

Prayer

Praise You, Lord God; for You are always at work fulfilling Your plan.

Praise You, Lord God; for Your plan is always for our benefit.

Praise You, Lord God; for Your love for us is real and tangible.

Praise You, Lord God; for Jesus has opened up our way to heaven.

Praise You, Lord God; for we need have no fear in Your presence.

Praise You, Lord God; for Your plan is that we should be united in peace. AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Theme: Sabbath

Pray as you are led, about

- *Your own relationship with God through Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit*
- *Your family and those you love*
- *Your friends and neighbours*
- *The people with whom you work*
- *The fellowship of your church*
- *The country in which you live*
- *The future of our world*

Meditation

Rescue us, Lord Jesus Christ,
by Your Holy Spirit, rescue us.

Restore our bodies through rest,
and strengthen them with exercise;

Replenish our minds by the Word,
and fill our hearts with Your truth;

Re-ignite Your fire of love in us,
so that we may shine for You;

Recover our zeal to live the Faith,
by challenging us to do Your will;

Replace the tiredness in our hearts,
with the vigour of Your enthusiasm;

Recharge our souls through worship,
so we may enjoy Your presence;

Renew us, Lord Jesus Christ,
by Your Holy Spirit, renew us.

Bible Study - Luke 6:1-5

¹ One Sabbath while Jesus was going through the grain fields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. ² But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" ³ Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He entered the house of God and took and ate

the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?" ⁵ *Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."*

Review

Last week I wrote briefly about the Sabbath. Scripture tells us that the principle of the Sabbath is that we honour God by resting for one day in seven, as He did when He made the world. The principle of Sabbath rest is therefore not a matter of personal judgement but about honouring God by doing what He has told us to do. Moreover He does not give us the Sabbath as a burdensome law, but rather, a gift for us to use intelligently and carefully according to our circumstances. This is why throughout His life, Jesus both honoured the Sabbath but also resisted any human legalism that people attached to it; as in this well known Gospel story (which is similar to stories found in Luke 13:10f. and 14:1f.).

Many people have difficulty with the issue today because the teaching we get about what it means varies from church to church. Moreover, society as a whole has rejected the traditional Christian view of the Sabbath, and whilst remnants of it remain in society, the issue is contentious. Indeed, the idea that Scripture says God wants everyone to worship Him and 'shut up shop' on Sunday is unhelpful, because this would be to overreact to what the Bible says about the Sabbath and misinterpret what Jesus said about it. So what should a Christian do, and how should we behave on the Sabbath?

I suggest we should return to Scripture and study what it has to say. The Old Testament tells us that we should honour God by resting one day in seven (Gen 2:1-3, Ex 31:14f.). The 'Law' (Exodus 20:8-11) says that the Sabbath is day of rest, and says nothing about worship; moreover, we are told that the Sabbath is part of the way God has made the world. Everything needs rest, including the land, and without it, even the land malfunctions (see Lev. 25:1-6, 26:34f.). Rest is for our good, and we are surrounded by evidence that it is important. People burn out unless they rest, moreover, land, wildlife and the environment suffer unless we give it rest as part of our stewardship of the world (even with modern agricultural methods).

Over time, the people of Israel gradually worshipped God more and more on the Sabbath day (Lev 23:16, Numb. 28:9f. 1 Chron 9:32, Psalm 92:1 etc.). Then, when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and Israelites throughout the world could not use the Temple as a place of worship (from 587BC onwards), the practise developed of worshipping God weekly on the Sabbath day in a local Synagogue. This is what most Jews did in Jesus' day, as they do now; and of course, the Sabbath (the seventh day of the week) is Saturday, not Sunday!

Early Christians copied Jesus (as illustrated in this scripture from Luke 6); they rejected the thousands of laws and regulations about the Sabbath developed by Jewish scribes and Pharisees in the years prior to the time of Jesus. They were not in scripture, and we should not imagine that they ever were. Scripture tells us simply that God's desire is for us to rest, and it leaves us to make judgements about the details. Surprisingly, the early Christians separated themselves from Jewish practice by worshipping God on the day Jesus was resurrected, which was Sunday. They honoured God by resting on the Sabbath (Saturday) and worshipped Him at great personal cost on a day that the rest of the world regarded as the first day of the working week; Sunday. The equivalent today would be having services of worship to God early on Monday morning or late on Monday evening!

Over many centuries, the practice developed of calling Sunday the Sabbath instead of Saturday, and having a Sabbath day of rest and worship on Sunday. You can see therefore that the 'status quo', assumed by many Christians today, is a loose development

of Scriptural ideas put together for convenience! It is not 'what the Bible says', as if we should enforce Sunday as the Sabbath Day like a divine law; that would be to exaggerate Scripture.

I strongly suggest that Christians accept that God wants all people to honour Him by resting on one day in seven. This is what He has said throughout the Bible. How we do this is a matter for us to decide, and for each of us, it may or may not coincide with what we feel we are doing on Sunday when we worship our risen Lord! The reason why this website does not now offer formal devotions on Sunday is because the author seeks to encourage all people to honour a Sabbath day of rest. There is plenty of material here for you to have devotions every other day of the week, or some days only, and there are many ways you can use the material provided. I simply suggest that on one day, have a rest, and let God speak to you through your rest.

There is more I would like to say about the Sabbath; how to practice it, and what to do about devotions. I will write about this next week. Consequently, this website will have a fixed page on Sundays, with access to these articles about Sabbath and devotions.

God bless you

Paul H Ashby