

## 59. The Third Commandment.

**Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil.** *Eccl. 5, 1.*

In the Old Testament, God set apart the seventh day and appointed it for rest, commanding His chosen people to keep it holy above all other days. The observance of the day was minutely specified. No one was to kindle a fire, to carry a burden, to make a journey, or to disturb in any way complete bodily rest. The transgressor was to be put to death. This law was never incumbent on all men. It never bound the Gentiles, and it no longer binds the Jews. With Christ's appearance the Old Covenant was past, and God made a New Covenant with all mankind. For thus we read in the prophet Jeremiah, chapter 31: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers." And in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 8: "In that He saith, A New Covenant, He hath made the first old. Now, that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

As soon as Christ's work of redemption was finished upon the cross and the veil of the Temple had been rent in twain, the Sabbath, too, lost its significance. Paul says of the Sabbath-days Col. 2, 17: "Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." Christ rang the death-knoll of the Old Testament Sabbath, as it were, by His own coming. Therefore He says: "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day." Matt. 12, 8. In the New Testament we need not observe the seventh day. Whatever in the Third Commandment related to that day has been abrogated and abolished by God Himself; no longer does it bind our consciences.

There is no New Testament law enjoining us to observe a certain day. The early Church set apart the first day of the week, and ever since Sunday has been celebrated, — not indeed by divine command, for there is no such command. We celebrate Sunday in order to have time and opportunity for public worship. We call it the Lord's Day because it was the day of His resurrection. On this day we contemplate the work of our Lord and Redeemer in communion with our fellow-Christians by meeting with them in the house of God.

## Prayer.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we pray Thee so to govern and guide us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may with all our heart hear and receive Thy Word and truly sanctify the Lord's Day, to the end that, in turn, we may be sanctified by Thy Word, that we may put all our confidence and hope in Jesus Christ, Thy Son, amend our lives in accordance with Thy Word, and avoid every offense, until by grace for Christ's sake, we shall enter into that eternal rest which remaineth to the people of God and be saved forever. Amen.

This is the day the Lord hath made;  
He calls the hours His own;  
Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,  
And praise surround the throne.

To-day He rose and left the dead,  
And Satan's empire fell;  
To-day the saints His triumph spread  
And all His wonders tell.

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