

IDOLATRY AND REST

Matthew Henry's commentary notes that the list of sins Paul enumerates in his indictment of mankind in Romans 1 encompasses breaking every one of the Ten Commandments. Those who reject God's revelation of Himself are allowed by Him to descend into deeper and deeper depravity.

As I considered each of the Ten Commandments, the one that really stuck out to me was the fourth: keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest. Our idols do not afford us the luxury of any respite from our pursuit of them, but the living God does.

As I read through Leviticus where the details of the sacrificial system are laid out, I do not find any mention of specific sacrifices that were to be made on the Sabbath day, the only exceptions being the three annual festivals. There were daily sacrifices, morning and evening, that were also done on the Sabbath, but nothing prescribed for the average person to bring as an offering to the Lord on that day.

The God we serve, the Creator, who is perfect in holiness, righteousness, justice, and mercy is pre-eminently deserving of constant worship. This is the picture of the daily morning and evening sacrifices in the Old Testament, that there should always be worship ascending to God. In heaven worship is continual. When the Apostle John was given his vision of heaven (see Rev. 4:1-11), he noted that "day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is, and who is to come' . . . and the twenty-four elders fall down and worship Him" (v.8-10). The angels also worship Him (see Rev. 7:11).

How amazingly gracious it is, then, that this One, who merits unceasing adoration should condescend to allow His people one-seventh of their time to be free from any obligation to Him! This is not to say we are free from His moral requirements, but only from work and religious duties. God is worthy of our perpetual worship but He does not need it, nor does he demand it. (See Psalm 50:8-12.) He is at rest and so He allows us freedom to rest.

Those who reject God's revelation of Himself seek to set themselves free from His requirements. In doing so they also certainly set themselves far from the possibility of true rest. The author of Hebrews makes it clear that rest is directly linked to faith (Heb. 4:2). The children of Israel did not believe God would overcome the peoples of the Promised Land. As a result, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years until everyone of that generation had died. (See Heb. 3:16 - 4:7.)

Our puny idols, so worthless compared to the great I AM, demand our undivided attention and unending subservience. How grateful I am to know the One who said, "Come to Me, all who work to exhaustion (marginal translation), and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).