

6. God of the Sabbath

By John Thiel, *Seeking to Please God Series*, [mp3](#)

Scripture reading: John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

The time in which we are living is the time of the day of atonement; it is the time of Zechariah 3:1-7—Joshua and the Angel. As we saw previously, this scripture applies specifically to our time. Joshua is a representative of God's people, and as we stand before Christ, our High Priest, in the judgment hour, we are receiving a change of garment as we examine ourselves closely.

Seeking the Lord

The Lord desires you to receive the gospel, and to practice it in your lives. {19MR 233.1}

We are to *practice* the gospel. We often assume that the gospel is merely something God has done for us; but here we read that it is a gospel that we need to practise in our lives.

He calls upon you to become humble seekers after Him, to receive the truth into good and honest hearts, and to reveal it in a decided change of character. Let every believer turn his attention toward seeking the Lord, that the church as a body may stand before God in true humility, the souls of the members cleansed from the defilement of sin. {*Ibid.*}

My brethren and sisters, take hold of the work of perfecting Christian character. We are to live for the glory of God. There needs to be deep searching of heart. There is a great work to be done in cleansing the life by the truth of God's Word. When this truth is received as it should be, the life will become a power for the glory of God. {19MR 233.2}

This is a reminder that our focus, at this present time, is a searching of our hearts that we would be changed in character, and that we would cleanse our lives by the truth of God's word. We have to examine God's word to examine our hearts by it, so that we would be cleansed and we might give God the glory.

One of the things highlighted here is that we are to seek the Lord; we are to actually become involved with Him, *to become seekers after Him, to receive the truth into good and honest hearts*. This is not just discovering truth; this is seeking *Him* through the truth. The theme running through all this self-examination is “seeking to please God”. Are we pleasing God? This is the question.

Glorying in the Knowledge of God

There is something that God tells us in the Scripture with regards to what pleases Him.

Jeremiah 9:23 Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise [man] glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty [man] glory in his might, let not the rich [man] glory in his riches: 24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I [am] the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these [things] I delight, saith the LORD.

God is exposing Himself to us here. He is saying, There is something I delight in; I delight in *lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness*; and because I delight in this, I would love if you would understand this. I would want you to please Me in understanding Me and in knowing Me. It makes God very closely personal to us as we meditate on this.

And in the words of Jesus in His high priestly prayer, He is actually interacting with this scripture when He says to God, I have demonstrated You to the people around Me; I have given You the glory; I have glorified You in the earth. And speaking to the Father of Himself, He says:

John 17:2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Jesus glorified the Father, and He now looks to the Father to glorify Him, because everything that Jesus was doing was to bring to the human race this which God delights in—the righteousness, the judgment, the mercy. And it is the knowledge and understanding of this that God wants us to gain. An understanding of God, a knowledge of God; not just a knowledge about God. When you know someone, you don’t just know about him; you *know* him, or her. In a marriage relationship, husband and wife *know* each other. This is a very intimate experience together. This is what God is longing for—for us to know Him; and this is life eternal.

So I ask this question both to myself and to you, As we examine ourselves, do we *know* Him? Do you know Him? Is He your personal Saviour, your personal God? How well do you know Him? To what extent do we know Him? To know Him is life eternal.

Do You *Know* Him?

The apostle Peter expands on this statement of the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

So the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord is the avenue through which grace and peace may be multiplied unto us.

2 Peter 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

His divine power has given us all things through that knowledge. *This is life eternal.*

2 Peter 1:4 Whereby [through the knowledge of Him] are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Precious promises come from that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, because He delights in mercy, judgment, and righteousness towards us. By this knowledge, by these precious realities of God's promises to us (because this is His personality, His nature); by these we may be partakers of the divine nature. So when you are a partaker of the divine nature, how well do you know God? You know Him because you are a partaker of the same nature. You know Him. This is why I am asking the question, How well do we know Him?

1 Corinthians 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

To that extent. Do you know Him so that you actually have His mind? This is life eternal, that we might know Him.

Only under the direction of the Omniscient One shall we, in the study of His works, be enabled to think His thoughts after Him. {Ed 134.5}

Do you know Him? What thoughts do we follow? Our own thoughts or His? And are we able to actually lock into His thoughts? This is what it means to know Him—to *think His thoughts after Him*. Under the direction of the Omniscient One, under the Holy Spirit's aid, we are *enabled to think His thoughts after Him*. This is the knowledge of God, and this is life eternal.

What does God delight in? As we seek to please Him, to know Him, we should strive to be in such tune with Him that we can think His thoughts after Him, thoughts of mercy, of judgment, and of righteousness. Let us glory in knowing that. This is what He wants us to glory in.

He Will Magnify the Law

Isaiah 42:21 The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make [it] honourable.

Here it is again. We are seeking to please God. What pleases Him? *The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake*. He delights in righteousness, He delights in judgment, He delights in mercy. So what is He pleased about? *He will magnify the law, and make it honourable*. Here we come across something that the human natural mind has to deal with, because when the law of God comes to us in all its reality, according to the words of Apostle Paul in Romans 7, sin revives, and we die. It was a very unpleasant experience for Saul; and a lot of people, when the law of God is uplifted before them, find it a condemnation, because they haven't been keeping it. So the attitude towards the law is already something which is beyond the human ability. But when He *magnifies* the law, this activity grows to even greater proportions. If something that condemns the sinner is magnified, how much worse does he feel? But it is pleasing to God to magnify the law. This is what the psalmist said about the righteous man: *In His law doth he meditate day and night*; and he found that God's law is very broad—*magnified*.

How do we view the law? Do we know God? What is it that pleases Him? It pleases Him to *magnify the law*. How do we appreciate this? Do we view the law as a set of rules, looking upon the Ten Commandments merely as a set of rule? Remember the first angel's message. This is part of the day of atonement message.

Revelation 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

So this everlasting gospel is what we are to practise, as we read before. This is what this angel is uplifting;

Revelation 14:7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

So the angel is proclaiming the everlasting gospel and identifying for us that it is the hour of God's judgment. God delights in judgment. And on the day of atonement, in this message, we are called upon to examine ourselves: Do I know God? How do I regard His Ten Commandments? What do I see in reference to Him and the Ten Commandments?

The message proclaimed by the angel flying in the midst of heaven is the everlasting gospel, the same gospel that was declared in Eden when God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." Here was the first promise of a Saviour that would stand on the field of battle to contest the power of Satan and prevail against him. Christ came to our world to represent the character of God as it is represented in His holy law; for His law is a transcript of His character. Christ was both the law and the gospel. {1MR 44.2}

What are we touching here? What is the mind exercise that is stirred by this? How do I regard the law? Is it in my heart? This is the transcript of God's character; not just a set of rules. This is life eternal, that we might know God; and it is His delight, it pleases Him, to magnify the law, because it is magnifying His character before us. And how do I regard Him? Do I know Him? When I look at those laws, do I see God's character, or is it just a set of rules? There is a big difference.

As we view this, here is Jesus representing His character to us under the message of the gospel, as we see it in the first angel's message, and you can see that everything is interlocked, so that the gospel and the law are part of God's character—mercy and justice. This is knowing God; to actually not just know about this, but as we practise the gospel in its connection with the law, we begin to know God. We are coming to know Him. By the gospel our transgressions of the law are erased. As it says, Give God the glory, for the hour of His judgment is come. So the gospel is applied to the soul because he has seen the magnification of God's character in the Ten Commandments; and now he examines his heart, and he believes that Jesus, who exemplified the character of God, has demonstrated that He would die for my transgressions. And as I let my mind grasp this knowledge of Jesus Christ and the Father in living oracles through the work of the Holy Spirit, as I permit this to percolate my experience, I am actually experiencing release from the condemnation which the law does to me as it is expanded. I see the law and the gospel that Jesus represents.

The Law Written in Our Hearts

Now through the gospel this amazing erasing of my sins and implanting of the character of God within me takes place, as expressed here:

Jeremiah 31:33 But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

This is the knowledge of God. The transcript of His character, which is the law of God, is inscribed into the inward parts. Now you really know Him when this is happening. This is what it means to know God. The inward parts are being moved by this work of the gospel. And as we are making the effort to search our hearts, we want to ask ourselves the question, How well do I know Him? How do I regard Him when the law of God in all its expansion becomes so big in front of me and I feel so completely overwhelmed with my unworthiness, standing before such a character, such a law? As I stand before this, there is the gospel, and my heart is touched by the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, and God Himself at the cross died with Jesus. Something happens in the inward parts as we permit this to enter. *Let this mind be in you.*

So the language of the Ten Commandments, which are a transcript of God's character, is implanted in the inward parts—we know God. Here is now the beautiful symbolic language that we are to grasp in living experience:

Ezekiel 36:24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. 25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Here is the gospel.

Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do [them].

This is the gospel in its conjunction with the Ten Commandments, the character of God. Jesus represents the law and the gospel, and He gives us a new heart with the law written therein, and He will cause us to walk in His statutes because we will now know God. And those Ten Commandments are now very precious to us because of the wonderful power of the gospel.

Practising the Gospel

As we receive the knowledge of God in the framework that we have established thus far, notice how this integrated principle of pleasing God comes into focus. He has provided for us the forgiveness and the cleansing of our sins as He magnifies the law and shows us our unworthiness; and the more He shows us our unworthiness through the expansion and magnifying of the law, the more the gospel of Jesus becomes operative as we plunge ourselves into it and practise the gospel. What does it mean for us to practise the gospel? We take hold of Jesus in reality and let His dying for our sins do for us what it is meant to do—that I will let my sins be forgiven and I am no longer to hang onto those feelings of guilt.

We are no longer to be oppressed in our mind with anxiety that we are so sinful. But every time we feel the sinfulness, as the expansion of the law takes place and we see another element and another dimension that is not right before us, we must cease feeling miserable about ourselves. Instead of feeling miserable about ourselves we are to open our hearts to the mercy and goodness of God.

We must not allow our attention to be drawn from Jesus to our surroundings. {RH, August 7, 1888 par. 1}

The lower lights must be kept burning. Jesus is the great light which lights every man that comes into the world. All heaven is interested in the conflict that is going on in this world between truth and error, light and darkness. The great Source of all light is constantly shining, and those who will catch his rays, and will reflect them upon others will be light-bearers in this darkened world. {RH, August 7, 1888 par. 2}

We are to be light-bearers in this darkened world. What is it we should do?

We are not pleasing God when we permit our minds to dwell upon our imperfections, mourning constantly over our condition, with our eyes directed continually upon our mistakes and errors. {*Ibid.*}

We are examining ourselves. What are you doing? What are we doing? As the magnification of the law takes place in our hearts and we see ourselves unworthy, and we see our errors clearly laid out before us, it is not pleasing to God *when we permit our minds to dwell upon our imperfections, mourning constantly over our condition, with our eyes directed continually upon our mistakes and errors.* This is interesting.

Come to Jesus; he is the light of world. Take hold of his strength by faith, and make peace with him. {Ibid.}

This is what it means to practise the gospel.

Shall you talk of your weakness? -- No; no; for that pleases the enemy. Dwell upon the great help that has been provided for you in Jesus, your Redeemer. {Ibid.}

This is the God of the Sabbath. Because to believe what Jesus has done in connection with the character of God and the law that condemns us; to believe what He has done in the gospel; as we by faith take hold of that and practise that and cast ourselves upon the mercies of Jesus and His righteousness; as I engage in that, then I am embracing holiness, am I not? I am embracing the righteousness of Jesus, am I not? His justification belongs to me; I am justified, which means I am as though I had never sinned. And as another item of my sinfulness comes up before me, just do it again. And do it again. Practise the gospel. And as we do this, we will find rest, not mourning. It is sort of a paradox, isn't it? We are to afflict our souls in this day of judgment; and so we interpret that to mean that we should constantly despair over our condition and over how sinful we are. But here we read that it is not pleasing to God for me to do that. But as I afflict my soul, as I examine myself in the light of the character of God, which is the Ten Commandments, the transcript of His character, as He delights to expand this before me, and as He wants to impart His law into my heart by confession, repentance, and trust in God, He is not pleased if I keep on hanging on to the discovery of these errors and keep on lamenting about them. Just embrace Jesus, the Light, straight away, and let it penetrate and wash away that by confession and trust. That is what the Hebrews were missing out on, and the churches of today will do the same if they will not pick up exactly what the Hebrews were meant to pick up on. This is God's fear, that we will lament.

Entering into His Rest

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left [us] of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

To know God was to receive His divine mind by the precious *promises*.

Hebrews 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For he spake in a certain

place of the seventh [day] on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

Now this beautiful integration of the gospel and the law is now entered into with regards to the Sabbath as well, because the Sabbath is part of that law.

Hebrews 4:9 There remaineth therefore a keeping of the sabbath [margin] to the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God [did] from his.

So we have a very clear connection of the gospel rest that is found through the application of the magnification of the law and the Sabbath as part and parcel of this beautiful sprinkling of the water upon us and this writing of the law into our hearts.

We have read in Ezekiel that God says: *“I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.”* He is taking His people out from among the heathen, out from among the captivity of mingling with the pagan world around us, and He says:

Deuteronomy 5:15 And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and [that] the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

Why did God command them to keep the Sabbath day? Why does He command the keeping of the Sabbath in connection with the gospel and the law? Because He has brought us out of the pagan nations; He brought the Hebrews out of Egypt. To everyone who has come out of the captivity of the nations around us by the mighty hand of God’s wonderful and powerful grace; as He brings us out He says, I want you to keep the Sabbath because I have done this for you. Do you believe Him? Do you trust Him? Do we really know Him in regards to all this? This sends shivers down my spine every time I see its depths. How easy it is to miss it. How easy it is to see all the laws and statutes in a frame of mind that is so different from the true knowledge of God.

True Sabbath keeping is inseparable from the gospel release that is found in Jesus Christ; just like we can’t keep the law unless the gospel of Jesus Christ has written the law in our hearts. To be kept correctly, the Sabbath is to be entered into with this frame of mind. As we examine ourselves, we therefore ask, Do I know God? Do I know the gospel? Do I know the law and the gospel in Jesus Christ? And as I know Him, my heart is drawn out to Him in living terms; I am practising the gospel. I am releasing myself from the guilt that the magnification of the law is laying upon me, and I trust Him that He forgives me, and I am not

going to displease Him by focusing on my errors and my mistakes. Are we examining ourselves correctly? This is what is contained in the first angel's message—Give Him glory, trust Him. You can see this reality exposed in the word of God all the time.

Outcome of the Gospel

We see in the following words the gospel and what the outcome of the gospel is when we practise it and we know Jesus Christ and the Father as we ought to know them. These are beautiful words to embrace in practice, not merely wonderful poetic words:

Isaiah 61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD [is] upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to [them that are] bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

Tell me, are you comforted when Jesus points out to you, “I have died for you; you don't need to hang on to your mistakes and errors anymore”? The gospel of Jesus Christ is to comfort the mourner, not to cause him to mourn on further about his mistakes and sins. God has sent Jesus to us

Isaiah 61:3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Give Him the glory.

Isaiah 61:4 And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

And what does that remind you of? Isaiah 58. There is the Sabbath. The receiving of the gospel is the repairing of the waste places.

Raising the Old Foundations

Isaiah 58:12 And [they that shall be] of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. 13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, [from] doing thy pleasure on my

holy day; 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].

With the advancing discovery of my sins and guilt, as the law of God, which is His character, is magnified to me, I plunge myself in the beautiful gospel every time another detail is found, and every time my weakness is laid out before me. I lift up my heart in gratitude for what Jesus has done. I keep my eyes focused, not on my mistakes and errors and sins, but on Jesus my Redeemer. And the more I discover my unworthiness, the more my heart goes out to Him, and the more gratitude rises up inside of me; and we will therefore, by the law being implanted in our heart moment by moment, step by step, raise the foundations of many generations. We will turn our foot from the Sabbath, from doing our pleasure on His holy day, because we *know* Him. He is the God of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is *the Lord's day*. Those who know God will keep the Sabbath properly. They will indeed *call the Sabbath a delight*; they will indeed refrain from doing their own pleasure on His holy day. They will call the Sabbath *honourable*, honouring Him, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words, because they know Him—The Lord of the Sabbath.

True Sabbath Keeping—A Relationship

There is here a totally different mentality of true Sabbath keeping. We will delight ourselves in the Lord, and He will be pleased with us, because we are not mourning and carrying on about our frailties and our shortcomings, but we are continually plunging ourselves in the blood of the Lamb.

And if we want to know the expanded detail of true Sabbath keeping, I suggest to you the reading of *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 6*, p. 349-369. It is all laid out there in the framework of knowing God.

Sabbath will therefore come to us as our best friend, because God is our best Friend. And we shall have a totally different attitude to Sabbath keeping, because we know God.

The knowledge of God is indelibly imprinted in that fourth commandment—Exodus 20:10-11. We know it so well; we can so glibly argue the point that the seal of God is in the fourth commandment. We say: “The Sabbath *of the Lord thy God*, it says there. He says, I am the One that created the earth. In the commandment it shows the *name* of God, the *Creator*; it is the seal of God!” But

while it is true that this is the seal of God, we must *know* Him. *Then* only am I sealed by Him, because I know Him.

So the true Sabbath-keeper is the person who has a true knowledge of God and has everlasting life because of justification and sanctification because of his knowledge of God in his inward parts. Just as God said before that He delights in justice, and mercy, and righteousness, so here we read:

Isaiah 56:1 Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation [is] near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. 2 Blessed [is] the man [that] doeth this, and the son of man [that] layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. 3 Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I [am] a dry tree. 4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose [the things] that please me, and take hold of my covenant; 5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. 6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

Here it is; the covenant, the law in the heart.

Isaiah 56:7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices [shall be] accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. 8 The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather [others] to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

He gathers them from among the nations, like He gathered the Hebrews out of Egypt. And as He does this He will keep on gathering others; and the Sabbath-keeping company will continue to enlarge, so that those who are going to be sealed at the end are quite a company—they are called *the hundred and forty and four thousand*. That's a lot of people. They will be taken from among the large numbers of people who claim it matters not which day you keep, who say that the Sabbath was only given to the Jews. All this mentality is far short off the mark, and yet it is being imbibed by the majority of Christians around us. They do not *know* God. But those that do will be taken out from among them, and they shall be gathered together and will give God the glory.

I pray that none of us here will be missing in that company as we examine our hearts and consider that true commandment-keeping and true Sabbath-keeping is to examine whether I truly know God or not. God grant us to know Him and give Him the glory.

Amen.