

The Observance Of The Lord's Day

(Preached on 14th April 1978)
By Rev. J. O. Soyinka



I pray that the Lord may answer the prayer of that soloist for all of us, who was praying to God to search us and know us, and we know that if the Lord searches us, and if we allow him to search our hearts, it shall be a blessing to us.

Leviticus 19:3 ³ **Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.**

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 ¹² **Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.**

¹³ **Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work:**

¹⁴ **But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.**

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.**

What the Lord will want to talk to us this morning is the observance of the Lord's Day. The observance of the Lord's Day. This is a time of deep mourning, a time of distress, a time that we should have a sober reflection as a people, and as a nation, we ought to examine our lives and ourselves this time to be able to ask the question that why is it that God is not answering our questions any longer? Now we have course to thank God for the freedom we have as a nation, we became independence from the rule of our colonial masters, and we have course to thank God also for the privilege to worship God as a nation, as an individual without any fear, without molestation, for we have the freedom of worship. Not only that, we have the privilege that God has brought us here, where we can hear the sound doctrine and where we have the opportunity of worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth. We are very thankful to God for all these blessings. But one thing we are very apprehensive about and which make us to be very fearful is the fact that as a people, as a church it seems that we are going down the downward trend. The wind of backsliding seems to have overtaken us, and we are been affected by some of these events as a church, hence we have to be very apprehensive of what is happening. We know that if we examine the words of that song which says that 'All shall be well', we know that if we apply ourselves to the word of God, though we do not know tomorrow, but we know that all will be well with us.

Now when the children of Israel were been lead out of Egypt, out of the land of bondage, now by Mount Sinai they were giving the commandments through their leader. Now it was in those commandments that they got all the laws that they were given to observe, both the ceremonial laws and all the other laws that they were to keep. Now among the laws that they were given to keep, the sacred laws to observe, was this important law that had to do with the Sabbath. The Lord their God had given them six days to work and the seventh day for them to keep and in it they were not to do any kind of work. In Leviticus 19:3 that we have read earlier on we were been told of the things expected of the children of Israel there. They were been told among other things that every man should fear his father and his mother and keep my Sabbath. This shows us that this first commandment which they were given was very important, the second and the third were very important; likewise the fourth was also important which has to do with the keeping of the Sabbath. When they fail to keep that Sabbath well lead to them been taken into captivity, and things do not go well with them.

Now the children of Israel did not know how God created the world, but the account in the word of God made us know that God created the world in 6 days, and he was labouring within these six days of creation to bring everything to order. On the seventh day, he rested. This was the order of creation, and this is what we come across in the Genesis account. We were told that the first six days, that God worked and on the seventh day, God rested. We were told that God had set for us an example in line with the popular saying that an example is better

than precepts. This is an example which God left for us which we have to follow and that is the reason why it is necessary for us also, that people living in the world in these last days, follow this injunction that was left with the Israelites, that is to work within the six days that God had given to us, and the seventh day to observe it as a day of rest. Now God objected to the people of Israel labouring on the seventh day, and that is the day of rest. He made it clear that day was not for them to do their businesses, to transact their businesses, to go up and down, and to make merchandise here and there, and that was not the time for them to do that. If they did that, then they would have spoilt the Sabbath for the Lord. If they did that, God would certainly punish them.

Exodus 31:14 ¹⁴ Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it *is* holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth *any* work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Now God's eye is especially on this seventh day for rest, and that is why he had enjoined us to work on six days and on the seventh day to rest. On the journey of the Israelites to Canaan, we note that God ordained the tabernacle worship. Now in this tabernacle worship they were to bring sacrifices and to seek the face of the Lord over their offences. They brought their sin offerings, their burnt offerings, and God's eye was on this day as a day for them to worship and bring their sacrifices unto him. We saw that whenever they fail to do this, God's anger was always resting upon them. This was the reason why they were into captivity into Babylon. We saw that on the seventh day when they were supposed to have their Sabbath of rest, many times they would not observe it. Not only that, after every year of farming – the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th year was meant for farming and to till the land. But the land was supposed to be given rest on the seventh year. But we found that on the seventh year of rest which they were supposed to do no work on the land, they disobeyed in this regard. Both for the seven day and the seventh year which they failed to keep, God brought judgement upon them and that was why we had the Babylonian captivity.

Ezekiel 20:13 ¹³ But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.

Now the generation that came after those that were in the wildernesses, were also reminded of the same thing of the need for them to keep the Sabbaths, of the need for them to rest and observe the word of God in this regard, failure in which they would have great distress and affliction. All the commandments of God are yes and Amen. The Lord honours his word even above his own name. Notice that whenever they observe the word of God in this regard, help was available to them, God was available to help them and answer their prayers. Anytime they disobeyed, and even we too, anytime we disobey the word of God, we observe that difficulties come into our life, and distresses come, and the anger of God will be kindled against us.

Now whenever we fail in anything the Lord command, what always follow is distress and affliction. According to that popular saying that the devil finds work for idle hands, when we fail to occupy ourselves with the things of God, obviously the devil will occupy us with something to do. The day been referred to as Sabbath day is a day of rest, a day of worship, a day when we bring our oblations and sacrifices unto God, a day of prayer and day of rest. Israel failed to do this, and that was why distress and affliction came upon them as a people. As human being we ought to remember that we cannot stand on neutral ground, either be in the camp of the devil or the camp of God, there is no third position. This is the reason why we have got to determine which ground we are going to stand. When you do not obey the word of God in this regard, and you are not standing where God wants you to be, obviously affliction will be yours.

Ezekiel 22:8-16 ⁸ Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.

⁹ In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.

¹⁰ In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution.

¹¹ And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

¹² In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD.

¹³ Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.

¹⁴ Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with

thee? I the LORD have spoken *it*, and will do *it*.

¹⁵ And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee.

¹⁶ And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

I said earlier that the devil finds work for the idle hands. Now I have said also that the Government of our country for what they are doing, we ought to thank God for them, because they have granted us the opportunity to worship God the way we want. They have given us freedom to worship and have declared that we should on the working days of the week Monday through Friday or Saturday, and declare Sunday which is the Lord's Day as work free. Now what happened to Israel, when they failed to keep the Sabbath, all the abominations and the very hideous things which the ear should not hear and which should not be mentioned, they have been committing. Now we have the example of the children of Israel who were given the commandment to worship the Lord on the Sabbath day, to work in six days and rest on the seventh, but they despised the ordinance, they made mockery of it, and instead of it they were doing their own pleasure. Look at all the abominable things that the Lord mentioned that they were doing instead of worshipping the Lord on the appointed day that was given to them. They were discovering the nakedness of their father, indeed they were polluting their bodies and the bodies of those who were very close to them, they were told that some of them committed abomination with his neighbour's wife, and others have lewdly defiled his daughter in law and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. These were the kind of abominations they were committing. This is the case of many today who have been giving the injunction to come to the Lord's house on the Lord's day to worship God. What do they do? They stay at home thinking that they are enjoying themselves, well there so called enjoyment is what will bring sorrow into their life. They stay in their house hoping to fulfil the pleasures of the flesh. You're staying in your house is exactly what is going to kill you. Now we are told that in the word of God that the sorrow of the wicked will kill him. Now when we do not hearken to the word of God, obviously distress and affliction will be ours. We are told in the word of God that it is the blessing of God that maketh us rich adding no sorrow onto it. That is the reason why in this commandment of God we have got to put out heart into it.

⁹ In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.

Now this is the reason why today you find many people on the Lord's Day, what are they doing on the Lord's Day? They are gossiping about, they are planning who they will destroy, they are planning to loot properties, to meet together on how to kill other people, they backbite and go from place to place to commit all sort of atrocities. It is also the same day of the Lord when many gather themselves in secret places and in open places feasting and making merry, dancing about and we ought because of these things as children of God bow our heads and ask the Lord to help us as a nation. In some places we find some of them, they gather together in the name of a feast, they wear only pants both men and women and they enjoy themselves so called in this way. Now this is because they can manage themselves and use themselves as they like, not knowing that their lives do not belong to them. Well we are told that sorrow of the wicked is exactly what will kill him. This is the cause of the trouble of this nation, this is the cause of the affliction this nation undergoing today. Unless we go and ask God to come and help us we will notice that the trouble will continue as it has been doing.

Twenty five years ago, when I first came to this city of Lagos, I had the experience of observing that even in this city it was not usual at all to be playing football on Sunday, it was something that you will not see at all for people to go to feast, and to go to places of pleasure, it was something that nobody will witness at all, but what do we observe today? A day we call Sunday, it is those who answer Dorcas, Jane and Daniel that you will find on the soccer field, they are those you will find in the cinema houses and watch all kind of films. In fact apart from the morning films there are evening films also, scrambling all these places in their thousands? When I go after the evening service and go to my house, sometimes I see those who are coming out of cinema houses at 11.00 pm in the evening, well they are satisfying themselves and enjoying themselves, not knowing that they are only incurring the wrath of God upon themselves. Well the trouble in our nation is as a result of all these things, because there is no smoke without fire. Well it is a day like this which is the Lord's Day, when many people will be travelling from cities to cities, stations to stations. It is a day like this that you see them by the sea side, enjoying themselves by the lagoon, enjoying themselves on pleasurable island where they will carry themselves with the food which they will eat. It is a day like this they organise picnic, and other things just to satisfy the desire of the flesh. We are told that the sorrow of the wicked will exactly kill him. The Sabbath day is not for all these things, the Sabbath day is for worship, a day when we bring our sacrifices, our oblations unto God, the Sabbath day is a day of prayer, the Sabbath day is a day when we think about our relationship to God and God's relationship to us. The Sabbath day is a day which we should seek the face of the Lord. What about those of us who say we are Christians, well when we come to the house of God on a day like this, are we not watching the

time, hardly will the sermon be over when some will come to the altar of prayer and go on their knees, and after 10 minutes they have already disappeared.

Exodus 16:22-24 ²² **And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.**
²³ **And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.**
²⁴ **And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.**

Our God is all seeing and all-knowing and His understanding nobody can fathom. The children of Israel had a provision that God was giving to them through the manna that God was providing for them. They were been told to gather only for one day at a time. The Lord will provide for them, a measure of one omer, and they were not supposed to gather more than this. But in their covetousness, sometimes they would see this thing just as something that had been provided free of charge, they would gather above measure, and beyond the measure they were supposed to collect. One thing that was observed was that when they would get to their houses, the measure which they would not be able to use that very day, would turn into worms on the next day, and this is the reason why we should understand that the God we are serving is a God we ought to respect and whose word we ought to honour. The blessing of the Lord maketh rich and added no sorrow. We should not run away from God, He had ordained that we should work in six days and on the seventh day we should rest. We ought to embrace the word of God at its face value and not alter it at all because the seventh day is the day of rest according to the word of God. God told these people to gather two omers on the sixth day, now on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th days they were to gather an omer at a time. Any time they gathered beyond that, well it turn into worms, and it will bring affliction upon them. Well the God we are serving is a God that has power over all things, He is the God who has power over the air, He is a God who has power over the food that we eat, he is the God who has power over all the elements of creation, and this is the reason why we ought to really embrace everything that he says. My brother and my sister why are you filled with anxiety, this God that we are serving is able to provide all that we need. That is why we ought to trust him with all our hearts.

Isaiah 56:1-2 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.**

Now 25 years ago, or 50 years ago or 100 years ago we can see that over these years, that man has become advanced in knowledge, science and technology, and man has attained great heights in civilization, but unfortunately it has not been the same when it comes to the power of God, it seems that the power of God and the attitude that people have to the things of God have reduced, but this is not from God's own side because God's power remains constant. It is man's failed God and who have reduced the standard of God and he is not hearkening to the word of God as God had ordained that he should.

Now the Sabbath is the day that the Lord had ordained that the people of Israel should observed and this was something he handed to them from generation to generation and this was what the apostle upheld, and this was also Jesus Christ in his early ministry upheld. It had been made know to us that all that happened in the old testament dispensation were all a type of what would happened in the new covenant. Now we saw that the Lord Jesus Christ was buried on Friday which was the same Friday we have today, which was three days ago. The Jewish Sabbath was a Saturday that was the day that they observed for their own rest. We saw that the Lord Jesus Christ resurrected like this which is Sunday which we referred to as the Lord's Day. This was the day in which he met the disciples. He found them talking about the event of the last three days gather together in a room, and there he appeared unto them when all doors and windows were locked and he said Peace be unto you. It was on the Lord's day that he appeared unto Thomas who had been doubting about the events of the last three days, about the miracle that had happened to Jesus. We saw Jesus Christ is the start of the new covenant, the beginning of the new dispensation and during his ministry he wrought many miracles on the Lord's day, and this was the day of Pentecost, when the power of the Holy ghost was given. It was this same Lord's day when we heard a man of God of whom we are going to read now received a great revelation from God.

Revelation 1:10 ¹⁰ **I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,**

Isaiah 58:13-14 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*.

That is the Lord's day. Today is the Lord's day. You should ask yourself how are you spending it? Have you spoilt it? God can rectify it for you today. Have you spoilt it by your actions, by your behaviour, by your worship of God, by the way you pray, come and give yourself to God that you may have the blessing of God upon your life.