May you experience the deep peace of Jesus Christ now and forever.

*[F]or you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*

 1 Peter 1:23

Our physical bodies are perishable (although the Christian’s will be resurrected glorified). Our bodies are considered dead when our spirit has left them; our spirit is separate from our body and we are dead. In the same way, when we sin, our spirit is separated from God, that separation is spiritual death.

We look forward to a bodily resurrection one day. That resurrection could be considered a rebirth; being made alive again. Because of our spiritual death, we need a spiritual resurrection; a spiritual rebirth.

This is why Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again. It was his spirit that needed to be brought back to life; back to relationship and fellowship with God. It is through Jesus’ work on the cross that physical and spiritual rebirth are possible.

Although the physical rebirth will take place at some time in the future, the spiritual rebirth takes place at the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. He is the seed that is imperishable and our reborn spirit is imperishable. At this rebirth, we become children of God.

Praise our almighty God for what He has done for us through Jesus!

In Christ’s love

John

 1-9-22

Genesis 2:1-3

As we studied chapter 1 of Genesis, we saw that God had an orderly plan in which He created everything and He was able to do it in six days. He made what was necessary to sustain the life He would create and He created the life in increasing complexity. The last of His creation was a man and a woman: Not only the most complex of all His creation but made in His image. A beloved creation, for which He knew He was going to have to suffer His own wrath and die for. Even so, human-beings were given dominion over all else that God had made.

This is heady stuff and we need to praise God for all He has done for us. But there is an important point we mustn’t miss: We were made last. Another way of looking at that fact is that God didn’t need us to help Him create. He didn’t need our input, suggestions or ideas. In Job 38:4, after Job had stated many times that he would like for God to explain why these things were happening to him, God asked Job a very poignant question, “*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth*?”

This points out one of the stumbling blocks with Christianity; it requires submission to God; and we don’t like to submit. People have always been happy with a god of their own making; a god that they can control. But that is not the God of the Bible. Think of satan’s temptation of Eve in the Garden; he told her that if she ate of the fruit, she would be like God. So, if she were like God, she wouldn’t have to submit to Him.

This has been a problem for us ever since. But chapter 1 of Genesis makes it clear that God made us and everything else. That makes it obvious that He gets to make the rules. It should also make it obvious that because we are the created, He is far more powerful than we, and it is futile to rebel against Him. And He is not a cruel taskmaster; rebelling against Him makes no sense.

God offers us a chance we don’t deserve, a chance for eternal life, an eternal life of joy and happiness, of fulfillment that we can never achieve on this earth. But that chance comes only by submitting to God. And the only acceptable form of submission to God is to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. When we submit to Christ, we are then submitting to the Christian life and the Bible lets us know that the Christian life is full of submission: in civil affairs we submit to the government, in church we submit to church leadership, wives submit to husbands who in turn should be submitted to Christ, children submit to their parents, slaves to masters, and all of us are called to be servants of everyone else.

All of this is good, all of it is from God, and all of it rubs us the wrong way. But God understands that and for those who are willing to submit to Jesus, He gives the Holy Spirit for a continual help and strength. People are the apex of God’s creation, but Genesis 1 shows us that we are still creation. We would do well to keep in mind that satan was created the apex of all the angels, but he let pride blind him and he refused submission.

After six days of work, chapter 2 begins by telling us, “*Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts*.” We were told back on day one, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*.” God, who has always existed, made a beginning of all that has been created, and time. At that very beginning the earth and all the area that would be the universe came into existence in an instant. Yet it was not in the final state that God had planned. God continued creative work that day and for the next five.

Now we are told that God’s creative work has been completed by the end of the sixth day. The heavens and the earth were done and in the form God wanted them. He had completed everything else that occupied the earth and universe. The word “host” can encompass any group. It is used for the stars and all that is in space; it is used for armies, both angelic and human. The entirety of creation is being described by using the extreme ends (heaven and earth) plus a word the covers everything else (hosts).

We need to understand this first verse, that God’s work was done, so we understand the context of the second verse. Some translations say, “*By the seventh day*…” but other translations say, “*On the seventh day*…”. Both are correct translations but “*On the seventh day*” can give the impression that God still did work on the seventh day; that the seventh day was when He completed what He was doing. This has led to some misunderstandings. But the context is clear that God was done creation by the end of the sixth day. On the seventh day, all His creative work had been done.

Verse 2 tells us that God “rested” on the seventh day. It scarcely needs to be said that God wasn’t tired and He didn’t need to rest. In fact, Isaiah 40:28 says, “*Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth; Does not become weary or tired*.” Think about how we sometimes make something strictly for enjoyment. We might build something, paint a picture, write a story, bake something; when we’re done, we’re not tired, but we can take pleasure in what we have made. We can simply enjoy it. This is how God rested. He had already seen that everything He had made was “*very good*”. Figuratively, God could sit back and just enjoy the existence of all He had made.

In verse 2 it says, “*He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done*.” And then in verse 3 it says, “*in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made*.” Being repeated like this shows emphasis. What we need to notice is what God is resting from. He is resting from the work He has done; He is resting from His work of creating and making. What this lets us know is that God did not stop working entirely. He stopped His work of creation and began His work of providence.

God’s work of providence means that He continues to sustain and maintain all that He has created. We’ve looked at Psalm 104 which praises God for all that He causes to happen in His creation so that life can continue. And we cannot forget about salvation; about the overarching theme of the Bible: redemption. Jesus coming to this earth and suffering in our place was God working.

In John chapter 5 is the account of Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath and He was criticized by the religious leaders who were present for “working” on the Sabbath. Jesus responded in verse 17, “*My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working*.” Of course, God the Father and Jesus are one, so they are both working. But Jesus’ act of healing was an act of providence; it was an act of caring for and maintaining His creation. Even more, He was giving evidence of who He was so that people would believe on Him for salvation.

The concept of the Sabbath is very important; it shows up throughout the Bible. Consider that the day after the man and the woman were created, was the Sabbath day. The first full day of life for these two was a day of rest. It was a day for them to enjoy all the new creation that God had made; and to enjoy time with God Himself. They were made to work and there was plenty of work for them to do, but they got to start with a day of pure enjoyment. Here we see the beginning of what Jesus said, “*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*.”

The Sabbath shows up again in Exodus 20 among the ten commandments. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy*. This reminds us of what we see in Genesis. God has blessed animals and the people, but on the seventh day He blessed the day. Verse 2:3 says He sanctified the day; that means He set it apart as special; that means He made it holy. In the fourth commandment, God let His people know that they were to cease from their labors on the day. Even though man had fallen into sin, God still wanted His people to have a time to rest; time to enjoy God.

Several weeks ago, we looked at the Sabbath as it applies to Christians. Briefly, the ten commandments were a covenant with the Hebrews. They do not apply to us in our covenant with Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are not bound to keep the Sabbath. However, the ten commandments tell us what pleases God; so, out of love for Christ we obey them. Following early Christian practice, we celebrate the Lord’s Day as a day to keep holy and abstain from labor. It’s not a rule we must follow, it is a delightful submission to what pleases our Saviour.

Even so, the Jewish Sabbath and our Lord’s Day do not compare with what the man and the woman experienced in paradise. But our loving Lord God still wants His people to experience it. So, God continued His work, not of creation, but of providence which included our redemption. Now, we can see from the book of Hebrews that our true rest is coming; a Sabbath rest is coming for the people of God through Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews chapter 4 verses 9 and 10, it is written, “*So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His*.” For one thing we see that the Sabbath isn’t over with; it is still very important to God that His people, Christians, get to enjoy a Sabbath rest. Free of arduous labor and full of the joy of experiencing God. And He has made this possible by Jesus’ work on the cross.

This passage points out two different effects. First, our salvation is entirely by faith in Jesus Christ. There is no work we can do to obtain salvation. So, once we accept Jesus as our Saviour, our work of trying to obtain heaven is done. We rest from working our way into heaven. And Jesus Christ becomes our Sabbath rest.

Secondly, once we are saved by faith, we have work to do. It is not work to gain heaven; it is work given to us by God. Ephesians 2:10 gives us a lot of information. *[W]e are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them*. We are the result of God’s workmanship; He made us as we are told in Genesis. John chapter 1 tells us that all things were made through Jesus Christ. So, we were made by God through Jesus Christ.

But it tells us that we were made for good works. Once we become a Christian, we have work to do; we have good things to do that benefit others and bring glory to God. Furthermore, God already planned out what He wanted us to do in eternity past. That is hard to consider. Before Genesis 1:1, before God created the heavens and the earth and time, He knew each of us and He had planned out the good things that we were to do.

The Christian is not to coast. We are called to work and that is one of the reasons that we should do all our work as if unto God. Each of us has a calling, a ministry ordained by God that He will show to us at the proper time. We are not called to work ourselves to death, but we are to be productive.

Now, what about that rest. The Christian is already resting from their work of trying to obtain salvation; but when do we rest from our work that God has ordained for us during our Christian life? The answer is when we die. At death, our work here is done. That is when we enter our rest. After this life, Christians cease from laborious work and enjoy the presence of God.

This is why Paul cries out “*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting*?” Jesus has made death the doorway to eternal rest; to eternal fellowship with God. Back to the way He intended things in the first place.

Prayer

Thank You Lord Jesus, for You have rescued us from the hopeless and vain work of trying to obtain heaven. Yours is the only perfect work; the only acceptable work to the Father. It is only on the coattails of Your work, covered in Your own righteousness that we become acceptable to the Father; and it is only then that our good works are pleasing and acceptable to Him.

We are forgetful; remind us that our purpose here is to glorify You, to glorify the Father. In large part we glorify Him by our good works, by loving our neighbor, by loving our enemy. We can only accomplish this with great help from the Holy Spirit. May He be our constant guide.

Thank You for the concept of good works for Your glory. Give us discernment and wisdom, that we may recognize these opportunities when they are presented. Give us the strength and courage to complete these works, no matter the cost, trusting that You will work all out for Your glory and for our ultimate good.

We pray these things in Jesus’ name

Amen