

Stop for the Sabbath

#0617

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—October 31, 1969

I know we're glad to be together in this vesper hour, and we want to hear the Word of the Lord. I love these words that Jesus spoke to His disciples just before He suffered in Gethsemane and on the cross:

"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"
John 15:11.

If our joy is full, then we're joyful, aren't we? That means happy. Almost everybody is hunting for happiness, and the Bible is God's message telling us how to be happy. The whole plan of salvation is designed with this in mind. This evening, I want to study some things that will help us in being happy. And remember, dear friend, when you're happy, you make the dear Lord happy. If you're sad, He's sad. He loves you. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus as He entered into the human woe on that occasion. Of course, He brought joy out of it. He's ready to bring joy out of our woes. But I repeat, when we're sad, He's sad. When we're happy, then He's happy. So we can make Him happy by being happy. How will we be happy? We'll be happy by following the instructions He has given us in our text. It's listening to what He has said.

Turn to the Song of Solomon and get a picture of the happiness of those who have learned to have fellowship with Jesus. While the Song of Solomon is a song of human love, it's also a representation of the love of Jesus for His church, and the love and joy of the church as the church shares with the Lord.

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" Song of Solomon 2:3–4.

There are many people today who have little time to sit down for very long. Here is a picture of quiet, unhurried communion of soul with soul and heart with heart. When I pass through the airport in Chicago, I note in several different places in that great building they have places where people can get a snack, something to eat. They go up to the counter and get their drink and their sandwich, and then they stand at the counters and eat. This isn't the picture in our verse. It isn't standing up and eating. The world is on the run today. But here, the one who knows the Master says, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love."

There is time in the Christian's life for personal fellowship with his Lord. There's time for that. Looking down the stream of time, God saw that we would need special time in this last generation, and He has brought a great reformation focusing attention especially upon the seventh-day Sabbath. One of the great purposes of this is that we may have the time for fellowship with Jesus.

God points out in Isaiah that His people in this remnant hour will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. This is conditional:

"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, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord" Isaiah 58:12.

The Sabbath is preeminently a day of joy, a day of delight, provided we see Jesus in it. "Then shalt thou *delight* thyself in the Lord." One of the greatest privileges of the Sabbath is time for personal fellowship with Jesus. I'd like to be very practical in studying this tonight because we're in a time when it is easy to get into a *rush* even on God's holy day. In fact, some people rush more during the Sabbath than at any other time of the week. They try to cram in a great many things into the 24 hours.

Some of us have learned that the best way to enjoy a meal is not to see how much food we can get in during the time that we sit at the table. Aside from the relation to health, we have learned that the way to really enjoy the food is to deliberately keep from eating everything on the table, but eating a certain amount of certain varieties and sitting there and just relaxing and *enjoy* every mouthful. Is that right? That's the way to really enjoy a meal.

This is the way to enjoy the Sabbath, my dear friend. There's someone here tonight who is going to get some help on this point, and a great load is going to roll off your shoulders, your heart, as the thought comes to your heart that it isn't necessary, it isn't required, and it isn't even a good thing to keep up with everything you might engage in during the Sabbath.

My friend Neil took me to Florida once. He took me there on my first trip, and he was telling me about an experience he had the first time he went to Florida. He visited a friend of his down there who had a big grapefruit grove. And Neil liked grapefruit, and when they were out there together in the grove, he saw a big grapefruit drop.

Neil said to his friend, "Can I have that?"

His friend said he could. Neil opened his pocketknife and opened up that grapefruit, and enjoyed it immensely. About that time, another grapefruit dropped.

Neil said, "Can I have that one?"

His friend said he could. He enjoyed it. Then another one dropped.

Neil said, "It dawned on me that I couldn't keep up with all the grapefruits that were dropping in that one grove." [Elder Frazee laughs.]

Dear friends, that's the way it is on the Sabbath. There are all kinds of blessings dropping, dropping all around. But if you and I try to keep up with all of them, try to get hold of all of them, we'll get spiritual indigestion, and instead of enjoying the Sabbath, we'll feel worn out. Instead of being refreshed, we'll be tired. Do you see what I mean? The Sabbath is the day of refreshment. It's the day of true recreation. It's not for a picnic. It's not for a holiday, but a holy day which has the greatest opportunity for recharging our battery and building up our strength physical, mental and spiritual.

Oh, I am so thankful for the Sabbath, my dear friends. I want everyone to get the *most* out of it. We get the most out of the meal by not trying to eat everything. We get the most out of the Sabbath by not trying to take in everything. Notice in this verse we've just read, Isaiah 58:13–14, that God invites us to lay aside everything that would divert us from the highest privileges of Sabbath-keeping. We're to honor Him not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words. Then we're to delight ourselves in *Him*.

I think we are all acquainted with some of the avenues of blessing that the Sabbath offers: The public worship of God in a meeting such as this; the study of the Bible in the Sabbath school; the preaching of the Word; the hour of worship; the *response* of the congregation testifying of the goodness of the Lord. All of these are avenues of blessing. Another great avenue of blessing is contact with God's created works:

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High: To shew forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night, Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands. O Lord, how great are Thy works! and Thy thoughts are very deep" Psalm 92:1–5.

We find part of the joy and the blessing of Sabbath-keeping in contemplation of God's created works. It's a wonderful thing to live where we can see the things that God has made. The mountains, the plains, the hills, the valleys, the trees, the birds, the flowers, the rocks, the snow, the clouds, the rain, the sunshine—all these things tell of the power and the wisdom and the love of the great Creator. To contemplate these, and let our minds and hearts go out in appreciation of God's wonderful love in creation, is just as much a part of Sabbath-keeping as coming to the house of God and hearing the Word preached. All belong together. And there is a relaxation that comes in contact with nature—a building up of the vitality of the body and the mind and the soul that we *need*.

No matter how we seek to have a balanced program through the week, when we come up to the Sabbath, we find ourselves in need of spiritual recharging. Thank God He has arranged that in the Sabbath, we can all be so blessed that when the sun goes down Saturday night, we can have more strength, more energy, and more power than we had when the sun goes down Friday night. It's a wonderful thing, dear friends, that we can have this experience. Oh, how glad I am that God has given us the Holy Sabbath. What do you say? Thank God for the Sabbath.

In the book *Education*, we have a comment on one of our opening texts:

“An intensity such as never before was seen is taking possession of the world. In amusement, in money-making, in the contest for power, in the very struggle for existence there is a terrible force that engrosses body and mind and soul. In the midst of this maddening rush, God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him. ‘Be still, and know that I am God. ‘Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. With hurried steps they press through the circle of Christ’s loving presence, pausing perhaps a moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens they return to their work”
Education, page 260.

Rushing through seasons of devotion is eating too fast, you see. I call attention to it as it relates to our public worship. May I caution you against the tendency to multiply forms and ceremonies. We are told that when we come to the table, a few dishes are enough. In the public worship of God there is a tendency, as the church loses power, to multiply forms and rituals. Study the way Jesus conducted His instruction to the people. Study the work of the early church. It is conspicuous for its absence of a lot of this ritual and liturgy and form and ceremony. Those of you who plan the services of the church and Sabbath School, study how you can prune away and cut out this thing and that thing. Pruning in an orchard is not necessarily concerned with cutting out dead wood. Even good wood has to be pruned, doesn't it? What for? So you can have more fruit. Is that right?

But now, coming especially to our private devotions, many even in their seasons of devotion fail to receive the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. One of the reasons why people are in too great haste is because they are having to rush through the soup to get to the salad. They eat a few bites of the salad to get to the entrée, and so on through to get to the desert. They have to hurry through that to meet an appointment. The only way we can get more time for some things is to spend less time in something else. Is that right? The only way we can get *more* time to chew our piece of toast is to spend less time in gobbling something else. Fewer varieties and more concentration upon what we *are* taking will bring greater joy to the mind and heart. “Many are in too great haste.”

So I suggest, dear friend, that you deliberately study *how* to keep from hurrying on the Sabbath, and this will get you ready for the rest of the week. Study how, as you come to God in prayer or study. If your time is limited, take only one verse. Sometimes in Sabbath School, so much time is taken in the preliminaries that when it came time for the Sabbath School lesson, the teacher says, "Well, we don't have very much time this morning, so we'll have to hurry to get through the lesson." Have you ever seen that happen? Oh, yes. It can happen. One answer to that is not to have so many preliminaries. But another part of the answer is this: Dear Sabbath School teachers, when your time for the lesson is shortened, don't *run* to get through the lesson.

It's like people who are going through a beautiful park and *racing* to get through, so they cover *all* the roads in the park. The faster they go, the more they miss. Right? That's right. There are times in the Sabbath School lesson it would be better to take a few verses and actually study *those* than it would be with a heaving sigh to come to the ringing of the bell and say, "Whew! We got through it."

Now back to our private devotions. When we get down to pray with God, or when we sit to read His Word, what are we trying to do? Are we trying to get through certain forms, and the more we can pack into 5 minutes or 30 minutes the better? No. We're seeking to have a visit with Jesus. A visit with Jesus. Did you ever have a friend visit you, and their whole attitude was such that they were in such a hurry that there was no time to have a visit? In fact, there are times people come and say they don't even have time to sit down. There are times when we have errands so that we *don't* have time to sit down. But what did our text in Song of Solomon say? "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

Dear ones, when we come to visit with God, before we go to bed at night, when we get up in the morning and through the day, let us cultivate the habit of sensing that we have all the time we need. This is so unusual in this century. We are not in a hurry when we visit with Jesus. If our time is limited, eat less but chew it thoroughly. If our time for study is limited, take fewer verses but relax and meditate, and get the joy of sweet communion with God. Sweet communion with God. Not a pause for a moment in His presence, but personal contact with Christ to sit down in companionship with Him. *This* is our need.

Happy will it be with the children of our homes and the students of our schools when parents and teachers shall learn in their own lives the precious experience pictured in these words from the Song of Solomon: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." I *sat* down; I didn't stand up at a quickie lunch counter and gobble down a snack. Oh, no. "I *sat* down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love." I repeat, dear one: the only way we can have that experience is to *miss* a lot of things. Just miss a lot of things; that's all right. Don't worry about that. If we're getting the *best*, we can afford to miss not only the worse but even the good and the better. Is that not so?

Here is another practical suggestion that I want to bring in, in order that we may get more of the real *joy* of Sabbath-keeping:

“If we desire the blessing promised to the obedient, we must observe the Sabbath more strictly. I fear that we often travel on this day when it might be avoided”
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6, page 359.

Unless we're careful, the tendency to turn the Holy day into a holiday will lead us into the practices of the world about us. The Sabbath is not a day to be running around over the country, my dear friends. It's true, as this page suggests, that there are times that the Lord's messengers must travel in order to give a message to a certain church at a certain time. But even this has certain restrictions around it if you read what's said here. But the Sabbath is not a day for joyriding.

Someone says, “The Sabbath is a day to see nature.”

Yes. Some people see it at 60 miles an hour. Now just how much *spiritual* companionship with Jesus is involved in that is a question. Of course, we would not attempt to dictate what others should do.

I call your attention to this chapter in *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6*, on the observance of the Sabbath. I can tell you this, dear friends: If I were living in the heart of a great city, I'd thank the Lord for some method of transportation that would get me to a park or out in the country where I could *walk* among the trees and see the beautiful things of God. But living in the country surrounded as we are with all the beauties of nature, let us rejoice in having our fellowship with Jesus, and our communion with Christ, in nature as the disciples in His time did. Walking through the groves, in the fields, by the lakeside, and under the open sky, they learned direct from the Creator of the universe the precious lessons of trust. There are wonderful lessons for us in these things if we will address ourselves to them.

I noticed up at our little school, someone has put up a little sign with “STOP” written on it. It caught my eye the other day. It's like one of these stop signs they have on the highway, only this one is smaller. I don't know just what use the teachers and children are making of it, but tonight I'd like to have you think of the Sabbath as the *stop* sign. I suppose you have noticed as you come near a stop sign that sometimes the state highway has been thoughtful enough to put up a sign that says, “Stop Sign Ahead.” What does that mean? Slow down and get ready to stop.

Did you know there was a preliminary warning sign on Friday morning? Friday is the preparation day for the Sabbath. That's its primary purpose. Other things are incidental. And so as we come into Friday, and particular Friday noon, we're to get ready to *stop* before the sun goes down.

Now you know there are drivers who just wear out their brakes coming up to a stop sign. This is hard on the nerves. Tonight we're studying how to be happy and how to get the most out of our Christian experience. The Sabbath, with that great stop sign, bids us as we approach it, to slow down. Then we are to come to a *full* stop and turn to the right onto the highway of the Sabbath day's blessing.

Have we stopped? Have we turned and entered into the great stream of blessing on this Holy day? What is your witness, your testimony tonight? Let God bless us as we praise His name here in this chapel this evening.

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