

. . . *apart from me you can do nothing* (John 15:5)

If we want to thankfully participate with the Lord Jesus Christ in the restoration of humanity by being vines of faith that bear the fruit of good works, we are to wholeheartedly love God with our time.

A. Wholehearted love for God.

In the *first* commandment, God forbade his people to have any other gods instead of or in addition to him. That is understandable because just as we are not to love someone else instead of or in addition to our *spouse*, so we are not to do this with God, our heavenly spouse who *promised* to love and guide us faithfully, maintain us, to live with us in all holiness, to never forsake us, but be true to us always, in good days and bad, in riches and poverty, in health and sickness, for as long as we both shall live. The *more* we rightly come to know this heavenly spouse, trust in him alone, submit to him with all humility and patience, expect all good from him only, and love, fear, and honour him with all our hearts, the *more* we will find ourselves living in a relationship of wholehearted love with him. If not, we will find ourselves committing the sin of *idolatry* over and over again. I begin my sermon on the fourth commandment in this manner because all the commandments that follow the first are a manifestation of God's heartfelt love to *keep* his spouse with him in this relationship of wholehearted love. That's why he wants us to *listen* to and *obey* him instead of trying to manipulate him (2nd commandment). That's he wants us to seek our *refuge* in his name like the psalmist does in Psalm 23 instead of misusing the name of God by not seeking our refuge in God's name.

B. Wholeheartedly love for God with our time (1)

What is true for the second and third commandment is also true for the *fourth*. Also this commandment manifests God's amazing love for us in that he now commands us to wholeheartedly love him with our

time. This is understandable because time is not our time, but *God's* time. As such, it does *not* belong to us, but to him. What that looks like, according to the fourth commandment, is that we work *six* days a week. This too is understandable against the background of the *culture* in which this commandment was given because lots of people in those days did not like to work six days a week. Instead, they liked to sit around and do *little* or *nothing*, as if time was not God's time, but their own. Today, many people *still* like to do the same—not only in the Middle East, but also in our Western society. Yet, precisely because God's people are God's means of *rescuing* the world from the power and pollution of sin, God commands his bride that she shall not assimilate to this kind of a lifestyle. Instead, she is to be *different* by not sitting around and doing little or nothing, but work six days a week because all time is God's time. God could have taken this time *away* from humanity after the fall into sin, but he did not. Instead, he graciously *extends* the gift of time because he wants to rescue this world from sin by gathering a people for himself from every tribe, nation, tongue and language. And God uses those who are rescued from sin as a means to rescue *others* as they bear witness to the values of the coming kingdom of heaven by showing that all time is God's time. And when it concerns working six days a week, God wants his people to bear witness to the kingdom value that we are *responsible* for this earth. Adam and Eve were in the *Garden*. After their fall into sin, they and their descendents are responsible for the whole *earth*. Concretely, this means that we are responsible for what God has *entrusted* to us to take care

of: ourselves, our spouses, our families, our church, and the area where we live and work. God calls us to make something creatively and lovingly *beautiful* for him (cf. Mt. 25:14-30). And we do this firmly *believing* that the God who has entered into a marriage covenant with us will love and guide us faithfully, maintain us, to live with us in all holiness, will never forsake us, but be true to us always, in good days and bad, in riches and poverty, in health and sickness, for as long as we both shall live.

C. Wholeheartedly loving God with our time (2)

Yet, wholeheartedly loving God with our time not only means we are to *work* six days a week. It also means we are to *rest* on the Sabbath. And we do so because God does not want us to be a *slave* of time. And God wants us to rest from our daily responsibilities in firm conviction the God who has entered into a marriage covenant with us will continue to love and guide us faithfully, and maintain us *even though* we rest from our daily responsibilities. After all, it is the *LORD* who builds the house and not we (Ps. 127)! God's people in the past often had great *difficulty* believing this. Consequently, they often *broke* the Sabbath (cf. idolatry). And they did so while the Sabbath was a *sign* of God's marriage commitment to them (Ex. 31:13,16)! What happened in the past still often happens *today* (cf. idolatry). Yet, God wants the Sabbath to be *delight* for us so that it will be a joy for us to rest on this day so that we can be *strengthened* in wholeheartedly loving him—also with our time.

