

**Standing we sing Psalm 49:4 beforehand**

4-

*Such is the fate of proud and foolish men,  
The end of those who praise them for their sin.  
Into Sheol like sheep they headlong run;  
Their shepherd, Death, stands by to urge them on.  
They all go down directly to the grave;  
From death's corruption no one them can save.  
But God will pay my ransom and not leave me,  
For He into His glory will receive me.<sup>i</sup>*

Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth<sup>ii</sup>. Beloved, grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ<sup>iii</sup>. By the powerful operation of God the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

**Psalm of praise 84:5**

5-

*Lo, one day in Thy house of praise  
Is better than a thousand days  
Outside the courts of Thy salvation.  
As one who fears and serves the LORD,  
I would much rather stand and guard  
The threshold of His habitation  
Than, far from God, to dwell within  
The tents of wickedness and sin.<sup>iv</sup>*

Prayer.

**Psalm 73:8**

-8-

*Whom do I have in heav'n but Thee?  
Who shall on earth my refuge be?  
Since I have Thee as rock and Savior,  
I seek no further wealth or favor.  
Although my flesh and heart may fail,  
God is my strength, I shall prevail,  
For He, whose steadfast love is sure,  
Will be my portion evermore.<sup>v</sup>*

Scripture reading : Nehemiah 13<sup>vi</sup>  
Text : Nehemiah 13:14 - 22.  
Catechism Lord's Day 38

In the fourth commandment the Lord orders us to keep the Sabbath holy.

- Much emphasis is laid on the fact that the day must be particularly different to any other workday.
- This day must be marked by the fact that we keep it holy.
- God hallowed the day and we may not alter its character.

The fact of the matter is simply that the Lord will not allow the profanation of the Sabbath to remain unpunished.

- Nehemiah reproaches the people by reminding them that the Lord has once before brought great calamity over their city due to this type of irresponsibility.
- By this type of sin they exacerbate the Lord's wrath.

Hence the following is necessary:

- 1. The commandment regarding the Sabbath regulates God's ordering of us.**
- 2. The commandment regarding the Sabbath is a prelude to eternal life.**

- 1. The commandment regarding the Sabbath regulates God's ordering of us.**

Why must the day be kept holy? The answer lies in the fact that the day points forward - towards the life hereafter where in perfection we will live with the Lord. This symbolic meaning of the day is revealed to us in Exodus 31:12, 13:

**<sup>12</sup>And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>13</sup>Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. <sup>14</sup>Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. <sup>15</sup>Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. (Exodus 31:12 – 15)**

Thus it has to do with the connection that exists between us and the eternal blessing of the Lord.

- Leviticus 16: 30<sup>vii</sup> (and Leviticus 23: 32<sup>viii</sup>, 25<sup>ix</sup>) emphasises the reconciliation between the Lord, and us as it happens on this day.
- It already points to the work of the Messiah who creates a time of perfection between the Lord, as part of the reconciliation that He wrought and us.

To holy the Sabbath requires of us active planning.

- But not the planning of our everyday activities on this day.
- It must consist of communion with the Lord.
- Therefore the Biblical instruction is quite clear:
  - Rest of all your physical labour.
  - Serve God in Spirit and truth.

The leaders of Israel desecrated the Sabbath because of values to which they held in their time, which caused them to sacrifice and bend their principles.

- With their crooked values they led the people into difficulty and trouble.
- Their money became a power, which caused them to perform all manner of profane activities on the Sabbath.
  - In order to make money they had to operate their winepresses on the Sabbath.
  - In order to increase profit, they had to transport their produce to the city on the Sabbath.
  - The same was true of their wine and fruit, which was then ready for the market.

In order to place this matter in its proper perspective the Lord destroyed the entire nation and even had them taken from their country into exile.

- A portion of the new generation He brought back.
- With them the Lord begun anew – amongst others with the keeping of the Sabbath.

We must ourselves repent of this sin, because the Lord will not hesitate to punish also us with destruction, because He has already shown that He may very easily do so.

In the Bible we read of things we are to do on the day of rest.

- Things such as worship services, catechism classes, Bible study and prayer. (It is written in Deuteronomy 31:11, 12<sup>x</sup>.)
- Think thereon that on the day on which Jesus cleansed the temple He said that "My house must be called a house of prayer"<sup>xi</sup>

*Everything that we do on a Sunday must attest to the fact that we are grateful to the Lord that He punished the Lord Jesus for our sin, so that we can thereby rise from death with Him, to now await eternal perfection.*

The Lord prescribed how we are to express our gratitude and this expectation of His Second Coming:

- It must be expressed by our singing, because we must praise the Lord with also our music and singing.
- Think of Psalm 149:

**Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.**

Or Psalm 150, which sings of a rejoicing happy multitude and of everything, that lives and moves that must join in to sing the praise of the Lord.

The Sabbath was also the day on which the people had to bring their thankoffering to the Lord.

- Do you still remember Malachi's words? The Lord said:  
**Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. Malachi 3:10**

We cannot meet the Lord with empty hands.

- That is why under the worship service we give to the needy from our abundance, so that the Lord may alleviate their want.

The Day of Rest established by the Lord, proclaims to us that the Lord's blessing follows us – throughout the day; during the worship service, and especially with an eye to the day on which we enter eternal peace when we are then with the Lord forever.

## **2. The commandment concerning the Sabbath is a prelude to eternal life.**

There is an appointed rhythm to life.

- Each time that one breaks an order given to one by the Lord, it has consequences, which affects also other facets of one's life.
- If one breaks the rule concerning the Sabbath, then the rest of one's life deteriorates into chaos.
- The rule for the Sabbath is that it is meant to be a day on which the Lord is worshipped, and to clothe each day in such a way that one seeks the honour of the Lord - especially against the backdrop that the work of the weekdays tends to delay and hinder our worship of Him.

The connection between this day and the Lord must become so strong, that it governs each day of our life - as it will be in heaven one day.

The moment at which this commandment decays into disorder, namely that we no longer keep the day holy, the Lord simply withdraws His hand from us.

- It is not to no avail that the Bible teaches that God is a God of order.
- For this reason disorder follows on all terrains whenever we aim to disturb the order which He has prescribed.
- If on Sunday, we abandon His holiness, things will go awry the rest of the week, because then people kill each other in the streets, and steal from and rape each other etc.

As Church of the Lord we therefore have the obligation to ensure that the Lord's order is maintained and adhered to on the Sabbath.

- One can only attain peace if one knows the Lord, and when one lives in accordance with the order as He established it.
- And when we carry it out and draw the attention of those who do not know the Lord to it.

Each one who faithfully attends worship services on Sunday receives the Lord's blessing. They are instructed in everything that is of importance to the Lord.

- Which means that their knowledge of the Lord increases and their relationship with the Lord deepens.
- Such people are also those who draw such strength from the Lord that they can manage the crises which crops up.
- They are those who employ maturity and insight when judging the times in which we live.

Have you ever thought of how huge an event it is when an entire church prays together and when they sing to the glory of the Lord? And when they are blessed together?

We must celebrate the Sabbath the way the Lord Jesus did.

- The Bible teaches that it was His habit to visit the Synagogue on Sundays.
- It must also be our habit to come together for a worship service in a church building – because then we follow the Lord's habit.

Jesus went to church because there He met with and worshipped the Lord.

- The meaning of the worship in church services is that it points towards the day on which we enter the eternal Sabbath with the Lord.
- Which is the time of the Hereafter when we are going to live on the New Earth. There will not be a temple, because then the Lord is with us eternally.
- There will also not be weekdays, because it is then one eternal day of rest.

While we are still on earth, the Lord calls us by His Holy Spirit to attend each worship service.

- He wants to have communion with us.
- During these gatherings he wants to teach, comfort and exhort us.
- He especially wants to bless us.
- So, come to the worship service each Sunday.

Let us read Catechism Lord's Day 38.

**Question 103. What does God require in the fourth commandment?**

*Answer: First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; (a) and that I, especially on the sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God, (b) to hear his word, (c) to use the sacraments, (d) publicly to call upon the Lord, (e) and contribute to the relief of the poor. (f) 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. (g)<sup>xii</sup>*

**Amen.**

Prayer.

Psalm 130:3, 4.

3-

*I wait for God to hide me;  
My soul, with longing stirred,  
Shall hope, whate'er betide me,  
In His unfailing word.  
For Thee, LORD, I am yearning  
With more intense desire  
Than watchers for the morning  
To dawn of day aspire.*

-4-

*Hope in the LORD, O nation!  
With Him is steadfast love;  
His plenteous salvation  
He'll send you from above.  
He will redeem His people,  
His chosen Israel,  
From all their sin and evil,  
That they His praise may tell.<sup>xiii</sup>*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Ghost,  
be with you all.<sup>xiv</sup>

**Amen.**

Prayer.

Psalm

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.<sup>xv</sup>

**Amen**

**Dr. M.J. du Plessis**  
**Reformed Church Bellville**  
**Date: 10 October 2010**

<sup>i</sup> [http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs049\\_Helder1980.HTM](http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs049_Helder1980.HTM)

<sup>ii</sup> Psalm 124:8

<sup>iii</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:3

<sup>iv</sup> [http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs084\\_Helder1980.HTM](http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs084_Helder1980.HTM)

<sup>v</sup> [http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs073\\_Helder1980.HTM](http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs073_Helder1980.HTM)

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+13&version=KJV>

<sup>vii</sup> <sup>30</sup>For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

<sup>viii</sup> <sup>32</sup>It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

<sup>ix</sup> <sup>25</sup>Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

<sup>x</sup> <sup>11</sup>When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. <sup>12</sup>Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:

<sup>xi</sup> Matthew 21:13, Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11

<sup>xii</sup> (a) Tit.1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: 2 Tim.3:14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 2 Tim.3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 1 Tim.5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 1 Cor.9:11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 1 Cor.9:13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 1 Cor.9:14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. 2 Tim.2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

(b) Ps.40:10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. Ps.40:11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. Ps.68:27 There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

(c) 1 Tim.4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 1 Cor.14:19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. 1 Cor.14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. 1 Cor.14:31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

(d) 1 Cor.11:33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

(e) 1 Tim.2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 1 Tim.2:2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 1 Tim.2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 1 Tim.2:8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. 1 Tim.2:9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 1 Tim.2:10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 1 Tim.2:11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 1 Cor.14:16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

(f) 1 Cor.16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

(g) Isa.66:23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

<http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/heidelberg.html>

<sup>xiii</sup> [http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs130\\_Westra.HTM](http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs130_Westra.HTM)

<sup>xiv</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:14

<sup>xv</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:14

