



Reform in Sabbath Observance

The Sabbath is a golden clasp that unites God and His people. But the Sabbath command has been broken. God's holy day has been desecrated. The Sabbath has been torn from its place by the man of sin, and a common working day has been exalted in its stead. A breach has been made in the law, and this breach is to be repaired. The true Sabbath is to be exalted to its rightful position as God's rest day. In the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah is outlined the work which God's people are to do. They are to magnify the law and make it honorable, to build up the old waste places, and to raise up the foundations of many generations. To those who do this work God says: "Thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Verses 12-14.

The Sabbath question is to be the issue in the great final conflict in which all the world will act a part. Men have honored Satan's principles above the principles that rule in the heavens. They have accepted the spurious sabbath, which Satan has exalted as the sign of his authority. But God has set His seal upon His royal requirement. Each sabbath institution bears the name of its author, an ineffaceable mark that shows the authority of each. It is our work to lead the people to understand this. We are to show them that it is of vital consequence whether they bear the mark of God's kingdom or the mark of the kingdom of rebellion, for they acknowledge themselves subjects of the kingdom whose mark they bear. God has called us to uplift the standard of His downtrodden Sabbath. How important, then, that our example in Sabbathkeeping should be right.

In establishing new churches, ministers should give careful instruction as to the proper observance of the Sabbath. We must be guarded, lest the lax practices that prevail among Sundaykeepers shall be followed by those who profess to observe God's holy rest day. The line of demarcation is to be made clear and distinct between those who bear the mark of God's kingdom and those who bear the sign of the kingdom of rebellion.

Far more sacredness is attached to the Sabbath than is given it by many professed Sabbathkeepers. The Lord has been greatly dishonored by those who have not kept the Sabbath according to the commandment, either in the letter or in the spirit. He calls for a reform in the observance of the Sabbath.

Preparation for the Sabbath

At the very beginning of the fourth commandment the Lord said: "Remember." He knew that amid the multitude of cares and perplexities man would be tempted to excuse himself from meeting the full requirement of the law, or would forget its sacred importance. Therefore He said: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Exodus 20:8.

All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter. We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life. All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, will represent the principles of His government. They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom. Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day they will have the companionship of Christ and will exemplify the perfection of His character. Every day their light will shine forth to others in good works.

In all that pertains to the success of God's work, the very first victories are to be won in the home life. Here the preparation for the Sabbath must begin. Throughout the week let parents remember that their home is to be a school in which their children shall be prepared for the courts above. Let their words be right words. No words which their children should not hear are to escape their lips. Let the spirit be kept free from irritation. Parents, during the week live as in the sight of a holy God, who has given you children to train for Him. Train for Him the little church in your home, that on the Sabbath all may be prepared to worship in the Lord's sanctuary. Each morning and evening present your children to God as His blood-bought heritage. Teach them that it is their highest duty and privilege to love and serve God.

Parents should be particular to make the worship of God an object lesson for their children. Passages of Scripture should be more often on their lips, especially those passages that prepare the heart for religious service. The precious words might well be often repeated: "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him." Psalm 62:5.

When the Sabbath is thus remembered, the temporal will not be allowed to encroach upon the spiritual. No duty pertaining to the six working days will be left for the Sabbath. During the week our energies will not be so exhausted in temporal labor that on the day when the Lord rested and was refreshed we shall be too weary to engage in His service.

While preparation for the Sabbath is to be made all through the week, Friday is to be the special preparation day. Through Moses the Lord said to the children of Israel: "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning." "And the people went about, and gathered it [the manna], and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it." Exodus 16:23; Numbers 11:8. There was something to be done in preparing the heaven-sent bread for the children of Israel. The Lord told them that this work must be done on Friday, the preparation day. This was a test to them. God desired to see whether or not they would keep the Sabbath holy.

This direction from the lips of Jehovah is for our instruction. The Bible is a perfect guide, and if its pages are prayerfully studied by hearts willing to understand, none need err upon this question.

Many need instruction as to how they should appear in the assembly for worship on the Sabbath. They are not to enter the presence of God in the common clothing worn during the week. All should have a special Sabbath suit, to be worn when attending service in God's house. While we should not conform to worldly fashions, we are not to be indifferent in regard to our outward appearance. We are to be neat and trim, though without adornment. The children of God should be pure within and without.

On Friday let the preparation for the Sabbath be completed. See that all the clothing is in readiness and that all the cooking is done. Let the boots be blacked and the baths be taken. It is possible to do this. If you make it a rule you can do it. The Sabbath is not to be given to the repairing of garments, to the cooking of food, to pleasure seeking, or to any other worldly employment. Before the setting of the sun let all secular work be laid aside and all secular papers be put out of sight. Parents, explain your work and its purpose to your children, and let them share in your preparation to keep the Sabbath according to the commandment.

We should jealously guard the edges of the Sabbath. Remember that every moment is consecrated, holy time. Whenever it is possible, employers should give their workers the hours from Friday noon until the beginning of the Sabbath. Give them time for preparation, that they may welcome the Lord's day with quietness of mind. By such a course you will suffer no loss even in temporal things.

There is another work that should receive attention on the preparation day. On this day all differences between brethren, whether in the family or in the church, should be put away. Let all bitterness and wrath and

malice be expelled from the soul. In a humble spirit, "confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." James 5:16.

Before the Sabbath begins, the mind as well as the body should be withdrawn from worldly business. God has set His Sabbath at the end of the six working days, that men may stop and consider what they have gained during the week in preparation for the pure kingdom which admits no transgressor. We should each Sabbath reckon with our souls to see whether the week that has ended has brought spiritual gain or loss.

It means eternal salvation to keep the Sabbath holy unto the Lord. God says: "Them that honor Me I will honor." 1 Samuel 2:30.

The Sabbath in the Home

Before the setting of the sun let the members of the family assemble to read God's word, to sing and pray. There is need of reform here, for many have been remiss. We need to confess to God and to one another. We should begin anew to make special arrangements that every member of the family may be prepared to honor the day which God has blessed and sanctified.

Let not the precious hours of the Sabbath be wasted in bed. On Sabbath morning the family should be astir early. If they rise late, there is confusion and bustle in preparing for breakfast and Sabbath school. There is hurrying, jostling, and impatience. Thus unholy feelings come into the home. The Sabbath, thus desecrated, becomes a weariness, and its coming is dreaded rather than loved.

We should not provide for the Sabbath a more liberal supply or a greater variety of food than for other days. Instead of this the food should be more simple, and less should be eaten, in order that the mind may be clear and vigorous to comprehend spiritual things. Overeating befogs the brain. The most precious words may be heard and not appreciated, because the mind is confused by an improper diet. By overeating on the Sabbath, many have done more than they think to dishonor God.

While cooking upon the Sabbath should be avoided, it is not necessary to eat cold food. In cold weather let the food prepared the day before be heated. And let the meals, though simple, be palatable and attractive. Provide something that will be regarded as a treat, something the family do not have every day.

At family worship let the children take a part. Let all bring their Bibles and each read a verse or two. Then let some familiar hymn be sung, followed by prayer. For this, Christ has given a model. The Lord's Prayer was not intended to be repeated merely as a form, but it is an illustration of what our prayers should be--simple, earnest, and comprehensive. In a simple petition tell the Lord your needs and express gratitude for His mercies. Thus you invite Jesus as a welcome guest into your home and heart. In the family long prayers concerning remote objects are not in place. They make the hour of prayer a weariness, when it should be regarded as a privilege and blessing. Make the season one of interest and joy.

The Sabbath school and the meeting for worship occupy only a part of the Sabbath. The portion remaining to the family may be made the most sacred and precious season of all the Sabbath hours. Much of this time parents should spend with their children. In many families the younger children are left to themselves to find entertainment as best they can. Left alone, the children soon become restless and begin to play or engage in some kind of mischief. Thus the Sabbath has to them no sacred significance.

In pleasant weather let parents walk with their children in the fields and groves. Amid the beautiful things of nature tell them the reason for the institution of the Sabbath. Describe to them God's great work of creation. Tell them that when the earth came from His hand, it was holy and beautiful. Every flower, every shrub, every tree, answered the purpose of its Creator. Everything upon which the eye rested was lovely and filled the mind

with thoughts of the love of God. Every sound was music in harmony with the voice of God. Show that it was sin which marred God's perfect work; that thorns and thistles, sorrow and pain and death, are all the result of disobedience to God. Bid them see how the earth, though marred with the curse of sin, still reveals God's goodness. The green fields, the lofty trees, the glad sunshine, the clouds, the dew, the solemn stillness of the night, the glory of the starry heavens, and the moon in its beauty all bear witness of the Creator. Not a drop of rain falls, not a ray of light is shed on our unthankful world, but it testifies to the forbearance and love of God.

Tell them of the way of salvation; how "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. Let the sweet story of Bethlehem be repeated. Present before the children Jesus, as a child obedient to His parents, as a youth faithful and industrious, helping to support the family. Thus you can teach them that the Saviour knows the trials, perplexities, and temptations, the hopes and joys, of the young, and that He can give them sympathy and help. From time to time read with them the interesting stories in Bible history. Question as to what they have learned in the Sabbath school, and study with them the next Sabbath's lesson.

As the sun goes down, let the voice of prayer and the hymn of praise mark the close of the sacred hours and invite God's presence through the cares of the week of labor.

Thus parents can make the Sabbath, as it should be, the most joyful day of the week. They can lead their children to regard it as a delight, the day of days, the holy of the Lord, honorable.

I counsel you, my brethren and sisters: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." If you desire your children to observe the Sabbath according to the commandment, you must teach them by both precept and example. The deep engraving of truth in the heart is never wholly effaced. It may be obscured, but can never be obliterated. The impressions made in early life will be seen in afteryears. Circumstances may occur to separate the children from their parents and their home, but as long as they live the instruction given in childhood and youth will be a blessing.

Traveling on the Sabbath

If we desire the blessing promised to the obedient, we must observe the Sabbath more strictly. I fear that we often travel on this day when it might be avoided. In harmony with the light which the Lord has given in regard to the observance of the Sabbath, we should be more careful about traveling on the boats or cars on this day. In these matters we should set a right example before our children and youth. In order to reach the churches that need our help, and to give them the message that God desires them to hear, it may be necessary for us to travel on the Sabbath; but so far as possible we should secure our tickets and make all necessary arrangements on some other day. When starting on a journey we should make every possible effort to plan so as to avoid reaching our destination on the Sabbath.

When compelled to travel on the Sabbath we should try to avoid the company of those who would draw our attention to worldly things. We should keep our minds stayed upon God and commune with Him. Whenever there is opportunity we should speak to others in regard to the truth. We should always be ready to relieve suffering and to help those in need. In such cases God desires that the knowledge and wisdom He has given us should be put to use. But we should not talk about matters of business or engage in any common, worldly conversation. At all times and in all places God requires us to prove our loyalty to Him by honoring the Sabbath.

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