

Jehovah Mekoddeshkem

Israel was learning what it meant to be God's people. They were to be different; different from the nations around them, because their God was unlike any other. Yahweh had chosen to place His covenantal love on them, not because of who they were (Deuteronomy 7:6-8) but because of who He is! In Exodus 31:12-17 Israel is once again being reminded of this reality. The primary way, as God's chosen people, they were to display this difference was through keeping the Sabbath. While the other nations labored, they were to rest. On the seventh day of the week they were to enjoy their Sabbath. This day was set aside to commemorate God's creation being finished (Genesis 2:1-3). Because God had ceased from His work of creation, Israel was to cease from her labors. In so doing God's people demonstrated to the world what it meant to be created in God's image; so as image bearers, they also rested. A rhythm had been established from the beginning of time, and Israel was instructed to participate to demonstrate their relatedness to the Creator. This day developed into a time of commemorating another one of God's mighty works, Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). So, once a week, God's people stopped their striving and remembered they were created and delivered, giving an occasion to focus attention and adoration on the God who had placed His love on them, preparing them to join in His work for the week to come.

In Exodus 31:12-17 God reveals that He is the LORD who sanctifies you, or Jehovah Mekoddeshkem. To sanctify means to set apart, to consecrate, or to make holy. The Lord set aside Aaron and his sons, consecrated them, and made them holy for the priesthood (Ex. 29:21). The altar was made holy, and anything coming into contact with it became holy (Ex. 29:37). The Tabernacle, the ark, the table of showbread, the altar of burnt offering, and all the smaller accessories and utensils used in the worship of Yahweh in Israel were anointed with special anointing oil so they became holy. Whatever came in contact with them became holy (Ex. 30:26-29). The primary sign that God had consecrated Israel was through the observance of the Sabbath. Israel's response of rest was in turn evidence that they were sanctified. They didn't sanctify themselves; God sanctified them, but their response of obedience was to be the result of being set apart by God. While the individual's sign of participation in the covenant was circumcision, the sign of Israel's corporate participation in the covenant was the keeping of the Sabbath. Like circumcision, the keeping of the Sabbath was an ongoing responsibility required of each generation. Unlike circumcision,

it was not a single act but an attitude to be consistently maintained and expressed weekly in action. This explains the death penalty for not keeping the Sabbath. Failing to keep the Sabbath was the equivalent of treason, denying the very sign of God's covenantal sanctification.

I finally bowed my knee to the Lord of Lords at 20 years old. I had grown up in a nominal Christian home that had been shattered by deceptive immorality and divorce. After failing to get my parents back together, it was during this unsettling time that I reached the end of my self-righteousness rope and called out to the Lord, and He delivered me from all of that self-effort that I had grown up with. Trying to be good, trying to be the responsible older brother, and trying to gain worth through sports. Like all nominal Christians I had tried to make myself holy, looking to my own efforts for salvation. Thankfully through the failure of my parent's marriage God had revealed my own failure to live a "good" life on my own. However, it was not until two years later that I learned of the true nature of God's work. I was a young naïve youth pastor in Southern California. While leading the teens through the letter to the Ephesians and reading Watchman Nee's book; *Sit, Walk, Stand*; God opened my eyes. Like so many times since, the teacher was the one in need of learning and believing! It was here in the first three chapters of Ephesians that I began to see what God had done:

- 1** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,
 - 2** in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.
 - 3** Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.
 - 4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
 - 5** even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
 - 6** and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...
- Ephesians 2:1-6

I had been made alive and seated in the heavenly places in Christ! This good news along with the revelation of my true identity in Christ from Ephesians 1 was almost too much for me! God had placed His love on me! There was a cross reference that further opened my eyes: "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11) Paul was reminding

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

John 17:15-19

1 Thessalonians 5:23

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

4. Now stop and take time to consider your response to God's work of setting you apart, consecrating you. You are a holy instrument (Romans 6:8-13) made holy for God's use and glory. There is also an ongoing work of sanctification that is called being transformed or being conformed to the image of Christ. (Romans 8:29, 12:2) We submit ourselves to this ongoing work in the same way that we received our salvation, by grace through faith. Often further sanctification comes as a result of crises where we come spiritually to the end of our self-effort rope. It is at these critical times that we recognize our need for God's work. If this is so, cry out to the Lord for His sanctifying work.

5. Now stop and rest. We rest by drawing near to the throne of grace in our time of need (the daily privilege of those in the New Covenant, Hebrews 4:14-16). Why is Jehovah Mekoddeshkem a strong tower? Why is there safety there? Take time, now to rest from your strivings and worship, love and give thanks to the God who accomplishes your justification and sanctification.