

# The Sabbath & Sabbatarianism

by J.I. Packer

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*The sermon explores the different views on the Sabbath and Sabbatarianism, including the Puritan and Anglican perspectives, and their implications for Christian practice.*

**Duration:** 52:44

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:2-3, Exodus 31:12-17, Numbers 15:32-36, Nehemiah 13:15-22, Isaiah 56:2-7, Matthew 5:17-21, Matthew 12:1-14

**Topics:** "Christian Liberty", "Sabbath Observance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of Christian liberty in relation to the Fourth Commandment. He explains that the reformers believed that apart from attending worship on the Lord's Day, Christians have the freedom to choose how they spend the rest of the day. However, the preacher warns against developing a mindset of abstinence for its own sake, as it goes against the teachings of the Westminster Confession. He also mentions humorous anecdotes about the Scottish Sabbath to illustrate the dangers of taking abstinence to an extreme.

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## Transcript

Almighty God, thou hast called us to love thee with all our mind, and to do our academic work to thy glory. Help us, we pray thee now, to fulfil thy summons and to study and think to thy praise, and grant that through our study, our grasp upon thy truth and thy will may be strengthened, and so our lives and our future ministry enriched. For Jesus Christ's sake, amen.

This afternoon, brethren, we move to the first of the four collision points between the Puritans and the Anglican authorities, bishops and kings in alliance, the four collision points which marked the development of the Puritan movement between 1603 and 1640. And the subject is the Sabbath and Sabbatarianism. Before we get going on it, may I invite you, as you leave, to take one of these bibliographies.

I spent some of the time when the snow was on the other day producing a proper bibliography such as I've never given you, supposing that you want to do some serious discipline Puritan study after we've finished this course. It's probably a more detailed bibliography than a lot of you will ever want to use. But if you did want to do some serious Puritan work, these are some of the books, the materials, that you ought to reckon with before you regard yourself as expert on the subject.

And it won't do you any harm to have the bibliography by you for reference. I've already given you this sheet of Puritan authors to read for the enrichment of life and ministry. This is a more academic bibliography, but my conscience really won't be clear until I've unloaded this one on you as well.

So please take one as you go. At the very least, it won't do you any harm. Now, the Sabbatarian issue.

I'm going to deal with this in some fullness, because I'm going to introduce into the exposition some things that ought to be known about the authentic, that is the actual historical Puritan approach to the Sabbath and the keeping of the Lord's Day. Some facts which people are not as well acquainted with as they should be. A number of subheadings, A, B, C, D. A, the problem of the fourth commandment.

We've got to set this issue against the realization that there is. That is, we've got to set this issue as it emerged in history against the realization, against the background of the realization that biblically there is a problem here on which good Christian men have differed during the ages. Let me remind you of what the problem is.

In the Bible you find the following facts. First, the seventh day rest is rooted in the creation narrative beginning of Genesis 2. In the Decalogue, it appears of the fourth commandment introduced by the injunction, Remember that thou keep'st holy the Sabbath day. Evidently then the Sabbath day was known long before Mount Sinai.

And there's a great Old Testament emphasis on Sabbath keeping in terms of abstinence from work. Work on the Sabbath day is punishable by death. The Exodus 31.12 following for the principle and Numbers 15.32 following for the narrative of an actual case.

Compare also Isaiah 56 and Nehemiah 13 and other passages to show how much importance is attached by God and the servants of God to the keeping of the Sabbath rest. When you get to the New Testament, you find the Lord Jesus Christ endorsing the Old Testament law as a whole. Think not that I came to destroy the law and the prophets.

I came not to destroy them but to fulfill them. And if anyone should break one of the least of these commandments and teach men so, he will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. As Christians go, he'll be a pretty second-rate or third-rate one.

That's Matthew 5.17-21 you remember. Our Lord does in fact specify and enforce in the course of his ministry a number of the several of the ten commandments. Though not actually the fourth commandment in terms.

When Sabbath questions come up in his ministry, he declares himself to be Lord of the Sabbath. Evidently implying that he has a right to teach men how to observe the Sabbath. And he does in fact establish the principles in his teaching that good may be done on the Sabbath day as he does himself.

Works of necessity and works of mercy are not acts of Sabbath breaking. But nowhere in the Gospels is it suggested that our Lord ever thought of abolishing the Sabbath or used his authority to undermine the obligation of keeping the Sabbath. All that he used his authority to do was to teach men how to keep it.

Not to raise the question of whether they should keep it or whether they now might stop keeping it. When one moves on to the Apostolic Church, one finds, on the one hand, that Christians met together for worship on the first day of the week. Acts 20 verse 7, that's when they met to break bread.

And this day was called the Lord's day. A kuriakehimra in Revelation 1 verse 10. It appears then that they had stopped keeping as their day for worship of God the Jewish Sabbath.

And we find the Apostle dissuading people who didn't keep Jewish Sabbath from supposing that they had erred. That's Colossians 2 verse 16. Let no one judge you in respect of a holy day.

And something even more surprising, we find him speaking of this any keeping of days is a thing indifferent. One man regardeth one day as different from another, another man regards all things alike. Well, never mind this, Paul, don't make an issue about it.

This appears to be in the realm of things indifferent. This is Romans 14 verse 5. Well now, what are we to do? What are we to make of this evidence? What are we to say about the fourth commandment? Three views can be taken, have been taken. One is the view that the fourth commandment has been cancelled.

The view is that the fourth commandment was typical of the rest. That is, the rest gains through knowing one's acceptance with God, not having to work for salvation anymore. The rest that is spoken of in Hebrews 4, which is in truth an entry into God's own rest, shared now in measure by the Christians, and to be shared by him completely hereafter.

If this view is taken, then Sunday worship is put on an ecclesiastical basis, an ecclesiastical and a prudential basis. The church has chosen, even as far back as the New Testament, to meet together every seventh day, on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, to worship God. This is very convenient.

And because this is the church's traditional practice, and because Christians ought to join with the church in worshipping God, therefore they ought to keep Sunday as a day of worship, because that's what the rest of the church does. No reason in the nature of the case why another day shouldn't have been appointed. No reason in the nature of the case why it should still be one in seven, as distinct from being one in eight, nine or ten.

But since this is the way it is, and since, as I say, every Christian has an obligation to join in worship with the church, then in this sense it's still an obligation to him to keep Sunday in the sense that he goes to church on Sunday. So, of course, this line of reasoning implies nothing as to what you should do with the rest of the Sunday once the church service is finished. Well, now, this was Augustine.

This appears to be the main line of Calvin's thought. It's certainly the line that most Anglicans have taken from the beginning of the 16th century onwards. There's no difficulty in squaring it with the teaching of Paul, nor with the teaching of Christ, because, you see, Christ didn't actually cancel any of the typical things in the course of his earthly ministry.

Their cancellation dates from his resurrection and the beginning of the new order. Just as, that is to say, Christ didn't speak a word against the temple sacrifices, though when he died and rose from the dead they ceased to have any significance. The new age had come.

The age of the Christ had finished. So, you could argue, he didn't say anything about ceasing to keep the Sabbath, but nevertheless when he rose from the dead the whole era of Sabbath-keeping had terminated also. This is reasonable theological argument.

The difficulty lies not in squaring this view with a New Testament evidence, but in squaring it with the Old Testament evidence, which seems to point quite clearly to the thought of the Sabbath as a creation

ordinance, a memorial of creation, and the Old Testament duty of maintaining a weekly memorial of creation based upon the seven-day creation narrative of Genesis 1. That isn't obviously typical of anything. That isn't obviously affected by the transition from the Old Covenant order of things to the New. And in fact, the majority, I suppose, of Reformed people have always felt that this is a decisive argument against the position to which Calvin inclined.

But there's another thing you can do with it. You can argue that what has happened between the two dispensations is that the seven-day cycle has been shifted one day from the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Lord's Day. But apart from this, no change whatever has taken place.

So the Lord's Day of the New Testament is to be understood as the Christian Sabbath, and all that goes from the Old Testament law of the Sabbath is those observances which can be shown to be either typical or, in effect, cancelled by our Lord's positive teaching on the Sabbath. This was the line which the first Puritan expositors of the doctrine of the Sabbath took. The teaching of Nicholas Bound in his work *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 1595, of which you'll hear more in a moment, is the line which most 17th century Puritans and many since their day, both in England and in Scotland, and some surely in this country too, have taken.

The difficulty there lies in knowing what to say about the two Pauline texts. Colossians 2.16 can be coped with by saying that when Paul says, let no man judge you in respect of the Sabbath, he's thinking purely of Jewish Sabbath, the Jewish Sabbath of the festival calendar, which, of course, included the weekly Sabbath on Saturday, what we call Saturday, that didn't have anything to say about the Christian Lord's Day. So that the whole thought is don't be a Jew and keep days like a Jew, but there's no implication the other way, be a Christian and don't regard any days as special days at all.

Romans 14.5, though, is certainly more difficult. One man regardeth every day alike, well, don't judge him to the Lord he regardeth it. That suggests that this whole area of days, any days, is an area of liberty and not of law, and that, I think, is a more difficult text to square with this particular understanding of what has happened to the Fourth Commandment, although it can be done, it has been done.

Or you can say a third thing. You can say explicitly that the Fourth Commandment, describing the Jewish Sabbath, has been partly cancelled, that is, all the abstinence elements have been cancelled because that was typical, that was typical of the rest of faith which men were to be led into. But then you say with that, that the commandment has been partly shifted as the second view supposed.

That is, it is true to say that God has taught Christians through the apostles to count their cycles of seven differently, and to have their seventh day rest on the first day of the Jewish week and not the seventh. And to say, as has always been said by those who have taken the shift view, that this dates from the resurrection of Jesus who rose on the first day of the week. Then what you say is that the significance of any abstinence that you do in fact practice on the Lord's day is to make room for the service of God.

You abstain from ordinary secular employment, not as an end, that is, not because you regard abstinence as such, as part of the moral law, but you abstain from secular employment as a means, that is, a means to making the most of the day for God in terms of worship and fellowship and good works and Christian service. As far as the abstinences are concerned, you are operating in the realm of liberty, not law, but the way that you are to use your liberty is by asking yourself, well now what is the best thing that I can do with the hours that make up this Lord's day to make the most of them for God? And the answer that surely one has to give to that question is will I make the most of these hours for God by worshipping Him with His

people when I have opportunity and by engaging in the other activities of Christian service and fellowship and communion with God which the day makes room for. I ought to take it thankfully as a dispensation of God's good providence that I live in a culture where the seventh day has become a day on which business is closed down so that there is leisure for Christian worship and service and I am to make the most of it.

You can see that in fact the person who reasons out the Christian doctrine of the fourth commandment in that way will come to a very similar conclusion to that of the man who reasoned it out in the second of these possible ways affirming that the Lord's day is the Christian service affirming that abstinence from work is part of the moral law of God but recognising also that our Lord taught us to think about the Lord's day positively taught us in other words that there is no virtue in doing nothing as such that laziness is never a good service of God and that abstinence from secular work is an idea correlative to taking up your time in positive uses of Christian worship and Christian fellowship. It's two slightly different routes but you get to the same place or a very similar place in the end. The second view was the view as I said of Bound and the Puritans the third view has been the view of those in the Reformed camp who had not taken the Puritan view of the Sabbath.

Eminent men for instance like Caitey expounded the Sabbath this way the Westminster Confession uses the phrase Christian Sabbath suggesting that it plumps for the second of those two views but it expounds Sabbath keeping in a way which will square either with the second or with the third. Let me just read to you what it says This is Confession chapter 21 section 8 The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord where men after a due preparing of their hearts and ordering of their common affairs beforehand do not only observe and wholly rest all the day from their own work and thoughts about their worldly employment and recreation but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship and in the duties of necessity and mercy. You can expound those words in terms of the third view taking the words do not only observe and wholly rest all the day from their own works and so on as implying that as being meant hypothetically implying that if this was what you did and if you stopped short of doing this well you wouldn't in fact be using the Lord's day as it was meant to be used but that in fact it's given us as a day in which we are to be taken up the whole time if we can be in the public and private exercises of the worship of God and the service of men.

Well now I set out those alternatives just to remind you of what are the different candidates in the field so to speak when it comes to expounding in its Christian context this fourth commandment. The Puritans, as I say, plunge for the second. I want to make the point that numbers one and three you may on reflection disagree with them but at least they're respectable options.

And you mustn't be too too cavalier at any rate at the level of principle in writing off the people who held whichever of these two views you don't yourself take. And I don't want you to get the idea that the Puritans were left out on a limb in their sabbatarianism because the Anglicans didn't believe in taking the fourth commandment seriously at all. That is because they refused to they refused to weigh and observe what they took the Scripture to say on the subject.

They thought that the first of these three views was the right one. Again it's another of these tragedies that keeps recurring in the Puritan story the tragedy that is of two sides both believing that the Scripture is on their side both believing that the line they take is right both believing that the line they take pleases God both convinced therefore that the line that the other chapter is taking does not please God and so losing their tempers and behaving badly to each other in consequence recurs again and again through this story. It's a very tragic story from this point of view.

Well now, that's the problem. Hurry on to Subsection B Development of the Puritan View Just a few historical facts.

Up to the Reformation there's detectable in the Western church an oscillation between Augustine's view that the fourth commandment was entirely typical and has therefore been entirely cancelled that's maintained by most of the theologians and on the other hand what you might call popular Sabbatarianism which is the mark of popular piety in the Middle Ages Nathan is able even to say on page 444 in chapter 15 of his *The Tudor Puritanism* which is on Sabbatarianism and which is certainly you ought to read Nathan is able to say on 444 that Sabbatarianism was a minor aspect of medieval Catholicism and this is true and laws against Sunday activities were passed from time to time in the Christian states of Western Europe right from Constantine in the 4th century onwards and there were some on the

English statute book before ever the Reformation happened as on the statute books in Germany and Switzerland as well Now in England this legislation was there but at the time of the Reformation it was more honoured in the breach than in the observance Sunday had become a day for riotous amusement and popular Sabbatarianism was well it was precisely what people knew that they ought to do what people thought they ought to do to practice and didn't and this was true in other places in Europe too Now all the reformers Luther and Calvin most notably reacted against the medieval church calendar with its saint days and with its Sundays a keeping of all holy days Sundays included was generally regarded as a meritorious observance in the medieval church and in the heat of their zeal against merits

the reformers insisted that all this area of life was a realm of Christian liberty they took the first of the three views I gave you as to how the fourth commandment applies to Christians they said that as long as you attend worship on the Lord's day which you certainly should do well you have liberty as to what you do for the rest of the day after that use it in a Christian way by all means but it isn't part of the law of God either the moral law either that you shouldn't do any of the things you'll do on the other six days of the week or that you should go on doing particular religious things the Puritans took this over they got it this was said you see by the English reformers and this is the kind of teaching that was given when teaching was given in Reformation England for the first

generation that the Puritans in face of this situation felt a desire to tighten up now the first to put forward an exposition of the bearing of the fourth commandment on Christians of the second type which I mentioned that the keeping of the whole day holy unto the Lord, estinence and all is part of the moral law of God was a man who later became a high church and Arminian bishop Lancelot Andrews who in those days 1580 was master of Pembroke and gave a famous course of catechetical lectures in which he expounded the fourth commandment in this way this was Andrews' Puritan period other Puritans took it up Greenham wrote a treatise on the Sabbath which took alternative number two it circulated widely in manuscripts in the 1580s and was published after his death in his collected works

Greenham's collected works are in the library incidentally you can find it there if you want to look at it Greenham had a son-in-law whom I mentioned to you earlier named Nicholas Bound and he was the first actually to write a book devoted specifically to this issue and publish it that was his true doctrine of the Sabbath 1595 it was recognised as putting forward a doctrine which was quite new in post-reformation England I'll quote to you the summary of Bound's book in the work of a later critic Peter Halin H-E-Y-L-I-N in his *History of the Sabbath* which is committed to view one and gives view two short script here's a summary of Bound's book and I've already told you that in my judgement the danger of answer two is that you should develop an abstinence casuistry that isn't related to the

positive use of the Lord's Day for the service of God that is, that you should regard abstinence as having value for its own sake although the wording of the Westminster Confession rules that view out and of course it's from following that line of thought that all the jokes about the Scottish Sabbath derive you know, the chap who went to bed with their shoes on so that they wouldn't have to tie up their shoes on the Lord's Day the chap who shaved on Saturday night so that they wouldn't have to shave on the Lord's Day and so on and so on well, it seems to me that that is a danger the Westminster Confession whether you tie it down in view two or three does actually rule it out but it's been developed and I don't think that it's for the honour of God or really represents the right grasp of

his revealed mind but this is what you've got in Bound and this is what Halin picks up and of the lines in his summary I want you to notice it Quote Halin Bound hath affirmed in the Gospel that the commandment of sanctifying every seventh day as in the Mosaic or Decalogue is natural, moral and perpetual that we Christians should take ourselves as straightly bound to rest upon the Lord's Day as the Jews were on their Sabbath therefore being one of the moral commandments that bindeth us as well as them all being of equal authority and for to rest upon this day it must be a notable and singular rest a most careful, exact and precise rest then for particulars and these are particular things that Bound had argued no buying of food, flesh or fish bread or drink on the Sabbath no carriers to

travel on that day no pack men or drovers scholars not to study the liberal arts nor lawyers to peruse men's evidences justices not to examine cases no man to travel on that day the ringing of more bells than one on that day not to be justified this is an attack on using the day for the purpose of change ringing which was a well-known English sport at that time no, you must just toll one bell to summon people to service but you mustn't ring bells in such a way as actually to enjoy yourself in the doing of it no solemn feasts to be made on that day nor wedding dinner all lawful pleasures and honest recreations like shooting, fencing, bowling which are permitted on other days are on this day to be foreborn no man to speak or talk of pleasure or any other worldly matter well, you can see how

the casuistry goes it's a thoroughgoing statement a thoroughgoing development of the thought that the abstinence from what you do on the other six days is part of the moral law of God binding us as strictly as it bound the Jews now, it must be said straight away that whether you judge this right or not by the scriptural standards of truth it could not but be a good and healthy thing in late 16th century England for the law of the Sabbath to be expounded this way and fund the activities of what we would call a secular thought to be severely curtailed because it's the kind of thing that was going on I quote from a Puritan writer Philip Stubbs a bit of a Jeremiah he was and this work of his was called An Anatomy of Abuses published in 1583 describing all the moral evils as well as the

ecclesiastical ones that are wrought in the realm of England and on the Lord's Day says Stubbs people spend their time, I quote frequenting bawdy stage plays, interludes playing May games, church ales that is, feasts on the dedication day of a church or the patron saint day of a church at which, of course, ale was drunk May games, church ales, feasts and wakeses they spend their time in piping, dancing, dicing carding, bowling, tennis playing bear baiting, cock fighting, hawking, hunting and such like also in keeping of sales and markets and in football playing and such other devilish pastimes actually, public amusement in England was a pretty riotous business on the 16th century Sunday there was a lot of drunkenness there was a lot of horseplay there was a lot of rioting there was a lot

of immorality there was no harm whatever for England in clamping down a little bit here is a description of how things were when Richard Baxter was a boy in the early 1600s he was brought up in an ordinary

English country village where they didn't have a clergyman who knew his stuff they had no preaching and teaching and this is the kind of life that went on on Sunday Quote Baxter In my youth one of my father's own tenants was the town piper and the place of the dancing assembly was not a hundred yards from our door and we could not on the Lord's day either read a chapter or pray or sing a psalm or catechise or instruct a servant but with the noise of the pipe and taber and the shouting in the streets continually in our ears and we were the common scorn of all the rabble in the streets

and we were called puritans, precisians, hypocrites because we rather chose on the Lord's day to read the scriptures than do as they did and when the people by the book that's the book of sports of which I'll tell you in a moment were allowed to play and dance out of public service time they could so hardly break off their sports that many acclaimed the reader that is they didn't have a minister they just had a man who read the service but couldn't preach many a time the reader was fain to stay that is he couldn't start the service till the pipe and the players would give over and sometimes the Morris dancers would come into the church in all their linen and scarves and antique dresses with Morris bells jingling at their legs and this was evening prayer you were allowed to do these things

after morning prayer was over evening prayer was an afternoon service incidentally in 16th, 17th century England you had it when you had it about three or four in the afternoon so they come into church in all this finery for the saying of the service and then as soon as common prayer was read they would haste out presently to their play again up next was this a heavenly conversation so that's the kind of situation into which bound treatise of the service was being said and you can't wonder therefore that different people reacted to it in different ways and Thomas Fuller the mid-17th century historian said the learned men were much divided in their judgements about these Sabbatarian doctrines some embraced them as ancient truths consumments of scripture long disused and neglected now

seasonably revived for the increase of piety others however conceived them grounded on a wrong bottom that is to involve a certain mis-exposition of scripture yet because they tended to the manifest advance of religion they thought it was pity to oppose them but a third thought flatly fell out with these positions as galling men's necks with a Jewish yoke against the liberty of Christians well that was the Anglicans who already right from the start were speaking against this doctrine well that's simply to show you the situation into which this teaching was fed and undoubtedly the fact that there were these abuses going on on the Lord's Day so the spiritual worship was made that much harder for those who wanted to practice it this fact in itself encouraged the Puritans to feel that here

they got hold of something that was really there in the word of God to be applied to the 16th century situation and strict Sabbath-keeping anyway, according to this line of teaching became part of the Puritan rule of life and this leads on to heading C the Puritan exposition of Sabbath-keeping now this is where I want to give you a little background material from the Puritans' own works themselves because the common view of what strict Sabbath-keeping meant for the Puritans is that the day would be spent in the manner of what in England we call the Victorian Sunday often misdescribed as the Puritan Sunday where abstinence was most definitely a virtue and nothing delightful might be done and in fact if you weigh the Puritan expositions of the Sabbath you will discover that this is not the

kind of Lord's Day observance or Christian Sabbath-keeping as they would have called it that they wanted to see at all and this thought of the weekly day of gloom is just a caricature of what they were after now let me give you some quotes and extracts to prove it here's an extended exposition from Matthew Henry on one of the texts which is here on Mark 2, 27 the Son of Man, Lord of the Sabbath an exposition of how he

understood the Sabbath Lord as Christ had left it to him writes Matthew Henry the Sabbath is a sacred and divine institution but we must receive and embrace it as a privilege and a benefit not as a task and a drudgery first God never designed it to be an imposition upon us and therefore we must not make it so to ourselves second God did design it to be an advantage to us and

so we must make it and improve it he had some regard to our bodies and the institution that they might rest but he had much more regard for our souls the Sabbath was made a day of rest only in order to it being a day of holy work a day of communion with God a day of praise and thanksgiving and the rest from worldly business is therefore necessary that we may closely apply ourselves to this work and spend the whole time in it in public and private see here then what a good master we serve all whose institutions are for our benefit this quotation fairly sums up the Puritan approach to the Lord's Day here may I just underline three of Matthew Henry's points and add a fourth by way of corollary one Sabbath keeping as Henry said means action not inaction the Lord's Day is not a day for

idleness John Dodd in a famous exposition of the Ten Commandments which went to about forty editions in the Puritan period wrote idleness is a sin every day but much more on the Lord's Day we do not keep the Sabbath holy according to the Puritans by lounging around doing nothing and if we don't spend the day in prosecuting the business of our heavenly calling we fail to keep it holy even though we may abstain from our earthly calling two Sabbath keeping as Henry says is not a tedious burden but a joyful privilege now the Puritans made a lot of it this is what people don't realise the Sabbath they said is not a fast but a feast learn the difference it's a day for rejoicing it's a day for rejoicing in the works of a gracious God both in creation and in redemption joy must be its temper

throughout Pope Zwinik joy suits no person so much as a saint and it becomes no season as well as a Sabbath again this from Brook it is the beauty and glory of a Christian to rejoice in the Lord every day but especially on the Lord's Day to fast on the Lord's Day said Ignatius is to kill Christ but to rejoice in the Lord this day and to rejoice in all the beauties of the day this is to crown Christ and this is to lift up Christ it's a feast day so joy must be the keynote of public worship yes the Puritans could say that just as they could practice it Baxter in particular spends time deploring drab mournful services he wants a lot of singing in services there must be no gloom on the Lord's Day and those who say that they cannot find joy in the spiritual exercises of a Christian Sunday said

Baxter said other Puritans thereby show that there is something very wrong with them but the activities themselves must be activities calculated to make a Christian rejoice praise, worship delighting in salvation incidentally Baxter also said that such things as wearing your best clothes to go to church and moderate feasting on the Lord's Day I told somebody this quite recently these things are perfectly appropriate and he also said that it's quite proper to take a walk on the Lord's Day and to rejoice in God's work of creation as you wander out in the fields of the country it's a day for rejoicing in God not a tedious burden then but a joyful privilege sensual Puritans thought third, Sabbath keeping as Henry said is not a useless labor but it's a means of grace and we should look forward

to our Sunday as days of grace here my quote is from Jonathan Edwards who I found says this more neatly than any of the Puritans that I'd read God hath made it our duty by his institution to set apart this day for a special seeking of his grace and blessing from which we may argue that he will be especially ready to confer his grace upon those who thus seek it the Sabbath day is an accepted time a day of salvation a time wherein God especially loves to be sought and loves to be found and fourth point corollary of the Puritan position but a corollary drawn out by very many of them Sabbath breaking brings

chastisement as does the abuse of any God given privilege and means of grace according to the Puritan understanding spiritual decline and material loss will accrue to both individuals and

communities for their sin the good gifts of God may not be despised with impunity Thomas Fuller whom I mentioned before thought that the Civil War and Thomas Brookes thought that the fire of London came of judgement on the nation for Sabbath breaking well even at the risk of running into next lecture I'm going to go on a bit with this I want to tell you something about the practical principles the Puritans taught for keeping the Lord's day holy they were methodical thorough men this is the kind of advice they used to give one you must prepare for the Lord's day so you must plan your week so that you will be able to make the most of your Sunday haphazard improvidence will exclude your profiting on Sunday on the Christian Sunday just as haphazard improvidence will rob you of profit in a

dozen other fields of life so you must sort things out you must get your heart free you must be ready by Saturday night to give yourself undistractedly to the service of God on the Sunday preparing the heart is even more important than getting your business squared up for the Lord's day is pre-eminently and begs to praise a day for heart work enter the Puritans quite bluntly and pointedly and this is a word for us too I think in our day just as it was a word a word for the times in theirs, the battle for Sunday is usually won or lost on the preceding Saturday night when time they said should be set apart for self examination, confession and prayer for God's blessing the coming day they used to do this themselves Puritan minister after Puritan minister would spend a long period in these

exercises of spirit on the Saturday night in preparation for the Sunday and Richard Dexter had a young people's fellowship that used to spend three hours each Saturday evening preparing together for the Sabbath in this way, this will it if thou wouldst leave thy heart with God on the Saturday night, thou shouldst find it with him on the Lord's day morning that's a good thought and so is this from the very practical mind of Richard Dexter, go seasonably to bed but you may not be sleepy on the Lord's day and second principle public worship must be central on the Lord's day well this is obvious and needn't be stressed the Puritans believed that quote Greenham, the public exercises are twice at the least to be used every Sabbath if God in his providence has given two services then

Christians who value the means of grace ought to be present at both services private devotion should take second place for church attendance if one or the other for any reason must go and we must get up on Sunday morning early enough to be able to come to church with our hearts once again prepared, if a man come to church quote God, as soon as he is out of his bed, sort of getting up at half past ten and rolling into church at eleven continue the quote the word shall be but a tediousness and serve to the further hardening of his heart then third point, the family must function as a religious unit on the Lord's day see, for we haven't planned to quote it here Westminster larger catechism question 118 which specifies all this, the head of the house must conduct family prayers twice, the

Puritan suggests, morning and evening, also he must take the family to church, he must examine and catechise the children and servants he must, it's his responsibility to care for the souls of the household and it's on the Lord's day supremely that that responsibility must be discharged observe what this means we reckon to reach today, to reach the men through the women and the children this is basic in our present day pastoral strategy the Puritans worked exactly the other way they sought to reach the women and the children through the men and they went for family when you're thinking about the building up of the life of a church this is a point which invites meditation, who was right who was on the better wavelength, who had a better grasp of the principles of godliness for the

principles that the pitfalls of legalism and pharisaism must be avoided on the Lord's day though they took view two of the three that I gave you they worked out their casuistry of Lord's day observance as if they held view three that is, they wouldn't allow you to be idle, they wouldn't allow you to be legalistic they said again and again that what matters is what you do on the Lord's day not what you don't do and they censured the pharisaic habit of mind which was only looking to see what shouldn't be done and what other people were doing that they shouldn't on Sunday Baxter, again is strong on this and he counters these tendencies with a constructive evangelical principle of judgment quote Baxter I will first look at a man's positive uses on the Lord's day how he heareth and readeth and

prayeth and spendeth his time and how he instructeth and helpeth his family and if he be diligent in seeking God and ply his heavenly business I shall be very backwards as Baxter to judge him for a word or action about worldly things that falls in on the by that's good, isn't it well, I'm trying to make this point again and again that the Puritan pastors were very human very level-headed, very balanced very wise and very clear in their understanding of Christian liberty and some of this material I think goes once again to bear out that point there's a little more to be said about the conflict itself that I'll have to say at the beginning of next class also if you've got questions please save them to the beginning of next class because our time is gone thank you

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