

# Guidelines to Freedom Part 3 - What's in a Name

by Alistair Begg

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*The third commandment emphasizes the significance of God's name and the consequences of misusing it, and it is essential to understand God's names to recognize His sovereignty, power, and provision.*

**Duration:** 1:34:29

**Scripture:** Exodus 33:19, Exodus 34:5, Psalm 20:7, Isaiah 43:10, Jeremiah 10:6, John 17:6

**Topics:** "Freedom"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not divorcing praise and worship from the proclamation of truth. He believes that it is the truth that gives substance to our worship and fuels our hearts and minds. The speaker expresses concern about the rise of 'sound bite Christians' who lack depth in their understanding of God's word. He encourages his audience to study, think, and listen in order to have a solid theological foundation. The sermon references the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 as an example of God's provision and faithfulness.

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## Transcript

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. The King James Version had it, you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain. I think this translation helps to clarify just what's involved in that, the idea of the misuse of the name of God.

Names are important. They're important to every mom or dad. If that were not the case, then moms and dads would not spend such an amazing amount of time trying to determine what they were going to call their children.

And every parent worth their salt has, at least on the first go around, been made aware of those books, either purchasing them or having them passed on to them, that have these huge lists of names, usually alphabetically listed. And if you can recall those days, or you're in the middle of those days, you go through the list, and just one reads it out, and the other says, nah, and the other one says, well, and it goes on like that, until eventually you've gone through the whole book, and you don't like any of the names at all. You say, oh no, your aunt was called that, I never liked her, she was grumpy, we're not calling her that, and no, no, that was the guy that lived next door to us in that apartment, do you remember him? Oh

no, we couldn't call our son that.

And so it goes on, and eventually you're in the labor room, and it's still, did you bring the book? No. And what are we going to do? And most, I think two out of three names in my family, I told my wife, I said, hey, you know, choose the name. I mean, I can't believe you just did this.

So whatever name you want, you can choose it, because this is amazing. And so we have one child who got the name Crooked Nose, which is what Cameron means, and it goes on from there. Although don't tell him that I told you.

Some of you have dated girls called Pamela, which isn't bad, because the books tell me it means all honey. If you're looking for the strong, rugged type, then choose a George, because a George is a farmer, a tiller of the soil, I'm told. If you're thinking of waltzing with someone, avoid Matilda.

Matilda, I'm told, means mighty battle maid. And it takes an edge off the song, doesn't it? But names are important, especially in the African context, the Asian context, and in earlier days in our own. Within the Scottish context, many names are Gaelic in their origin.

For example, my own name is Gaelic. Alistair is Gaelic for Alexander. Beg is an anglicized corruption of a Gaelic word, which means small or little.

And for those of you who've been calling me the little beggar, it's not very nice, and it's not very true. My favorite story about names I've told before, and hopefully you don't remember it, but it's the story of a lawyer whose name was Odd. And all through his life, people used to phone him up and say, hey, is that Oddball? And is that you, Oddguy? And he was just plagued by the name.

Consequently, when he left his last will and testament, he put specific instructions in the will which said that he did not want his name on his tombstone. He'd had enough trouble with it through his life, he didn't want it to follow him into his death. So instead, he had the inscription placed on his tombstone, here lies an honest lawyer.

And people used to walk through the graveyard and look at it and say, that's odd. So we understand that names say something, names mean something, names are significant. Now, if that is true on a horizontal plane, it is definitely true when we move into the transcendent level of the name of God.

And what I'd like for you to do this morning is, in a sense, to put on your thinking caps and try and think this through with me. Because I have a sneaking suspicion that if we were to say, which is the least significant, although we know there is no least significant, but if we were to determine what is the least significant of the Ten Commandments, which is the one that you can kind of slide by on of all of the ten, I wonder whether we wouldn't choose three. Whether we wouldn't say, well, I don't think that's really as important as idolatry or graven images, I just don't think so.

Now, if to any degree that is true, it bears testimony to the fact that we do not fully understand what is being said in relationship to this third commandment. If to use the name of God wrongly, if to misuse his name incurs guilt, as verse 7 tells us, then it clearly must be important and we need to understand why. So, let us take a moment or two to try and understand, not comprehensively because we don't have time for that, but to some degree the importance of the name of God.

The name of God in Scripture is given to us as something which is expressly precious. The name of God, the unique name of God, the proper name of God, which we translate Lord in our English version of the Bible, and that is Lord, four capitals, L-O-R-D, not capital L and then small o-r-d or lowercase o-r-d. You'll find both in the Bible, but when it is translated all capitalized, it is expressive of the Hebraistic name, which in Hebrew had the letters Y-H-W-H.

Now, for those of you who are young, you try for a moment to pronounce Y-H-W-H. How do you do it? With great difficulty, and in some cases not at all. Correct, because God did not want his name pronounced.

It was too precious. Indeed, when we read the early chapters, when we read in the Pentateuch, in the beginning of the Bible in the Old Testament, we discover that it was only one occasion when one individual used the name of God in the whole year of the Jewish calendar, and that was right around this time of year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. And on that day, the high priest went into the Holy of Holies--you can read about it in the book of Leviticus 23--and there on that day, he took the name Yahweh upon his lips, the two vowels having been provided in order to create pronunciability.

But the fact of the matter was and remains that the name of God was supremely precious. God's encounters with Moses have as much to teach us about the precious nature of his name as any others do. Let me turn you to two.

First of all, in Exodus chapter 33, and then we'll go back to That's verse 13. In verse 18, Moses says, Now show me your glory. And the Lord said, I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, Yahweh, in your presence.

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But he said, You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live. And then we have this interesting little bit where he says, There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock.

And Moses is to stand in there so that when the glory passes by, he is not confronted by the glory, because he couldn't see the glory of God and live. This is a very interesting thing. This ties in with the fact that we are not to make graven images of God.

Nobody could see God and live, but he said, I will make myself known in my name, and my name will be pronounced before you. Chapter 34 and verse 5. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, Yahweh. And he passed in front of Moses proclaiming, Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God.

In other words, he says his name twice, and then he explains what he's saying in saying his name. The compassionate and gracious God, what is God like? Slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. He maintains love to thousands.

He forgives wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he is a just God, and therefore does not leave the guilty unpunished. And the implications of that punishment run through generations, as we saw last week.

But in the expressing of his name, he is declaring not only the precious nature of it, but he is revealing his character. So we need to understand that the name of God is precious, and by his name, God portrays his greatness. God reveals all that he is and all that he does.

Turn back 30 chapters to Exodus chapter 3. There we have the encounter with God, Moses and the burning bush, the story whereby God reveals himself in the burning bush. Moses finds out that he's going on a significant mission. He's going to go to Pharaoh to say, let my people go.

And verse 13, chapter 3, Moses said to God, suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, what is his name? Then what shall I tell them? Now, doesn't that strike you as a little bit funny? He says, if I go to them and say, the God, Elohim, of your fathers has sent me to you, and they say, tell me his name. So in other words, there is a dimension to God that is revealed in the name which he is now about to give to Moses, that is so immense in his grandeur and in his power, that even the name Elohim, with which Genesis 1 begins, in the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth, that that word, nor even all of those words amass, can begin to express the immensity of who God is. Well, says God, if they ask you that question, just use the verb to be.

Say to them, I am who I am. That's what God says to Moses, and you are to say to them, I am has sent me to you. Now, hands up all who understand that.

Okay, good. Not too many, because it's a bewildering sort of statement, isn't it? What do you mean, say I am has sent me to you? Well, this is what it means. By using the verb to be, this essential element, by using this, God expresses the essence of his character.

By using this as his name, he reveals the fact that he is self-existent, that he is self-sufficient, that he is sovereign, that he depends on no one, and he depends on nothing. Now, who else in all of creation can take that as their name? Who else do you know who is self-existent, self-fulfilled, in need of no one, in need of nothing, and altogether sovereign? The answer is, you don't know anyone, and neither do I, for there is no one else. So I am who I am, says God.

Tell them, I am sent you. And that you see, jumping a couple of light years on, or 4,000 years on, 2,000 years on, whatever, jumping from the time of Moses to the time of Christ. That's why Jesus got himself in so much trouble with the Jews, because he kept saying, before Abraham was, I am.

And they said, that's God's name. And he said, that's right. I, he said, am self-existent.

I am self-sufficient. I am sovereign. I need no one, and I need nothing.

And they understood. This is a reminder to us, in passing, that the God whom we worship, the God of Scripture, is not a God of some cosmic discovery, nor is he a God of our own creation, but he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

He is both plural, and perfect, and powerful, and praiseworthy. And all of that is revealed in his name. When Jeremiah grasped this, he said, there's none like thee, O Lord.

Thou art great, and thy name is great in might. The Psalmist, chapter 20, verse 7, says, some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. What was Jesus' great, triumphant prayer in John 17, verse 6? I, he says, Father, have manifested thy name.

I have made known to them thy name. Now clearly, folks, this means something more than simply nomenclature. This means something more than simply saying, God is God.

I mean, that is tautology. So, he's expressing something of his character, and of his power, and of his control, and of his influence in all of the world. And you see, it is until we grasp this, we can't understand why the third commandment would be so significant.

You see, because if God is just down here somewhere, or if God is a cosmic creation, or if God is a figment of my imagination, or if God is whatever I want him to be in 20th century parlance, then why in the world shouldn't I misuse his name? But if God is I AM, then I got a problem. And so do you. And our culture, and it was not always like this.

Our culture violates thousands and millions of times every day the name of Almighty God. We would never have found it to be so had we lived a hundred years from now, even fifty years from now. It is indicative of where our culture rests.

Now, let me try and take this on from here for a moment or two. Let me show to you just why it is important that we understand the name of God in this way. Isaiah chapter 43, Isaiah speaking of the very same thing in verse 10 says, You are my witnesses, declares Yahweh, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am He.

Before me no God was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am Yahweh, and apart from me there is no Savior. That's what I want to say to my Jewish friends.

I want to say to them, here it is in your book, in our book, in Isaiah 43. I want to show you the end of the story. I want to show you the final piece of the jigsaw.

I want to say to you, Yahweh is Yahweh is Yahweh. There are not two, there is one. And He is the only God, and He is the only Savior.

Some of you have come this morning perhaps from a Jewish background, and you know what has been proclaimed over these recent days. The fact that there on the day of atonement there was forgiveness for sin, and there as the high priest made that sacrifice, so the people may be cleansed and renewed. And you know that it pointed out and on, but you have not come to discover the One who was a Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

Who is the One who purifies from all sin, and when we meet Him, do we discover Him to be a different God? He is Yahweh. One in three, and three in one. Immense mystery, profound truth.

Now let me give you one or two names of God. You may like to write these down. I think you'll find this helpful.

And certainly if you get ahold of this, you'll understand why God is so concerned about His name. Let me give them to you, and this is not exhaustive or comprehensive. It is selective.

If I had an overhead, I'd write them up for you, but I'm not good with overheads. I get all discombobulated, and it gets everybody upset. So here we go.

Elohim. Elohim. E-I-o-h-i-m.

Simply means creator. I've referred to it in Genesis 1. One in the beginning, Elohim created the heavens and the earth. Can I ask you this morning, do you honor God as your creator? You believe that God created ex nihilo? That He took nothing and made something? You believe that God is self-existent? He

spoke, and the world came into being? That He set the stars in space? That He put the planets where He wants them? That He, in Christ, holds everything together? Do you have a core, deep conviction in your heart concerning Elohim? If not, when you take His name upon your lips, you misuse His name, because His name is creator.

EI Elyon. Two words. E-I, second word, E-I-y-o-n.

Simply means God the Most High. You find it in Genesis 14, in the priesthood of Melchizedek. He was priest of, quotes, EI Elyon, God Most High.

The name emphasizes the sovereignty and the rule and the power of God. Ask yourself, as I must ask myself, do I believe in the sovereign, powerful rule of God? Do I worship and understand EI Elyon? And if I do, then why do I complain so much about my circumstances, and why do I doubt His ability to intervene on my behalf? It is because I misuse His name. He is Yahweh.

Jireh. Two words. Yahweh dash and then capital J-I-R-E-H.

It simply means the God who provides. Do you know the God who provides? You know where this comes? Comes in a wonderful story again in the book of Genesis, chapter 22. Abraham has his boy Isaac.

He and Sarai have looked forward to this boy's coming for many a year. Finally, he's given as a gift to them. And the word of God comes to Abraham.

He says, Abraham, take your son, your only son Isaac, and sacrifice him on the place that I will show you. And Isaac, his dad, and a few helpers begin to make the journey. And eventually, the dad says to the helpers, you stay here.

I and the boy will go yonder and we will return and worship with you. Even though God had said, take your boy and sacrifice him, the dad said, the boy and I will be back. Why? Because the dad knew what the boy was going to find out.

The dad knew that God was Yahweh, and when the boy said, hey, we've got the wood and we've got the fire going, but we ain't got nothing to put up here. Abraham says, Yahweh, he is Yahweh, and turning they look and see a ram caught in the thicket. And on that day, Isaac discovered that God was Yahweh, the Provider God.

And in a very realistic sense, that beast on that altar bore the place of Isaac and figured what was to happen centuries later when on a Roman gibbet outside the walls of Jerusalem, there would be yet another who would be bearing the place of another who deserved it. And there, bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood and sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah, Yahweh, Jireh, the Lord, my Provider.

Oh, could I take this name upon my lips as a curse, as a joke, as a flippancy? Could I sit in the theater and listen to them abuse the name of my Savior? Can I listen to the nonsense without stopping my ears and running for sanity? The answer is, loved ones, yes, yes, yes, we can. Because we've become so inoculated with the godlessness of our culture that we've a sneaking suspicion, as I say to you, that this third commandment is an anachronism from somewhere in the past and bears no relevance to us at all. Children come in my home and curse God.

They come in my home and say, Jesus, and they're not worshiping him. I pick them up in the car. They jam their finger in the door.

They profane the name of Christ. They don't know any better. They don't know that he is El Elyon.

They don't know that he's the Provider. They don't know that he is Yahweh. And they never will, living next door to the likes of some of us, for they hear the same nonsense from our lips when we jam our golf clubs in the garage door or when things just don't go according to plan.

The problem is, you see, our God is too small. We have now brought him down to our level. We have made him manageable.

We have made him such that we may manipulate him. We do not exist for his glory, but he exists for our provision. We come to worship in order that we might so induce him to do what we want done.

We do not come to worship to magnify and praise his name so that we might discover his plan for our life. I can go on. Yahweh, Rophe, the Lord who heals, Yahweh Nisi, he is my banner.

What does that mean? It was the banner of the marching armies, the protection of the army around him. And you're walking into some things tomorrow, and so am I. And we say to ourselves, I don't know if I can cope with another day in that office. I don't know if I can go on that business trip.

I'm not sure I can do another load of laundry. I don't think I can make these breakfasts anymore for these kids or get these lunches and drive like a jolly taxi driver for the rest of my life. I don't know if I can do it.

Well, let me tell you something. Yahweh Nisi, the Lord, is your banner. He's your protection in the storm.

Get underneath the banner and walk forward. He is Yahweh Mekadesh. He is the Lord of holiness.

He is Yahweh Shalom. He is peace. He is Yahweh Tzedkenu, the Lord, my righteousness.

He sang about it. Righteous I can stand in Jesus. What does that mean? Do you understand what you're saying? We who are unrighteous, who are dead in our trespasses and in our sins, who follow the ways of the world and the wickedness of Satan unwittingly without even knowing it, who are underneath the condemnation of God, may now stand complete and unchallenged by God's holiness.

How? By keeping the Ten Commandments, by showing up at church, by helping ladies with their shopping, by taking in ironing for the lady next door, by acknowledging that there is no possibility whatsoever of standing before God's holiness except to face judgment unless there is one who may take our place, namely Yahweh Tzedkenu, the Lord, our righteousness. So it doesn't make us feel good about ourselves. It makes us magnify his greatness.

He is El Shaddai. Don't you love that song? We've sung it many times. El Shaddai, El Shaddai, El El Yon and Adonai.

We say, what the world are we singing? It's magnifying the greatness of God. A great song. The wonder of the songs we've sung this morning.

They're all magnifying his name. Now it's not about the significance of G-O-D. It is about the fact that God, in declaring and disclosing himself, shows the wonder of who he is.

Now, we could list all these titles, and at the very best, we only have an inkling of the wonder of who God is. We need to realize that the names of God are full of instruction. They are packed not with magical qualities or spiritual power.

This is very important. The reason the name of God is so significant is not because his name has a magical quality. I hear people talking like this all the time.

It does scare me. As if somehow or another the name of God was a talisman. You just said these words, whatever the sentences were, whatever the construction of the consonants and vowels, if you said this name, it worked.

That's poppycock. That's silliness. The reason the name is so significant is not because the name possesses magical power, but it is because the name is full of doctrinal content.

And it is when we understand what the name signifies that we may then rest in the name. That's why Solomon is a wise man. He says in Proverbs 18.10, the name of the Lord is a strong tower.

The righteous run into it and are safe. What in the world does that mean? How can you run into a name? Well, it's metaphorical language we understand, but even so, even at that, what do you mean you run into the name of the Lord? You run in a place and go, the name of the Lord, the name of the Lord, name of the Lord. I hear people doing this all the time.

They're no better than pagans. It's not that. It is when I go in my bedroom and I face myself and I say, I can't cope.

And then I remember the Lord provides. And I run into that truth and I hide. When I'm confronted by my sin and I can see no reason why God would welcome me, I run into the fact that God in Christ is that great atoning sacrifice.

When my heart is fluttering and my pulse rate is up and there is fearfulness on me, I run into the truth that he is Yahweh Shalom. He is my peace. It's intently practical and it's very theological.

People say from time to time, you know, I don't want to get into all this theology. I just want to know God. Do I mean we have to have all this stuff just to know God? I mean, give me a soundbite.

Give me 20 seconds on it, would you? Don't give me the New York Times editorial. Give me the USA Today version. And we are producing soundbite Christians.

And that's one of the reasons we're in the difficulty we're in. Because Christians are not studying, they're not thinking, they're not listening. And so they are sloganeers.

They have slogans without understanding. And when the difficult times come, they have nowhere to run and nowhere to turn because all they have is a framework, but they have no substance. I want you folks to have substance.

I want you to have theology. I want you to have doctrinal content because the only way that another generation will rise behind us is not on the basis of the slogans we give them to rattle in their heads, but is on the basis of the truth with which we instruct them to undergird their lives so that our children and our teenagers may understand God's name, may understand the revelation of himself, and on the basis of their minds may have stirred hearts and change life. That's why people ask every so often, can we have a

service where we just sing for the whole service? No.

No. Why not? Is it wrong to sing? No, it's wonderful to sing. We love to sing.

But we are not going to divorce the praise and worship from the proclamation of truth. For it is the truth which gives substance to our worship, and it is our worship which fuels our hearts and minds for truth. There is a synergism between them.

That's why I don't want to just stand up here and talk. We want to see it combined. Now, you know, this came home to me so very clearly, the practicality of this, in receiving a little card, which I actually picked up just between the first and second service.

I don't usually open my mail on Sundays, for those of you who would write to me, because I'm never sure what's in it, and I certainly don't want a letter bomb halfway through the day. I'd like to complete my obligations. So I don't usually open my mail until a Monday.

But this one had a postmark from the UK, and I felt it was far enough away not to worry about it in any case. Turned out to be a letter from a young girl whom my wife and I met when I had the privilege of being an assistant minister in Edinburgh back in 1975. To the home of this family, we were invited, the Murrays.

They took us to tea often. The lady was such a kindly lady, wonderful baker, and we used to have some nice afternoons in their home. Earlier in the summer, we met the daughter, who is now a grown woman.

The daughter said to me that her mom had cancer and was very unwell. This card this morning says my mom passed away on September the 11th. But the interesting thing to me is this, that she says, this, both for my mom and for us, is something more to rejoice about than mourn.

An unbeliever can't say that. Only someone who understands that the name of God is eternity. She goes on to say, although I would not have chosen this particular road, I would not have missed the opportunity to grow in my faith and get to know my Heavenly Father so much better.

I just wait to see what He will do with all the lessons He has taught me. An unbeliever doesn't say that. The only person who says that is someone who understands that God is the God who provides.

She talks about God's provision, and she says how she has learned to see so much that God has given her as a provision from His hand. And I thought to myself, she understands why the third commandment is so important. Now, I have belabored that.

Let me come to the part you're most expecting. How then in the world do we break this third commandment? This is what you thought was important, and it is in measure important. But the fact is, the reason I have emphasized this is because until we understand the importance of God's name, then the breaking of the commandment has very little apparent significance at all.

But once we understand the magnitude of what we're doing when we abuse and misuse the name of God, then it becomes a telling truth. Three words summarize it. We break the third commandment by blasphemy, perjury, and hypocrisy.

Or if you want to reduce it a level, we break the third commandment by swearing, lying, and kidding. Every time that we incorporate the name of God into things that we are saying, in order somehow to try and strengthen our words. For example, I hear people say, and that's the God-honest truth.

That's blasphemy. There is only one truth, and that is God's truth. We don't need God's name added to truth.

And our words are to be yes and no, not yes and no and maybe. So we don't need to bring down, as it were, the name of divinity in order to reinforce what we're saying, unless, of course, what we're saying is so shaky because of our character that we feel somehow we need to strengthen it by an abuse of the name of God. We blaspheme God by treating his name irreverently.

We blaspheme God by mentioning his name and at the same time casting doubt on his character. We blaspheme God when we use his name in anger and in arrogance and in defiance of who he is. We misuse the name of God when we take it in vain when we're lying or uttering falsehoods and using God's name to back it up.

When we say we'll do things and then using God's name, affirm that and then back off and don't do it. You can find illustrations of this all the way through the Bible in Jeremiah 34, the story of King Zedekiah, who said that they would release and proclaim liberty to the slaves. They invoked the name of God in so doing, and then says God to them, but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back his slaves.

You profaned my name by taking back the slaves. You said one thing, then you did another, and you brought this glory to my name. Think of all the vows you've made in your life.

Did you stand at the front of a church and answer, I do, to the pastor's question? Did you stand at the front of the church and say, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all other, keep myself only unto her or only unto him, so long as I both shall live? Did you? Then are you doing it? You're playing fast and loose in your marriage. You are abusing and misusing the name of God. Did you vow to God that you would serve him with all of your life, that you were prepared to go anywhere, do anything for him at any time, and you made that commitment, and you've stepped back from it? You misused the name of God when you take it upon your lips.

For you have made a vow, you incurred his name, and now you incur his judgment. And we misuse the name of God when we take it and joke with it or are hypocritical with it in any way. If you see reverence is fundamental, then irreverence is dreadfully flawed.

In very few of our circles would dirty jokes be tolerated. We know that those sort of stories were part and parcel of our dead life, so we don't tell them anymore. But you know, there is a strange and progressing and disturbing frequency of expressions amongst evangelical Christians, such as, good Lord, Lord of mercy, even God, oh my God.

And then the corruptions of Guy and Gosh and G that we have brought in because we are either not brave enough or we still maintain a measure of sensitivity. Have you seen some of the t-shirts that are going around, stuff that says, God is rad, he's my dad? Or in a corruption of the Budweiser commercial, this blood's for you? That's blasphemous. I don't care what Christian publishing house put it out.

It's blasphemous. The blood of Christ that cleanses from all sin, purveyed to a godless community along the lines of a beer. The almighty creator God who holds my breath in his hands, communicated to in such a superfluous, superficial fashion.

Loved ones, just when you and I are ready to sneak past the third commandment, it jumped up and bit us. Every service that you and I attend, where I worship God with my lips and not from my heart, I break the third commandment. Every song that I sing using the name of God, when I sing lies, when I sing superficially, when I do not engage the reality of my being in it, I misuse the name of God.

The fact is that it is only when we take God's name in praise and in study and in love and in carefulness and in obedience and in prayer and in confidence and evangelism and in thankfulness, that we begin to get on the flip side of the commandment expressed in the opening phrase of the Lord's prayer, or the second phrase, our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. You want to know how badly we abuse the name of God? How many of us have thought it was really funny to tell the little story of the boy who, in saying the Lord's prayer, said, our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. I told that story.

The memory of it shames me when I think of the greatness of God. I spend a lot of my time on a Sunday walking around saying to people, I don't know your name. Then they tell me, some of you are sitting out here this morning, and in relation to all of this, your response to God is this, I don't know your name.

I never met you. And you will call his name Jesus, said the angel, for he will save his people from their sins. It is only when we encounter Christ as Savior that we meet God.

It is only then in meeting God that we can begin to understand why his name is to be hallowed. And therefore, this morning, that is both our point of conclusion, and for some, needs to be the point of beginning. Let's bow in prayer, shall we? Our God and our Father, you have exalted above all things your name and your word.

Forgive us for our flippancy, for our lies, for our superficiality. And even as we look into this law and see our faces in the mirror, we know we can cleanse ourselves by trying to do better. We thank you that you have provided for us in Christ a Savior.

And we want to be able to say how sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear, because it soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, and dries away each tear. Grant to us, Lord, grace to hear you, to respond to you, to live out what we learn, for we ask these things, commending one another lovingly to your care. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.

Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Shall we bow in a moment of prayer? Our gracious God and Father, this commandment, perhaps more than any other, is militated against both outside the church and inside the church. And if we're going to come to terms with it, if we're going to bow beneath the weight of its instruction, we're going to need the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to convince us of the truth of the Word of God.

And so we ask for that today, nothing more than that and nothing less than that, so that we may be renewed in our inner being regarding the truth of Holy Scripture. And we pray in Jesus' name, asking this. Amen.

A number of people have spoken to me concerning the impact of these ten commandments as we have begun to study them together. One gentleman announced at the conclusion of last Sunday morning that he was, as he put it, zero for three. And as you know, we had only done three to that point.

His honesty extended to the fact that he went on to say that, having read ahead, he felt that the best he might hope for was one out of nine. He made contact with me later in the day to say that after some further study, his revised estimate was that he was going to be zero for ten. Now those observations are as helpful as they are honest, because there isn't one of us here this morning that is going to be able to stand up and say that we have kept any of the first three commandments perfectly.

We haven't loved God exclusively, we haven't worshipped God correctly, we haven't been free of the misuse of his name, and now as we come to the fourth commandment, we've got a sneaking suspicion that we're going to have to bow beneath the weight of this one and acknowledge that we are guilty and that we are lawbreakers. Now that ought not to be of a concern to us insofar as that is the purpose of the law or one of the purposes of the law. If we could have kept all the commandments perfectly, then God would have accepted us.

But we can't, and therefore he doesn't. We're guilty, we've broken God's law, and it is by means of the law that we're made conscious of our sin. If we simply compare ourselves with other people, we may say, well, I'm a little better than this individual, I'm not as good as that one, but on a kind of sliding scale, I'm really not that bad, and if God grades on the curve, then presumably I'm really okay.

But when we stand against a perfect law of holiness and place our lives in the reflection of this, we realize that we're guilty. Now, the whole of the Bible makes clear just why this is, and if you turn for a moment this morning by way of introduction to Romans chapter 3, I need to say this, and there is a sense in which I might realistically have this as the recurring introduction to all of our studies in each of the commandments, because it is equally apropos every time we turn to another one. Romans chapter 3 and in verse 19, Paul is writing, he's already pointed out from the Old Testament that there is no one who does good, not even one.

People don't like to hear that. And then he says in verse 19, Now, we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, the purpose being so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.

Rather, through the law, we become conscious of sin. I'll just hold it there for a moment. What Paul is saying is this, that the law of God summarized in the Decalogue in the Ten Commandments is given to us as a mirror in which we see a reflection of ourselves, and when we see ourselves, we realize that we are lawbreakers, that we are guilty before a holy God.

We also realize that we cannot keep this law with any sense of perfection, and therefore that the law, the Ten Commandments, cannot be for us a ladder up which we climb to acceptance with God. And if there is to be acceptance with God, then we know that it must come by some other route. That's verse 21.

But now, says Paul, a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify. In other words, he says, what I'm about to tell you is not new. The whole of the Old Testament, in the law and in the prophets, they're pointing forward to this solution to the problem.

Verse 22, this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. That is the appeal of the gospel. That is the opportunity of the good news.

That is the expansiveness of the offer. That there is a possibility of being put in a right standing with a holy God, I who am guilty and a lawbreaker, and the way in which that divine transaction takes place is through faith in Jesus Christ, and it comes to all who believe, who entrust themselves exclusively and wholly into the care of the provision that God has made for us in Christ. For, he says, there's no difference.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. So then we see that the law confronts us with our guilt. It sends us to Christ to find forgiveness and freedom.

The freedom is not a freedom to do what we want, but rather to do what we should. What should we do? How may we know what we ought to do? Well, that is summarized for us here in the Decalogue, in the Ten Commandments. Here are the guidelines for freedom.

Here is how children are to live with their parents. Here is how husbands are to live with their wives. Here is the sanctity of human property.

Here is the sanctity of work. Here is the sanctity of life. Here is all that God intends in this great summary statement, providing for us the nature of genuine freedom.

So the believer, then, keeps the law of God, not believing that by keeping it we gain acceptance or approval with God, but rather we keep God's law as a declaration of our grateful response to his love. Until we understand that, then we haven't really understood enough to proceed with the study of the Ten Commandments. So let me summarize it again.

Until the law of God confronts us with our sin and our need of a Savior in whom we then trust, any explanation of the Ten Commandments will fall deaf upon our ears, because the Ten Commandments are not a way to gain acceptance with God, but they are the guidelines for free living, lived out by those who, through faith, have believed in the provision of Christ. So this morning, when we proclaim the law, we are inevitably categorized. We are all lawbreakers.

We are either those who, having broken the law, have come to Christ for salvation and trust in that alone, or we continue as unbelievers. And if, having come to Christ for salvation, we then are those who are saying, teach me from the Word what the parameters of freedom really are. So we discovered in the first commandment that it had to do with the exclusive worship of God.

In the second commandment, that it was important for us to worship the correct God correctly. In the third commandment, last time, that we are not to misuse the name of God. And now, this morning, in the fourth commandment, we discover that there is an abiding significance to a day that is holy to the Lord.

The fourth commandment confronts us with the abiding significance of a day that is set apart to the Lord. Now, there are two things that mitigate against any good understanding of this commandment, and they are these. On the one hand, an almost complete lack of conviction about any notion of the abiding significance of the fourth commandment.

And we'll address that in a moment. And on the other hand, almost total confusion concerning the nature, not only of all the Ten Commandments, but peculiarly of this one day. Now, we can highlight this in a

number of ways.

Let me do so by quoting from the Civil War. I think it's the Civil War, isn't it? Stonewall Jackson? General Jackson is a legend in American history. Any of you who have read of Jackson will know that he was a man of extreme principle and character.

At the very heart of this was his conviction of faith in Jesus Christ. And his extreme rigorous character attached itself also to the observance of the Sabbath. And writing in his biography, his widow says, certainly he was not less scrupulous in obeying the divine command to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy than he was in any other rule of his life.

Since the creator had set apart this day for his own and commanded it to be kept holy, he believed that it was wrong for him to desecrate it by worldly pleasure, idleness, or secular employment as to break any other commandment of the Decalogue. Sunday was his busiest day of the week as he always attended church twice a day and taught in two Sabbath schools. He refrained as much as possible from all worldly conversation.

And in his family, if secular topics were introduced, he would say with a kindly smile, we will talk about that tomorrow. He never traveled on Sunday, never took his mail from the post office, nor permitted a letter of his own to travel on that day, always before posting it, calculating the time it required to reach his destination. One so strict in his own Sabbath observance naturally believed that it was wrong for the government to carry the mail on Sunday.

Any organization which exacted secular labor of its employees on the Lord's day was, in his opinion, a violator of God's law, and so his life was marked by a rigorous obedience to the law of God. Now, loved ones, here's the question. Is this quote from Jackson an anachronism? In other words, if Jackson was right, where does that leave us? Because if we're right, most of us, he was wrong.

But one thing is for sure, we're not both right. So we need to go to our Bibles then and determine who approximates to the instruction of God's word closely. Is it us in our libertine rejection of the Lord's day, or is it Jackson in his rigorous obedience of it? That kind of sets the context.

You're going to have to think with me. The first service went out wearied, dragging, poor souls, beaten, trudging on their way to lunch. It's probably not going to be much better for you, I have to say.

I might as well, I feel the alien nature of this commandment so strongly that it couldn't be graphically portrayed anymore than if I were to come up here wearing the funniest suit you ever saw, and you could say, oh, I understand why he's saying that, because he's the fellow that wears that funny suit. He has a lot of quirks to him. But loved ones, we've got to get to grips with what the Bible states.

There's so much material, we can't cover it in one sermon. That's why we're going to come back to it tonight. We'll come to it tonight because it's the only way we can keep on track.

Incidentally, we're on the radio right now, 11 o'clock in the morning, and we'll be for the next three months. We're trying to preserve some kind of integrity with the development of things that people can hear in the radio audience. But that's beside the point.

So tonight, we'll come to many of the questions that most of you are hoping we'll address right now. We're not going to get to them. The reason we're not is because unless we understand the foundational element

of this, those other questions about which we debate so strongly are frankly just an irrelevancy.

So there are three points that we're going to address. Number one, we're going to consider the principle as it's stated. Secondly, we're going to look at the practice as it is observed.

And then we're going to finally come, and that will be this evening, to the practice applied. Okay, so sorry, the principle stated, the pattern observed, and the practice applied. The principle stated is summarized clearly in this first sentence of verse 8 of Exodus 20.

All of the rest of it is an application or an amplification of this straightforward command. Namely, remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Now, there's nothing particularly difficult about that.

It's very clear. What it actually means demands our attention, but the clarity with which it is stated is obvious, as with the others. You shall do this, you shall not do that.

It is clear, even a child can understand it. God is concerned about the sanctity of one day in seven. So it is absolutely vital that we come to understand that there is no convincing reason to believe, as some have taught and continue to teach, that the fourth commandment is in a different category from the other nine.

If you've been around church life long enough, you may well have imbibed the notion that we have nine commandments, and then we have one that is kind of maybe in and maybe out. Interestingly enough, the maybe out factor has a direct correlation with the prevailing impact of the surrounding culture. There was no maybe out in the mind of Stonewall Jackson.

There was no maybe out in the minds of our forefathers in this country. There was no maybe out in the minds of the average Bible-believing, God-fearing church congregation, even 50, 40, 30 years ago from today. And one of the things I always do when I travel this country and I'm with older pastors, I always ask them, tell me about the Lord's day when you were a young man.

And they describe a day that is very, very different from today. Now, there's a reason for that, loved ones, and we need to find out what it is. And we need to determine whether it's actually progress or regression.

Well, you see, there are people who say that the fourth commandment has things that attach to it, regulations, mosaic factors that are such that we don't do those things anymore. And therefore, because we don't do those things anymore, we no longer need to be governed by this commandment. But loved ones, this is just silly talk.

For example, we recognize that there are mosaic attachments to all of the commandments, not least of all to the fourth. Now, in the fourth commandment, you weren't allowed to light fires on the Sabbath day. That was a peculiar ceremonial attachment to it.

If you broke the fourth commandment, the punishment was stoning. So, people say, hey, we don't, we light fires and we don't stone people, and therefore, we don't get into this fourth commandment stuff, therefore, we don't have a fourth commandment. No, because if you think it out, there were ceremonial attachments to all the other commandments.

Take the fifth commandment, honor your father and mother that your days may be long upon the land. Is that an abiding command? Is that regularly accepted within the church? Yes, everybody upholds that one. But the fact of the matter is that if a young man cursed his father or his mother, the punishment was

stoning.

The seventh commandment, thou shalt not commit adultery. Do we give credence to that? Do we uphold that? Yes, we do. And what happened to an adulterer or an adulteress? They were stoned.

Now, we no longer stone people, because those are the ceremonial accretions that were part and parcel of the Old Testament context. But the fact that we no longer entertain that which surrounded the command, in no way negates the command. It doesn't for adultery.

It doesn't for honoring your father and mother. So, the question is, why in the world should it for the fourth commandment? And I put it to you that the reason that it does for the fourth commandment is because we don't like the implications of the fourth commandment. It cuts across our lives.

It cuts across what we've become used to. It cuts across our desires for acquisitiveness. It cuts across our commitment to leisure.

It cuts across the God that we've made of family living. And frankly, we are glad to set it apart as a different kind of command. Now, the question that you must answer for yourself is, is there any abiding biblical validity for making that kind of distinction? Now, we're going to go on and follow this through, and you must think along with me.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. In other words, sanctify the day. The phrase here means two things.

It means, first of all, remember the Sabbath day by setting it apart. That's what it means to keep it holy. It means to set it apart.

Well, in what way is the day set apart? Well, weren't there seven days in the week that God made? Yes. Did he just call one holy? Yes. Was there to be one that had a peculiar, holy, sanctified dimension to it? Yes.

So in what way was it set apart? Well, it was set apart from all the other days. It was a different day from every other day that God had created. And he sanctioned this by his own example, as we will see.

Now, the immediate reaction to that on the part of some is to say, but you don't understand, or maybe not so forcibly, but to say, well, what about the fact that every day is the Lord's day? Well, there's a sense in which that's true. We ought to serve the Lord every day, and we ought to serve the Lord every moment of every day. And the way in which we do our work ought to be a service to the Lord.

And there is a realistic sense in which, whether we're brushing up a factory floor, or whether we're giving an injection, or writing on a school blackboard, or having somebody sign an insurance proposal form, or whatever else it is, that we recognize that God is in charge and overrules in all of those moments of every day. But the fact is, loved ones, that even when we acknowledge that, it in no way sets aside the distinctive element of this fourth commandment, isolating this one day in seven and possessing it with a distinction which God has ordained. So, in other words, once we acknowledge that God is in charge of every day, it doesn't set apart the fact that God said, remember this particular day in a peculiar way and make it a different day.

Now, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand that. That's what it's saying. That's not an interpretation.

That's simply what it's saying. The implications of it we can go on to discuss, but that's what it's saying. I think you'll agree.

John Murray, the late John Murray, professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, says, to obliterate the difference between one day and the other six. To obliterate the difference may appear pious, but it is piosity, not piety. It is not piety to be wiser than God.

It is impiety of the darkest hue. The Sabbath day is different from every other day, and to obliterate this distinction in thought or practice is to destroy what is the essence of the institution. Now, there is a wealth contained in that statement.

Let me summarize it for you. The recognition of the distinction of the day is indispensable to its observance. The recognition of the distinction of the day is indispensable to its observance.

So that unless you and I be convinced that God has distinguished this day for all of time, and that because he has distinguished it in this way, we must live within the framework of what he has laid down, then any attempts at keeping the Sabbath day will simply be as a result either of legalistic externalism, or as a result of a kind of time-honored tradition, or as a result of the reinforcement of what has become customary for us. Okay? Now, I grew up as a child in Scotland in exactly that position, and all children must. But if we ask a child whether they like the idea of a different day on the Lord's Day, the answer is, no, I do not, frankly.

So, we wouldn't ask them. We would tell them. This is the framework.

And any child, unredeemed, unregenerate, is going to buck the system. Say, I don't like this, and I don't like this day, and I don't want to do this, and I don't want to worship, and I certainly don't want to do it twice, and I'm not going in a choir, and I don't like this Sunday school, and I'm sick and tired of the whole operation. That's fine, honey.

I heard you. I've been there. Now, let's go.

Let's just continue just as we said we were doing. We're on our way. Okay? Now, unless the day dawns when God, by his Spirit, redeems that child, and in the heart of that child, what to that point has been simply the observance of custom, and it now becomes the conviction of their tiny life, then from that day, everything changes.

Because once they have become convinced, once they have ownership of the principle in their own lives, then they no longer do things simply as a result of constraint, but they do them as a result of an internal conviction. Now, as true as that is of children, it is true of us all. And that is why many of us continue to buck the idea of the Lord's Day.

Because it is a conviction about its distinction, which creates relevance to its observance. And since we have never come to a conviction about its distinction, anytime anyone suggests to us that this is what may comprise the Lord's Day, our answer is, who do they think they are to tell us what I'm going to do with my time? It's not your time, and it's not my time. Every breath I breathe is a gift from God, and he is in charge of my time.

And he who created time and parceled it in the way that he intended, intends that the utilization of time shall bear testimony to the distinction of his creative handiwork, and shall bear testimony to the fact that we are his covenant children. You see, the same thing is true of any commandment. If you take the commandment, for example, in relationship to adultery, if you and I are only going to keep the commandment regarding adultery on the basis of its pragmatic usefulness, well, it's a good idea, you know, you get yourself in a lot of trouble.

But not as a result of its rightness, not as a result of divine authority, not as a result of an internal conviction, then we are left to the winds of circumstance to blow upon us. Then we're in a situation and somebody says, why not? And since the commandment is simply a kind of practical accretion for us, and is not an internal conviction for us, then the smell of the perfume, or the heat of the evening, or the drive of the passion may be enough to take us right into total sin. Because we'd never internalized the command.

God's law had never been written upon our hearts. We had never said, I delight to do your will, O Lord. We'd never settled this issue, I am the Lord your God, you shall do this.

We had never bowed there, we had never internalized its truth. And so as soon as the circumstances went against us, we were swept into chaos. That is exactly, I put it to you, what is happening with the Lord's Day in the continental United States and in the Western world at large.

We have vast numbers of people who have never become convinced of the distinction of the day. They have no internal conviction about the day, about its abiding relevance. And so when somebody says, why don't we do this? Why don't we go there? Why don't we do whatever it is? The answer is, yeah, why not? Because after all, the only lingering notion that we have of any abiding relevance of the command is that it is something to do with not lighting fires, and not riding your bicycle, or not doing a bunch of stuff that we have picked up from somewhere along the line.

But we don't have any notion of it in our heart. So if I can express it as clearly as possible, observance of the Lord's Sabbath quickly becomes obsolete if it does not spring from the sense of sanctity generated and nourished by the fact that God set apart this day for our good. So it's not irksome.

It's not a punishment. It's a phenomenal, liberating privilege. But until we understand the distinction and apply it, we will internalize any expressions of it as either anachronisms or quirks of human personality.

How else could chariots of fire sweep the academy awards, and sweep a nation of non-church-goers and church-goers, and by and large, to almost a hundred percent degree, completely pass people by in terms of the implication of what the whole movie was about, at least in Little's side of things? Remember him with the royalty, and the head of the Olympic committee in that scene where they bring him in and sit him down? Now come on, Little, for the sake of your king and for your country to put aside these silly ideas of yours about the Sabbath and about the Lord's Day. Remember his reply? I would never set aside my king or my country save that there was a higher power, a higher authority, the one who sets up kings and the one who brings down kings. And I will not run.

There isn't a person in the movie theater who didn't find something inside of them saying, man do I love that kind of conviction. What was it? It was a conviction about the distinction of the day. And once he settled that, then everything flowed from it.

But until you settle that, nothing will flow from it except legalism and the constraints of custom and tradition. If I may be part of the personal illustration, I always tell the young people this. I never studied on a Sunday.

Never studied on a Sunday. Caught myself in difficulty sometimes as a result of it, but I never studied on a Sunday. All through school, I never studied on a Sunday.

Why? Because I thought that a two-by-four would hit me on the head if I did? Why? Because I thought that if I didn't study on a Sunday, then I'd be able to walk past the library and people would say, oh what a pious person, baggage. They knew I wasn't a pious person. Why didn't I do it? Because I had a conviction that God had hit on something really good with this one-day-in-seven thing.

And furthermore, it was right. And so I just didn't study. What it meant was that I could worship, I could eat, I could fellowship, I could have the time of my life on the Lord's Day.

First, I had determined the distinction of the day, and then the application for it. That's the first element in the sanctifying of the Lord's Day. It is a setting apart.

It is a making a difference of one day from the rest. God distinguished one day from the rest. He distinguished it himself by what he did and what he didn't do.

The second element to it is, and it's just the other side of the coin, that keeping it holy makes clear to us that the difference which God has ordained in this day is a difference of a specific kind. The day is not simply a day set apart from other days, but it is a day set apart to the Lord. So the key to the Sabbath is not inactivity.

The key to the Lord's Day is not just waking up and lying in your bed about 11 o'clock or half past 12 and saying, well, it's a day of rest, therefore I did it. That's not it. And see, this is where people say, well, I don't know why we have all these services.

For goodness sake, isn't this supposed to be a day of rest? Well, tell me about it, would you? See, you don't understand. Neither do I. But this is it. The rest which God has ordained is a rest from labor and a rest to him.

The day of rest is a day which has a positive dimension and focus towards the Lord our God. It is not simply kept from our everyday routine, but it is kept for the Lord. It is a rest of another kind of activity.

We rest from the ordinary activities of the other six days. Why? Because we might be released into the worship and contemplation of the glory of God. That's why.

Now, the fact that some people don't do this and don't do that and don't do the next thing because they're a bunch of legalists, that's their problem. But the fact of the matter remains that if we would remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, we distinguish it from all the other days, and we do so by distinguishing it by exercising our hearts in the religious exercises of worship and of study and of prayer and of piety and of acts of mercy and of kindness and so on. I recognize, and I can't disassociate myself from this, that I have the benefits of a Scottish heritage.

Amazing benefits in relationship to this. The danger in it, though, is that you go, it's cultural. He's just coming off with a bunch of that stuff from across the sea.

That's why you and I have to think it out together. But I was brought up to understand this. That's why we visited old ladies in the hospital on Sunday afternoon.

Why? Because it was a great day for acts of mercy. That's why the Pharisees tried to tie Jesus up in knots with a man with a shriveled hand. The guy with a shriveled hand comes, the Pharisees say, hey, you're going to heal him today? You're going to break the Sabbath, Jesus? He said, you guys don't know what you're talking about.

You can't come up with all these external rigmaroles. He said, if you had a sheep and it fell in the ditch, would you get it out on the Sabbath? They all looked shamefacedly at each other because of course they would. He said, you crazy rascals, look at this man here.

Do you not think a man with a shriveled hand is more important to God than one of your sheep lying in a ditch? He says, the guy stretches forth your hand and stretches it out. What was he doing? Setting aside the Sabbath? No, he was setting the Sabbath aside from the ridiculous accretions of the Pharisees, all the little bits and pieces that they added to it. The danger is, you see, that in setting aside any intrusions of Phariseeism, what we actually do is we throw the baby out with the bathwater and we're left, as many of us frankly are to this point in our lives, with only nine commandments.

So, the principle stated is such that we might enjoy the privilege of God's presence, the study of God's word, the fellowship of God's people, uninterrupted by both employment and leisure, which draws from us a devotion to Christ in a singular way on other days. I will come to the application tonight, and if it was possible we could have a question and answer session on it. I don't know about that.

We'll have to think about it, but I mean not in terms, not instead of a study, but there's a million questions that are raised by it. But here's the thing, does this strike you like something you would want to do? Spend a whole day, as it were, without your newspaper and without CNN and without recreation? The answer is, no, I don't like the sound of it. You know what? You don't like the sound of heaven.

You don't like the sound of what it's going to be, to be in the presence of Christ for all of eternity. Six of us go away to a cabin on the lake. We go away because we love one another and we're glad of one another's company.

We're there for two and a half days and suddenly somebody at a mealtime says, do you want to know something interesting? We never turn the TV on. I don't even know what's happening in the world. We never read a newspaper.

I didn't even call the office. You know what? I never called the check on my handicap. Why? Because the context of fellowship and love and enjoyment is so all-consuming.

That means I've got to say something. Whenever our experience of worship is so devalued and our notion of the Lord's day is so disintegrated, so as to conceive of it in such a way that we believe that religious exercises are supposed to get over and done with as fast as we possibly can so that we may, quote, get on with the day, then we stand condemned before the fourth commandment. We ought actually to be getting down on our knees and thanking God for the privilege of being brought under the orb of influence of a church that is determined on the basis of the holy scriptures that we will give every opportunity on the Lord's day for all the things that the Lord's day was intended to mean--for worship, for prayer, for study, for fellowship, for holy contemplation.

And the fact that it does not appeal to us says more about the low level of our spiritual appetites than it does about anything else. Now when we come back this evening, we're going to pick it up at this point. But the fourth commandment makes it clear that God has provided this day to worship him undisturbed by personal business or pleasure.

And the question is, what should we welcome so much as a day of worship and service to God, uninterrupted by the routine and the rush and the scramble of work and recreation? That's the principle stated. The pattern applied, we'll go on to consider. And then this evening, we will also come to some of the areas of application as we have opportunity to.

Let me just give you a flavor that again either falls into the realm of anachronism or falls into the realm of something to which we might approximate. This is a description by a guy whose name was Donald McDonald. He was the minister of Greyfriars Free Church of Scotland in Inverness for many years.

He died in 1975. Addressing the issue of the Lord's Day and how it might be profitably shared, he says, I shall cherish the memory of it as long as I live. The Sabbath in my native island of Lewis in my boyhood days.

This is his experience as he grows up as a child in the Outer Hebrides. Don't let us allow geography to put us off. The Ten Commandments don't apply any better in the remote parts of the western isles of Scotland than they apply in the heart of the continental United States.

He says, the Sabbath day was prepared for on Saturday evening. All the household work was finished earlier than usual. Tomorrow's meals, as far as that was possible, were prepared and by 10 p.m. the family gathered and, quotes, the book was taken.

In the Scottish Highland home to this day, if you are there for a meal, the host in the home may at one point towards the end of the evening say, shall we take the book? You may be forgiven for thinking that he's referring to the Sears catalog or the Yellow Pages or something, but he's referring to the Bible. And so, he says, the book was taken. However late with their household work, some might be on other nights.

On a Saturday there would not be one light in a hundred to be seen at 12 o'clock midnight. The Sabbath itself began with family worship. Public worship began usually at 12 noon.

Hundreds of people made their way to the house of God. The only way to get there was by walking, yet almost everyone who was able to go attended, although many lived several miles away. Evening worship was at six o'clock and again everyone who could go was there.

Particularly impressive was the complete silence that prevailed throughout the day. Not a stroke of work was done. There was no noise of car or cart.

Between church services no one was seen outside his own house except those who had to take their cattle to drink. Should anyone be seen going up or down the main road, people would come to their doors to ask one another if they knew who it was, being absolutely certain he was going for medical aid for some ill person or to deliver an urgent message. Inside the house no books were read but the Bible and religious books.

All other books were put away on Saturday night. Conversation about worldly things was not allowed. Frequently relatives and friends who had a long distance to walk to the church came into my parents'

home between services and their conversation was always of a religious kind.

As a rule they discussed points made by the preacher in the morning service. This was the way the Lord's day was observed as I remember it. That, he says, of course, was in a country place.

Unhappily it is now impossible to get a quiet Sabbath similar to that which I have described. Wherever we go, Sabbath desecration has penetrated to the most isolated hamlets and homes. Sunday newspapers, radio, television, and pleasure-loving tourists have left no corner, however remote, untouched.

Yet in spite of all of this, it is possible for believers to enjoy the blessing of God in his day, and now I shall explain how they can obtain it. Tonight, when we return, we will try and tackle, in this very different geography some twenty years on, the practical applications of the observance of the fourth commandment. Let us pray together.

Our God and our Father, now we realize why the Bible says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. As we gaze into the mirror of your law and see ourselves, we know we need a Savior. I pray today that you will convict and convince of sin in the lives of some, that as our service ends they may not be able to leave but to come and pray and get some literature and settle the issue of faith, believing in Christ.

That others of us who by our disregard for your law live lives pragmatically pleasing ourselves, that you will catch us, that you will consume us with your grace and your goodness, that you will create within us convictions so that we are not suffering under external rules, nor routine customs, nor buffeted by the expressions of the culture of our day. Remind us that we are a holy nation, a chosen people, a people belonging to God, that we might declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Write your word upon our hearts, we pray, that we might live to your glory.

And may grace, mercy, and peace from Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be the abiding portion of all who believe today and forevermore. Amen.

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