

Prayer

Bless this day, O Lord, and bless Your people as they worship You; whether in small congregations or large, whether in cities or villages or towns, whether young or old, whether in new congregations or established churches, and in every country of the world. Unite Your people who worship You today in one great chorus of praise! AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Theme: Sabbath

Pray in worship to the Lord your God;

- *Praise Almighty God, the Creator of the world*
- *Confess your faith in Christ Jesus your Saviour*
- *Open up your heart to the work of the Holy Spirit*
- *Confess your sins to the Lord Your God and accept His forgiveness*
- *Forgive those who have hurt you or offended you*
- *Let God speak to You through Scripture and His revealed Word*
- *Decide how to act on what He has said to you today*

Meditation

Lord Jesus, You live in perfect light;
Save me from sin and despair.

Break through the noise of temptation and strife;
Whisper Your word in my ear.

Conquer the clamour of worldly pride;
Show me Your pathway of Love.

Silence the troubles which darken my sight;
O Spirit of God, bring peace.

Speak to me, strengthen me, stay by my side;
My heart is not complete without You.

Lord God, You make sense of my faltering life;
Lead me to holiness and grace.

Bible Study - Deuteronomy 5:12-15

¹² *Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.* ¹³ *Six days you shall labour and do all your work.* ¹⁴ *But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work-- you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you.* ¹⁵ *Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.*

Review

This study is not what you may have expected today. Whilst preparing this weekend's devotions, I felt that the Lord was requiring me to make a change to the website, which has offered daily devotions for each day of the week for nearly four years. He has told me to change the format at the weekends, in particular what is provided on Sundays, the day we traditionally call the Sabbath day.

The reading is from Deuteronomy 5, where Moses retells the story of the giving of the Ten Commandments, and the fourth of these requires God's people to honour the principle of the Sabbath. For many years, I have taught that the Sabbath is an essential principle of Christian life by which we honour God; we are to keep one day in seven free from our normal work, as God did in creating the world (Gen 2:1-3). When creating this website, I decided at its inception that I would provide shorter, 'brief' Bible studies for Saturdays and Sundays, making it possible for me to complete the weekend work in one day, and thus have a Sabbath myself. Also, because personal devotions are not 'work', I did not feel it was wrong to provide them for seven days in the week, and neither has anyone challenged me about this.

Along with many people who work, my best intentions have not always been sustained, and I have not always kept the discipline as intended. However, because our Lord is forgiving in nature, I have confessed my difficulties and sins, and sought His forgiveness for what has gone wrong. Certainly, I have struggled in recent times to maintain a proper Sabbath whilst attempting to maintain this website ministry. As anyone must, I have to work at organising my own priorities with the help of the Lord; but as I prepared for this weekend and prayed about these matters, I was given a brief but important message.

The Lord told me to demonstrate the principle of the Sabbath on the website by leaving Sunday free from the usual devotional material. I believe I am also required to create a standard page for Sundays that contains basic teaching about the Sabbath and worship, suggestions about regular devotions, and page links to guide new site visitors to the available options.

Making this change forces me to consider carefully how I should organise all the daily devotions provided by this site. I am aware of a number of different opinions about how I organise the major weekday studies and the brief studies at the weekends, but I have submitted this to the Lord in prayer. The result of this is that I believe it right to continue in the following way. I will write

- four full studies each week on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday;
- two brief 'weekend' studies on Friday and Saturday.

I am aware that some people appreciate the full studies, and they would like them to be available every day. However, there are many who appreciate the variety provided and the fact that the differences give people choice about how they use the site. The reduction from five to four full studies in a week will also help me to keep a full Sabbath, and maintain the necessary standards for this work.

In teaching about the Sabbath, Scripture has led me to consider some important issues. I do not have the space to write carefully and accurately about this today, but over the next few weeks, I aim to provide an explanation of the relevant Scriptural texts about Sabbath, and make this available to those who wish to explore the matter further.

This is the first time I have changed the site format given to me by the Lord four years ago, and I do this because He has required it of me. I would be very happy to receive your comments about this, but I hope that you will accept my need to be obedient in this matter. However we do it, each of us must find a way to honour the Sabbath principle, and from now on, this will be reflected in the devotions provided by this web site.

May God bless you, *Paul H Ashby*