

Our Culture & Our Character

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10. The Sabbath Experience

For me Time is a mystery. I would like to understand Time. But for me Time is, but I cannot really give a concept on it—it is. Do we see it? Or we can't see it? Time has a mystery tied to it, because Time is like air, it enters everywhere—it is everywhere—Time.

Sabbath belongs to all of humanity. It's the gift that God has given to all humanity. Whether they accept it or not, all human beings enter into the Sabbath, all of them. Even in prison there is Sabbath.

Sabbath is redemption; the Sabbath experience is a redemptive experience. If we follow what God is showing us here in the scriptures, Sabbath is liberty; Sabbath is dignity; Sabbath is restoration; Sabbath is gospel.

Let us read the commandment in Exodus 20:8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:"

And the Lord then says why: 11 "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The Lord set apart the Sabbath. He did something special with the Sabbath. The word for 'sanctify' is to cut off, to separate, and to consecrate with a specific objective— and within the context of sin, in order to redeem us, in order to restore us. Last night we mentioned that Sabbath is a plural experience because no one can enter into the Sabbath experience alone. He who enters into the Sabbath experience alone, that is the Sabbath of the Pharisee. To the Sabbath we cannot enter alone.

Someone is affected positively by keeping the true Sabbath. Someone is touched by keeping the Sabbath, because the Sabbath experience is a redemptive experience; it is an experience of sanctification; it's an experience of forgiveness; it's an experience of reconciliation and no one is reconciled alone.

Reconciliation is not an egotistical, selfish experience. Reconciliation is an experience that is alterocentric, other-centered, because in order to reconcile—when we were created we were in harmony, we were reconciled to God, with our neighbor and with nature. But when we sinned, we lost that reconciliation and harmony. But when we come to the fountain, when we come to the Sabbath, whence are the waters of rest, we are reconciled.

If we are not reconciled, then we are not in the Sabbath, because Sabbath is Shalom, Sabbath is peace, Sabbath is harmony, and the Holy writings teach that even the cattle, the beasts, that are within our courtyard, that are within our house—and we don't understand this, because nowadays we don't have cows or horses or cattle inside our house.

In this Western experience, we should place here something different. Instead of putting there your cattle, you should put your dog—your dogs, or your cats, because the beasts should also experience the affect of the Sabbath experience of reconciliation.

In the book of Jonah, the Lord finishes the book of Jonah with a special conciliation that we seldom take into account. But in Jonah the Lord says, when Jonah rejects God's reconciliation; when Jonah rejects forgiveness; when Jonah wants the Ninevites to be condemned and he is disappointed because God forgives Nineveh. Jonah is angered with the Lord and the Lord teaches him that lesson with that plant.

Then the Lord concludes: Jonah 4:11 "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle (animals)?"

Also many animals—why does the Lord include in the Sabbath experience even the animals? Because no one who participates in the true Sabbath experience remains the same. Who ever enters into the Sabbath experience, and enters in time with the Lord, what the Lord gives to the sinner on the Sabbath day affects nature; affects my son; affects my daughter; it touches my wife; it affects the family; it touches everything that is within your house—because Sabbath is a redemptive experience. And Redemption, at least at the minimum, happens between a you and an I.

What happened in creation when Adam and Eve sinned? What happened with the flowers? What happened to the animals? What happened with relationships? What happened between Adam and Eve? The scriptures say, "Thou shalt have dominion over her." "And your desire shall be unto him". Were the relationships affected? Was God's image affected? Was the true principle of authority and dominion broken down? Were faith, trust and affection affected? Was individuality affected? Did we usurp the individuality?

This participation of the Sabbath is to restore all that within your sphere—in your home. Here Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, that the faithful, he that is faithful, sanctifieth the unfaithful. 1 Corinthians 7:14 teaches that the faithful, he who believes, he who has experienced—and you know that we Westerners have difficulty with the word 'believe', because for us to believe is just to assent with our mental faculties. But for the oriental mind, believing is not just saying yes with their mental faculties, believing is obeying. Believing is to work. To believe is to live—believe.

But Plato taught us that believing was just to say yes with your head, while with your hands you say no; with your works you say no; but with our head we continue saying yes but with our works we are saying no. In reality we are not doing it, but in thought and in an abstract way, we are saying yes.

That is the spiritualistic dichotomy that Satan taught Greek philosophers. In matter of knowledge we are children of the Greeks. The Lord, Who is not Greek, Who gave His message in the Oriental semantics, for Him, to believe is to live! And when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:14, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."

The experience of sanctification is an experience that has radio-active properties. Each human being can irradiate—he can radiate either sin, or righteousness. He can radiate selfishness or other-centeredness. He can radiate hatred or love; resentment or forgiveness and hope. And in our eyes we radiate, in our countenance we radiate, and when we touch, we are radiating; in the tone of our voice we are radiating.

The Sabbath experience is an experience—a plural experience and it has no trace of selfishness. That is why whoever enters into the Sabbath, dignifies, lifts up, places up, his fellow man. Oh, in marriage relationships, we who are married should experience—we should experience once again the new encounter experience—from Sabbath to Sabbath.

What happens in the marriage relationship? Does it become common? Do we become indifferent? Does it become so common that she—that she is just she, and I, I am I. But in the Sabbath experience that has to be redeemed, if it is the true Sabbath experience. If through the week, I have not treated her as in the

image of God, I have not received her as in the image of God, then, I have destroyed her dignity. I have destroyed her value. I have underestimated her life. And in the Sabbath experience, that should be redeemed. That must be restored, that has to be reconciled.

Human beings today, when we are not reconciled, we sleep giving the back to each other; And others, they change beds; and still others, they change rooms. Others who have more facilities of space, one will be in the second story and the other one in the basement. That is humanity without the Sabbath. That is human beings without being reconciled. That is humanity without sanctification.

And beloved brothers, within the true Sabbath, the beast participates in that experience. If I am in the real Sabbath, what should my companion experience, when I participate of the sanctification? Sanctification is radiation and no one remains the same. And if uranium and radium, the inorganic elements, that are not alive, that don't have the image of God, have the capacity of radiating and having rays that are admitted from them, and even of producing cancer and destroying the cell, what can the love of God do when it is constituted into the human experience and the Sabbath experience?

That's why we find the commandment, "Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy servant, nor thy maid servant," and on few occasions does the scripture make a difference between feminine gender, because that was the culture, in their culture people were in complete satisfaction in the rupture that had happened when Adam sinned.

When Adam sinned and when Eve sinned, when they disobeyed, the way they treated each other changed. He usurped dominion over her, not by Divine will—it was a consequence of sin. Rupture between man and woman is not the Word of God—it's a consequence of sin. When she became her own center, and when he became his own center, there was a true rupture. And he had dominion over her. In Genesis 1 and in Psalm 8, the dominion and government and strength over, is upon things—over things, not over persons.

In the image of God, between persons, only love, only trust, only hope, only kindness, and the fruits of the Spirit—love—nothing else, between two, but it was lost after creation. Sabbath restores it, and the animals experience it, if you enter into the real Sabbath experience. And if the dogs and the cats should experience it, what should the unbeliever experience who is living with the believer? There should be a radioactive power, the radiation of the Holy Spirit and of the truth because God's love is radioactive.

The gospel is radioactive—"I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God." The original word says 'dunamis' and from dunamis comes the word dynamite. It's power! It's radioactive! It transforms, it changes, it penetrates, just as time penetrates everything and enters like air into everything. In the same way God has wanted to enter into us in the Sabbath experience in order to perform redemption and sanctification, remission and forgiveness, complete reconciliation.

Have we lost that Sabbath? The Jews lost the Sabbath; the Pharisees lost the Sabbath but they believed that they were fulfilling the law.

Sabbath is dignity. There are some verses here in Deuteronomy that are very special. We are happy—many are happy because the laws of the Old Testament were nailed to the cross. But the principles that are behind the symbols of the ceremonial sabbaths are still valid. The external form died, but the principle never dies. But the Jews were specialists in keeping the external application—having destroyed the principle. But the principle never perishes.

Follow on the principle of the Sabbath here in Deuteronomy 15; "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. 2. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release."

The Sabbatical year, the seventh year was a year of forgiveness. Just as the Jubilee—the experience of the Jubilee, was an experience of forgiveness. All scripture is saturated with justification. All scripture is saturated with forgiveness, because for the Lord, sin—sin is absurd. It has no explanation. It has no reason of being. It is irrational. It is crazy. He cannot conceive it. Sin is so terrible, that it is absurd. And the only thing He could do with sin was to justify it.

For us that is very difficult to understand, very difficult; because what we do with the sin of someone else—we recognize it; we sentence it; we accuse him; we condemn him; and we send him to jail; because it's sin—it's evil. And then we think that that is our righteousness.

But in God's righteousness, instead of defending the norm, He defends the image of God because the price is not in the letter of the law; the price is living and is in the person. But for us it is very difficult to handle that. But the Lord has opened the way to forgive what is absurd in me, to forgive my sin—my iniquity, even the depths—even my very depths.

In this world people forgive anything except money. But in Sabbath, the Lord made provision within Sabbath for forgiveness. Sabbath is forgiveness; Sabbath is justification; Sabbath is hope; Sabbath is life; and that is why Sabbath is rest. It is Shalom.

There are many things that could be said here in the following verses of Deuteronomy 15, a principle is revealed of what God's character is. Every ceremony of the Old Testament, every statute of the Old Testament, reveals an aspect of God's character that should be in us. Not the external form but the principle.

Notice what happened here in verse 12; never was it God's plan—never was it God's plan that woman should be less than man. That man should be lord, and the other slave. Never was that God's plan. That has never been the Lord's plan—that is the result of sin. Things became degenerated in our social status in such a way that in the days of Jacob, he bought his wives, and the fathers, the parents accepted the culture that their daughters were things, and they sold them. They negotiated with them and they exchanged them. Strange! It's the consequence of sin.

The Lord in His mercy redeems that in the Sabbath experience. Notwithstanding that cultural problem the Lord enters into time—He's Immanuel with us and He teaches us that thy maidservant, that your servant, in the Sabbath experience, no longer is a servant—he's the image of God.

Perhaps here we don't see that because in this culture, you don't have many maids or servants. In the days of Abraham Lincoln that was finished. But in spirit, there is still slavery. But in our Latin countries we still have servants and rich people, the wealthy people they hire servants. Have you seen the maidservant's or the servant's room in the house of the wealthy? Have you seen them? What type of rooms are they? The tiniest; the smallest; the least comfortable—there in the back—"He's just the servant". He's not the image of God—he's the servant. He has the worst because he's a servant. How do we look on him? How do we look at him? That's not God's plan. That isn't God's character.

In the Sabbath experience, he who keeps the true Sabbath, he who experiences it, that when sunset on Friday arrives, of every Sabbath, he stops being a servant—his social status is not that of a servant on Sabbath. His social status is the image of God; and he receives the same things that the lord of the house receives.

And that's why the scriptures says nor thy servant, nor thy maidservant, because your servant and your maidservant on Sabbath, they are reconciled, they are restored. the experience of the Sabbath is a plural experience. It's not a selfish experience—what I am and what I receive from Him, who comes and visits me, is the same participation that I give to others in the spirit, in the influence and the way that I treat others in the reality and not the concept.

And the servant and the maidservant also experience it and they hope for the Sabbath; they yearn for the sunset on Friday because in that moment he prepares himself because no longer is he a servant, no longer is he a slave, he's the image of God. He has been dignified, he has been lifted.

No one enters into the Sabbath alone. Your peace, your reconciliation, your forgiveness, your righteousness, your sanctification, is a radioactive power and it touches all that are within your home, including the animals, even the foreigner and if it includes the foreigner of course it includes your family in greater proportion.

What type of relationship should happen between husbands and wives in the Sabbath experience? If we have taken away from her, her dignity during the week and if we have exerted dominion over her or she over him? Sabbath restores all that.

Deuteronomy 15, Verse 12: "And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee."

Liberty—Sabbath is liberty; but not only liberty, because liberty alone, without dignity, is not liberty according to the Lord. For us, liberty is just to break the chains and that's what human law does. It removes the chains. The Negro is no longer the slave and the white man is no longer the lord over the black man.

But only the chains; God goes beyond that. Not only the chains but He gives value and the Lord restores and dignifies—He dignifies his fellow man. Here what He says: 13 "And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:"

If you let him go empty, then he will become a slave again. He will have to look for some other chains.

14 "Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him."

Today we don't have lambs, flocks, we are vegetarians—what do we have? What do we have, what do we have in abundance that she doesn't have? That he doesn't have? What do we have in abundance that the wife doesn't have? That the husband doesn't have? That the son, or the servant, that the animal doesn't have? That the foreigner doesn't have? And in order to dignify him, it's not just to rent the chains asunder. It's not only the status, also internally, his dignity which is God's image.

Oh my beloved, God's liberty, God's liberation, God's reconciliation, God's sanctification, is totally different to these selfish concepts that I have; from His reality who is God, that descends in the Sabbath and enters with me in my time and he visits me in my home to restore His image in me. And once He restores it in me—what do I breathe? What do I breathe out? What influence do I impart? What do others receive from me? The same thing that I receive from Him.

And what is life eternal? And this is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent.

Oh beloved, how did Jesus handle the Sabbath? And the Pharisees did not understand Jesus' Sabbath, because on Sabbath, Jesus dignified people. Jesus liberated people. Jesus reconciled the people. Not on paper, not in the letter of the law, with the human being; with your son; with your daughter; with your servant; with your maidservant; with the animals—with the flock—with the cattle; with the foreigner.

The Jews had destroyed the Sabbath and they had made it into a private experience; into a selfish experience—a totally egocentric experience. And they thought that they were in the truth.

The Lord came and He broke all that apart, and they didn't understand. Do we understand why the Sabbath is the Seal? It's not just a matter of time. It's much more than time. And time for me is a

phenomenon—it's a mystery. And in time—it is that events happen. In time—it is that prophecy is fulfilled. In time—prophecy is developed. In time—creation was done and in time—redemption was done. In time—the cross took place and in time—we are redeemed.

The Lord knew that we would be busy in our selfish works: on Sunday—I work for myself; on Monday—I work for myself; on Tuesday—I work for myself; Wednesday and Thursday—I work for myself and Friday—I work for myself; and perhaps on Sabbath I continue thinking on myself. The Lord knows that we need a rest from our self and He has given us the Sabbath; so that we might rest from our self; so that we might rest from sin; so that we might rest from what is ours; we might leave our things aside which is sin, iniquity and we might experience Him.

We work differently from God, because God worked on Sunday—not for Himself—but for us. And He worked on Monday—not for Himself—but for us. And all His work is not for Him—it's for us. Ellen White says that Jesus did nothing for Himself. All was done for others—every day, every day.

Heaven does not work; heaven does not work. Have you known the origin of the word 'work'? It is a Latin word, 'travail' instrument of slavery. Heaven does not work. God does not work. Jesus does not work. Jesus serves. The Lord serves; every work of God is a work of service. And the work of the 144,000 will be a complete work of service. They have not lived for themselves—they lived for others. They have experienced the great universal law of service—I, for you not I for myself.

Have we rested from our self? And each moment we live in function of others and not in relationship to ourselves. That is the foundation; that is the base of the divine economy. The foundation of our economy is selfishness—it is the base. But in the foundation of the divine economy, other-centeredness is placed—totally opposite foundations.

Sabbath is the Seal of the experience of other-centeredness; where God in His mercy, knowing our fallen condition, and knowing that everything that is ours, rotates around myself and that I am the center and everything I do I do it for myself and with difficulty do I do something for someone else.

The Lord, Who prophetically knew that as we drew closer to the end of time, the only thing ours would be the cares of this world; the cares of this world. Who doesn't live for himself? And our excuse is "I don't have time", that's our excuse; "I don't have time". "I am too busy." "I am too busy in my business." And God, understanding that human condition, gave us a fountain—a Sabbath; and every six days we would have a special fountain in the midst of the desert, so that He might lead us by still waters; so that we might enter into His menuha—the rest from myself. The rest from 'I' being the center; and for that—time.

It's in time—it's in time that I can rest from myself. It's in time that I lay aside myself. It's in time that I renounce to myself by God's grace.

Oh my beloved, the enemy has said that Sabbath is just a rule; that Sabbath is legalism. But Sabbath is grace! It's mercy. Sabbath is love. He has given it to us because of man—it is for man. It is for you; it is for us; it's a gift; it's His mercy; it's His grace; it's part of His gospel because He is love. And comprehending our human condition and all our processes, He has given us a break, a rest, a fountain of rest.

And the word 'menuha' that is translated as 'rest' is a state of harmony—a state of peace; resting in Him. He—assuming our lives. Isaiah 58:12, 13; "If you keep thy foot . . . Not doing your will. . . and not speaking your words. . . and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: 14 "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."