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Part 2

My folks and I lived in Mt. View, California during my teenage years – about 25 miles from San Francisco. My brother and his family lived in Palatka, Florida. So, the summer between my junior and senior year in high school, we drove across country to visit my brother.

Our route took us down thru the Central Valley of California and then right thru Death Valley. We decided to time our trip so our time in Death Valley was after dark.

Those of you familiar with California know that the Central Valley is pretty hot and dry during the summer, and the heat in Death Valley is intense.

Even though it was night, when we entered Death Valley it was over a 100 degrees. Fortunately we had AC, but it was still pretty uncomfortable. What you could see was arid and barren.

In the early morning, we drove out of Death Valley and the elevation started going up. Death Valley is below sea level.

By the time we got to Flagstaff, where we planned to stop and get some rest, it felt like an oasis – the cool, clear air (its elevation is around 7,500 feet); the green forests; and the surrounding mountains. It was a breath of fresh air – both physically and mentally.

If you've spent any time in a desert environment, you know how important an oasis is.

You can go mile after mile through arid, dry conditions. And then you come over a rise, and there is this island of green surrounding a natural source of water – which is a haven of life.

Imagine how important these island's of life were to people traveling through on horseback or wagon trains.

Many times life can feel wandering around in a desert – your resources are stretched thin, you feel alone and burned out, and there seems to be nothing to refresh you.

What you and I need is an oasis. We need a time and place for rest, to gain strength, to keep our priorities straight.

Sabbath is intended to be that oasis!

But for many of us, it's not. We feel bound by rules, sometimes spoken, sometime implied that make it feel restricting and stifling. Many watch the minutes tick by until the sun goes down and they can go back to doing their own thing again.

Sabbath Rules

Where have all our Sabbath rules come from?

When the Israelites returned from the Babylonian Captivity, they finally recognized that their continual problems came from not following God's commandments.

They noted that the Sabbath Commandment said don't work – so they set out to carefully define what was work so they would be careful to not do it on the Sabbath.

By the time of Jesus came on the scene, there were hundreds of rules defining proper Sabbath observance. These were intended to protect the commandment and to keep them from accidentally doing any work during the Sabbath so they would not be defiled.

The focus had changed from God to self – what *they* should avoid doing so *they* would remain pure.

Rather than looking at the opportunities Sabbath brings, they focused on what they shouldn't do. As a result, they missed the invitation to rest and to come closer to God.

This is what happens any time the focus shifts from God to yourself. Any religion focused on avoiding bad actions is always self centered. It will never qualify you for eternal life. And it will always feel like a burden.

Unfortunately, we have adopted many of the same restrictions – restrictions rooted in tradition rather than the Bible.

The Sabbath Commandment

Let's take a look at the Sabbath Commandment. We find it in [Exodus 20](#):

Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.
([Exodus 20:8-11](#), NLT)

As the video we have seen a couple times now noted, there is a “do” and a “don’t” in this commandment.

The “do” is to remember to observe the Sabbath day. And the “don’t” is what sets you up to be able to follow through on the “do” – don’t work.

It defines the Sabbath:

... the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. ([Exodus 20:8-11](#), NLT)

A couple of chapters later it gives this additional clarification:

“You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but on the seventh day you must stop working. This gives your ox and your donkey a chance to rest. It also allows your slaves and the foreigners living among you to be refreshed.” ([Exodus 23:12](#), NLT)

God is concerned about both physical and spiritual refreshing. He is even concerned about people who didn’t believe in Him and working animals. He knew they too needed the rest and refreshment that only Sabbath can bring.

If you take the time to read all the passages about Sabbath in the Bible, you’ll find this is the only real “don’t” related to the Sabbath. If you download the [PDF version of last Sabbath’s message](#) from our blog, calendar, or Golden News, you will find most of these Sabbath passages listed. ([Click here](#) to view it.)

God gives us the “don’t” – don’t work or just go about our regular, everyday activities – so we will be free to focus on the “do” – resting in our connection with God.

He makes it a command to help us understand how important it is. This “don’t” gives us a great deal of freedom and personal discretion in how we rest in Him.

This “don’t” is what makes the Sabbath an oasis!

Jesus on Sabbath

When you look at Jesus' ministry while He was here on earth, many of His miracles of healing were deliberately done on the Sabbath. He was definitely making a point.

One time He and His disciples were walking through a field of ripe grain and being hungry, the disciples picked some of the grain and ate it. This was not unusual. In their culture someone passing through a field or orchard were free to pick whatever they could eat.

But, this was the Sabbath so they broke two laws – they *worked* by harvesting grain (picking it) and threshing grain (rubbing it between their hands to separate the grain from the chaff).

The Pharisees called Jesus out on this. Jesus pointed to some Scripture examples to justified their actions and then said:

“The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!” (Mark 2:27-28, NLT)

We find the rest of the story in the book of Matthew:

Then Jesus went over to their synagogue, where he noticed a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Does the law permit a person to work by healing on the Sabbath?” (They were hoping he would say yes, so they could bring charges against him.)

The man with the deformed hand apparently was a set-up. Notice how they phrased their question – they labeled healing as work. By phrasing it this way, they were revealing their bias and their trap.

And he answered, “If you had a sheep that fell into a well on the Sabbath, wouldn't you work to pull it out? Of course you would. And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, the law permits a person to do good on the Sabbath.”

Jesus used their emphasis on work to show that they would work to protect their investment on the Sabbath. A suffering animal needed to be taken care of right away. This was common accepted practice. If you would “work” to relieve the suffering of an animal, wouldn't it be even more important to relieve the suffering of a person?

The answer to Jesus was obvious – of course a person is more important. He refused to call it work. Doing good for others was not breaking the Sabbath law. He then demonstrates it.

He said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” So the man held out his hand, and it was restored, just like the other one! Then the Pharisees called a meeting to plot how to kill Jesus.
(Matthew 12:9-14, NLT)

For Jesus, an important part of the Sabbath was bringing rest and healing to hurting and broken people. This was far more important than focusing on what you shouldn't do.

A Deeper Rest

Do you remember how the 4th Commandment defined the Sabbath? As we saw a little earlier today:

... the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. (Exodus 20:10, NLT)

This is similar to Jesus' invitation, which we have looked at a number of times:

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest ..."

Jesus offers you rest. This rest is found in coming to Jesus. He goes on:

"... Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

(Matthew 11:28-30, NLT)

You experience the rest Jesus offer as you stay with Him, watch how He relates to life, and follow in His footsteps wherever He leads you.

The only way the Sabbath becomes a day of real rest, is when you respond to Jesus' invitation.

As important as physical rest is, it's hard to find if your mind and heart are not at rest. When you're stressed, confused, troubled, and anxious, you'll have a hard time relaxing enough to feel rested.

This level of rest is only found in Jesus.

Sabbath becomes a real oasis of rest, when you use it to connect with Him.

It will not happen if you're focused anywhere else.

When you focus on Jesus the Sabbath will become that weekly oasis of peace and rest. It will sharpen your focus and provide divine wisdom and power for the week to come.

Where do You Begin?

If this has not been your experience where do you begin? How do you make the Sabbath an oasis?

It always begins with coming to Jesus.

Tell Him how your Sabbath's have been. Ask Him to lead you through the process of making it a delight.

Ask Him to do for you what He promised He would – to put His law in your mind and write it on your heart (see **Jeremiah 31:31-34**).

Ask Him to help you to see the possibilities and not focus on the negatives.

Everything, including a true Sabbath rest, comes as a result of your growing relationship with Jesus. Then the Sabbath will become a delight as it fulfills its role in bringing you closer to Jesus and aligning your priorities with His plan!

Notes

Text you find in **this color** is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing [BibleGateway.com](https://www.biblegateway.com). In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Previous Messages in this Series (click on the title to download it)

- May 9, 2020 – *Dead or Alive?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- May 16, 2020 – *Symptom or Disease?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- May 30, 2020 – *Out or In?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 6, 2020 – *Starve or Eat?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 13, 2020 – *Atrophy or Exercise?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 20, 2020 – *Just Love?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 4, 2020 – *Am I a Hypocrite?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 11, 2020 – *Burn Out or Rest? – Part 1* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)

Scripture References

Genesis 2:1-3 (NLT): *So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ² On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation. (Genesis 2:1-3, NLT)*

Exodus 16:11-31 (NLT): *Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹² “I have heard the Israelites’ complaints. Now tell them, ‘In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’”*

¹³ That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. ¹⁴ When the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. ¹⁵ The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. “What is it?” they asked each other. They had no idea what it was.

And Moses told them, “It is the food the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ These are the LORD’s instructions: Each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts for each person in your tent.”

¹⁷ So the people of Israel did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, some only a little. ¹⁸ But when they measured it out, everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed.

¹⁹ Then Moses told them, “Do not keep any of it until morning.” ²⁰ But some of them didn’t listen and kept some of it until morning. But by then it was full of maggots and had a terrible smell. Moses was very angry with them.

²¹ After this the people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the flakes they had not picked up melted and disappeared. ²² On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much as usual – four quarts for each person instead of two. Then all the leaders of the community came and asked Moses for an explanation. ²³ He told them, “This is what the LORD commanded: Tomorrow will be a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath day set apart for the LORD. So bake or boil as much as you want today, and set aside what is left for tomorrow.”

²⁴ So they put some aside until morning, just as Moses had commanded. And in the morning the leftover food was wholesome and good, without maggots or odor. ²⁵ Moses said, “Eat this food today, for today is a Sabbath day dedicated to the LORD. There will be no food on the ground today. ²⁶ You may gather the food for six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath. There will be no food on the ground that day.”

²⁷ Some of the people went out anyway on the seventh day, but they found no food. ²⁸ The LORD asked Moses, “How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions? ²⁹ They must realize that the Sabbath is the LORD’s gift to you. That is why he gives you a two-day supply on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must each stay in your place. Do not go out to pick up food on the seventh day.” ³⁰ So the people did not gather any food on the seventh day.

³¹ The Israelites called the food manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers. (Exodus 16:11-31, NLT)

Exodus 20:8-11 (NLT): Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. (Exodus 20:8-11, NLT)

Exodus 23:12 (NLT): “You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but on the seventh day you must stop working. This gives your ox and your donkey a chance to rest. It also allows your slaves and the foreigners living among you to be refreshed.” (Exodus 23:12, NLT)

Exodus 31:12-17 (NLT): *The LORD then gave these instructions to Moses: ¹³ “Tell the people of Israel: ‘Be careful to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you from generation to generation. It is given so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy. ¹⁴ You must keep the Sabbath day, for it is a holy day for you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; anyone who works on that day will be cut off from the community. ¹⁵ You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day must be a Sabbath day of complete rest, a holy day dedicated to the LORD. Anyone who works on the Sabbath must be put to death. ¹⁶ The people of Israel must keep the Sabbath day by observing it from generation to generation. This is a covenant obligation for all time. ¹⁷ It is a permanent sign of my covenant with the people of Israel. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he stopped working and was refreshed.”* (Exodus 31:12-17, NLT)

Exodus 35:1-3 (NLT): *Then Moses called together the whole community of Israel and told them, “These are the instructions the LORD has commanded you to follow. ² You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day must be a Sabbath day of complete rest, a holy day dedicated to the LORD. Anyone who works on that day must be put to death. ³ You must not even light a fire in any of your homes on the Sabbath.”* (Exodus 35:1-3, NLT)

Leviticus 19:3 (NLT): *“Each of you must show great respect for your mother and father, and you must always observe my Sabbath days of rest. I am the Lord your God.”* (Leviticus 19:3, NLT)

Leviticus 19:30 (NLT): *“Keep my Sabbath days of rest, and show reverence toward my sanctuary. I am the LORD.”* (Leviticus 19:30, NLT)

Leviticus 23:3 (NLT): *“You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of complete rest, an official day for holy assembly. It is the Lord’s Sabbath day, and it must be observed wherever you live.”* (Leviticus 23:3, NLT)

Numbers 15:32-36 (NLT): *One day while the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they discovered a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. ³³ The people who found him doing this took him before Moses, Aaron, and the rest of the community. ³⁴ They held him in custody because they did not know what to do with him. ³⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man must be put to death! The whole community must stone him outside the camp.” ³⁶ So the whole community took the man outside the camp and stoned him to death, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.* (Numbers 15:32-36, NLT)

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 (NLT): *“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your oxen and donkeys and other livestock, and any foreigners living among you. All your male and female servants must rest as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were once slaves in Egypt, but the*

LORD your God brought you out with his strong hand and powerful arm. That is why the LORD your God has commanded you to rest on the Sabbath day.” (Deuteronomy 5:12-15, NLT)

Nehemiah 13:15-22 (NLT): *In those days I saw men of Judah treading out their winepresses on the Sabbath. They were also bringing in grain, loading it on donkeys, and bringing their wine, grapes, figs, and all sorts of produce to Jerusalem to sell on the Sabbath. So I rebuked them for selling their produce on that day. ¹⁶ Some men from Tyre, who lived in Jerusalem, were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise. They were selling it on the Sabbath to the people of Judah—and in Jerusalem at that!*

¹⁷ So I confronted the nobles of Judah. “Why are you profaning the Sabbath in this evil way?” I asked. ¹⁸ “Wasn’t it just this sort of thing that your ancestors did that caused our God to bring all this trouble upon us and our city? Now you are bringing even more wrath upon Israel by permitting the Sabbath to be desecrated in this way!”

¹⁹ Then I commanded that the gates of Jerusalem should be shut as darkness fell every Friday evening, not to be opened until the Sabbath ended. I sent some of my own servants to guard the gates so that no merchandise could be brought in on the Sabbath day. ²⁰ The merchants and tradesmen with a variety of wares camped outside Jerusalem once or twice. ²¹ But I spoke sharply to them and said, “What are you doing out here, camping around the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you!” And that was the last time they came on the Sabbath. ²² Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and to guard the gates in order to preserve the holiness of the Sabbath. (Nehemiah 13:15-22, NLT)

Proverbs 3:5-12 (NIV): *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. (Proverbs 3:5-12, NIV)

Isaiah 1:10-20 (NLT): *Listen to the LORD, you leaders of “Sodom.” Listen to the law of our God, people of “Gomorrah.” ¹¹ “What makes you think I want all your sacrifices?” says the LORD. “I am sick of your burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle. I get no pleasure from the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹² When you come to worship me, who asked you to parade through my courts with all your ceremony?*

¹³ Stop bringing me your meaningless gifts; the incense of your offerings disgusts me! As for your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath and your special days for fasting – they are all sinful and false. I want no more of your pious meetings. ¹⁴ I hate your new moon celebrations and

your annual festivals. They are a burden to me. I cannot stand them! ¹⁵ When you lift up your hands in prayer, I will not look. Though you offer many prayers, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with the blood of innocent victims. ¹⁶ Wash yourselves and be clean! Get your sins out of my sight. Give up your evil ways. ¹⁷ Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.

¹⁸ “Come now, let’s settle this,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool. ¹⁹ If you will only obey me, you will have plenty to eat. ²⁰ But if you turn away and refuse to listen, you will be devoured by the sword of your enemies. I, the LORD, have spoken!” (Isaiah 1:10-20, NLT)

Isaiah 56:1-8 (NLT): *This is what the LORD says:*

“Be just and fair to all. Do what is right and good, for I am coming soon to rescue you and to display my righteousness among you. ² Blessed are all those who are careful to do this. Blessed are those who honor my Sabbath days of rest and keep themselves from doing wrong.

³ *“Don’t let foreigners who commit themselves to the LORD say, ‘The LORD will never let me be part of his people.’ And don’t let the eunuchs say, ‘I’m a dried-up tree with no children and no future.’ ⁴ For this is what the LORD says: I will bless those eunuchs who keep my Sabbath days holy and who choose to do what pleases me and commit their lives to me. ⁵ I will give them – within the walls of my house – a memorial and a name far greater than sons and daughters could give. For the name I give them is an everlasting one. It will never disappear!*

⁶ *“I will also bless the foreigners who commit themselves to the LORD, who serve him and love his name, who worship him and do not desecrate the Sabbath day of rest, and who hold fast to my covenant. ⁷ I will bring them to my holy mountain of Jerusalem and will fill them with joy in my house of prayer. I will accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices, because my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations. ⁸ For the Sovereign LORD, who brings back the outcasts of Israel, says: I will bring others, too, besides my people Israel.” (Isaiah 56:1-8, NLT)*

Isaiah 58 (NLT): *“Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Shout aloud! Don’t be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! ² Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me. ³ ‘We have fasted before you!’ they say. ‘Why aren’t you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don’t even notice it!’*

“I will tell you why!” I respond. “It’s because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. ⁴ What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. ⁵ You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD?

⁶ “No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. ⁷ Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

⁸ “Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. ⁹ Then when you call, the LORD will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply.

“Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors! ¹⁰ Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. ¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. ¹² Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a builder of walls and a restorer of homes.

¹³ “Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don’t pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the LORD’s holy day. Honor the Sabbath in everything you do on that day, and don’t follow your own desires or talk idly. ¹⁴ Then the LORD will be your delight. I will give you great honor and satisfy you with the inheritance I promised to your ancestor Jacob. I, the LORD, have spoken!” (Isaiah 58, NLT)

Isaiah 64:1-6 (NLT): *Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down! How the mountains would quake in your presence! ² As fire causes wood to burn and water to boil, your coming would make the nations tremble. Then your enemies would learn the reason for your fame! ³ When you came down long ago, you did awesome deeds beyond our highest expectations. And oh, how the mountains quaked! ⁴ For since the world began, no ear has heard and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him! ⁵ You welcome those who gladly do good, who follow godly ways. But you have been very angry with us, for we are not godly. We are constant sinners; how can people like us be saved? ⁶ We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind. ⁷ Yet no one calls on your name or pleads with you for mercy. Therefore, you have turned away from us and turned us over to our sins. (Isaiah 64:1-6, NLT)*

Isaiah 66:22-23 (NLT): *“For just as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, will remain before me” – this is the LORD’s declaration – “so your offspring and your name will remain. ²³ All humanity will come to worship me from one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another,” says the LORD. (Isaiah 66:22-23, NLT)*

Jeremiah 13:23 (NIV): *Can an Ethiopian change the color of his skin? Can a leopard take away its spots? Neither can you start doing good, for you have always done evil. (Jeremiah 13:23, NIV)*

Jeremiah 17:19-27 (NLT): *This is what the LORD said to me: “Go and stand in the gates of Jerusalem, first in the gate where the king goes in and out, and then in each of the other gates. ²⁰ Say to all the people, ‘Listen to this message from the LORD, you kings of Judah and all you people of Judah and everyone living in Jerusalem. ²¹ This is what the LORD says: Listen to my warning! Stop carrying on your trade at Jerusalem’s gates on the Sabbath day. ²² Do not do your work on the Sabbath, but make it a holy day. I gave this command to your ancestors, ²³ but they did not listen or obey. They stubbornly refused to pay attention or accept my discipline.*

²⁴ *“But if you obey me, says the LORD, and do not carry on your trade at the gates or work on the Sabbath day, and if you keep it holy, ²⁵ then kings and their officials will go in and out of these gates forever. There will always be a descendant of David sitting on the throne here in Jerusalem. Kings and their officials will always ride in and out among the people of Judah in chariots and on horses, and this city will remain forever. ²⁶ And from all around Jerusalem, from the towns of Judah and Benjamin, from the western foothills^[a] and the hill country and the Negev, the people will come with their burnt offerings and sacrifices. They will bring their grain offerings, frankincense, and thanksgiving offerings to the LORD’s Temple.*

²⁷ *“But if you do not listen to me and refuse to keep the Sabbath holy, and if on the Sabbath day you bring loads of merchandise through the gates of Jerusalem just as on other days, then I will set fire to these gates. The fire will spread to the palaces, and no one will be able to put out the roaring flames.” (Jeremiah 17:19-27, NIV)*

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NLT): *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.*

³³ *“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34, NIV)*

Ezekiel 20:1-26 (NLT): *On August 14, during the seventh year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity, some of the leaders of Israel came to request a message from the LORD. They sat down in front of me to wait for his reply. ² Then this message came to me from the LORD: ³ “Son of man, tell the leaders of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: How dare you come to ask me for a message? As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I will tell you nothing!’*

⁴ *“Son of man, bring charges against them and condemn them. Make them realize how detestable the sins of their ancestors really were. ⁵ Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: When I chose Israel – when I revealed myself to the descendants of Jacob in Egypt – I took a solemn oath that I, the LORD, would be their God. ⁶ I took a solemn oath that day that I would*

bring them out of Egypt to a land I had discovered and explored for them – a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the best of all lands anywhere. ⁷ Then I said to them, ‘Each of you, get rid of the vile images you are so obsessed with. Do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt, for I am the LORD your God.’

⁸ “But they rebelled against me and would not listen. They did not get rid of the vile images they were obsessed with, or forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I threatened to pour out my fury on them to satisfy my anger while they were still in Egypt. ⁹ But I didn’t do it, for I acted to protect the honor of my name. I would not allow shame to be brought on my name among the surrounding nations who saw me reveal myself by bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. ¹⁰ So I brought them out of Egypt and led them into the wilderness. ¹¹ There I gave them my decrees and regulations so they could find life by keeping them. ¹² And I gave them my Sabbath days of rest as a sign between them and me. It was to remind them that I am the LORD, who had set them apart to be holy.

¹³ “But the people of Israel rebelled against me, and they refused to obey my decrees there in the wilderness. They wouldn’t obey my regulations even though obedience would have given them life. They also violated my Sabbath days. So I threatened to pour out my fury on them, and I made plans to utterly consume them in the wilderness. ¹⁴ But again I held back in order to protect the honor of my name before the nations who had seen my power in bringing Israel out of Egypt. ¹⁵ But I took a solemn oath against them in the wilderness. I swore I would not bring them into the land I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful place on earth. ¹⁶ For they had rejected my regulations, refused to follow my decrees, and violated my Sabbath days. Their hearts were given to their idols. ¹⁷ Nevertheless, I took pity on them and held back from destroying them in the wilderness.

¹⁸ “Then I warned their children not to follow in their parents’ footsteps, defiling themselves with their idols. ¹⁹ ‘I am the LORD your God,’ I told them. ‘Follow my decrees, pay attention to my regulations, ²⁰ and keep my Sabbath days holy, for they are a sign to remind you that I am the LORD your God.’

²¹ “But their children, too, rebelled against me. They refused to keep my decrees and follow my regulations, even though obedience would have given them life. And they also violated my Sabbath days. So again I threatened to pour out my fury on them in the wilderness.

²² Nevertheless, I withdrew my judgment against them to protect the honor of my name before the nations that had seen my power in bringing them out of Egypt. ²³ But I took a solemn oath against them in the wilderness. I swore I would scatter them among all the nations ²⁴ because they did not obey my regulations. They scorned my decrees by violating my Sabbath days and longing for the idols of their ancestors. ²⁵ I gave them over to worthless decrees and regulations that would not lead to life. ²⁶ I let them pollute themselves with the very gifts I had given them, and I allowed them to give their firstborn children as offerings to their gods – so I might devastate them and remind them that I alone am the LORD. (Ezekiel 20:1-26, NLT)

Ezekiel 22:1-16 (NLT): Now this message came to me from the LORD: ² “Son of man, are you ready to judge Jerusalem? Are you ready to judge this city of murderers? Publicly denounce her detestable sins, ³ and give her this message from the Sovereign LORD: O city of murderers, doomed and damned – city of idols, filthy and foul – ⁴ you are guilty because of the blood you have shed. You are defiled because of the idols you have made. Your day of destruction has come! You have reached the end of your years. I will make you an object of mockery throughout the world. ⁵ O infamous city, filled with confusion, you will be mocked by people far and near.

⁶ “Every leader in Israel who lives within your walls is bent on murder. ⁷ Fathers and mothers are treated with contempt. Foreigners are forced to pay for protection. Orphans and widows are wronged and oppressed among you. ⁸ You despise my holy things and violate my Sabbath days of rest. ⁹ People accuse others falsely and send them to their death. You are filled with idol worshipers and people who do obscene things. ¹⁰ Men sleep with their fathers’ wives and force themselves on women who are menstruating. ¹¹ Within your walls live men who commit adultery with their neighbors’ wives, who defile their daughters-in-law, or who rape their own sisters. ¹² There are hired murderers, loan racketeers, and extortioners everywhere. They never even think of me and my commands, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹³ “But now I clap my hands in indignation over your dishonest gain and bloodshed. ¹⁴ How strong and courageous will you be in my day of reckoning? I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do what I said. ¹⁵ I will scatter you among the nations and purge you of your wickedness. ¹⁶ And when I have been dishonored among the nations because of you, you will know that I am the LORD.”
(Ezekiel 22:1-16, NLT)

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NLT): And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.
(Ezekiel 36:26-27, NLT)

Amos 8:4-6 (NLT): Listen to this, you who rob the poor and trample down the needy! ⁵ You can’t wait for the Sabbath day to be over and the religious festivals to end so you can get back to cheating the helpless. You measure out grain with dishonest measures and cheat the buyer with dishonest scales. ⁶ And you mix the grain you sell with chaff swept from the floor. Then you enslave poor people for one piece of silver or a pair of sandals. (Amos 8:4-6, NLT)

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT): Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, NLT)

Matthew 12:1-14 (NLT): At about that time Jesus was walking through some grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began breaking off some heads of grain and eating

them. ² But some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, “Look, your disciples are breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath.”

³ Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He went into the house of God, and he and his companions broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. ⁵ And haven’t you read in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath? ⁶ I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple! ⁷ But you would not have condemned my innocent disciples if you knew the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ ⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!”

⁹ Then Jesus went over to their synagogue, ¹⁰ where he noticed a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Does the law permit a person to work by healing on the Sabbath?” (They were hoping he would say yes, so they could bring charges against him.)

¹¹ And he answered, “If you had a sheep that fell into a well on the Sabbath, wouldn’t you work to pull it out? Of course you would. ¹² And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, the law permits a person to do good on the Sabbath.”

¹³ Then he said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” So the man held out his hand, and it was restored, just like the other one! ¹⁴ Then the Pharisees called a meeting to plot how to kill Jesus. (Matthew 12:1-14, NLT)

Mark 2:23 – 3:6 (NLT): One Sabbath day as Jesus was walking through some grain fields, his disciples began breaking off heads of grain to eat. ²⁴ But the Pharisees said to Jesus, “Look, why are they breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?”

²⁵ Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you ever read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ²⁶ He went into the house of God (during the days when Abiathar was high priest) and broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. He also gave some to his companions.”

²⁷ Then Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!”

3 Jesus went into the synagogue again and noticed a man with a deformed hand. ² Since it was the Sabbath, Jesus’ enemies watched him closely. If he healed the man’s hand, they planned to accuse him of working on the Sabbath.

³ Jesus said to the man with the deformed hand, “Come and stand in front of everyone.” ⁴ Then he turned to his critics and asked, “Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?” But they wouldn’t answer him.

⁵ He looked around at them angrily and was deeply saddened by their hard hearts. Then he said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” So the man held out his hand, and it was restored! ⁶ At once

the Pharisees went away and met with the supporters of Herod to plot how to kill Jesus.
(Mark 2:23 – 3:6, NLT)

Luke 6:1-11 (NLT): *One Sabbath day as Jesus was walking through some grain fields, his disciples broke off heads of grain, rubbed off the husks in their hands, and ate the grain. ² But some Pharisees said, “Why are you breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?”*

³ *Jesus replied, “Haven’t you read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He went into the house of God and broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests can eat. He also gave some to his companions.” ⁵ And Jesus added, “The Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath.”*

⁶ *On another Sabbath day, a man with a deformed right hand was in the synagogue while Jesus was teaching. ⁷ The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees watched Jesus closely. If he healed the man’s hand, they planned to accuse him of working on the Sabbath.*

⁸ *But Jesus knew their thoughts. He said to the man with the deformed hand, “Come and stand in front of everyone.” So the man came forward. ⁹ Then Jesus said to his critics, “I have a question for you. Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?”*

¹⁰ *He looked around at them one by one and then said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” So the man held out his hand, and it was restored! ¹¹ At this, the enemies of Jesus were wild with rage and began to discuss what to do with him. (Luke 6:1-11, NLT)*

Luke 13:10-17 (NLT): *One Sabbath day as Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, ¹¹ he saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Dear woman, you are healed of your sickness!” ¹³ Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised God!*

¹⁴ *But the leader in charge of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath day. “There are six days of the week for working,” he said to the crowd. “Come on those days to be healed, not on the Sabbath.”*

¹⁵ *But the Lord replied, “You hypocrites! Each of you works on the Sabbath day! Don’t you untie your ox or your donkey from its stall on the Sabbath and lead it out for water? ¹⁶ This dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years. Isn’t it right that she be released, even on the Sabbath?”*

¹⁷ *This shamed his enemies, but all the people rejoiced at the wonderful things he did.*
(Luke 13:10-17, NLT)

Luke 14:1-6 (NLT): *One Sabbath day Jesus went to eat dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees, and the people were watching him closely. ² There was a man there whose arms and legs were*

swollen.³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in religious law, “Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the Sabbath day, or not?”⁴ When they refused to answer, Jesus touched the sick man and healed him and sent him away.⁵ Then he turned to them and said, “Which of you doesn’t work on the Sabbath? If your son or your cow falls into a pit, don’t you rush to get him out?”⁶ Again they could not answer. (Luke 14:1-6, NLT)

John 5:1-18 (NLT): Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days.² Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches.³ Crowds of sick people – blind, lame, or paralyzed – lay on the porches.⁵ One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years.⁶ When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”

⁷ “I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”

⁸ Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”

⁹ Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath,¹⁰ so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, “You can’t work on the Sabbath! The law doesn’t allow you to carry that sleeping mat!”

¹¹ But he replied, “The man who healed me told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

¹² “Who said such a thing as that?” they demanded.

¹³ The man didn’t know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd.¹⁴ But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, “Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you.”¹⁵ Then the man went and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had healed him.

¹⁶ So the Jewish leaders began harassing Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules.¹⁷ But Jesus replied, “My Father is always working, and so am I.”¹⁸ So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God. (John 5:1-18, NLT)

John 7:21-24 (NLT): Jesus replied, “I did one miracle on the Sabbath, and you were amazed.²² But you work on the Sabbath, too, when you obey Moses’ law of circumcision. (Actually, this tradition of circumcision began with the patriarchs, long before the law of Moses.)²³ For if the correct time for circumcising your son falls on the Sabbath, you go ahead and do it so as not to break the law of Moses. So why should you be angry with me for healing a man on the Sabbath?”²⁴ Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly.” (John 7:21.24, NLT)

John 9:1-41 (NLT): As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. ² “Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?”

³ “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. ⁴ We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. ⁵ But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man’s eyes. ⁷ He told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “sent”). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

⁸ His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, “Isn’t this the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some said he was, and others said, “No, he just looks like him!” But the beggar kept saying, “Yes, I am the same one!”

¹⁰ They asked, “Who healed you? What happened?”

¹¹ He told them, “The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.’ So I went and washed, and now I can see!”

¹² “Where is he now?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he replied.

¹³ Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, ¹⁴ because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and healed him. ¹⁵ The Pharisees asked the man all about it. So he told them, “He put the mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away, I could see!”

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath.” Others said, “But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?” So there was a deep division of opinion among them.

¹⁷ Then the Pharisees again questioned the man who had been blind and demanded, “What’s your opinion about this man who healed you?”

The man replied, “I think he must be a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jewish leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents. ¹⁹ They asked them, “Is this your son? Was he born blind? If so, how can he now see?”

²⁰ His parents replied, “We know this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹ but we don’t know how he can see or who healed him. Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself.” ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who had announced that anyone saying

Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. ²³ That's why they said, "He is old enough. Ask him."

²⁴ So for the second time they called in the man who had been blind and told him, "God should get the glory for this, because we know this man Jesus is a sinner."

²⁵ "I don't know whether he is a sinner," the man replied. "But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!"

²⁶ "But what did he do?" they asked. "How did he heal you?"

²⁷ "Look!" the man exclaimed. "I told you once. Didn't you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"

²⁸ Then they cursed him and said, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses!" ²⁹ We know God spoke to Moses, but we don't even know where this man comes from."

³⁰ "Why, that's very strange!" the man replied. "He healed my eyes, and yet you don't know where he comes from?" ³¹ We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will. ³² Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he couldn't have done it."

³⁴ "You were born a total sinner!" they answered. "Are you trying to teach us?" And they threw him out of the synagogue.

³⁵ When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

³⁶ The man answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him."

³⁷ "You have seen him," Jesus said, "and he is speaking to you!"

³⁸ "Yes, Lord, I believe!" the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.

³⁹ Then Jesus told him, "I entered this world to render judgment – to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind."

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, "Are you saying we're blind?"

⁴¹ "If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty," Jesus replied. "But you remain guilty because you claim you can see. (John 9:1-41, NLT)

John 13:33-35 (NLT): Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can't come where I am going. ³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

(John 13:33-35, NLT)

John 15:1-17 (NLT): *"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.*

⁵ "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷ But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸ When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹ "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! ¹² This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ¹⁶ You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

(John 15:1-17, NLT)

1 Corinthians 13 (NLT): *If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. ³ If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.*

⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

⁸ Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! ⁹ Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! ¹⁰ But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. ¹² Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but

then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

¹³ Three things will last forever – faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love.

(1 Corinthians 13, NLT)

Galatians 5:22-26 (NLT): *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another. (Galatians 5:22-26, NLT)

Ephesians 2:1-10 (NLT): *Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil – the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.*

⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) ⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. ⁷ So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:1-10, NLT)

Colossians 2:16-23 (NLT): *So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷ For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels,^[a] saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, ¹⁹ and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.*

²⁰ You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, ²¹ "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"? ²² Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use

them.²³ These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.

(Colossians 2:16-23, NLT)

Hebrews 4:1-16 (CSB) Therefore, since the promise to enter his rest remains, let us beware that none of you be found to have fallen short.² For we also have received the good news just as they did. But the message they heard did not benefit them, since they were not united with those who heard it in faith.³ For we who have believed enter the rest, in keeping with what he has said, So I swore in my anger, "They will not enter my rest," even though his works have been finished since the foundation of the world.⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in this way: And on the seventh day God rested from all his works.⁵ Again, in that passage he says, They will never enter my rest.⁶ Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news did not enter because of disobedience,⁷ he again specifies a certain day – today. He specified this speaking through David after such a long time:

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day.⁹ Therefore, a Sabbath rest remains for God's people.¹⁰ For the person who has entered his rest has rested from his own works, just as God did from his.¹¹ Let us, then, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall into the same pattern of disobedience.

¹² For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.¹³ No creature is hidden from him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens – Jesus the Son of God – let us hold fast to our confession.¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.¹⁶ Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. (Hebrews 4:1-16, NLT)

1 John 3:11-24 (NLT): This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another.¹² We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous.¹³ So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

¹⁴ If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead.¹⁵ Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.

¹⁶ We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion – how can God’s love be in that person?

¹⁸ Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. ¹⁹ Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. ²⁰ Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.

²¹ Dear friends, if we don’t feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence. ²² And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.

²³ And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. ²⁴ Those who obey God’s commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us. (1 John 3:11-24, NLT)

1 John 4:7-20 (NLT): Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love – not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. ¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

¹³ And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. ¹⁴ Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. ¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸ Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. ¹⁹ We love each other because he loved us first.

²⁰ If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? (1 John 4:7-20, NLT)

E.G. White References

Desire of Ages, pages 328-331: *“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”*

These words of comfort were spoken to the multitude that followed Jesus. The Saviour had said that only through Himself could men receive a knowledge of God. He had spoken of His disciples as the ones to whom a knowledge of heavenly things had been given. But He left none to feel themselves shut out from His care and love. All who labor and are heavy-laden may come unto Him.

Scribes and rabbis, with their punctilious attention to religious forms, had a sense of want that rites of penance could never satisfy. Publicans and sinners might pretend to be content with the sensual and earthly, but in their hearts were distrust and fear. Jesus looked upon the distressed and heart burdened, those whose hopes were blighted, and who with earthly joys were seeking to quiet the longing of the soul, and He invited all to find rest in Him.

Tenderly He bade the toiling people, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

In these words Christ is speaking to every human being. Whether they know it or not, all are weary and heavy-laden. All are weighed down with burdens that only Christ can remove. The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place. “The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6). He has borne the burden of our guilt. He will take the load from our weary shoulders. He will give us rest. The burden of care and sorrow also He will bear. He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart.

The Elder Brother of our race is by the eternal throne. He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Saviour. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. The Lord “telleth the number of the stars;” and yet “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” (Psalm 147:4, 3). “Come unto Me,” is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer. The rest that Christ offers depends upon conditions, but these conditions are plainly specified. They are those with which all can comply. He tells us just how His rest is to be found.

“Take My yoke upon you,” Jesus says. The yoke is an instrument of service. Cattle are yoked for labor, and the yoke is essential that they may labor effectually. By this illustration Christ teaches us that we are called to service as long as life shall last. We are to take upon us His yoke, that we may be co-workers with Him.

The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God. If we were left to follow our own inclinations, to go just where our will would lead us, we should fall into Satan's ranks and become possessors of his attributes. Therefore God confines us to His will, which is high, and noble, and elevating. He desires that we shall patiently and wisely take up the duties of service. The yoke of service Christ Himself has borne in humanity. He said, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” (Psalm 40:8). “I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” (John 6:38). Love for God, zeal for His glory, and love for fallen humanity, brought Jesus to earth to suffer and to die. This was the controlling power of His life. This principle He bids us adopt.

There are many whose hearts are aching under a load of care because they seek to reach the world's standard. They have chosen its service, accepted its perplexities, adopted its customs. Thus their character is marred, and their life made a weariness. In order to gratify ambition and worldly desires, they wound the conscience, and bring upon themselves an additional burden of remorse. The continual worry is wearing out the life forces. Our Lord desires them to lay aside this yoke of bondage. He invites them to accept His yoke; He says, “My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” He bids them seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and His promise is that all things needful to them for this life shall be added. Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet.

“Learn of Me,” says Jesus; “for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest.” We are to enter the school of Christ, to learn from Him meekness and lowliness. Redemption is that process by which the soul is trained for heaven. This training means a knowledge of Christ. It means emancipation from ideas, habits, and practices that have been gained in the school of the prince of darkness. The soul must be delivered from all that is opposed to loyalty to God.

In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. But many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.

It is the love of self that brings unrest. When we are born from above, the same mind will be in us that was in Jesus, the mind that led Him to humble Himself that we might be saved. Then we shall not be seeking the highest place. We shall desire to sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him. We shall understand that the value of our work does not consist in making a show and noise in the world, and in being active and zealous in our own strength. The value of our work is in proportion to the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Trust in God brings holier qualities of mind, so that in patience we may possess our souls.

The yoke is placed upon the oxen to aid them in drawing the load, to lighten the burden. So with the yoke of Christ. When our will is swallowed up in the will of God, and we use His gifts to bless others, we shall find life's burden light. He who walks in the way of God's commandments is walking in company with Christ, and in His love the heart is at rest. When Moses prayed, "Show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee," the Lord answered him, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." And through the prophets the message was given, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Exodus 33:13, 14; Jeremiah 6:16). And He says, "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Isaiah 48:18).

Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." (Isaiah 26:3). Our lives may seem a tangle; but as we commit ourselves to the wise Master Worker, He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory. And that character which expresses the glory – character – of Christ will be received into the Paradise of God. A renovated race shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy.

As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and in thus coming we begin the life eternal. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still more of glory will be opened to us; and the more we know of God, the more intense will be our happiness. As we walk with Jesus in this life, we may be filled with His love, satisfied with His presence. All that human nature can bear, we may receive here. But what is this compared with the hereafter? There "are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Revelation 7:15-17). (Desire of Ages, pages 328-331)

Steps to Christ, page 30-31: *God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation, as well as in that of man; but however trifling this or that wrong act may*

seem in the eyes of men, no sin is small in the sight of God. Man's judgment is partial, imperfect; but God estimates all things as they really are. The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe. He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give.

The poor publican who prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13), regarded himself as a very wicked man, and others looked upon him in the same light; but he felt his need, and with his burden of guilt and shame he came before God, asking for His mercy. His heart was open for the Spirit of God to do its gracious work and set him free from the power of sin. The Pharisee's boastful, self-righteous prayer showed that his heart was closed against the influence of the Holy Spirit. Because of his distance from God, he had no sense of his own defilement, in contrast with the perfection of the divine holiness. He felt no need, and he received nothing.

If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better. How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ. Do you expect to become better through your own efforts? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." **Jeremiah 13:23**. There is help for us only in God. We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are. (Steps to Christ, pages 30-31)

Steps to Christ, page 35: Study God's word prayerfully. That word presents before you, in the law of God and the life of Christ, the great principles of holiness, without which "no man shall see the Lord." **Hebrews 12:14**. It convinces of sin; it plainly reveals the way of salvation. Give heed to it as the voice of God speaking to your soul.

As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but – O wondrous love! – God in Christ is "reconciling the world unto Himself." **2 Corinthians 5:19**. He is wooing by His tender love the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of his children, as is God with those He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaties to the wanderer than does He. All His promises, His warnings, are but the breathing of unutterable love.

When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. That which will help you is to look to His light. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" and that you may be saved by His matchless love. **1 Timothy 1:15**. Jesus asked Simon a question in regard to two debtors. One owed his Lord a small sum, and the other owed him a very large sum; but he forgave them both,

and Christ asked Simon which debtor would love his Lord most. Simon answered, “He to whom he forgave most.” **Luke 7:43**. We have been great sinners, but Christ died that we might be forgiven. The merits of His sacrifice are sufficient to present to the Father in our behalf. Those to whom He has forgiven most will love Him most, and will stand nearest to His throne to praise Him for His great love and infinite sacrifice. It is when we most fully comprehend the love of God that we best realize the sinfulness of sin. When we see the length of the chain that was let down for us, when we understand something of the infinite sacrifice that Christ has made in our behalf, the heart is melted with tenderness and contrition. (**Steps to Christ, page 35**)

Steps to Christ, pages 62-63: *The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been – just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents – perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.*

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

*More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” **Galatians 2:20**. So Jesus said to His disciples, “It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” **Matthew 10:20**. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works – works of righteousness, obedience.*

*So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us. (**Steps to Christ, pages 62-63**)*