

Biblical Topics

Ten Commandments - Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

Sabbath day means rest day. For the Jews God appointed the seventh day of the week as a day of rest (Ex. 20:9-11), on which they were not permitted to do any labor except works of charity and of necessity (Matt. 12:10-12). The Jews kept the Sabbath holy by hearing, studying, and pondering the Word of God in the Synagogues (Num. 28:9; Lev. 23:3; Luke 4:16).

Some people still believe that by divine command we must observe the seventh day (Seventh Day Adventists). Others say that we must observe at least one day out of seven. Yet others maintain that OT Sabbath laws now apply to Sunday. They are all wrong. The Sabbath laws are abolished, and God has appointed no other day in its place.

- Matthew 12:8: For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.
- Colossians 2:16-17: ¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.
- Romans 14:5-6: ⁵ One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.
- Galatians 4:10-11: ¹⁰ You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

Probably in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ early Christians assembled for worship on Sunday. Of itself, Sunday is not holier than any other day. It is also not kept holy by merely resting from work, by reading the paper or by visiting with friends. Any day and hour spent in prayer, in hearing or pondering God's Word is a real Sabbath day and hour. In order that we may assemble with our fellow Christians for public worship, we must indeed agree on the time, day and hour, for such worship.

- Hebrews 10:25: Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
- Acts 2:42: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

We sin against this commandment when we do not attend worship; when we do not use the written Word of God and the Sacraments. We also sin when we use the Word of God and the Sacraments negligently or carelessly. This is done when we do not take to heart what we learn from the Word of God and not live according to it.

- John 8:47: He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.
- Luke 10:16: He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.
- James 1:25: But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

What does God require of us in the Third Commandment?

There are two things to know before going into this part of each commandment:

First, one of the best ways to move away from wrong behavior or habits is to do the very opposite actions. Each of the commandments asks the question: What does this mean? Following that question and near the end of the explanation, Luther offers positive behaviors that would aid in doing a better task of following God's direction in this commandment. Work at practicing these.

Second, right after the question comes the statement, "we should fear and love God." In the commandments to "fear God" means to "stand in awe of Him," to revere, respect, esteem, and honor Him. We are NOT to shake in our boots from fright.

God requires that we hold preaching and the Word of God sacred. We must not regard it as the "word of me," which we might ignore, but receive it as the "the Word of God."

- 1 Thessalonians 2:13: And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

God requires that we should gladly hear it, learn it, and mediate upon it. Our heavenly Father has important things to tell us. We should gladly hear Him and love His house.

- Ecclesiastes 5:1: Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.
- Psalm 26:8: I love the house where you live, O LORD, the place where your glory dwells.
- Colossians 3:16: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.
- Joshua 1:8: Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

- Luke 11:28: He replied, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.
- Luke 10:39: Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and learned His Word.
- Luke 2:19: Mary kept and pondered the Word of God in her heart.
- Acts 17:11: The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily.

God requires that we should honor and support the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. God through the congregation calls men who are to teach and preach His Word to us. We must honor them as His servants, we must obey them and must contribute to their support.

- Hebrews 13:17: Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.
- Galatians 6:6-7: Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

God requires us to diligently spread the Word of God. We think of this as mission work.

- Mark 16:15: He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

The above information is taken from: "Luther's Small Catechism" annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler.