of the same coin.

Chapter 15 lays out the Sabbath patterns, the true gospel patterns that are to permeate our lives, filling them with warm compassion. But chapter 16 reminds us of the Sabbath thinking, the gospel thinking, which has to fill our hearts and minds because it's that alone that will cause us to overflow with gospel-giving love.

It's only the true evangel that will drive true ethics. And it's the regular means of grace, which is what Israel's festivals, these festivals we read about, what they were, they reminded them of God's redeeming grace.

And it was these that empowered them and evoked these works of true grace in their lives and in their community. So first let's look at chapter 15 in a little detail.

This chapter gives us an overview of how to live according to Sabbath patterns. And the message is clear. Don't neglect, as God's people, don't neglect the true works of faith.

[13:02] God's people are to maintain a compassionate, liberated attitude in life. And not just in theory, it's got to be real in practice. And that means, first of all, in verses 1 to 11, it means there is a time to forgive debts.

Now, in Exodus chapter 23 was the command that every seventh year the land was to lie fallow. It was to be a year of rest, release. Same word as used repeatedly here.

And here this chapter expands that, makes it very clear what Exodus also said, that it was for the poor. So this was not some sort of homage to Mother Earth. Not at all. This was all about caring for human beings.

So verse 2, creditors were to release debts. However much was left to pay back. And this isn't, it's not some kind of naive idea to encourage people to take out debts they can't pay and then default on them.

It's not that. It assumes that they were paying back what they were due. But there comes a time when your brother Israelite, your brother among God's people, is to be blessed by you with release.

[14:11] That's what this is about. It's an example of what Paul says in Galatians 6.10 of God's people doing good to everyone, but especially to the household of God.

Let generosity overflow, particularly to your brothers and sisters. And that's the point, you see, of verse 3. It's not discriminating against an outsider.

It's simply saying what a great blessing, what a joy it is to be part of God's own household. What it means to belong to a people whose whole existence is defined by grace, by gratuitous redemption, by release.

What a wonderful thing to belong to the people of God. But look at verse 4. What are we to make of verse 4? There will be no poor among you.

How does that fit with the instruction of verse 2 that we just read? Or indeed verse 11, where it says, they'll never cease to be poor in the land. There's a very clear tension there, isn't there?

[15:12] It's so obvious, it's clearly deliberate. It's to provoke us to think. Look at verses 4 and 5. Things should be this way. If only, verse 5, you will strictly obey the voice of your God.

But of course, the commands of verse 2 and verse 11 and all the other commands like this are needed precisely because of the reality that people's hearts are hard. And people's hearts are not fully in submission to God, even among his people.

That's what Jesus said, remember, about the similar command about divorce. It should not be so. But because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses gave you that instruction. And this is a fallen world still, isn't it?

So a command like this and so many of the other commands in God's word, they point us to the ultimate goal of God's kingdom. That is where we will see verse 4 completely fulfilled.

But you see, God calls his redeemed people to live now with that goal in view all the time. And if God's people of old were to strive to reflect the ways of his heavenly kingdom here on earth in the land of Israel, in that first beachhead of God's kingdom on earth, then how much more so must that be for us who live in these last days when the church of Jesus Christ is being extended to the very ends of the earth?

[16:43] It's no good then, is it, to be a proud Sabbath keeper, to drive to church every single Sunday, never miss it, wearing your smart clothes, but not caring a hoot for a brother or sister in the church who's in real need.

That's no good, is it? What does John say? We ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need and yet closes his heart against them, how does God's love abide in him?

Little children, let us love not in word or talk. That's cheap. But in deed and truth. Isn't that exactly what Moses is saying here in verses 7 and 8?

Don't harden your heart. Don't shut your hand to your brother. Now listen to James in James chapter 2. If a brother or sister is poorly clothed or lacking in daily food, and one of you says to him, Oh, go in peace without actually giving him the things he needs for the body.

What good is that? So also faith by itself, if it doesn't have works, is dead, says the apostle of Christ. And that should never be in a truly gospel church.

[17:55] That's the very place where heaven's ways should be seen here on earth. That's the point that Luke makes actually. Explicitly at the end of Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 4, where he quotes from verse 4 here and tells us that in that early church in those days, there was not a needy person among them.

Because the spirit of Sabbath thinking, of redeemed thinking, was filling their hearts and minds. And it was that generous church that was a truly growing church, full of God's grace and power.

Just read the book of Acts. But still, until the complete fulfillment of God's purposes, we live by faith, don't we? We live not by sight.

And we live with the struggle of redeemed life, but in bodies that are still sinful, in a world that is still fallen and under the curse. That's what Paul tells us in Romans chapter 8. And we're not yet living in the consummation of all things.

And so just like the Israelites back then, so for us, we need the kind of instruction of this chapter. And you see, verses 7 to 11 here deal with the reality, don't they?

[19:10] Of redeemed life in a fallen world, where there will be poor and needy. And where brothers and sisters do get in a mess at times among God's people. And when that happens, says the Lord, verse 7, don't harden your heart to them.

Don't shut your hand to them. No, be open-hearted. Be open-handed. Verse 8, help them. And verse 9, don't be selfish.

Don't be unworthy. Don't say to yourself, Oh, the year of release is near, so if I lend him all of this, he'll never have time to pay me it all back. I'm going to lose a lot. No, don't grudge it, he says, because, look at verse 10, because God is giving you an opportunity to be blessed as you give to somebody else.

It's not a loss to lose financially in that way. It's a blessing. That's Sabbath thinking talking. And the Lord says, actually, this is the path of blessing for the whole community.

Look back at verse 6. A community that looks after its own in love and compassion like that will flourish in the eyes of the world. And we need to take that seriously, don't we, as individual Christians, as a church.

[20 : 28] And surely also it means the reverse, doesn't it? That we won't flourish under God if we're closed-hearted and closed-handed towards our brothers. An ungenerous church will be an ungrowing church just as a generous church will be a growing church.

And I'm sure also there's a word, too, for national leaders, isn't there? Where nations exploit their citizens, where there's cold-hearted disdain for people's lives. It's unlikely to lead that nation to be powerful and influential in the world.

Just think of North Korea today for an extreme example of that. God will not be mocked, and our politicians need to remember these things as well. They're written principally for the church, but there is a word here for the world if it wants to know the righteousness that exalts a nation.

But we've got to be clear, too, haven't we, that this chapter is not promoting the kind of welfarism that creates just a dependency culture that destroys personal responsibility.

That's such a corrosive thing, and it's all around us, sadly, today in our Western world. It's caused many problems in developing countries, too, hasn't it?

[21 : 41] Where so many have become dependent upon handouts that it's tended to destroy enterprise and ambition in so many developing countries. Writers from these countries today are saying, don't just give us that aid.

Don't keep us down. Welfarism that creates dependency is a corrosive thing. But here, notice, it's the opposite of that. The assumption is that people do take responsibility for their own needs, and that they're prepared to work hard for themselves, yes, with the help of others.

That's what verses 12 to 18 are all about, do you see? In these commands that are telling us how to deal with indentured laborers. So you see, where verses 1 to 11 proclaims that there's a time to forgive debts because all your wealth is on loan to you from the Lord, and you're to forgive your debts generously and treat all your wealth as transitory.

Well, so also, verses 12 to 18 proclaim that there's a time to release slaves because your workers also are on loan to you from God, and you're to treat them well, and you're to remember that their services also are transient.

Does the Bible promote slavery? That's a claim that's often made today, isn't it? Usually in the context of saying, well, the Bible promotes slavery, but the church moved on from that and gave that up, and just so, the church should move on from the things that the Bible says about sexual practices and marriage and homosexuality and the like.

[23 : 15] But that's far from true, and this chapter and many other chapters show us that very clearly. Of course, if you just take a cursory glance, you might think otherwise. Remember how concerned the media was about context when Donald Trump tweeted the words of Sadiq Khan, the London mayor, after the London Bridge attack.

The whole world knew that Donald Trump took those words out of context. Well, if the media was as inclined to take the words of God in context than Scripture, it might make a lot less mistakes and stupid things would not be said.

So let's look at these verses in context. How exploitative are they? The first thing to note is the footnote to verse 12, because this almost certainly does refer to someone selling themselves into indentured labor as their only way of preserving a living after some disaster, perhaps losing their crops or losing their land.

So this is a very different situation from forced labor, the kind of slavery that we think of. There was plenty of that in the ancient world. We saw it in the ghastly transatlantic slave trade of the 17th and 18th centuries.

We see it still today in many parts of the world. But this is not that. Notice secondly, verse 12, notice how compassionate, how fair these instructions are.

[24 : 38] Notice that a male and a female are to be treated exactly the same way. That was something unique in the ancient world. Notice the protection in verse 12, never keeping that labor beyond the year of Sabbath release.

And notice in verse 13, the extraordinary generosity. You shall not let them go when they go empty-handed, but rather laden with goods, with wealth from your own possessions. Furnish him liberally.

How many employers give you that today when you move on to another job? Why all this generosity? Well, look at verse 14.

Because God has blessed you, and so you are to share the blessing. And don't forget verse 18. You've had a jolly good deal out of it. You've had half the cost of a normal laborer, the market rates. Yes, you've helped him with a job that he desperately needed, but you've also gained. So don't dare exploit that situation. Don't forget, verse 15, that you were once real slaves.

[25 : 47] You were once in terrible plight, and the Lord redeemed you. He released you, so you should never be the kind of people who exploit others, especially your own needy brothers in the faith.

your people who march to a different drumbeat from the world round about. So he's saying, you see, it's not wrong for you to benefit from the advantage of the availability of this labor.

As an employer, you benefit from it, and so does he, because he's got work to live by until things improve. It's not wrong for you to benefit from the market conditions when they move in your favor. Often that is how real wealth is created. But it is wrong, says the Lord, to do so at the expense of exploiting those who are caught in real difficulty.

Good labor deserves its reward. So verse 14 is plain. You must share the blessing that God has given you. In other words, it is to be excessive generosity, not extreme greed, that drives this kind of biblical capitalism.

[26 : 57] It's not communism. It's all built around individual wealth. It's all built around personal relationships. It's not collectivism. It's not enforcement. It's not expropriation of property, taking your property away forcibly.

That Mr. Corbyn seems to want to do. But, for a redeemed people, the spirit of release and restoration governs their hearts.

And when people know that they owe everything to God above, to his great generous blessing, then they will want to emulate his generosity to others.

So, is the Bible, is this dreaded, dark Old Testament, is it promoting exploitation? Or emancipation? Well, it's very clearly the latter, isn't it?

In fact, verses 16 and 17 are a further evidence of how unslave-like this so-called slavery really was. Some slaves in this position had such a good life, such a happy life working for the person they'd indentured themselves to, that they didn't want ever to leave.

[28 : 06] They said, no, even if you gave them large yes, property, no, I want to stay with you. If that's so, well, you must let them. You can't just junk them.

Again, it's generosity, it's compassion. Even if this ear-piercing ceremony seems a little bit over the top for us, obviously they were made of sterner stuff than we are today.

But you see, isn't that the aim? Or shouldn't it be the aim for every Christian employer? That those dependent on them should love them, should want to stay with them? Because it's clear that in their life, in their work, in everything they do, they're marching to a different drumbeat from the rest of the world.

For them, they live the liberated rhythms of redeemed life, Sabbath thinking, permeates everything they do, their life and their work. They're marked by generous giving, not by greedy grabbing. And we must remember too, of course, that just as our attitudes to our brothers and sisters in Christ are to be generous and overflowing, so also our attitude to God will be intimately linked with that.

[29 : 23] And redeemed people, Sabbath people, if we're never people who will fleece others, nor are we ever to be people who will try and fleece God himself. And that, quite literally, is what verses 19 to 23 are about.

We need to remember that there's a time to give God the cream of our substance. Your animals, your property, everything you have are on loan to you from God.

And so, you are to mark that by reserving the very first and the best for Him. And to rejoice in doing that with thankfulness in your heart to God. So, verse 19, you don't shear your firstborn sheep.

That is to fleece God, quite literally. Nor do you do any work with your firstborn animals. No doubt the strongest and the best one. But no, that's not for your gain. It's for your God.

And notice verse 29, if it's a dud, that firstborn, you don't say, oh great, thank goodness, that's the Lord one. We'll give that to Him. No, no, no, no. You swap that one back for yourself and you give God a proper one.

[30 : 26] You don't do like the man who had two 50-pound notes and he was a keen betting man and his wife hated it but he managed to persuade his wife that he would go to the bookies and put those two 50-pound notes on two horses because if I win really big, I'll be able to give so much more to the church collection.

And he went and he put on his bets on two horses. The first one lost but the second one won really big at 200 to 1. So he came home and she said, well that's 10,000 pounds. Have you given 5,000 pounds to the church?

Ah, well no, he said. You see, it was the Lord's horse that lost. Well, we're all very skilled at that kind of thinking actually, aren't we?

It's so unworthy of the Lord who redeemed us. Not with silver and gold but with the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember David the king, he wouldn't give to the Lord something inferior, something broken.

I'll not sacrifice to the Lord my God that which costs me nothing, he said. How much less should we redeem by the precious blood of Christ?

[31 : 35] How much less should we fleece the Lord when he's given us so much more? But you see the overriding issue all through this chapter.

You see, to have a heart that is overflowing with generosity and to see your wealth and the fruit of your labor not just as a means to get for yourself but to give to others.

That, you see, is the way of real blessing in life. That's to know the liberation of the redeemed life. To know God's blessing on you.

Live like this and God will bless you. Look at verse 4. That's what he says. And again in verse 6.

And again in verse 10. Live as a giver and the Lord's blessing will surround your life.

And verse 14. As the Lord blesses you you'll be enabled to go on being an ever more generous giver. What did Jesus say?

[32 : 35] It's better to give than to receive. That's the way of real blessing. That's redeemed thinking.

That's Sabbath thinking. It's no accident you see that Luke refers to this in Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 4 because it was the generosity of the early church that was the key driver of its growth of its mission.

Chris Wright puts it this way. There is missionary power in joyful generosity. That's not just because mission costs money and it needs to be paid for of course but also because it's generous hearts that will be gospel hearts.

And only where there's a truly gospel heart in the church will there be real generous gospel passion that overflows in zeal for mission. And that's why you see chapter 16 belongs so closely with chapter 15.

Because you see if we are to live lives of liberated generosity we'll only do so if we never forget that we are people who have received such generous grace from God.

[33 : 49] And the Sabbath patterns that we've read in chapter 15 they are empowered by the Sabbath thinking that comes in chapter 16. And the message here in chapter 16 you see is very clear.

Don't neglect the means of grace that God has given you. Let the gospel constantly therefore dictate your diary and your whole calendar your whole life.

Because as Peter says in his second letter God has granted us everything we need for such a godly life but we mustn't neglect his grace. And so if our lives like Israel's lives if our lives are to be permeated with the real works of faith they must be punctuated by the real means of grace.

And that's what God gave Israel in their weekly Sabbaths and also in these annual festivals whereas as verse 16 of chapter 16 says they were together three times a year all of them before the Lord to be reminded of the greatness of their God and the generosity of their God and the grace of God's provision to them.

So if we then like Israel if we are to be enabled and empowered to live out these liberating rhythms of redeemed life what must our daily and weekly and yearly routines look like?

[35 : 09] What must our common life do as it brings us together to remembrance? Well look at chapter 16 first of all we are to ensure that we remember with great reverence the great Passover of the Lord.

That's what verses 1 to 8 describe. It talks about the Passover culminating in that solemn assembly on the seventh day. It was different of course to the original Passover no blood on the doorpost any longer because the threat was gone.

God's avenging angel had passed. The people had been redeemed. They're in the land. They're possessing what God had promised them. But God's people are never ever ever to forget how they got there and how God saved them from the destroying angel.

How God redeemed them from the slavery and the bondage of Egypt. So verse 3 all the days of your life you are to remember your great redemption.

God's deliverance in the past through the Passover lamb slain for your salvation. And you're to rejoice in the provision of the future and the liberation of living in his presence.

[36 : 23] And not a year could go past without God's people having to vividly dramatically solemnly proclaim to one another the gospel of their deliverance and the glory of the great Redeemer.

And friends for us we've been ransomed haven't we? Not with the blood of a Passover lamb but with the lamb without blemish the lamb without spot Christ our Passover lamb who has been sacrificed for our eternal redemption.

And whenever we sit at the Lord's table as we'll do in a moment we proclaim his death until he comes. And how much more should we always remember whenever we come together remember the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ remember our great Redeemer who has liberated us.

And won't it be true that the nearer we live to the cross the more we remember with great reverence what he has done for us the more our hearts will well up with that spring of living water that can't help but flow out as rivers of living water to others through us.

Remembering and reminding one another with great reverence the Passover of the Lord that is what will make us you and me into generous people giving people Sabbath people.

[37 : 42] And secondly remembering with great rejoicing God's provision and his presence with us and among us forever. That's what these harvest festivals in verses 9 to 15 are all about.

You see the first first of all the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. That was 50 days after the beginning of the wheat harvest. It began the day after this solemn assembly when as Leviticus 23 tells us a sheaf the first sheaf cut was waved before the Lord as a testimony of faith to the harvest that was still to come.

And then seven weeks later that early harvest festival was celebrated. And notice verse 11 the great rejoicing that's commanded in God's great provision. And again verse 12 the reminder that you're no longer slaves you're a liberated people you're no longer slaving to provide for the king of Egypt you're being provided for by the king of heaven in his land of promise in his land of rest.

Our God provides all our needs. That's the message. And then in verse 13 the Feast of Booths the Feast of Tabernacles that was the last feast the harvest home after all the ground had been harvested the trees the vines and the labor is sheltered in the booths in the fields but again Leviticus 23 reminds us that these were a vivid reminder of the tents that all the people lived in all through those wilderness years when God himself pitched his tent right in the midst his tabernacle his presence always among his people to give them life.

And that's why again verse 15 this was to be altogether joyful because it was a vivid proclamation of the reality of the God who has not only redeemed his people from past bondage but who delights to dwell amongst his people to provide for all their needs to promise his abiding presence forever.

[39 : 44] How could a people who were constantly reminded of these realities how could they not live lives that overflowed with compassion overflowed with generosity overflowed with the spirit of Sabbath release?

and how much more for us? We can bear witness to far far greater promises far greater fulfillments in our lives through the Lord Jesus.

Not just promises for our earthly bodies but far far more. In Christ's resurrection Paul reminds us that Christ is the first fruits of the great resurrection that will be at his coming for all who belong to him bodily life forever through what he's done.

Isn't that a wonderful thing to think that Jesus rose from the dead on the day after the Sabbath on the day of the first fruit the waving of that first sheaf that promised the harvest to come and then 50 days later on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the church amid great joy declaring that harvest for the world is underway and then as John saw in his vision in Revelation at last there will be the final harvest of the earth the ingathering harvest home when the angels go out with their sickle to gather all the earth to the great ingathering in the day of Christ's judgment solemn yes but also altogether joyful as God's people at last are liberated forever as the evil one is conquered and at last they will hear those wonderful words from the throne in heaven behold the tabernacle the booth the tent of God is with men he will dwell with them and they will be his people and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither there be mourning or crying or pain anymore for the former things have passed away and you see we must remember all of this all the time that God has provided for us in Christ all of this the promise of resurrection life forever and that God has promised that he will go on dwelling with us forever so that we know his presence unbroken forever all because of the blood of our Lord

Jesus Christ who is our great Passover who has rescued us from bondage to sin and death and hell you see won't this Sabbath thinking which is gospel thinking if it saturates if it permeates the whole of our lives won't that inevitably mean that we must be living to a very different drumbeat from the rest of the world around us won't it mean that we must be living a liberated rhythm of life redeemed how could it not do that but we still live in these fallen bodies don't we we still live in this fallen world and we need the rhythm the pattern of the means of grace that God has given us in the regular gatherings that we have just like this this morning so that we will re-hear and re-learn and re-remember the great and precious promises of his grace which are everything that we need for life and godliness israel had their weekly sabbaths they also had their great festivals so do we and we need them the

[43 : 17] Hebrew says don't give up meeting together you Christians as some want to do but encourage one another all the more as you see the day drawing near we have more need of the regular calendar means of grace that God has given us the nearer we get to Christ coming not less need but more need says the New Testament so we should thank God for all our weekly gatherings the Lord's day and every other opportunity that we have to rejoice in our Redeemer to remember so our minds are filled with his gospel hope and to enjoy his rest to enjoy his release to be reminded that we are not driven by the burdens of life that we are not slaves to the material world of work and gain all of that is transient and to share practically with one another in tangible ways to show that our hearts are open to our brothers and sisters in Christ that our homes are open that our hands are open that our wallets are open you see how all of this goes together look look as we close at verses 16 and 17 at the end of chapter 16 you see it's as

God's people gather around the gospel it's as they're gripped by the glory of the gospel everything that these great feasts speak of above all in their wonderful fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ it's as we do that that we become givers for the gospel everyone giving as they were able because it's as we do that that we are galvanized by the blessings that the Lord has lavished on us so do you want to live a life that is full of blessing do you want to live a life that is liberated from the burden of life in this fallen world in this sin cursed world then learn the secret of Sabbath it's as simple as that let Sabbath thinking which is redeemed thinking which is gospel thinking let it rule in your heart and then you will find that Sabbath patterns will flow out from your heart be a giver don't be a grabber in life just as

Christ gave himself for you be a giver and you will discover the great blessing that it is better to give than to receive and as you do so in fact your capacity to receive real riches God's true blessing on your life it will increase the more of a giver you become the greater the blessing will be chapter 15 verse 10 you shall give freely and your heart shall not be grudging because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake that's God's word we need to trust him let's pray heavenly father it is so easy for us to be caught up and to be made to march according to the beat of this world driven seeking grabbing getting but all for things that will one day pass away help us we pray to remember that you are our redeemer that you brought us out of slavery out of bondage and into the kingdom of your beloved son the place of rest of release of restoration place of altogether joy filled delight so help us we pray to be a Sabbath people marching to your drumbeat and as you bless us so blessing this world that it too might see in us and through us a better way and the way to your throne through the Lord Jesus

Christ help us we pray for we are weak but you are strong and we ask it in Jesus name Amen