

AFTER CHRISTMAS WITH DOCTOR LUKE

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8. TRIUMPH OVER TEMPTATION Based on Luke 4:1-13

Plato had a friend named Trachilus who had a very close call and almost lost his life in a storm at sea. The ship actually sank and he was thrown into the sea, but he managed to get to shore. When he reached his home he ordered his servants to wall up the two windows in his chamber that overlooked the sea. He was afraid that some bright day he would look at the tranquil scene of beauty and be tempted to once again venture out on its treacherous waters. This is one of man's major methods of fighting temptation. It is by striving not to see it.

There is no doubt about it that what we see is a primary lure of temptation. Had Adam and Eve never looked upon the forbidden fruit and seen its loveliness they would not have been so easily enticed to taste it. Had David not seen the beauty of Bathsheba he would not have been lured into the sin that so marred his life. Had Lot's wife been unable to look back at Sodom she would not have become a pillar of salt.

The story is repeated for perpetually as people testify that had they never seen that

automobile with the key in it they never would have stolen it. Had they never seen that door open, they never would have entered the building, and on and on it goes. What the eyes see provoke all kinds of feelings in the mind and body, and that is why we teach the children to sing, "Be careful little eyes what you see." But the fact is, there is no escape from seeing what can entice you to choose evil. Even before television it was nearly impossible, but now it is definitely impossible. Sin is so visible in our world today that we could accurately describe our period of history as the times of temptation.

It is reassuring for us to see that Jesus went through such a time as this himself. Satan took Him to a high place so He could see all the kingdoms and all their splendor. We sometimes think of His temptation as a one time ordeal, and so we dismiss it as totally different from the lifetime battle that

we have to endure. We imagine the testing of Jesus to be like this: "Yes, I'll never forget that day when I was about 30 years old, and I had a terrible time of triple temptation." We figure that anyone can get through a tough day, and so we tend to doubt that Jesus really knows what temptation is all about for the average man.

Take note of the precise language of Luke in verse 2: "Where for 40 days He was tempted by the devil." We think in terms of 40 days of fasting and then a day of temptation, but Luke says it was 40 days of temptation. We are talking a major battle here, and not a mere skirmish for a day. W. Graham Scroggie writes, "...it is not the 40th day that we fear so much as the 39 days of petty assault, of guerilla warfare, of irritating trial....But Jesus faced these also. In ways of which we have no record, He was assaulted by the devil during the whole period, and the 40th day temptations were but the last, concentrated, and desperate assault of the infuriated foe upon His weakened body but loyal spirit."

Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, and not just in the 3 areas of which we have record here. The last verse of this record makes it clear that when it was done it was far from over. Satan just withdrew to lick his wounds and prepare for another assault at an opportune time. In other words, a careful reading of this temptation account makes clear that this triple temptation, though of tremendous significance, is only a trickle of the total temptation Jesus had to endure. Someone said that those who flee from temptation usually leave a forwarding address. Satan catches up with them, and so it was with Jesus, for this ordeal of His was not just a one-time shot.

We do not live in a world that Jesus does not understand. He knows every trick of the devil, and He knows the power of temptation. We need to take seriously Heb. 2:18, "Because He himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted." Let's recognize that Jesus has been there. He knows the power of persistent temptation, and He also knows the way to victory. The study of His temptation is one of the best things we can do to

learn how to handle this universal experience.

When I say universal, I mean it in an absolute sense. Death is universal, but we have a couple of exceptions in the Bible of those who never died such as Enoch and Elijah. We say sin is universal, but we have one exception, for Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet He was without sin. But the one thing we can say is absolutely universal from Adam to the last person on earth is temptation. God cannot be tempted, but man cannot not be tempted. Nobody, not even God in human flesh, can escape the testing, for it is part of what it means to be human in a fallen world. This leads us to the first point we want to consider about Christ's temptation, and that is the paradoxical reality of

I. THE VALUE OF TEMPTATION.

Matthew begins his account in 4:1 by saying, "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil." Luke begins with an emphasis also on Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit and led by the Spirit. If you think being a Spirit filled Christian will shelter you from temptation, think again. This encounter of the Savior and Satan was no accident. It was an appointment. It was a part of God's plan and an important event in the life of our Lord. John Milton saw this. His two greatest poems are *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. The first deals with the temptation of Adam and Eve and their failure and fall. The second deals with the temptation of Christ and His

success.

Milton is saying that what Adam lost Jesus regained in the wilderness of temptation. It is true that Jesus died for our sins on the cross, but where did he earn the right to be the spotless Lamb of God worthy of being such a sacrifice to atone for sin? It was here in the desert where He was put to the test, and it was here that He passed the test. Here is where Jesus became our Savior, and He could never become such without being tempted, and that is why He was led of the Spirit to be tempted. This means that there is value in temptation, and not only for Jesus, but for all of us. That is why it is so universal. No person can be what God made them to be without temptation.

Walter Baghot said, "It is good to be without vice, but it is not good to be without temptation." This is biblical, and that is why God allowed Satan to tempt Adam and Eve, and why He led His Son to be tempted. Temptation is from the Latin *temptatia*, which means a testing or trying out. Not to be tempted would be to have God reject you before you got a chance to prove you can see evil and choose good. Products are tested to see if they will serve the purpose for which they are made. Man is made to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The only way He can fulfill this purpose is to have the ability to see evil and choose what is good. This can only be tested by making the choice of evil possible, and that is what temptation is. It

is the lure and enticement to choose what is not God's will.

William Prescott was right when he said, "Where there is no temptation there can be little claim to virtue." There are many sins that I feel no enticement toward at all. I am not virtuous by avoiding these, for my dog avoids them also. I am only virtuous by avoiding the ones I find appealing. The man who has an opportunity to steal and doesn't do it, even though he feels like doing it, is more virtuous than the man who never feels like stealing. If you never feel like doing something, you are not being tested, and so you never choose good when evil was not a tempting choice. The man who has an opportunity to do evil, and also feels the enticement of it, but then chooses not to do it, that man makes a virtuous choice. Edmund Vance Cooke wrote,

So you tell yourself you are pretty fine clay
To have tricked temptation and turned it away,
But wait, my friend, for a different day;
Wait till you want to want to!

What this means is that most righteous people are those who have felt the pull of sin in the world, but who have had the power to say no. Martin Luther praised temptation as one of his key teachers. He wrote, "Temptation is one of the three things needed for a saint's development." We have all heard that we need to study the Bible and pray, but we have missed this one that we also need to be tempted to grow. John Bunyan wrote, "Temptation provokes us to look upward to God." Jesus could not have been our Savior without temptation, and none of us can be all that God wants us to be without temptation. We are to love and hate temptation at the same time, for it is the door to both good and evil. It is important to see this, for if you only feel negative about temptation, you will fail to sense when you are led of the Spirit to be tempted for the sake of growth and advancement in the kingdom of God.

Every temptation is an opportunity to demonstrate where we stand. It is one thing to say, "I am for honesty and morality." But it is another thing to choose honesty and morality when the dishonest

and immoral is enticing you and making you feel they are so appealing. The Christian will have these feelings where evil can seem so good. Can it be good to have such feelings? Yes it is, for that is when your value system is truly tested. Is it just something you were taught like the multiplication table, or is it something you really believe? Temptation will put you to the test and reveal just how deep your commitment is to the values you profess. Temptation separates the men from the boys. The temptation of Jesus made Him the most unique man ever, for He felt the appeal of it in all points, and yet He chose to follow, not His subjective feelings, but the objective Word of God.

The point is, this was good, and there is great value in temptation, for the testing tells you where you really are, and that is valuable knowledge. If you know there is an area where the enticement of evil could win over you, that is where you pray, "Lead me not into temptation

but deliver me from evil." This encounter of the Savior with Satan in the wilderness is the ultimate conflict, which rises far above those like David against Goliath, or Israel against Assyria. This is the heavy weight championship of the universe. No one else had ever defeated Satan, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Jesus was a hybrid of both God and man. Such a being had never before existed, and now He had to be tested. Could He take the pressure of being in the flesh and not yield to the lust of the flesh? Could He see with human eyes and think with a human mind and not be lured by the lust of the eyes and the pride of life? These were the questions that had to be answered, and not on paper, but in actual combat conditions of light against darkness. Some people do not take the testing seriously. They see it as a trivial time of play-acting, for they Jesus could not sin anyway, and so it was not big deal. Such a view misses the tremendous significance of this encounter. It denies the reality of Satan's cleverness, and the reality of Christ's freedom.

There is no temptation unless there is the freedom to choose what is offered. If Jesus could not turn stones into bread, it would be no temptation. It is no temptation for us because we do not have the freedom to make that choice and turn stones into bread. That was a choice Jesus could make, and He felt the need for bread after 40 days of fasting. He could have jumped off the temple and not been injured, and He could have won the crowds to Him by this spectacular feat of magic. He could have bowed to Satan and become the greatest ruler the world has ever known. Jesus had the freedom to make these choices, and so they were real temptations. Satan was not merely playing games. This triple temptation package was subtlety at its best, and had anyone of them worked he would have thrown a monkey wrench into God's plan of salvation. Humanity would have been under his control. Jesus would have had to die for His own sin, like all other men, and not be a Savior of the world.

Thank God that Jesus remained loyal to the Word of God, and He became the first man not subject to the kingdom of darkness. Because He passed this test Jesus became the founder of a new kingdom for man. It is the kingdom of light where men can gain victory over the powers of darkness. It is the kingdom where the gates of hell cannot prevail. We note that the angels did not come to comfort Jesus until the battle was over. He had to pass this test on His own on the level of His humanity. He had to earn the right to be our Savior and Lord as a man, and He could not have done so without being tempted, and that is why we see the value of temptation.

We need not fear the feelings of temptation as if it meant that we are not good. The best of people feel these feelings. Adam and Eve felt them as perfect specimens of manhood. Jesus felt

them as the only perfect man. Feelings that make disobedience to God seem appealing are not sinful. They are testing to see if you will put your money where your mouth is. Will you surrender to your feelings, or will you be loyal to the objective values you know to be the will of God? Every temptation is a call for a decision. We need to ask, "Is how I feel my guide, or is

what God says my guide?" The Christian who begins to conform to the world is easily identified as one who, like the world, does what he feels like doing. Strong Christians feel the same feelings, but they do not choose to follow their feelings.

Peter Marshall, the great preacher made so famous after his death by his wife Catherine Marshall, tells of his many temptations. He was constantly tempted to use time unwisely and to procrastinate in his reading and sermon preparation. He was tempted to run away from problems and move to other areas of service. He was tempted to give in to discouragement when things did not go his way, and his leadership was not accepted. He had his female problems as well. He once had to tell a very attractive woman that she was ugly and unappealing to him to get her to stop enticing him to fly to Mexico with her, and it worked. The point is, here was a godly man with all kinds of feelings that were very real. He felt them deeply, but he did not choose to make these feelings the basis for his behavior. He chose to do the will of God, and out of that choice came other feelings that counter those negative ones and made him a greater servant of the kingdom of God. Secondly we look at,

II. THE VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION.

The victory is what gives it value. If one fails to pass the test, it can hardly be called a value. Had Jesus failed it would have been the second fall of man, and we have no way of knowing if there could have ever been another chance. The whole plan of God for man's glorification depended on this victory over temptation. One of the reasons we do not recognize the tremendous value of this victory is because it does not seem like Jesus overcame any great sin. We fail to see the cleverness of Satan, and so we miss the impact of his appeal. We need to see that Satan is not appealing to a sinful nature in Jesus, and as was the case with Adam and Eve. A sinful nature is not necessary for temptation. Sin does not begin with what is evil. It begins with what is good, normal and natural, but which is beyond the bounds set by God.

There is no evil in eating a delicious piece of fruit. There is no evil in changing a stone into bread, or of trying to get popularity or power to benefit others. The devil is not stupid. He did not try and entice Adam and Eve into chopping down all the trees in Eden. He got them to lose all the trees and beauty of Eden, not by an appeal to do what is folly and obviously evil, but by an appeal to do what seemed so right. Satan did not come to Jesus with an appeal to steal fishing nets left unattended and sell them to other fishermen. He did not appeal to him to support His movement by raiding other boats to fund it. Satan came offering to meet normal and natural desires, and to achieve goals which were legitimate, and which were appealing to the most pure and righteous.

Dr. Kyle defined temptation like this: "Temptation is the incitement of our natural desires to go beyond the bounds set by God." This is good, for it does not say an incitement to do evil and what is unnatural. We get the idea in our heads that temptation is only to do what is evil. Not so, for it is often to do what is normal and natural, but beyond the bounds set by God. The

erotic feeling of passion, for example, is a God given and God blest emotion. It is good and normal. When David looked at Bathsheba taking a bath it was not wrong for him to be erotically stimulated. That is the

way God intended the naked body of a woman to affect a man. It was normal and natural for him to feel as he did. The temptation was to go beyond the bounds set by God. There would have been no problem had he satisfied those feelings stimulated with his own wife as God intended. His mistake was in satisfying them with the wife of Uriah. He let perfectly normal feelings led him to choose folly rather than the wisdom God had clearly revealed.

The problem was that David did not see far enough. He did not see beyond the sin to its consequences. The Son of David also saw the enticing side of people's allegiance to him. It was a glorious vision that no doubt gave him a feeling of power and joy when he thought of the good he could do as lord over the kingdoms of the world. But Jesus gained His victory over temptation, not by avoiding the temptation and the feeling, and not by rolling up the windows of His soul so that He could not see the appealing offer, but instead, by seeing deeper and further than the scene that Satan. Jesus won the victory by seeing the consequences of how His choice would affect His relationship to God. Life was not a matter of bread, popularity, or power. He saw that life was primarily in His relationship to God. Any choice that shatters that relationship is folly beyond compare.

Jesus had an ultimate allegiance by which He could test all His feelings, and that is how He could conquer over threat of the tempter. His question was never, "Does this feel right," for He knew that feelings cannot be a final guide. His question was always, "Does it fit my loyalty and commitment to honor God in all that I do?" The way to win is not to try and escape the enticing visions of temptation, but to see them in the light of a greater picture. People who fall for Satan's view of life see from too narrow a perspective. If they would take the blinders off and see the hole they would see that which leads to victory.

The Christian professor Ed Kindson says, "The first step in conquering temptation is to visualize the sin and its terrible consequences." If only Adam and Eve could have looked beyond the lovely fruit; if only David could have looked beyond the lovely body, and seen all of the pain that momentary pleasure would produce. They were tempted by what they saw, but they could have overcome the temptation by seeing further and seeing more. Buchner Fanning said, "When the mirage of temptation is lifted, we see sin as a barren desert, a desolate wilderness whose wastes are endless. Its waters are bitter and its shade is spiritual darkness. Its singing birds are but the bats and owls from the caves of doom, and its morning breezes are but the hissings of fiery serpents. Its beauty is artificial; its promises are false; its guides are liars."

It is shortsighted folly to do evil, thinking that good will result. This is rationalizing. It is like the thief who murmured as he broke the window, "God helps those who help themselves." Victory is in seeing the total picture in the light of God's objective word. A young man said to

his bride after the wedding, "Honey, I don't feel married, do you?" She replied, "Dear, you have better adjust your feelings to fit the facts." That is what victory over temptation is all about. Jesus adjusted His feelings to fit the facts of God's revealed will. In doing so, the temptation lost its power. The mirage faded, and he felt one of life's greatest feelings, which is the feeling of triumph over temptation.

9. LABOR AND LEISURE Based on Luke 6:1-11

Charlemagne founded great schools of learning even though he could not read nor write. Eliza Peters, an English woman, could also not read or write, but when she died she left her money to buy books for a medical school so that others could advance their learning. You do not have to know how to do something yourself to help others learn to do it. It is possible for a bachelor to teach you how to be happily married. It is possible for a single nurse to teach you how to care for a baby, even though she has never had a baby. It is possible for an architect, who has never pounded a nail, to instruct you on how to build your house or church. It is even possible for a secular teacher to help a child learn the 23rd Psalm or the Lord's Prayer.

The point of all this is, when it comes to balancing your life between work and rest I am no great authority. I got an early start at being a workaholic. I worked 40 hours a week in secular employment at the same time I was a full time pastor as well as a student in seminary. Any one of the three could have kept me busy enough, but I was doing all three. I lived under pressure and was on a treadmill that would not stop, and this became a life-style for me. It took me years to learn to take a day off. I am no authority on the balanced life, but I can still help you see the wisdom of it, and why it is the will of God for us. I am still learning, but some who get this wisdom early may be able to avoid the long way around that I have taken, and get to the practice of the balanced life sooner.

The essence of the balanced life is to learn not to put all your eggs in one basket. The Pharisees were great examples of how not to live. Their whole life was so involved in keeping the law that they became terrible specimens of humanity. They lost all human compassion for people because all that mattered to them was the law. They were the ultimate in legalists, and Jesus had nothing but conflict with them because He cared more about people and their needs. When His disciples were hungry and took some grain to eat as they walked through the field, He was not concerned about the petty issue of whether this was work or not. There was precedent in the Old Testament where David ate the bread that only the priests were supposed to eat. The Pharisees had no defense against this historical record. But they did not like it.

Jesus added insult to injury and healed a man on the Sabbath. He again had an unanswerable argument when He said, "Is it lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath-to save or destroy life?" They had no clever comeback, for there was none. Jesus had outsmarted them and they were furious. They began to plot how to get rid of Him. If you can't destroy a man's arguments, you either have to accept his truth or destroy the man. They choose the latter and

plotted His murder. This illustrates just how serious it is to become addicted to any idea or concept that is not absolute. The Sabbath was the addiction of the Pharisees. They could be called Sabbathaholics, and the New Testament is clearly anti-Sabbathaholic.

The New Testament is radically different from the Old Testament when it comes to the Sabbath. Paul stresses the liberty of the individual conscience. He writes to the Christians in Rome where there was obvious conflict among those who felt obligated to keep the whole law, and those who felt equally obligated not to be bound by it. He wrote in Rom. 14:5, "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." The idea of one Christian trying to regulate another Christian's life, and telling them they should not shop on Sunday, eat out, or go to a sporting event says Paul is an attempt to play God. In verse 4 he asks, "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or

falls."

Paul is shockingly liberal when it comes to the liberty of the individual as to how he observes the Sabbath, or any other day. If a Christian is convinced that what he does pleases his Lord, then he has the right to do that without flack from fellow servants. Paul came to this conclusion because he believed that the Old Testament laws concerning the Sabbath were repealed by the coming of Christ.

He made this clear when he wrote in Col. 2:16-17, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come, the reality, however, is found in Christ."

Paul is saying that it is just as inappropriate for one Christian to judge another on how he keeps the Sabbath as to judge him for drinking coffee rather than tea. In other words, legalism is a dead horse for the Christian when it comes to the Sabbath laws. Those who believe that 7th day is still the only valid day for worship write tons of literature to prove that Christians are still under the laws of the Sabbath, but it will not hold up under Paul's clear rejection. But Paul's point would also make it wrong for us to judge those who still keep the Sabbath laws, for that is part of the liberty the Christian has. If a Christian wants to be just as Jewish as they can be, that is their privilege. They just do not have a right to impose a conviction on Christians who would rather not be legalistic.

When I was in the Middle East Conference we had a 7th day Baptist Church as part of our conference for years. There was no problem until they began to put fliers on the car windows of other conference people worshipping at their church on Sunday. They were telling them that they were wrong to be worshipping on Sunday rather than on the Sabbath, which they said was Saturday. We had to ask this church to leave our fellowship, not because of what they believed

and practiced, but because they tried to impose it on others, for this is the very thing Paul says is to be rejected. If Christians say this is how they like to observe a day that is fine, but they are to respect the right of other Christians to be convinced that other ways are equally fine. To ever make up a list of the right ways to spend the Sabbath, or any other day, and label this the Christian way is to reject the New Testament revelation, and forsake the way of grace for the way of law.

Strong, the Baptist theologian, had a legalistic background. Sunday was a colossal bore to him. He thought God must be very dull, for the Lord's Day was a day of boredom and lack of enjoyment. Then as he grew up he discovered that Sunday was a day of resurrection and new life for the dead. His Sunday's were like the morgue, and not life a celebration of life, and a day of festivity. His tradition made it a day of no fun because they went back to the shadow in the Old Testament and filled it with law and restrictions. He saw the folly of this, and saw that Christians are to look to Christ and His resurrection, joy and victory rather than to the shadow of the past. Sunday should be a day we love and treasure, and not one we dread.

It is one of the sin's of legalistic minds that has robbed millions of Christians of the joy of Sunday celebration. It all began calling Sunday the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the 7th day of the week and Sunday is the first. They have never been the same day, nor can they ever be. But because Christians have linked them as one they have often robbed Sunday of its light by clouding it with the heavy shadow of the Sabbath. This is not biblical, for it a rejection of God's greater gift. Sunday is not the Sabbath but it is a day on which we are to fulfill the principle of the Sabbath.

Jesus often broke the Sabbath law, but He kept the principle of the Sabbath, which was the balanced life of labor and leisure. If Jesus would have been an workaholic who never took a day off to get away for rest from His labor, we would have to conclude that there was no permanent principle in the Sabbath law. It would be pure legalism to be thrown out as irrelevant to the Christian, but Jesus did practice the balance life and became our guide to keeping the permanent principle. Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. This means there is an essential value of this gift of God to man that never passes away. It is this essence that we must seek to preserve no matter how much of the legalism that we discard.

It is not the law written on tablets that really matters, but the law that is written in the very nature of man. This law says that labor must be balanced with leisure or man will suffer the loss of life as God intended it to be. No man can be fully human without this balance. All work and no play makes, not only John a dull boy, but every Tom, Dick and Harry, and Sue, May and Mary are equally dull girls without this balance. The abundant life Jesus came to bring us is the balanced life where we get out of life what is good for the whole man. We need rest, not because the law demands it, but because our nature demands it. The Christian is to obey the

principle of the Sabbath for the same reason he eats and drinks. He needs it for his own well being, and not because it is a law.

God has made us so that we need diversion. We are not machines that can crank out the same product day after day and year after year with no variety. I never heard of a printing press complaining because all it ever does is print with black ink. It never gets red or green, and it never gets to print anything but newspaper. A machine is designed to be able to do the same thing over and over with endless repetition and no variation. That is what is hard on man, and that is why man has invented the machine. Man is made for variety, and he needs to vary his activity to be healthy and happy.

The Sabbath principle is anti-slavery and anti-machine-like work. It demands that man be man and get a break from the slavery of work and perpetual labor. It demands some diversion that expands man's potential to be more than an animal or a machine. The diversion is to exalt man's humanity, and to develop his mind and soul. If his work is doing what is mental and spiritual, then the rest and diversion will likely be physical to balance out the whole man. The point is, every man has more to his being than can be developed in work. They need time spent in areas that develop what work cannot develop. The principle of the Sabbath is to aid man in becoming all that he can be, and so that he will grow in all areas.

Health, happiness and holiness all depend upon man being a creature of great diversity and not limited to one sphere of life. The unbalanced life is a perversion of what it means to be human. That is why the workaholic is a sinner. They have developed only on sphere of their humanity and have left the rest go to seed. How you get this diversity cannot be a matter of legalism, for people have all different needs. It is folly to try and regulate them as if they were machines. The more complex society becomes, the more foolish it is to try and define what rest and diversion is. What is important is a life where body, mind and spirit get what they need to grow and develop.

The goal of the Sabbath principle is that people will become what God made them to be. God is not merely brute force. He is power controlled by reason and wisdom. God is mind, and that mind is guided by holiness and righteousness. There is balance in God so that He is the only absolutely perfect person in the universe. Jesus reflected that perfection of the Father in His

humanity by the perfect balance of His life. The goal of the Sabbath principle is that we too by the balance life might become more Christ-like.

The Pharisees were only pigmies of men because they kept the Sabbath and all of its laws, but they did not develop compassion for people. They hated Jesus for healing people on the Sabbath because they were so addicted to one narrow aspect of life. They neglected the greater aspects of love and compassion for people. They turned the Sabbath into an idol, and

they made what was meant for a blessing to become a burden. Work is also a blessing that becomes a burden when it robs us of balance. The essence of all the Sabbath law is this: God is anti-workaholic, and pro-rest and relaxation. We want to look at these two things as we seek for balance.

I. THE WORKAHOLIC LIFESTYLE.

The worst part of this bad habit is that it makes you look like a saint rather than a sinner in our culture. We deplore the drug addict, but we admire the work addict. He represents strength, success and energetic persistence. All that we admire in America is found in the workaholic. Dr. Charles White, Director of Gerontology at the University of Texas Health Center estimates that as many as 50% of all white collar workers in America are workaholics. This means that they do not know how to enjoy leisure, but can only feel useful when they are working. They make their wives or husbands feel like they are always in second place to their work. They get more satisfaction out of work than they do with their family, and so if there is any conflict between work and family, work wins out and this means long hours of labor, and only bits of time with the family.

Ted Engstrom in *The Work Traps* says that these people have a deep need to achieve that makes their work their god. In other words, a workaholic is a form of idolatry. All other values are subordinate to their god, and even weekends and vacations are endured rather than enjoyed, for they long to be back with their first love. This, of course, leads to many wives saying that they need help. The workaholic is very often a divorced person, for few mates can live long at second fiddle to a job. They justify their divorce on the basis of abandonment just as God divorced Israel when she abandoned Him for other gods.

The point is, this addiction to work like all addictions is destructive of the health of the individual, of the home, and of all relationships. It is a very serious sin even though it is greatly admired. Some sins are despicable, and we are repulsed by them, but other sins are appealing and the sin of work addiction is one of them. The result is that the Christian is more attracted to this sin than most other additions, for it is so respectable. They can play any role in the church they desire even though they are workaholics. Ted Engstrom does point out that there is difference between a workaholic than a person who just loves his job. The workaholic often hates his job but feels compelled to work all the time anyway. The person who just loves to work can also let go of it and enjoy leisure, but the workaholic cannot enjoy leisure, but only work. What he is doing is giving us a way out if we really love what we do, for then we are like Thomas Edison and Henry Ford who work all the time and are heroes for it.

I think this may be a dangerous loophole that will enable a workaholic to justify his addiction. The fact is, Jesus worked hard and He loved what He did. He put in long hours, but He also had the balanced life. He could enjoy leisure and solitude, and He called His disciples to come apart and escape the work scene for a time of rest. It is no justification that you love your

work if you put it

before your relationships. Godly people who devote their lives to revival and other Christian service often end up with children who rebel. It is just as much folly to worship and serve a good false god as to worship a bad false god. Idolatry does not have a good and bad side, for it is always bad no matter how noble the goal you serve. It is wiser and safer to recognize that even if much good has come out of it, the workaholic is not living the balanced life.

Workaholics often become successful, but at the expense of the values that are greater than success. Billy Wilder of Hollywood, when the studios were on strike back in 1981, told of how terrible it was to be out of work. He said, "...this gives a man a terrible sense of impotence, because a man is his achievements. To be able to work 25 hours a day, 8 days a week is a privilege." This is a fanaticism that goes beyond the average workaholic, but the idea of your work being you is very common.

Picasso the artist said, "Always, you put more of yourself into your work, until one day, you never know exactly which day, it happens-you are your work. The passions that motivate you may change, but it is your work in life that is the ultimate seduction." When he called work the ultimate seduction he was saying that it can seduce us away from God, family, and every other person and value in life, and become our idol, and when it does this it robs us of the balanced life and makes us slaves to a narrow segment of life.

The problem with Martha was not that she loved to cook and work at being a great hostess. Hospitality is one of the gifts, and we can thank God for those people who have to work hard at making life enjoyable for others. Her problem was her lack of balance. She could not cease to be a workaholic and take on the role of a leisurely hostess, and just sit down and enjoy her company. The ideal hostess is not one who is ever working. That makes people feel nervous and unable to relax. The ideal is one who can relax with her guests and enjoy the fruit of her labor.

Since I have never cooked or served a meal in my life I may not seem like much of an authority, but the fact is, I have an abundance of experience of being where Jesus was in being cooked for and served. My experience confirms this. There is much more appreciation for the hostess who has a balance in her labor and leisure. If for some reason it was impossible for Martha to achieve this balance on this occasion, she would have been wise to recognize the value of Mary in supplying the balance by sitting with the guests. Here is a case where two are better than one, and together they added balance to the experience. Martha's problem was that she could not see the value of this balance, and she wanted Mary to join her on the workaholic side and let the leisure side be forgotten. Her problem was that she did not see the value of the balance, and that is the blindness of all addiction. It cannot see the value of anything but the addition.

Most changes in life are not to be made by throwing out of one thing and replacing it with another. They are to be made by the keeping of what we have and adding to it that which gives it balance. The problem with the workaholic is not that he or she loves to work. The problem is that they don't love enough other things like leisure and rest to give them balance. The evil of this is that it robs them of being a whole person, which is God's will for all of His children. An unknown poet wrote,

If your nose is close to the grindstone rough, And you hold it down there long enough,

In time you'll say there's no such thing As brooks that babble and birds that sing. These three will all your world compose Just you, the stone, and your worn out nose!

Without balance there are very few values in life that can remain good. Lack of balance turns the good into an evil. Jesus brought balance to the Sabbath, and He brought balance into work by stressing the importance of leisure.

II. THE LEISURE LIFESTYLE.

Jesus honored labor, but He was not a workaholic. He recognized the need to get away from it all and get rest. Just when the crowds were so vast that they could not handle them, or even get a chance to eat, Jesus said to them in Mark 6:31, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." Long before the word burnout was invented Jesus knew of the reality of it, and He would not let it happen to His disciples. Even though He had to leave crowds of longing people He called them apart. This was the prescription of the Great Physician. Any Christian who refused to take vacations is not a noble saint, but a rebel against the Lord who made us and knows what we need. It was not the law of the Sabbath, but the law of nature that Jesus was obeying, and He expects us to obey it. Rest from the labor of serving people is vital to the balance life.

Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath principle. He did not have a mass of laws to live by, but just the principle of balance. You work hard, but you also get away from it and do not idolize it, even if it is the noble work in the world. Jesus went about doing good, but He also stopped and got rest so He could feel good Himself. That is balance living, and that is why the workaholic is out of God's will. Learning to love leisure is an important aspect of the Christian life. From the Chinese point of view culture is the product of leisure. Only those who use leisure wisely can be cultured. People who are always busy are not wise people, even if they are rich and famous. The only wise people are those who know how to loft gracefully. To be lazy is to loft foolishly, but to loft gracefully is to so use time that it beautifies the total man.

Jesus said in Matt. 11:28-29, "Come to me all ye who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Jesus embodies the Sabbath principle, which says, don't

be a slave or a workaholic. Come apart from your labor and in leisure learn of Him, and develop His spirit of gentleness and humbleness, and find rest for your souls. Jesus says that the body, mind and soul needs rest. The whole man needs it because it is in rest that the whole man grows. This defines rest for us. It is that activity, or lack of activity, that refreshes, restores and revitalizes that body, mind and soul.

If we are following the Shepherd, He will make us to lie down in green pastures. If we are lost and wandering sheep, we will probably be laboring all the time because we lack the security of being in the Shepherd's fold. To be able to relax and enjoy leisure is a sign of faith in the Shepherd. May God help us all develop balance in our labor and our leisure.

10. DIGGING DEEP Based on Luke 6:46-49

Dr. Victor Heiser, author of the one time best seller *An American Doctor's Odyssey*, was 16 years old when the tragic Johnstown flood struck in 1889. He was out in the barn getting a horse when he heard a dreadful roar. When he ran to the door he saw his father up at the house frantically motioning for him to get to the top of the barn. In a few seconds he was up on the roof, and in a few more seconds he saw a mass of houses, freight cars, trees and animals strike his house. It collapsed like an eggshell, but the barn was torn from its foundation and began to roll. By scrambling and crawling he was able to keep on top. The barn struck a neighbor's house. He leaped into the air and landed on the house just as it collapsed. Fortunately another house rose up beside him and he was able to cling to it.

He lived this experience over and over many times in his dreams, and he vividly recalled his fingernails digging deep into the shingles. He was sweep into a jam of wreckage and had to constantly dodge the deathblows of trees and beams that came roaring pass. A freight car came crashing into the wreckage and he was thrown like a bullet into open waters. He was sweep into another jam of wreckage against a brick building that was still on its foundation. He managed to get to the roof of this solid structure, and with others there he was able to rescue people being sweep by until there were 19 gathered on that still standing building.

It was raining hard, and so they opened the skylight and got down into the attic where they spent a night of terror listening to the roar of the water and the crashing of buildings all around them. Their building held, but most did not. Two thousand and nine were recovered, and many were never found. Those in buildings with deep and solid foundations lived to tell of this fearful flood. Many gathered with the Rev. Beale in the First Presbyterian Church in the heart of the city. The waters filled the basement, but it with stood the flood and everyone there was spared. Life or death depended on the foundation of the building you were in. A solid foundation meant life, and a shallow foundation meant death.

This is so obvious a truth when we consider a physical flood, but men do not always realize that this is equally valid in the spiritual realm. Jesus concluded His most extended sermon on

record, the Sermon on the Mount, with an illustration concerning the need for depth. Jesus was vitally concerned about the matter of foundations, and He wanted to impress all with its importance. Whether you are wise or foolish depends on what you do with this issue. If you dig deep to lay your foundation, you are wise. If you are satisfied to be shallow, you are foolish, and what you build will never hold up in the flood, which the storms of life bring at some point. Jesus implies that all will be tested by the flood.

Jesus was a carpenter, and there is no way to know how many homes He built, or help build, before He began His ministry of building the kingdom of God. One thing we can be sure of, however, and that is that none of them fell in the rainy season because of a shallow and shabby foundation. Jesus was a builder of quality in both the secular task of building a home, and in the sacred task of building a life. He expected all who followed Him to do likewise, and to avoid being superficial, but to dig deep.

The interesting thing to observe here is, that which makes the great difference between the wise

and the foolish builder is not conspicuous. The two houses may look identical, and, in fact, the one with no foundation may even look superior as far as looks go. The shallow life may be as appealing as the deep one. Appearances are deceiving. It is when the flood comes to test them that the hidden foundation proves its value, and leaves the man who dug deep standing justified.

No life can escape testing, and that is why Jesus was so insistent upon depth. You recall in His parable of the sower how some seed fell on ground where it had little soil. It sprang up quickly, but it had no depth, and so when the sun arose it was scorched and withered away. Depth is not a luxury. It is a necessity for survival. When God plants He knows the value of depth. In Psa. 80:8-9 Israel is compared to a vine which God planted. "You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land." In the New Testament Jesus takes over this image and applied to Himself and the church. He says, "I am the vine and you are the branches." Jesus is the vine with roots of infinite depth. There are adequate resources in Him for the branches to grow into all the world and bare fruit.

Christianity could not have survived without being rooted in Christ, for He alone has the depth to keep the church standing through the floods of persecution. God the Father plants deep; God the Son grows deep, and God the Holy Spirit reveals the depths. Paul says in I Cor. 2:10, "For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." The subject of depth is one of the most important for a Christian to grasp. The disciples had fished all night and caught nothing, but when they listened to Jesus and launched out into the deep their nets were breaking because of the great catch. Digging deep, growing deep, and fishing deep are common themes in Scripture, and they challenge us to give more attention to the dimensions of depth. I

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