

Of The Sabbath Day

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[0 : 0 0] Luke chapter 6 I like us to think this morning especially about verses 9 and 5 verse 9 then said Jesus unto them I will ask you one thing is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil to save life or to destroy it and then verse 5 and he said unto them that the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath well still you'll be aware that we have been looking over the past couple of months at the biblical basis behind the church's confession of faith looking in these recent weeks at the middle section verses chapters 15 to 21 and having come to the last chapter in the section chapter 21 entitled of religious worship and the Sabbath day we have divided this subject up into its two parts looking last Lord's Day at the subject of religious worship and so this morning we examine the topic of the Sabbath day now this is a subject on which Jesus spoke quite often and our chapter today is a case in point in this section

Jesus makes two main points which could be summed up with reference to the two verses that I have read verse 9 and verse 5 and first of all as we read it verse 9 then said Jesus unto them I will ask you one thing is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil to save life or to destroy it Jesus is asking a rhetorical question that is one to which he does not necessarily realistically expect an answer because the answer speaks for itself it is always better to do good than to do evil not only on the Sabbath but any day how much more so on God's special day it is always better to save life than to destroy it again even more so on the Sabbath the context was that Jesus was healing people on the Sabbath now in all fairness to his opponents they weren't against healing people but they regarded healing as a work and by definition to them work of any kind ought not to be done on the Sabbath we see for example in chapter 13 of Luke's account of the gospel the ruler of the synagogue there at verse 14 gets crossed with Jesus and with the people and the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day and said unto the people there are six days in which men ought to work and them therefore come and be healed and not on the Sabbath day it wasn't that they wanted

Jesus to do bad things they just didn't want him to do anything at all on the Sabbath day this is where God's command to rest from labor and to rest in him and worship him had become distorted into a legalist prohibition they didn't want Jesus not to heal people they just wanted him not to do it on the Sabbath they didn't want him to do bad things on the Sabbath they didn't want him to do anything at all on the Sabbath day not even good things not even healed people now as we look in chapter 6 we see at verse 9 there as it said I will ask you one thing is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil to save life or to destroy with that question we see that for Jesus doing nothing was never an option and to do nothing was in Jesus' eyes the equivalent of doing evil of destroying life is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do evil to save life or to destroy he knew what they wanted him to do they wanted him not to do good but to do nothing to not do good is in Jesus' eyes the equivalent of doing evil

John 5 we read verse 14 to 17 Jesus finds a man who he healed at the pool of Bethesda and he healed him on the Sabbath day Jesus finding him in the temple and said behold thou art made whole sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee the man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole and therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus and sought to slay him because he had done these things on the Sabbath day but Jesus answered them my father worketh hitherto and I work so whatever the work of God it's obviously alright for God to work for God to do good for things to be done serving the Lord serving good doing good on the Sabbath day my father worketh hitherto and I work and then we see later on in John 6 verses 28-29 then they said what shall we do that we might work the works of God what are these works we should do that are the works of God

Jesus answered and said unto them this is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent this is the work of God that ye believe in him whom he hath sent in other words the Sabbath was given as a means to enable mankind to serve God better in doing the good works of necessity and mercy and relieving distress and suffering and helping and healing people and being able to believe more strongly on the God who has made them on the Saviour who seeks to deliver them the Sabbath is given and it is made for man as Jesus points out elsewhere it is given in a pre-fall situation man is not given it because of his sinfulness it is given before sin it is given as a means to enable mankind to serve God better if we are to worship the Lord as he deserves and indeed as he commands us it follows that we must set aside a due portion of our kind each day for this priority this is also what the confession of faith makes reference to but recognising that the work the tasks and legitimate duties and employments of each day are heavy and take a toll on our strength and time the Lord has commanded that one day each week should be given wholly to worshipping him and resting in him it is not intended just for doing nothing nothing is what the Pharisees and others wanted Jesus to do on the Sabbath but he knew it wasn't just for just nothing but for resting in the Lord and worshipping him better doing good saving life on this matter according to Jesus to do nothing would be to do evil to neglect and ignore the Lord and his people and the sufferings of others on his day is to do evil it is to destroy little by little even one's own very life

[7 : 06] Jesus taught on various occasions that there could be no neutrality no nothingness with God one was either for him or against him and whoever did not gather with God scattered who is at gathering not with the Lord scattered abroad that's what he taught one might say the same about his holy day one cannot really pretend to neutrality about the Sabbath one either honours and worships the God who gave it and so do good or use it aright in the way that God intended or one does not do so in other words one does evil the second point Jesus makes is what we read at verse 5 the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath and like verse 9 this puts God or more specifically here this puts Christ at the very heart of Sabbath observance when we honour his day we honour himself when we defile or neglect or ignore his day we defile and neglect whom?

Christ the Lord of the Sabbath who claims ownership of the day it is all the more surprising that there is so often a tendency nowadays amongst many Christians to suggest not only that Jesus was against Sabbath observers but that he has freed all of us New Testament Christians from the burdensome shackles of what was after all as they claim to believe just a legalist Jewish ordinance and now being saved by grace we are free to keep for not keep this day as we see fit after all Jesus said in Mark 2 verse 27 the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath case closed sadly in such instances it is not so much the case that is closed but rather the Bible that seems to remain closed and the context to be ignored if we actually look at Mark 2 verses 27 and 28 we read what it says there the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath there is that claim for ownership again

Christ right at the heart of the Sabbath in this situation that Jesus describes in Mark 2 the disciples were getting a hard time for plucking ears of corn to eat something which God's law did allow them to do Judea only 23 verse 25 when thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor then thou mayst pluck the ears with thine hand but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn now that's what they're doing they're plucking the ears of corn as they're going through the corn fields there they go and we read that and we see the situation in Luke chapter 6 it says rubbing them in their hands now to some to the Pharisees that rubbing them in their hands that was the act of harvesting you didn't have a sickle you didn't have a threshing instrument and you just plucked the ears of corn and stuck them straight in your mouth well that was okay to the legalist but if you rubbed them in your hands that was you harvesting that was you doing work and because Luke tells us they were rubbing them in their hands and then the disciples got a hard time for plucking the ears of corn and for eating them

Jesus is defending them in that situation God's law did allow them to eat God's law did allow them to pluck the ears of corn but Jesus cites instead in our Luke example the instance of David eating the consecrated bread in the tabernacle even if it was not strictly in line with the law because it was meant to be just for the priests this instance was clearly permitted by God it was an exception allowed by the one who made the rules in the first place if you think of a worldly example let's say you're going through the streets of a city at night time and there's a nightclub or something and bouncers outside in their tuxedos and their bow ties and their big hefty guys and there's a queue of people wanting in the club and somebody turns up who's not got the dress code maybe he doesn't have a tie on or something the bouncer says no you're not getting in you can't come in here without the tie on and the owner of the club happens to come out and he says what's the problem he's with me he's my personal guest so you let him in now is the bouncer out he's like no no I'm not going to let him in

I know the rules of the club you can't let this guy in because he hasn't got a tie on and the owner said look I'm not destroying the rules you're doing a great job but it's my club so if I say he's in he's in now is the bouncer going to argue with the owner as you say that's fine sir you take him out and I'll keep an eye on the rest of the crowd up here the bouncer is the servant of the owner and the owner the lord of the sabbath is the one who decides what is and it's not allowed David was made an exception of it's not that oh well anybody can eat this bread the priests have got it's not the case of oh well it doesn't really matter about the sabbath the lord of the sabbath decides what is and is not permitted on his day god allowed an exception for the case of David an exception motivated by mercy this is what Jesus is really getting at here we want a more scriptural example if you think of Genesis 24 verse 10 where remember Abram is sending his steward to find a wife for Isaac and he says well you go off into the land of Haran you meet up with my relatives there and so on the servant took 10 camels of the camels of his master and departed but all the goods of his master were in his hand and he arose and went to the mess of the tain to the city of Nabor he didn't take empty camels he loaded them all with stuff and presents and goodness was all what but he didn't feel the need to then come back to Abram and said okay because I've taken these camels I mustn't shoot if ten was too many and he said okay he has put everything in his hand he's got the authority to take these camels if he wants he's effectively the steward the faithful servant the owner that confers privilege he can take his master's camels if he wants he can use them as he sees fit he can do what is right providing he is fulfilling his master's command the point is not whether a rule has been violated the question the sight of the owner of the sabbath in this case Jesus the lord of the sabbath is why have you done what you have done is there God only purpose to it is there faithfulness the servant is not stealing these ten camels he's rather using them to serve his master's purpose he is taking what is in his hand and under his authority to further his master's command Jesus why are you doing what you're doing you're going to say well I'm seeking to help this person they're in need or in distress I have to provide them with what they need and yes ideally I would be in church or I'd be I'd be resting whatever but I have to do this because they can't help themselves okay fine that's not a problem necessity mercy kindness serving the lord showing his love why have you done what you've done what is at the heart of your action who is it you are serving with this activity with this resource this holy day what is it you are doing with it is Christ at the heart of what you're doing and if it is that's fine if he is at the heart of it that's fine even if it may not be the overtly religious or the overtly normal way of doing things if that's what you're doing you're serving Christ and putting him first helping others necessity mercy what have you then fine the lord is not gonna not gonna judge us for that because if we've got Christ at the heart of the day then he's still the lord of the sabbath that is Christ at the heart of what you're doing on that day or is itself no it may well be that you're genuinely engaged in working necessity or mercy and need some other God-honoring labor but God will always know the truth and what is in your heart not just what you might tell yourself if we are shopping on the lord's day who is that for we are watching the football on the

[15 : 45] lord's day who is that honorary is it the lord of the sabbath or is the prince of this world we are traveling on the lord's day such that other folk have to work to provide us with that travel oh yes but that's a necessity i have to do that why oh because i'm visiting my granny in the hospital you know in mornet's well why didn't you go the day before well i couldn't because i was busy i had things to do you know so to make sure visiting your granny in the hospital doesn't eat into your time you'll eat instead into god's time god's commands how people say oh i've got away i have to get back from work i've got to get to work i've got to get home from holiday in time to get back to work oh why don't you leave a day later oh because then i'd be late for work okay fair enough why don't you leave a day earlier oh because i lose a day of my holiday i have to pay for overnight accommodation maybe even two nights how much money does it take i wonder before the sum involved means more to us than obedience to our lord is it a hundred pounds fifty forty thirty when did this idea arise in the heart of christians that obedience to christ was fine just as long as convenience to self wasn't interfered with when did christians decide that the bible must teach that following christ who gave himself for us upon the cross was meant to be somehow cost free and should not make any impact or difference in how we live our lives compared to how the heathens do it how many occasions have we passed up for the sabbath to be our silent witness our golden opportunity to make a humble quiet non-aggressive self-deprecating statement of difference about who we belong to and who we serve would anyone have heard of any middle if he had just said it's the olympics it's a big deal i'm serving my country i don't really want to run on the sabbath but i don't really have a choice i didn't choose this i wouldn't want to do it myself but you know but no choice don't want to let people down to him not letting god down was more important and as a result although he served faithful years as a missionary in china and all that he did and all the service that he rendered the thing that people remember about him today as an olympic gold medalist as he was he wouldn't run on the sabbath he wouldn't jeopardize his relationship with christ for all the gold medals in all the world and the only reason we remember him or most of us remember him is because he made that distinction and he put god first and yes there was a cause but see how his name is remembered now even in the world yes to honour the lord of the sabbath we will probably on occasion take a hit but if we do so we will know that we are doing it for him not for ourselves it will cost us at times but if being a christian never costs us what sacrifice do we offer him in our lives and in the end it will certainly cost us less than we told ourselves it would almost certainly and in any case god is no man's debtor he makes it good to us he makes it up whatever we may lose if in our life jesus christ is not lord of all then really he's not lord at all

because there's something else we put more important than him whether it's me myself or whether it's my leisure or my hobbies or my time or my work if there's something i am putting more important than christ then he's not really my lord he's either the lord of all or he's not the lord at all jesus not me jesus said the son of man is lord also of the sabbath charity however demands that we think the best of those who may genuinely genuinely and sincerely feel the view that the sabbath is just an old testament regulation a jewish regulation which is no longer binding up on christians under the new testament and that from a scriptural theological point of view they feel no longer obliged to maintain it one might perhaps admittedly with a little mischief ask that's very interesting that's great that's fine which of the other commandments given upon mount sinai in the old testament would you also feel similarly able to set aside you know are we free now under the gospel saved by grace to worship other gods no are we free to make raven images and worship them are we free now because we're christians under the new testament to take the lord's name in vain to blaspheme are we free to steal to kill to bear false witness to commit adultery to be covetous no so it's just the sabbath then how do we single out this one amongst all the others and say oh this one doesn't count but that's what all the others we do have to keep you know scriptural word for this is where exactly most people who take this abolitionist view of the sabbath will do so in the belief that the lord's day is a completely different thing from the sabbath and that it carries none of the connotations or obligations of the old testament jewish sabbath the rest from work and indeed from causing others to work for us and to focus that day on the lord and there are multitudes who claim that the first day of the week is nowhere referred to as the sabbath whether christian or otherwise but let us look at the facts the new testament was not written in english or in gaelic it was written in greek the term sabbath which in greek is the word sabbathon in greek can be applied three ways it can mean either firstly the seventh day or it can mean secondly a seven day period or it can mean a particular day of the week now undoubtedly a measure of interpretation must be exercised in each context where the word is used and the translators of the bible have clearly done that but just for the record to end all doubt or speculation let it be stated unequivocally that on every single occasion i'll say that again on every single occasion where the greek term translated as first day of the week is used in the new testament what it literally says is on the first sabbath that is what the actual greek actually says on the first sabbath this means for example it's in matthew chapter 28 verse 1 it literally reads in the end of the sabbath as it began to go on towards the first sabbath came mary michael and etc to the tomb now this would not make a lot of literary sense unless of course by the time the gospel accounts were written jewish believers were observing two sabbaths in a week the old

testament one and the resurrection day given the attention which our lord himself gives to the resurrection day in his appearances to the disciples it becomes clear that the lord of the sabbath regards this new day as eclipsing in importance the old seventh day but nowhere does jesus introduce a command that the sabbath principle that is rest one day in seven worship the lord is to be abandoned honesty and integrity demands the oft repeated claim that the first day of the week is nowhere referred to as a sabbath be finally abandoned such a claim is literally unsustainable because the simple fact is that the first day of the week in the greek new testament is in fact everywhere referred to by the term sabbath by literal definition then the first day of the week is a sabbath now there is so much more to be said on this subject but time doesn't allow us for now we just make this final observation leaving in mind that the confession of faith's concerns with religious worship on the sabbath day and it means the christian sabbath day the christian sabbath is trinitarian it points to the three persons of the trinity because in its observance we commemorate the work of all three persons of the trinity the work of the father the son and the spirit were also involved in let's say the work of the father in creation you know the first day that ever existed the evening and the morning were the first day what happened that day the lord said let there be light and there was light god saw the light that it was good god divided the light of the darkness he called the light day and the darkness night and the evening and the morning were the first day jesus said i'm the light of the world the day when god brought light out of the darkness the first day of creation is by definition the first day of the week when we remember and honor the lord on this day we remember the work of the father and the son and the spirit but of the father in creation we remember also the work of the son in redemption and resurrection this is the day of resurrection every lord's day is the day of resurrection but across the world today there will be lots and lots of branches of the church where this particular lord's day is especially celebrated as though this were the only day in which we remember god's resurrection but it's great to remember the resurrection of jesus and on the first day of the week that's the day he rose from the dead that's the day of victory that's his ultimate statement of his godhead of his victory over sin and over death so we commemorate the work of god the son in redemption and resurrection and we remember the work of the holy spirit in converting and sanctifying the young church at pentecost now of course pentecost was a jewish festival and for that reason we might think it originally fell on the old seventh day sabbath but it never did if you turn with me to levticus chapter 23 we see in verses 10 and 11 reference to the celebration of the first fruits that says speak unto the children of israel and say to them when you be coming to the land which i gave unto you and shall reap the harvest it all that you shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest and he shall weigh the sheaf before the lord to be accepted for you on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall weigh it now the celebration of the first fruits were told in first corinthians chapter 15 verse 20 and 23 now is christ risen from

the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept but every man in his own order christ the first fruits afterward day there are christ that is coming this festival of the first fruits is ultimately pointing forwards to the ultimate first fruits the resurrection just as everything in scripture similarly and ultimately points us on to christ this is an accident it's not coincidence god means from all eternity that as his scriptures unfold they unfold the story of his son jesus christ it is ultimately all pointing to them the scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning god and what duty god requires of man what man is to believe concerning god is that his son jesus christ is the ultimate fulfillment of all that the lord has done this festival the first fruits is pointing us forwards to the ultimate first fruits the resurrection just as everything in scripture likewise points us to christ and what day did it occur on well verse 11 of chapter 23 leuiticus tells us the first and the morrow after the sabbath that's the old jewish sabbath the priest shall wait now the old jewish sabbath is the seventh day the morrow after that is the first day of the week and after the first fruits 50 days 50 days were numbered leuiticus 23 again we see verses 15 and 16 there he shall count on to you from the morrow after the sabbath from the day that he brought the sheep for the way offering seven sabbaths shall be complete even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number 50 days and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the lord and so what day is it on from this the 50th day seven weeks seven sabbaths 49 days first day after the old sabbath 50th day from this the 50th day comes the name pentecost meaning 50 days and what day does that occur on verse 16 even on the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye shall be number 50 days from the very beginning the lord intended these things of resurrection and redemption and pouring out of his spirit to be based and grounded on the first day of the week remember what it says in

Acts chapter 2 Acts chapter 2 when the disciples are all gathered together waiting for god's gift of the spirit what does it say when the day of pentecost was fully come the day had dawned nine o'clock in the morning on the first day of the week the first day of the week of the lord's day day of resurrection day of creation day of resurrection day of the pouring out of the spirit from the beginning the lord intended these things of resurrection and redemption and pouring out of the spirit to be based and grounded in the first day of the week the lord's day and when it comes to the end of all time the visions of what shall be then were also given in this day what does john say revelation chapter one i was in the spirit of the lord's day first time and that's when he sees all his visions of all that the lord reveals to him let us just consider this one question when a nation or even a community honors the sabbath is that community reckoned more christian or less are the other commandments more likely also to be observed or less if the sabbath is being honored is it likely to be a safer more positive and congenial place to live and to bring up children more so or less so when the sabbath is being honored eliminate the christian sabbath and you eliminate most of the identifiable christian distinctive in any community the devil knows this we too have learned it by bitter experience can there be a more holy day as far as god is concerned at the time of the reformation when the medieval church used to have saints days and festivals for this and celebrations of that they were forever having a saints day celebration or a holy festival or a special feast or whatever all through the so-called christian year they would have these different saints days and festivals and breaking up with these holy days and and what have you when the reformers went straight back to basics they said okay what days are sanctified in the new testament church they went back to the bible and the one day that they found that god did honor and christ did require of his people and the apostles did worship and set it apart the whole day for that purpose was the lord's day the christian sabbath can there be a more holy day as far as god is concerned first day of creation day of resurrection day of the pouring out of the spirit the lord's day the christian sabbath is trinitarian it has become god's most holy day and the son of man has honored it above all other days he has the power to do so because all power in heaven and earth has been given to him and he has the authority to do so because the son of god is lord of all and the son of man is lord also of the sabbath you