**“‘Almost Discouraged’” The Signs of the Times, 8, 9.**

E. J. Waggoner

“I am so weak, and have so much to overcome, that I am almost discouraged.” How often do we hear this expression in social meeting. It is the burden of some testimonies. It seems as though some people think that there is special merit in depreciating themselves. They almost take pride in their humility. Others do not seem to know that there is any better way for them to do. But however true it may be, or however often it is repeated, it cannot but be displeasing to God. We are commanded to “exhort one another,” and to “provoke unto love and good works,” but such language is anything but encouraging. Its effect is seen on the individual who uses it. It soon becomes habitual, for each time it is uttered the discouragement increases. It grows by repetition, but it is withering to the soul. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 103.1}

It is the language of unbelief. Although the individual may be unconscious of the fact, the spirit which prompts it is the same as that possessed by the ten spies who brought back an evil report. God had said: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Having this promise, it was exceedingly wicked for them to say they could not possess the land. On this occasion, as well as at other times of murmuring, God showed his great displeasure. In this instance we see the natural result of such distrust. They did not enter the promised land. “And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.” Numbers 14:26-30. They said they could not go, and they did not; but Caleb and Joshua, who said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are able to overcome it,” did enter the promised land. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 103.2}

Distrust and faint-heartedness are as displeasing to God now as then. His promises are abundant. Listen to a few: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:15, 16. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” James 1:5. God does not upbraid us, *does not* taunt us with our weakness. A child has not the strength of a man, and no father will ridicule his infant child because of its weakness. Its very helplessness appeals to his sympathy. So God says, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” Psalm 103:13, 14. But it is necessary to “ask in faith, nothing wavering” for “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” Again we are exhorted: “Be content with such things as ye have for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Hebrews 13:5; and yet again: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:32. One more passage ought forever to stop all our murmurings and doubtings: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13. Read also Hebrews 2:18; 12:1-4; 13:8; Philippians 4:4, 13; and especially Psalm 103:17, 18, and Lamentations 3:22-33. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 103.3}

Do we really believe these promises? If we did would we not appropriate them to ourselves? We read them, and say we believe them, and yet to very many they seem vague and unreal. But if they are to be of any benefit to us we must consider them as real, and make our requests accordingly. Our belief is measured by our actions, not by our words. Is it not as much infidelity to disbelieve a promise that God has given as it is to disbelieve any other portion of his word? Let us take heed lest there be found in any of us “an evil heart of unbelief in departing from God.” {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 103.4}

But ought we not to be sensible of our weakness? Certainly; the more so the better. But we are not to think of it in such a way as to become discouraged. There are two ways of looking at our own frailties. One is to brood over them, lose sight of God’s willingness to help, and become discouraged. This pleases Satan. If we are prone to doubt and become faint-hearted, he will assist us to see more lions in the way than really exist. And such a course is really a form of selfishness. The individual becomes so intensely self-conscious that he can take cognizance of nothing else. He thinks of himself so much that he loses sight of Christ. He imagines that he himself must do the great work that is to be done, and when a few attempts show him the impossibility of it, he becomes discourage. Another way to consider them is in the light of the promises of God. When we do this we have every reason to be encouraged, and God is pleased with us. The more we distrust ourselves while trusting God, the stronger we will be, for God has said: “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9. And in view of this, Paul was led to say: “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake; for *when I am weak then am I strong*.” No man ever had more trials than Paul had, or felt less confidence in himself; but he believed God’s promises, and it was no vain boast for him to say: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 103.5}

Thus it was with Caleb and Joshua. It was not vain self-confidence which led them to say, “We are well able to overcome it.” Hear them: “If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and *the Lord is with us*: fear them not.” Numbers 14:8, 9. So the Lord is with us; his promises are multiplied to us. We have the accumulated proofs of his power and goodness through thousands of years past. It is far more sinful for us to distrust God now, than it was for ancient Israel. Then, “let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.” E. J. W. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 103.6}

**“Mixed” The Signs of the Times, 8, 9.**

E. J. Waggoner

Consistency is a rare jewel, and nowhere do we find less of it than among the advocates of Sunday observance. A curious example was lately given in a meeting of the “Home Protection Society,” an organization to enforce the Sunday Law. In one of their resolutions it was stated that the weekly rest and worship of the “Christian Sabbath,” is a right guaranteed both by the laws of God and of the State. Later in the meeting, the individual who offered the above mentioned resolution, stated that he thought that Seventh-day Adventists, in carrying on their printing business on Sunday, “do not violate the letter and spirit of the law of man, but they do violate the law of God.” Now here’s the rub. The advocates of the Sunday have claimed that the law which they were seeking to enforce was simply a “police regulation,” that there was no thought of enforcing the law as a religious enactment. These same individuals too, at the society meeting referred to, regretted that Brother White, when arrested as manager of the “Pacific Press,” for working on Sunday, did not plead guilty. But an eminent member of the same society thinks that he has violated the law of God, but not any law of man, either in letter or in spirit. Of what, then, would they have desired him to plead guilty? Evidently of nothing, unless they hold that a Police Court is empowered to enforce the law of God. It has puzzled us to know just on what grounds the Sunday advocates stand, but we are not likely to have our curiosity gratified in this request, at least not until they find out for themselves. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 108.1}

One thing, however, we would request as a special favor. We claim to keep the law of God. In fact, the requirements of our denomination are simply to “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” But our friends say we are violating the law of God. We ask, Wherein? We think that, as a Christian duty, they ought to apprise us of our error. It will not be enough to say that we work on Sunday. We know that, but what we want is a plain statement of the law of God that we violate by so doing. Something if it exists, that shows that Sunday has any more claims as a day of rest than Thursday or Friday. We shall not be exacting; a single passage will suffice. All the commandments of God with which we are familiar are very plain-“thou shalt,” and “thou shalt not.” Give us, then, a statement of it that is plain enough to convict a man in any court-before a jury of unprejudiced intelligent men, and we will plead guilty, and at once and forevermore keep “the venerable day of the sun.” We are willing to be enlightened, but while we find no law of God in favor of the Sunday, we shall believe with Paul, that “where no law is, there is no transgression.” E. J. W. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 108.2}

**“Questions Answered” The Signs of the Times, 8, 9.**

E. J. Waggoner

1. What is the nature of the “strong drink” referred to in Deuteronomy 14:20. It apparently recommends that which other Scriptures prohibit. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 108.3}

2. Are we to understand from Numbers 11:31 that the quails fell to the depth of three feet over so great an area of country as here indicated? C. E. W. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 108.4}

1. It is not in Paul’s writings alone that there are “things hard to be understood.” And it is not alone the “unlearned” that have stumbled over the subject of “strong drink” as found in the Bible. In this case, as in all, it is safe to start out with the assurance that the Bible does not contradict itself. The Hebrew word *shebar*, which is translated “strong drink,” means that which *satiates*, as well as that which *intoxicates*. Kitto says: “It had in all probability a much wider signification than is now conveyed by the phrase ‘strong drink.’” He classes the various senses of the word under three heads. 1. Luscious saccharine drink, or sweet syrup, especially sugar or honey of dates. From it are derived words meaning “dainty,” “dessert,” “sweetmeat.” 2. Date or palm wine in its fresh or unfermented state. 3. Fermented, or intoxicating palm wine. It is doubtless the first of these that is referred to in Deuteronomy 14:26. The “strong drink” of the first class, was not injurious in itself, but was forbidden whenever the circumstances required abstemiousness, as in Judges 13:4. It is a well-known fact that much sugar or sweetmeats produce a state of fullness, lassitude, and dullness. It was on this account, doubtless, that these things were forbidden to those who “separated themselves unto the Lord.” Numbers 6:2-4. The use of the last class, that which intoxicates, is not countenanced in the Bible. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 108.5}

2. It is not a necessary conclusion, even from our English version, that the quails lay on the ground to a depth of two cubits, and the original does not warrant it. The sense is conveyed by the Vulgate, a literal translation of which is: “They flew in the air two cubits high above the earth.” E. J. W. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 108.6}

**“Sunday Law Tract” The Signs of the Times, 8, 9.**

E. J. Waggoner

Last week an edition of 5,000 of this tract issued, and another edition is already called for. The Oakland church has taken and distributed 1,500, the San Francisco church 1,000, and other churches that ordered only a few hundred, are calling for more. The demand for it convinces us that it is the right thing at the right time. Our object in circulating the tract was not to stir up strife, but to take advantage of an interest that had been awakened by the friends of the Sunday, to place the truth of the Bible on this question before the people. The truth on the Sabbath question has probably been brought before more people in California during the past two weeks than ever before. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 108.7}

That the prejudices of some should be aroused by it, is no more than could be expected. The truth has ever met with opposers, and we know of no way to avoid opposition except by keeping silent in regard to the truth, and this we cannot do. On the whole, however, the tract has been well received, and has received favorable notice from the press of this city. Some persons accused us of playing into the hands of the “League of Freedom,” of desiring to enforce the observance of the Sabbath, and other things equally absurd. But none who have candidly read it, find any difficulty in understanding exactly our position. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 108.8}

We have nowhere charged the “Home Protection Society” with the arrest of the manager of the Pacific Press. They disclaim any connection with is, and we give them the benefit of the supposition that when they started the movement they did not foresee the result. Some evidently thought that a law which is general in its application could be enforced upon simply a few. They doubtless have learned better by this time. The Oakland *Times* justly says: “The obstacles in the way of a Sunday Law are much greater than had been anticipated when the agitation was first started.” One of two things must now be done: The law must either be strictly enforced or else repealed. Whatever happens we are content, so long as the agitation serves to make the truth of God more clear to the people. E. J. W. {SITI March 2, 1882, p. 108.9}

**“Can We Keep the Sabbath?” The Signs of the Times, 8, 10.**

E. J. Waggoner

There are thousands throughout the United States and in Europe who are ready at once to answer this question in the affirmative, for they know by experience that it is possible. Indeed, the question really admits of only one answer, and that is, “Yes; we can if we want to.” But there are many persons who imagine that they cannot keep the Sabbath, and for their benefit I propose to consider some of the so-called reasons which they give. This article is not intended for those who, in order to avoid the acknowledgment that the seventh day is the Sabbath, plead that the world is round, that time has been lost, and other flimsy objections against the Sabbath. It is only for those who acknowledge the truth of the Bible, are fully convinced that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, and know that it is the duty of all men to keep it, but fancy that they are so situated that it would be impossible for them to do so. I say they fancy, for it is not so in fact. No individual was ever yet placed in such a position that he could not do what was certainly his duty to do. He might find it difficult, and perhaps unpleasant, but never impossible. {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.1}

“I would like to keep the Sabbath,” says one, but my business will not let me.” Well, if this is really the case, then get some other business that will not hinder. If you saw that your present business was greatly injuring your health, and would cause your death in a few months, unless abandoned, you would lose no time in changing your occupation. But by disobeying God you lose his favor, and this will bring eternal death. {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.2}

“But I could not live if I were to keep the Sabbath.” This is of the same stamp as the reason given above, and is offered alike by those who are in prosperous business, and those who labor for their daily bread. How do you know that you could not live? Are there not thousands who are keeping the Sabbath, and do not they live? Ask those who have tried it, and see what testimony they bear. It is true, you may not be able to amass quite so much property, but “what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.3}

But let us consider this matter further. You say you cannot live if you keep the Sabbath. Are you sure that you can if you do not keep it? Have you any guarantee that your life will be continued indefinitely? Do those who violate God’s law live any longer on an average than those who keep it? You certainly know of no one who is not subject to death. The psalmist says: “What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” Psalm 89:48. “It is appointed unto men once to die,” and this without any distinction in regard to age or belief. Then why do you assume that you will be exempt if you do not keep the Sabbath. {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.4}

“But,” our friend will doubtless reply, “I expect, of course, to die sometime in the natural course of events, whether I keep the Sabbath or not; what I mean is, that I shall not be able to earn a living for myself and family.” Well, you profess to believe the Bible; let us see what it says in regard to this matter. “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But *seek ye first the kingdom of God*, and his righteousness; *and all these things shall be added unto you*.” Matthew 6:31-33. Could any promise be plainer than this? If it does not mean just what it says, it does not mean anything. And God is fully able to fulfill this promise. Just consider what a vast estate he has. Here is a description of it: “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.” Psalm 50:10-12. Surely you need have no fear of starving, if you serve such a master as that. {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.5}

Listen to another promise: “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, *and verily thou shalt be fed*.” Psalm 37:3. There you have the promise; now listen to the testimony of one who had an opportunity to know, as to how this promise is fulfilled: “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” Verse 25. You can verify this in your own experience if you choose. Who are they that form the great army of tramps, that wander through the country begging bread? Are they Christians, as a class? Are they those who have sunk their property in the service of God? I think no one ever saw a tramp that was noted for his piety. An active worker in the Young Men’s Christian Association says that of the hundreds who have applied for charity to the institution with which he is connected, all are irreligious persons, and that he has never known a regular attendant of church to apply for alms. Truly, “the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.” {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.6}

Again the Lord says: “But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.” Deuteronomy 8:18. No one can doubt the truth of this statement. “He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” We could not keep ourselves alive for a single moment. All men, good and bad alike, are equally dependent on God for life and its attendant blessings. Now, if God has prospered you in the past, when you were trampling on his law, unwittingly it may be, will he not be more likely to continue his blessing if you obey him? Will he not have an especial care for his servants who cheerfully obey him? Certainly no person who professes faith in God’s word should ever fear to keep his commandments. {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.7}

Do not, however, get the idea that abundant riches are promised to those who obey God. The psalmist saw that the wicked were “not in trouble as other men;” he saw that they had more than heart could wish; and he became envious when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. But when he went into the sanctuary of God, and understood their end (Psalm 73:17), then his envy ceased. He saw that God does not propose to reward either the good or the bad in this life. The wicked may well have riches in this life, for that is all the enjoyment they will ever have; and the righteous can well afford to have but little of this world’s goods, and even to suffer affliction and persecution, since for them God has reserved “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away”-“an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.8}

But there is this difference between the wealthy sinner and the poor servant of God: There is no promise made to the transgressor of God’s law. God allows the sun to shine, and the rain to fall, alike on the just and unjust. But the transgressor has no assurance that all his riches may not “take to themselves wings and fly away,” and he be left a beggar; while the righteous man who may have but a bare living, has the promise that that little will be continued to him. God often permits his servants to be brought into strait places, and, in order to try their faith, to be sometimes brought where they can see no opening whatever; still his promises are sure, and cannot fail. Food and clothing are promised, and though these may be scant, yet “a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.” Psalm 37:16. {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.9}

One thought more: If we keep the commandments of God, we are God’s servants. If we refuse to obey him, whose servants are we?-We certainly must be the servants of Satan. There is no neutral ground. “To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.” Now suppose you continue in sin, and sin is nothing else but the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), what is your prospect for living? Here is it: “For the wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23. “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” Ezekiel 18:20. You say you cannot live if you keep all God’s commandments; God says you cannot live if you do not keep them. If your statement were true, you would only lose this present life, and many men in times past have lost their lives for the truth of God, and we honor them for it; but if you disobey God, you will lose eternal life. Jesus says: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Matthew 16:25. Satan may promise well, but he has nothing but the treasures of this world to offer, and they are all forfeited, so that he has really nothing to offer you. How different is the service of God. The apostle says: “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” 1 Timothy 4:8. {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.10}

But the promises of God and happiness to those who fear God are almost innumerable. Not a tithe of them has been given. Surely those mentioned are sufficient to enable anyone to trust God. Some further objections, and Scripture testimonies, may be considered next week. E. J. W. {SITI March 9, 1882, p. 115.11}