

Lord of the Sabbath

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κύριος γὰρ ἐστὶν τοῦ σαββάτου ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου – Matthew 12:8

In three gospel accounts Jesus proclaims that he is “Lord of the Sabbath.” In each account Jesus emphasizes the word κύριος. Why? What was Jesus’ purpose? Besides discussing this, the focus for this paper will also include considerations related to what Jesus says.

I. Jesus’ Purpose for Proclaiming He was Lord of the Sabbath

For the sake of reference, permit me to read at least parts of the following accounts:

Matthew 12:1-14

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.” He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread – which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven’t you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Mark 2:23-3:6

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Luke 6:1-11

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

The Pharisees were taking issue with what Jesus was allowing his disciples to do. Their objection was not over *what* they were doing. Deuteronomy 23:25 allowed people to eat what they wished as they passed through a grainfield. The Pharisees' objection was over *when* they were doing it. This was the Sabbath, and in the Pharisees' mind Jesus' disciples were doing work and violating the Sabbath. In defending his disciples (and himself, since he was the Pharisees' real target), Jesus says he is "Lord of the Sabbath."

Reading only these accounts might easily give the impression that Jesus was exempt. God, says Koehler, is

"exlex," outside of, above the law; he is his own perfect ethical norm, and whatever he pleases to do or not to do is of itself right and just. "A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). "The Lord is upright...there is no unrighteousness in him" (Psalm 92:15). The personal righteousness of God does not consist in this that he conforms to the law he has given to man, or to another and higher law. (Koehler, p. 26)

Jesus Christ, Son of God, is "not man alone, but God and man in one undivided person." Therefore Jesus also is not subject to the law "because he is Lord of the Law" (FC SD 919,15).

The Savior, however, did not come to earth to display his exemption from the law. "Although he was God, he did not consider his being equal with God as a prize to be displayed," the GWN translation of Philippians reads. "He...made himself a slave, became like other human beings, and when he appeared in the form of a man, he became obedient and humbled himself even to the point of death, yes, death on a cross" (Philippians 2:6-8). Jesus, though free from the law, willingly placed himself "under law" (Galatians 4:4) for us. Christ became obedient to the law for us, in our place "*voluntarily...by free personal choice*" (Schaller, p. 149).

To live in perfect obedience under the law for mankind was Jesus' purpose for coming. To have done otherwise would have ruined his role as our substitute. Jesus was not excusing himself from perfect obedience to the Sabbath law.

Another conclusion which one could possibly draw from Jesus' words in these gospel accounts is that, with Jesus' arrival in the world, the Sabbath law was no longer binding. Being part of the Old Testament ceremonial law, the Sabbath was "a shadow of things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (Colossians 2:17). Christ had come, and so one might assume that the Sabbath was no longer truly in force.

Jesus did, indeed, speak of the time when there would be freedom from ceremonial laws, when believers would simply worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). However, the Christ would abrogate no divine law until he had first fulfilled it. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus says, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Speaking about this passage, Schaller says

that “fulfill” here means more than fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, “but also as the context shows, to the fulfillment of the law as a purpose of his coming. He meant the whole law as written by Moses, including all ceremonial ordinances and civil statutes” (Schaller, p. 149). Wenzel states that nowhere “is there any indication that Jesus intended to abrogate the Sabbath law, nor is there anywhere in the gospels a statement showing he has done so. Jesus has abrogated no law. He has fulfilled it” (Wenzel, p. 238).

Jesus was still very much in the business of perfect obedience to the entire mosaic law – moral, civil and ceremonial. His circumcision, observance of Jewish festivals, submission to tax laws, et cetera are all evidences of this. In John 8:46, Jesus challenged his enemies to prove him guilty of sin. They could point to nothing, not even to the transgression of a single ceremonial law.

Jesus was obedient to the entire law “to death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8), so that “through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). Until he cried out “It is finished” and gave up his spirit, after which the curtain in the temple tore from top to bottom (John 19:30; Matthew 27:51), the entire law was still in effect. Neither Jesus’ incarnation nor the beginning of his public ministry abrogated the ceremonial law.

Why, then did he say he was “Lord of the Sabbath”? Jesus said he was Lord of the Sabbath to assert that he had the authority to explain the true purpose of and obedience to the Sabbath law. Jesus did much the same thing in Matthew chapter 5. After explaining briefly the full, spiritual intent of God’s law, he said, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Christ taught and lived the full meaning of the law, “far exceeding the perverted though seemingly lofty righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees” (Payne, p. 166).

As Lord of the Sabbath, the one who had instituted and who upheld it, Jesus would have been the first to condemn any violation. In this case, it was the Pharisees who were guilty of transgression. Jesus, therefore, spelled out the Sabbath (and, in a wider sense, the law) for the Pharisees, since he had the authority to judge what constituted a violation of the Sabbath (Lenski: *Matthew*, pp. 465-466).

Jesus explained the Sabbath in a number of ways. He brought to mind how David and his companions, fleeing from Saul, were not condemned when their immediate needs made it necessary to eat the consecrated bread which was normally reserved for the priests (Matthew 12:3ff). He reminded them that necessity required the Old Testament priests to “violate” every Sabbath by performing their assigned duties in the temple, and yet they were innocent (Matthew 12:5). He declared that the Sabbath had been “made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). The religious ritualism the Pharisees had developed from the Sabbath was never to be higher than human need (Wicke, p. 44). He established that, contrary to Pharisaic thinking, it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:12; Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9). Jesus, however, got to the heart of true obedience in Matthew 12:7. After asserting his authority by saying, “One greater than the temple is here,” Jesus said, “If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.”

There lay the tragedy. The Pharisees truly did not have a clue as to what those words of Hosea 6:6 meant. Lenski gives a good sense of the deep rift that existed between the Pharisees’ understanding and Jesus’ meaning:

Jesus is not speaking of mere humanitarian pity, nor of merciful actions inspired by the law. The mercy that Hosea refers to comes from the gospel, which fills also the Old Testament. It is born of the new life kindled by this gospel. And so this mercy is known by the inner experience of having it and putting it to delightful practice. When the Pharisees condemned the disciples, who were utterly guiltless, having transgressed not even a ceremonial law, they revealed that Hosea 6:6 (and every other gospel word similar to that) was foreign territory to them. (Lenski: *Matthew*, p. 466)

God’s law demanded total, wholehearted love (Romans 13:10). Selfless, self-giving love for God and neighbor was to permeate everything man did and every command of God he carried out. The Pharisees knew

nothing of this. They were dead in unbelief. They saw God's law only as a means to serve yourself, to elevate yourself, to make yourself righteous. As a result, the Pharisees had twisted God's law into something by which they could condemn others in need who were not even going against the spirit of the law. Only after tasting the true mercy, love, and forgiveness of God in Christ could one begin to take a few weak, imperfect faltering steps in living a life truly pleasing to God.

Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, explained what true obedience to the Sabbath law was. Such obedience was far beyond the reach of sinful man. That's why Jesus, man's substitute, had to come.

II. Related Considerations

A. Two quotes for an overview of the mosaic law

I hesitate to admit this, but there are still times when I struggle to explain in a clear, concise way the different uses of the word "law" in the Bible. Paul Peters' explanation about the abrogation of the mosaic law is very helpful.

But the Ten Commandments are not abrogated outwardly, we hear it said... These laws cannot be abrogated outwardly, we hear it said. Wherever this line of thought is used, two essentially different definitions of law are being blended together, an impossible procedure when we want to prove something. The law in the proper sense of the word, the law in its essence, the substance of the law as the expression of the immutable will of God, on the one hand, and the law as a code of laws given to one people and for a limited time, on the other hand, are not to be confused when speaking of the outward abrogation of the mosaic law. The law in the first sense of the word... does not enter into the picture at all in view of the outward abrogation of the law. It is only the law in the second sense of the word, as a code and corpus of laws, with which we are now concerned. The mosaic law is such a code of laws, given to Moses by God for only a limited period of time and bearing all the earmarks of temporal laws. These laws, including the Ten Commandments as a summary of all the mosaic laws, are abrogated outwardly. The fact that the mosaic law, especially the Decalogue, contains the substance of the law which is to be equated with natural law, does not forbid us from making the above statement. Our statement refers to the mosaic form in which the substance of the law is contained, not to the substance of the law as such. (Peters, pp. 33-34)

Gerald Hoenecke quotes John Brown in describing in a nutshell Paul's picture of the mosaic law as the Old Testament Jews' *παιδαγωγός*:

The apostle is speaking of the design of the law in reference to the Jewish church or people as a body, and their situation under it. They were kept shut up under it. They were kept as under the care of a sentinel, they were shut up in a fortress, or confined within certain limits. They were kept from mingling with the rest of mankind, preserved a distinct people; and to gain this object, were subjected to many peculiar usages. The law was the "middle wall of partition" which kept them distinct from the other nations of the world. The making one city the seat of religion, the laws with regard to food and ceremonial pollution, the institutions directly opposed to the prevailing customs of the surrounding nations, all these formed a more powerful barrier to commixture with the surrounding nations than any physical separation of mountains, or seas, or distance could have done. (Hoenecke, p. 284)

Upon Jesus' death, the entire mosaic law, including the Ten Commandments, was abrogated. Today we choose to use the Ten Commandments in our instruction, not because the mosaic law from which they came is

still in effect, but because, as Luther says, “Nowhere are the laws of nature (God’s moral laws) so well composed and arranged as in Moses” (Peters, p. 34).

B. No strings

Perhaps it’s because I hang my hat in a state where the dominant religion is entirely law, or perhaps it’s because I’ve had my fill of reading anti-Mormon books and tracts published by Reformed church bodies (many Reformed books and tracts seem to follow the same troubling pattern of first contrasting the emptiness of Mormon legalism with the joy of coming to know Jesus as Savior, then listing what *one must do* in life to be a “true Christian”). At any rate, the freedom Christ won for us has taken on a new depth of meaning. The intolerable yoke of trying to earn God’s favor is gone (Galatians 5:10). By faith we stand righteous before God. (Philippians 3:9). Through Christ’s redemption God has already declared us not guilty (Romans 3:24).

Because the Lord of the Sabbath kept every aspect of the law perfectly, “God blotted it out, cancelled and annulled it completely” (Lenski: *Colossians*, p. 116). There are, therefore, no strings tied to the gospel. We are absolutely free.

Likewise, Paul also tells us in Galatians 5:1 to “stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” It’s all or nothing. Either we belong to God by grace, or we place ourselves under the terrible burden of ceremonial works.

If we should keep and observe the laws and rites of Moses, we must also be circumcised, and keep the mosaical ceremonies; for there is no difference; he that holds one to be necessary, must hold the rest so too. (Luther: *Table Talk*, p. 167)

Martin Franzmann summarized Galatians 5:1-12 by saying that freedom and the law

are absolutely incompatible. Freedom is not a way which man has chosen, but the way which God has established. No man may therefore compromise it; to return to the law as the way of salvation, in however slight a measure...is to cancel the gospel, is to lose the Christ who has made us free. (Franzmann, p. 58)

However, Dr. Becker reminds us that each of us, by nature, is still a pure legalist:

Reason knows only the religion of works. Human reason is not able to free itself from the habitual and permanent opinion that man’s righteousness is an active, personal uprightness, rather than the passive righteousness bestowed freely for Christ’s sake, proclaimed in the gospel, and accepted by faith. (Becker: *Foolishness of God*, p. 56)

As a result, Christ’s body of believers faces a constant battle against the Sirens’ song of legalism.
Legalism and ritualism

have been a perennial problem in the church and continue to trouble the church even to this day... In large ways and small, legalisms and special prescriptions of various kinds creep in, weigh heavily on the consciences of children of God, and rob Christ, the Savior, of his glory. (Went, p. 249)

In Christ we are free from the demands of law. In the Christian life all ceremonial laws are gone as well. The temptation to invent new ones, however, is not.

Even though any ceremonial law is an “insult to Christ” (Becker: “Christian Liberty,” p. 40), our law-oriented sinful nature is always looking for a way, any way, to create one in our Christian living. A most appealing way is through the misuse of God’s Word. The Judaizers, for instance, used God’s Word in the Old

Testament mosaic law to tie strings to the gospel. “The Judaistic teaching would not have been nearly so misleading and dangerous to recently converted Gentiles had it, instead of using the Scriptures, operated with something completely foreign to them” (Hoenecke, p. 276).

It’s easy, of course, to find church bodies that misuse Scripture in the spirit of a Judaizer. The Seventh-Day Adventists use Matthew 19:8 to argue that, just as God permitted divorce but did not condone it, so also he has permitted alcoholic beverages but does not condone their use (*Seventh-Day Adventists Believe*, p. 282). Historically, the Reformed have proclaimed God’s commandments in a spirit which presupposed that even the *new man* in a believer needed coercion from God’s law and that the Decalogue per se from the mosaic law was still in force. August Pieper wrote in 1916:

This insistence that the law applies to the Christian has often given the application of Scripture to morals and life in the Reformed Church a distressing and rigoristic quality. Even Scripture *itself* serves more or less as a law, as the rule given by Christ the King to his people... The zeal for the proper observance of Sunday, which has from way back been a characteristic symptom of the Reformed Church, presupposed throughout the acceptance of the binding nature of the Sabbath commandment. (Pieper, p. 113)

That quality of the Reformed is still apparent today. The strings are still tied.

Another route our sinful natures might try to take towards legalism is one which possibly poses a greater threat in our circles. That is the desire to produce a “safer” Christianity (Lenski: *Colossians*, p. 124). It is a God-pleasing thing when, in our freedom, we individually or collectively make sanctified decisions on how best to encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11); to consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24). However, “we will resist any attempt to enslave and entangle us in a system of thought which has as its starting point the idea that the use or non-use of the indifferent things of this world has any bearing on our salvation” (Wendland, p. 8).

“Indifferent things” are constantly requiring us to make decisions about their use or non-use, because they’re a part of the church’s life; from stewardship to externals in worship to outreach approaches and more. If, in deciding what or what not to use, we give our fellow members the impression that ours is the safer or superior strain of Christianity, then we have not only created a form of ceremonial law, we have also torn away at the all-sufficiency of Christ (Colossians 2:10).

The gospel has no strings. In Christ, freedom from the law’s demands is ours. In Christ we can now “bring forth much fruit” (John 15:5), not out of fear of punishment nor out of hope of reward. We do it out of faith and love. There is the beauty of Christian freedom. Though I am no longer under the burden of the law, yet “I perform the works of the law voluntarily and with delight” (Hoenecke, p. 287). Only in the freedom Christ won for me by his perfect obedience can I truly begin to walk with my God.

C. A wider question

Even though Jesus was not exempting himself from the Sabbath when he told the Pharisees he was Lord of the Sabbath, this account has, on occasion, brought up for discussion a wider question: Can God lift himself above his own principles?

In respect to God’s will for us, the answer is yes. Earlier we discussed how God is “exlex,” outside of the law. There is nothing above God to which he must answer. To look at this question further, however, we need a proper backdrop. First, God’s will is clear, because what God says is clear. It is “a lamp for my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105). It makes wise the simple (Psalm 19:7). It is “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). It makes us wise for salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).

Second, what God says about himself is clear. God is holy (Leviticus 19:2). God is just and righteous (Psalm 92:15). God is truth (John 17:17). God is unchanging (Malachi 3:6). God is good (Matthew 19:17). God is love (1 John 4:8).

Because of what he has revealed to us, we know that our God, the great I AM, is

unchangeably good, unchanging in his grace; and all his dealings with us are invariably good...so the immutability of God is the immutability of the God who acts graciously. God's immutability must be seen in its evangelical center: his immutability should always comfort us so that we can trust his "unchanging and unfailing Word and oath to us." (Preus, p. 101)

God is exlex, but he is not amoral! His very essence is love. His unchanging will is good. All that God does is good, and nothing is tainted with injustice (James 1:13). He who takes no pleasure in evil and hates all who do wrong (Psalm 5:4-5) cannot be the cause of evil. God cannot go against his essence. He cannot disown himself (2 Timothy 2:13).

Given this understanding of what God has revealed to us about himself, how far can we go in explaining episodes in which God's choices in what he did or did not do may be truly troubling to us? It's fairly safe to say that each of us, in walking through the pages of Scripture, has paused in reading this or that account and wondered about the why. Why did God allow *this* sin to go on for so long and punish *that* sin immediately? Why was God conspicuously silent about certain immoral practices which some of his believers regularly embraced? Why did God deal with *this* person with the utmost severity and with *that* person with what seemed to be little more than a slap on the wrist? I guess I'm intentionally staying away from wrestling with specific instances in Scripture, simply because it's not this paper's purpose to do that. Suffice it to say that there are accounts in Scripture where we simply do not know specifically why God did what he did. We can point to circumstances. We can observe general consequences which a believer endured as a result of the sin which God had not directly addressed. And yet the specific *why* is not clear to us.

I'm convinced that one cannot talk about this without fully realizing that the Lord who has revealed himself to us is also a *hidden* God. Isaiah declares, "Truly you are a God who hides himself" (Isaiah 45:15). Schaller wrote, "Although God has revealed to us much about himself, he remains everywhere a hidden God, whose thoughts we can only repeat after him, and only to the extent that he has expressed these thoughts in the first place" (Schaller, p. 189).

Luther argues that we cannot

conceive how the eye sees, or how intelligible words are spoken plainly, when only the tongue moves and stirs in the mouth; all which are natural things, daily seen and acted. How then should we be able to comprehend or understand the secret counsels of God's majesty, or search them out with our human sense, reason, or understanding? Should we then admire our own wisdom? I, for my part, admit myself a fool, and yield myself captive. (Luther: Table-Talk, 40)

Because God is truly a hidden God, whose judgments are unsearchable and whose paths are beyond tracing out (Romans 11:33), our trust in him is not based on our near-sighted observations of what he does in isolated, hard-to-understand cases in Scripture, nor, for that matter, on how he guides history or on how he guides the lives of people we love. "I can only rely on him whose heart is known to me" (Bornkamm, p. 68).

God is both a revealed and a hidden God. His will is both a revealed and a hidden will. Our Lord, of course, wants us to concern ourselves only with what is revealed. But we know his heart. "Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:39). "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ" (Ephesians 1:9).

In Christ we know and see the essence of God's heart. It is Spirit-created faith in Christ which trusts God unquestioningly. "Apart from faith," Luther says, "God loses his justice, glory, power, et cetera, and there is no majesty or divine quality where there is no faith" (Elect, p. 211). Faith recognizes that any acts of God

which are apparent contradictions to his holiness, his goodness and love are only that (Mark 4:40). Faith overcomes the apparent difference between what we sometimes see and what our New Man knows.

“For the more penetrating eye of faith these contradictions dissolve by themselves. For faith asks for no definite formula concerning God; it knows that it can reach into mystery and darkness and there find a hand that will hold and guide it” (Bornkamm, p. 74).

We never need to rationalize for others what God decides and does. We need only to trust the One who died to make us his own.

D. Define love at the foot of the Cross

“If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3). Paul is truly echoing what the Lord of the Sabbath said to the Pharisees. Love is the fulfilling of the law. “For since all laws aim at faith and love, none of them is to be in force as a law if it threatens to conflict with faith or love” (Luther: *What Luther Says*, pp. 767-768).

Tragically, however, the Master of Deception has gotten much of the world to redefine what love is. In many circles, love has become synonymous with tolerance; tolerance which accepts anything but intolerance. Such a corrupt spin on the word love turns it into a license to revel in all that God hates and to neglect and despise all that God truly loves. Everything from moral perversion to denial of God’s Word is today tolerated in the name of love, even in the name of “Christian” love.

For us to see the definition of love, however, we must stand at the foot of the cross. Jesus “became obedient to death – even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). “He will crush your head” (Genesis 3:15), God had promised Satan. Jesus’ love in his life and death was no passive tolerance of sin. On the contrary, it was an active destruction of sin’s curse.

That’s the same kind of love that fills our New Man. He doesn’t live to tolerate sin or to excuse it. He zealously lives to destroy it and drown it with the Old Adam. He joyfully lives to fulfill God’s law in its true, spiritual sense. And yet he lives to do all these things with a heart saturated with the full content of 1 Corinthians 13. For it’s also the New Man’s desire never to break the bruised reed or to snuff out the smoldering wick (Isaiah 42:3).

We close with God’s description of what our New Man lives and breathes. He lives and breathes it because Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath and Obedient Servant, has already perfectly fulfilled it.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. – 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

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