

The Blessing of Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy

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To all you beautiful, faithful Sunday afternoon Saints, we commend you for the respect of the Sabbath day which you show by attending conference this afternoon, wherever you may be.

We have been instructed, edified, and spiritually nourished through the five sessions of this magnificent general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have been taught "how to act upon the points of [the Lord's] law and commandments"¹ and have been "sanctified by that which [we] have received."²

Now it is time to "bind [ourselves] to act in all holiness before [the Lord]."³ In other words, based on this conference, we need to decide on specific actions to bring about needed changes in our lives. This action is called faith, and the changes are repentance. Blessings always follow these two principles. If we do not take action quickly, then the very thing which could have sanctified us may turn to our condemnation.

Today is the Sabbath. It does not end when we leave this session; it does not end if someone calls on the phone or knocks at our door inviting us to come out and play, go for a ride, to a ball game, or shopping; it does not end because we are on vacation or someone is visiting us, whether member or nonmember.

The Lord commanded: "Go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."⁴ A critical element in observing this commandment is to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."⁵

The Sabbath lasts all day! In a revelation "especially applicable to the

saints in Zion,"⁶ the Lord states that the Sabbath was given that we might keep ourselves "unspotted from the world."⁷ It is a day to partake of the sacrament, a day "to pay [our] devotions unto the Most High,"⁸ a day of "fasting and prayer,"⁹ a day to offer our time, talent, and means in service to our God and our fellowmen,¹⁰ a day to "[confess our] sins [to our] brethren, and before the Lord."¹¹ It is also a good day to pay our tithes and fast offerings, a day to be marked by sincere sacrifice of the pursuits and pleasures of the world. It is a day to keep the Sabbath covenant,¹² a day of "rejoicing and prayer,"¹³ a day of "cheerful hearts and countenances."¹⁴

Isaiah promised, "If thou turn away thy foot . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, . . . and . . . honour him, not . . . finding thine own pleasure, . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord."¹⁵

Obviously, our attention is on doing the Lord's will and not continuing to work nor indulge our carnal appetites for recreation and loafing.

The prophet Spencer W. Kimball counseled: "The Sabbath is a holy day in which to do worthy and holy things. Abstinance from work and recreation is important but insufficient. The Sabbath calls for constructive thoughts and acts, and if one merely lounges about doing nothing on the Sabbath, he is breaking it. To observe it, one will be on his knees in prayer, preparing lessons, studying the gospel, meditating, visiting the ill and distressed, sleeping, reading wholesome material, and attending all the meetings of that day to which he is expected. [Failure] to do these proper things is a transgression on the omission side."¹⁶

Our beloved prophet Gordon B. Hinckley has promised: "If you have any doubt about the wisdom, the divinity of observing the Sabbath Day, . . . stay home and gather your family about you, teach them the gospel, enjoy yourselves together on the Sabbath Day, come to your meetings, participate. You will know that the principle of the Sabbath is a true principle which brings with it great blessings."¹⁷

Jesus taught, "The sabbath was made for man."¹⁸ What does that mean? It means for a man to have the joy and happiness which the gospel promises, on this day he must sacrifice the world, set aside his employment as possible, and keep the eternal covenant of the Sabbath day. The Lord commanded: "Wherefore the children of Israel [which includes all Latter-day Saints] shall keep the sabbath . . . throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever."¹⁹

Of all people on the earth, the Latter-day Saints must lead out in sanctifying this appointed day each week. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," said the Lord, "ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."²⁰

To this very day, "the matter of Sabbath observance remains . . . as one of the great tests which divides the righteous from the worldly and wicked," said Elder Bruce R. McConkie.²¹

The promises of the Lord to those who keep the Sabbath day holy are so wonderfully clear in the scriptures that they leave one asking, "Why would anyone throw away such blessings for the tawdry, temporary pleasures of the

world?" Hear again the words of Jehovah as they roll down from Mount Sinai: "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

"Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase. . . .

". . . And ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

"And I will give [you] peace in the land, . . . neither shall the sword go through your land. . . .

"For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, . . . and establish my covenant with you. . . .

"And I will set my tabernacle [that is, my temple] among you. . . .

"And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."²²

I love the Sabbath day! It has blessed my family in countless ways. I bear a testimony born of personal experience that the commandments of the Lord are "true and faithful."²³

I know you will be happier, enjoy greater peace, and find your lives made glad as you witness the miracles that come to each person and family who make the sacrifice of keeping this eternal covenant.

I love our Lord and Savior. I know He lives and that this is His Church and kingdom on earth. I know He is at once a

just and merciful God, who loves His children with all the tenderness of a kind and loving Father. May we, in turn, "offer a sacrifice unto the Lord [our] God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit,"²⁴ pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. D&C 43:8.
2. D&C 43:9.
3. D&C 43:9.
4. D&C 38:42.
5. Ex. 20:8.
6. D&C 59: section heading.
7. D&C 59:9.

8. D&C 59:10.
9. D&C 59:14.
10. D&C 59:12 reads, "Thou shalt offer up thine oblations," meaning to offer one's time, talents, or means (see footnote *b*).
11. D&C 59:12.
12. D&C 59:12.
13. D&C 59:14.
14. D&C 59:15.
15. Isa. 58:13-14.
16. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 96-97.
17. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 559.
18. Mark 2:27.
19. Ex. 31:16-17.
20. Matt. 5:20.
21. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 658.
22. Lev. 26:2-12.
23. D&C 71:11.
24. D&C 59:8.