**A Grace-Paced Life**

Exodus 31:1-18

**Good Morning Beloved,**

* Our passage today is talking about serving the Lord… and it is about resting in the Lord.
  + As we go through it today, would you ask the Lord to put in your mind two questions…
    - God, how can I serve you as a skillful worker?
    - God, how can I savor you by stopping from working?

**The Reading of God’s Word** – Exodus 31:1-18 (P. ??? in the Pew Bible)

*31:1 The Lord said to Moses, 2 “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, 4 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, 5 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. 6 And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: 7 the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, 8 the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, 9 and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, 10 and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do.”*

*12 And the Lord said to Moses, 13 “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. 14 You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 15 Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. 16 Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. 17 It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.’”*

*18 And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.*

**The Preaching of God’s Word**

1. The LORD Gave Gifts for Service (vs. 1-11)
   1. For several chapters, we have been hearing about the Tabernacle (where God meets with his people) and the Priests (the mediator who represents God to the people and please for the people to God).
      1. Now… the Book of Exodus shifts to one man… Bazalel.
         1. When Moses was on the mountain with God hearing all the precise and detailed commandments about worship… Moses was not be the craftsman creating the Tabernacle, nor the garments of the priest.
            1. That role of construction belonged to another.
   2. God uniquely sets apart Bazalel by “(*having) filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, 4 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, 5 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.” (vs. 3-5).*
      1. The artistic talent of this man to work in such a wide-range of mediums…
         1. In the 16th century… Benvenuto Cellini was an Italian goldsmith, sculptor, draftsman, soldier, musician, and artist who also wrote poetry.
            1. He was able to transition like Michelangelo and Da Vinci from one form of artistic expression to another and still be one of the greatest artists alive.
      2. Bazalel’s giftedness… ability… and knowledge in these three verses seems to surpass any other human artist… though none of his art remains.
         1. POINT: Bazalel was the greatest artist in his generation… BUT it was because he was filled with the SPIRIT of GOD.
            1. We should not look so much to the man as to HIS MASTER.

In the same way that a brush reveals the brilliance of the painter… Bazalel manifests the beauty of the LORD.

* + - 1. A community of artists, including Oholiab, are now commissioned to serve the Lord according to His revealed WILL (vs. 6).
    1. This idea of being filled with the Spirit of God shows up again in the Old Testament as…
       1. Deuteronomy 34:9 - *Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.*
          1. Here the Holy Spirit fills Joshua with wisdom so that the flock of God would be under the skilled hand of a good shepherd.
       2. Micah 3:8 - *But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.*
          1. Here the Holy Spirit fills the prophet with unction so that the people of God would repent and be delivered from evil.
    2. Each man’s gift is uniquely given so that God would be exalted.
       1. The plunder of Egypt formerly showed human pride…
          1. NOW… it reminds men of God’s power (Ex. 20:2).
       2. The treasures of Egypt exalted in man’s ability…
          1. NOW… The ark of the testimony manifested God’s incomprehensibility (Ex. 20:21).
       3. The gold of Egypt lured men to their death in vanity…
          1. NOW… the mercy seat reminds men of their salvation by God’s triumph (1 Chron. 28:2).
  1. In many ways… these men are being commissioned by GOD for the greatest artistic achievement in the history of the world up to that time.
     1. Beloved, the Apostle Paul will address Christians to use their gifts for the glory of God and the Building up of the Body.
        1. Romans 12:4ff - *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them*
           1. Application: Where has God gifted you? Where can you use your gift?

Illustration #1 - Hank Marshman – Campus Crusade Retreat… I told God I would go anywhere and do anything He wanted me to do…For 45 minutes I’ve been working on this knot for this banner and it’s still not looking good.

Illustration #2 - Montgomery Prayer Group – We would pray for an hour then head to breakfast for an hour. Any final thoughts before I go to seminary?

If you are about to sit down and read a book and notice that the kitchen trash is full…. Always… always… put the book down and take out the trash.

* + 1. POINT: Look to use your gifts… but the graces of faithfulness and humility are the context service.
       1. Romans 12:3 - *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*
  1. And that is what makes the next portion of scripture so fascinating.
     1. After having received such a high calling that the focus would be on the WORK to be done… but God declares that there is something more important than the work… it is restful obedience.

1. The LORD Grants Grace for Sabbath (vs. 12-18)
   1. The commissioned artists and the entire covenant community are now reminded again about the importance of the Sabbath.
      1. There is no task so important that it rises above hearing “‘*Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. 14 You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you.”*
         1. This is not a legalist demand.
            1. In Matthew 12, Jesus reminds us that the Sabbath is a day of rest, mercy, and worship.
         2. It is a supernatural opportunity and joyful duty for intimacy.
            1. It is not just “the Sabbath”… it is “MY Sabbath”

It is for knowing the LORD and being sanctified by the LORD.

* 1. There are clear directives… “do no work” (vs. 14)
     1. And clear penalties… “shall be put to death” (vs. 15).
        1. The Sabbath is more than a date of the calendar.
           1. It is a statement of faith in the Lord… it is a sign of the covenant.
     2. Illustration: David Murray does not talk about a day of rest… but he does talk about a restless night where we pride ourselves on not sleeping. Here is his five-point sermon[[1]](#footnote-1)…
        1. *I don’t trust God with my work, my church, or my family.*
           1. Sure, I believe God is sovereign, but he needs all the help I can give him. If I don’t do the work, who will? Although Christ has promised to build his church, who’s doing the night shift?
        2. *I don’t respect how my Creator has made me.*
           1. I am strong enough to cope without God’s gift of sufficient day sleep (Ps. 3:5; 4;8). I refuse to accept my creaturely limitations and bodily needs (Ps. 127:1-2). I see myself more as a machine than as a human being.
        3. *I don’t believe that he soul and the body are linked.* 
           1. I can neglect my body and my soul will not suffer. I can weaken my body and not weaken my mind, conscience, and will.
        4. *I don’t need to demonstrate my rest in Christ.* 
           1. Although the Bible repeatedly portrays salvation as rest, I’ll let others do the resting.
        5. *I worship idols.* 
           1. What I do instead of sleep shines a spotlight on my idols, whether it be late-night football, surfing the Internet, ministry success, or promotion.
     3. What sermon are you preaching in your sleep?
        1. Have you ever had the frustrating experience of going to be early… and being unable to sleep?
           1. One author put the situation like this…

Would a family holiday gathering be good?

Yes.

A trip to Tahiti?

Yes.

A feast filled with laughter?

Yes.

An exercise schedule that is practical and effective?

Yes.

A competent family physician?

Yes.

* + - * 1. All those matters are fine in their place… but “none will make you fearless in the face of trouble”.[[2]](#footnote-2)
      1. By following the Lord’s precept to “keep the Sabbath” (Ex. 31:14), we remember his promise…
         1. *And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” (Ex. 33:14)*
  1. When we stop… [[3]](#footnote-3)
     1. We remember how God made us embodied souls (Genesis 2:1-3)
     2. We recall how God will sustain us in every season (Matt. 6:25-34)
     3. We rejoice because there is something even more significant than the creation of the world that has occurred (1 Cor. 15).

1. Conclusion
   1. What is more significant that the creation of the world?
      1. It is the news that frees of the bondage of false expectations (1 Cor. 10:13).
      2. It is the news that not only tells us to rest, but also enables us to recreate (Isa. 26:3-4).
      3. It is the news that allows us to relax and also prioritize what would best serve the Lord in this life (Eph. 5:16).
      4. It is the news that comforts us in our afflictions and enables us to love people with any affection (2 Cor. 1:3FF).
   2. THE GOSPEL: That new is that the Greatest Craftsman and Artist who ever lived became disfigured for you.
      1. Though Bazalel and Oholiab were endowed with ability, intelligence, and knowledge (Ex. 31:3) so that there art was esteemed as “holy to the Lord” (Ex. 30:37)… no product of pure gold compares to the flawless perfection of the life of the Son of Man.
         1. “Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent!” (Luke 23:47)
      2. The one who was filled with the Holy Spirit at His Baptism (Luke 3:22ff) soon embodied the prophet’s words…
         1. “… his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness” (Isa. 52:14).
            1. As he died on the cross.
      3. Now we recall that Jesus Christ, the one who was discarded like filth, now is the “image of God” (Col. 1:15) that we long to behold (Matt. 17:1ff).
         1. For His resurrection from the dead has abolished forever the destiny of a life filled with perishability, dishonor, and weakness (1 Cor. 15:42-44) as the Risen and Reigning King now has a body that is imperishable, glorious, and powerful.
            1. In Christ, we now are NEW Creations (2 Cor. 5:17)!

Consequently… we serve by the pleasure of our King (John 6:38),

for the glory of our King (Rom. 11:36),

and by the power of our King (Eph. 5:18).

* + 1. For “Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” (1 Cor. 15:45)
       1. May you with a skillful hand serve the Lord with all your gifts, talents, skills, and abilities… as you rest in his grace… and find that HIS burden is easy and HIS yoke is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

**Prayer**

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* (Rev. 1:5-6).

**Benediction – Numbers 6:24-26**

*The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*

1. David Murray, *Reset*, 54-55 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. David Powlison, *God’s Grace in your Suffering, 83* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Marva Dawn helpfully writes, “We will consider many aspects of Sabbath ceasing—to cease not only from work itself, but also from the need to accomplish and be productive, from the worry and tension that accompany our modern criterion of efficiency, from our efforts to be in control of our lives as if we were God, from our possessiveness and our enculturation, and, finally, from the humdrum and meaninglessness that result when life is pursued without the Lord at the center of it all. In all these dimensions we will recognize the great healing that can take place in our lives when we get into the rhythm of setting aside every seventh day all of our efforts to provide for ourselves and make our way in the world. A great benefit of Sabbath keeping is that we learn to let God take care of us—not by becoming passive and lazy, but in the freedom of giving up our feeble attempts to be God in our own lives.” As quoted in Ryken’s *Exodus*, 915. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)