



THE SALVATION ARMY UNITED KINGDOM TERRITORY
WITH THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

POSITIONAL STATEMENT

SABBATH KEEPING

The Salvation Army's teaching and practice of observing a weekly day of rest is based upon the scriptural principle of keeping the Sabbath, which has been in existence since creation, and has been demonstrated by God himself.¹ It takes into account the context of the relevant Scripture passages as well as recognising the extent to which traditions have been shaped over time.² Furthermore, through the recorded teaching and practice of Jesus Christ we have been provided with insight as to how God intended the Sabbath to be observed,³ and how it exists for our own benefit.⁴

Sunday has traditionally become the special day of the week which Salvationists have kept aside as a time to rest, worship and pray corporately, whilst affirming that we are not bound by any form of legalism with regard to when or how the Sabbath should be observed.⁵

While some may consider every day to be holy and offered to God, Sabbath-keeping is a reminder to take time to refrain from normal work and to rest in God. Its benefits include enabling a time to meet as a body of believers, to worship God, to remember his sovereignty, provision, love, and mercy, and to remember that we are precious in his sight for who we are, not for what we accomplish.⁶

Observing the Sabbath principle is also a prophetic testimony which points to our eternal rest in Heaven. It is a witness to our future resurrection, promised to all who have placed their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and a reminder that salvation is not earned through our work or good deeds.⁷ Through Sabbath-keeping we are provided with spiritual, emotional and physical refreshment, not only enhancing our productivity, but also enabling us to gain a fresh perspective on our lives, our character, our relationships and our work, as we rededicate ourselves to God.

Sabbath keeping is therefore a matter of spiritual holiness and human wholeness, and the right to exercise our Christian faith through Sabbath keeping needs to be defended in the workplace, with the employer being sympathetic to the need for employees to maintain this principle in their weekly routine.

Footnotes (Bible Quotations from Today's New International Version 2005)

¹ The weekly Sabbath principle is demonstrated through God's inclusion of a time for rest within his plan for creation:

'By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done' (Genesis 2:2-3).

Again he modelled the pattern of weekly rest while miraculously providing manna and quail for the Israelites in the wilderness during their exodus:

'Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much – two omers for each person – and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, "This is what the Lord commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.'"

So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. "Eat it today," Moses said, "because today is a sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any."

Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the

Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out." So the people rested on the seventh day' (Exodus 16:21-30).

² The fourth of the Ten Commandments specifies the Jewish requirement to observe the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week (Exodus 20:8-11), and other Judaic laws within Scripture call for further ordained annual Sabbaths to be kept (eg, Leviticus 23:4-8). These are of significant importance, being a sign of God's covenant relationship with the Jews (eg, Exodus 31:14-17) and which, along with other requirements, continued to be practised by the Messiah Jesus (eg, Luke 4:16; John 5:1; 7:2-10; 10:22-23; Luke 22:7-8), as well as by the apostle Paul (eg, Acts 22:2-3; 21:20-24; 17:2; 21:39) and by other Messianic Jews (eg, Matthew 24:20; Luke 23:55-56) beyond the instigation of the New Covenant.

The divine weekly Sabbath principle pre-dates the Jewish laws and regulations and is therefore a model for us all to follow.

While some may continue to keep the seventh day as their Sabbath, the Church traditionally keeps aside the first day of the week, for historical and practical reasons, while some also identify this day with that on which Jesus Christ arose from the dead (John 20:1-2).

³ '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 human being than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath'" (Matthew 12:11-12) ²

⁴ 'Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:27-28).

5 While Jewish Law requires that this holy day be observed on the seventh day of the week, and traditionally the Church has observed it on the first day of the week, the Sabbath principle merely proposes that we ensure the practice of a weekly day of rest.

‘Some consider one day more sacred than another; others consider every day alike. Everyone should be fully convinced in their own mind’ (Romans 14:5).

‘Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ’ (Colossians 2:16-17).

6 ‘And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching’ (Hebrews 10:24-25).

‘Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Ephesians 5:18-20).

7 ‘A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit’ (John 19:29-30).

‘For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast’ (Ephesians 2:8-9).

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