**“Is It a Sin?” The Signs of the Times, 8, 38.**

E. J. Waggoner

A few days ago one of our brethren distributed some copies of the “Special Edition” on the local train in Oakland. Pretty soon a gentleman who had been reading a copy came and sat down beside the brother, and said, “Don’t you think you would be doing a good deal more good if you wrote and preached against sin, instead of saying so much about the Sabbath?” {SITI October 5, 1882, p. 452.1}

The idea expressed in this question is one that obtains quite generally. To be sure, there are many who teach that Sabbath-breaking is a sin; but the Sabbath whose observance they would enjoin is a counterfeit Sabbath, and not the true Sabbath of the Bible. But it is true that even among those who believe that Sunday is the Sabbath, there is a great deal of indifference as to the manner in which it is observed. {SITI October 5, 1882, p. 452.2}

In order to ascertain whether Sabbath-breaking is a sin or not, we must first determine definitely what sin is. There are certain things which few would hesitate to call sin, but we want a general rule that will cover all cases; a standard that will enable us to tell at once if a certain action is wrong, so that we may not be left to conjecture. Fortunately, we have just such a rule-one that is given by the pen of inspiration. We find it in 1 John 3:4: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.” Paul makes the same statement in another form: “For where no law is, there is no transgression.” Romans 4:15: and, “Sin is not imputed where there is no law.” Romans 5:13. And this fact is universally recognized. You cannot convince any man that he is doing wrong unless you first show him a law that he is violating. And whenever a man does anything, knowing that that act has been forbidden by some power having the right to enact law, he stands self-condemned. {SITI October 5, 1882, p. 452.3}

Solomon tells us that to fear God and keep his commandments is the whole duty of man. Then it must necessarily follow that the law to which John and Paul refer, the transgression of which is sin, is none other than the law of God-the ten commandments. A few texts will suffice to show the importance of observing that law. As above quoted, it comprises man’s whole duty. Ecclesiastes 12:13. It is “perfect, converting the soul.” Psalm 19:7. The keeping of the law is the test of our love to God. 1 John 5:3. It is only by keeping it, in connection with faith in Christ, that we are to inherit eternal life in the kingdom of God. Matthew 19:17; Revelation 22:14. On the other hand, we are told that “he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” Proverbs 28:9. Surely no worse fate could befall any man than that God should turn with loathing from his entreaty. And we learn that a partial obedience to the law will not suffice to bring the promised reward, or avert the penalty, for partial obedience is disobedience. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10. It could not be otherwise; for since God is the author of the whole law, we dishonor him if we do not render obedience to the whole law. If we willfully refuse to keep one of the commandments, we show that we do not keep the other nine out of any special regard to the Lawgiver, but because it is convenient or for our self-interest to do so. We do, therefore, really dishonor God by violating one of his commandments as truly as though we violated them all. {SITI October 5, 1882, p. 452.4}

Turning to consider this law, upon the observance of which our eternal destiny depends, we find that the Sabbath commandment is the most honored of them all. The fourth commandment is the one chosen to make known to men who the maker of the law is. It is true that three other commandments contain the word “God,” but there is nothing in them to designate who is referred to. “There be gods many and lords many, but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things.” 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6. The fourth commandment expressly declares that this only true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is its author. {SITI October 5, 1882, p. 452.5}

This law is almost universally recognized as the embodiment of all morality, the summary of all law; and the open violation of nearly all of them, especially the first three, and the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth, is considered a flagrant sin. The violation of the fifth and tenth is also theoretically considered a sin, although practically those two commandments are little regarded. But whether men regard the commandments in their lives or not, in theory they are generally ready to admit that they are all binding, with the exception of the fourth. The only reason of which we can think why men should thus lightly regard the fourth commandment, is that its violation is so common. Indeed, the custom of the people is often urged with all seriousness as a sufficient reason for not keeping the Sabbath. The Sabbath commandment is the only one concerning which men argue thus. They do not argue that God will not punish the thief because there are so many who steal; or that false swearing is now pleasing to God because it is so common. But in regard to the fourth commandment, they seem to imagine that they can overawe God with numbers, and convert him to their way of thinking. But sin is sin, whether practiced by few or many. Men become accustomed to sin, so that its heinousness is lessened in their estimation; but it is not so with God. The multiplication of sin only serves to make it more offensive to him. In this age of the world, human life is held very cheap, and murders are so frequent that we read of the worst crimes with scarcely a second thought; but we are not to suppose that God is less moved by a murder now than when Cain killed his brother. The fact that a multitude join together to commit any sin, does not recommend it to him. He says, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil;” and he has expressly declared that “though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.” {SITI October 5, 1882, p. 452.6}

Who can tell which commandment God regards as the most sacred? It is beyond the power of man. When Christ was asked, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” he did not specify any one, but quoted the two great principles which cover the whole law. We have no assurance that God regards Sabbath-breaking as any less a sin than theft or murder. From the place which he has given the fourth commandment in his law, as the one to show the badge of his authority, his creative power, it would seem that if any distinction were made, Sabbath-breaking would be considered as the greatest of sins. But even if we were able to discriminate between the commandments, and say that one is greater than another, it would not release us from keeping the least commandment; for Christ says, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least [*i.e.*, of no account] in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:19. Following the verse in which James says that to offend in one point makes a man guilty of all, we read: “For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” James 2:11. The fourth commandment may be supplied in place of the sixth, and we would then read, For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou break the Sabbath, thou art become a transgressor of the law. The same may be said of any other precept of the decalogue. {SITI October 5, 1882, p. 452.7}

Sabbath-breaking, then, is a sin, and those who would be preachers of righteousness must give the Sabbath its proper place in the law of God. We do not teach Sabbath observance to the exclusion of the other commandments, but we exhort men to obey all the law, for that is the standard by which “God shall bring every work into judgment.” “And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before God, as he hath commanded us.” Deuteronomy 6:25. E. J. W. {SITI October 5, 1882, p. 452.8}

**“The Fruit of the Spirit” The Signs of the Times, 8, 39.**

E. J. Waggoner

If we compare the fruit of the Spirit with the result obtained by following the teachings of the Bible, we shall find that they are identical. Paul says that all Scripture is “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. So if a man will profit by the reproofs and instruction found in the word of God, he will be perfect, lacking in no good thing. But a man cannot be more than perfect, and anything different from perfection is imperfection. The fact that any belief or practice is not indorsed or sanctioned by the Bible, is sufficient to condemn it. If it is not found in the Bible, it is not a part of the outfit necessary to make a man perfect. {SITI October 19, 1882, p. 463.1}

In Galatians 5:22, 23 we read, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” These fruits of the Spirit are the results which come from following the guidance of the Spirit. We will examine them in detail, and see if they differ in any particular from the word of God. {SITI October 19, 1882, p. 463.2}

The first thing mentioned is love. Very many persons entirely mistake the Bible meaning of love. With many it consists in a sort of good feeling, an indefinable condition, the principal feature of which is that the person feels happy and extremely well satisfied with himself. But the kind of love that the Bible brings to view does not depend solely on the emotions, but is very practical. John says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” 1 John 5:3. Again, “And this is love, that we walk after His commandments.” The keeping of the commandments is the test of love. Paul says, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Who ever heard of a law being fulfilled by its violation? Some persons think that they have so much love to God that he will accept it as a substitute for keeping the law; but we here learn that love *is* the keeping of the commandments. How a person can love God, and refuse to keep all his commandments, is a mystery that no one has ever been able to explain. Those who make such a profession lay themselves liable to the charge in 1 John 2:4. {SITI October 19, 1882, p. 463.3}

We see, then, that the result of following the Holy Spirit is to keep the commandments. But this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13. And we shall find that while love is the keeping of the commandments, all the other things mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22, 23, as the fruit of the Spirit, are the natural results of keeping the commandments. Joy and peace are mentioned next; and they attend the keeping of the law. The psalmist says, “Great peace have they which love thy law.” Psalm 119:165. Again we read, “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.” Isaiah 48:18. Here, too, the Spirit and the word agree. {SITI October 19, 1882, p. 463.4}

Long-suffering and gentleness are given as part of the fruit of the Spirit. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 13:4, that charity (love), which we have seen is simply the keeping of the law, “suffereth long, and is kind.” He also says that it “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up;” and as we have seen, meekness is a part of the fruit of the Spirit. Goodness is also part of the fruit of the Spirit; and Paul tells us that love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” {SITI October 19, 1882, p. 463.5}

Again we read that “where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.” 2 Corinthians 3:17. But James says that the law of God is a “law of liberty.” James 1:25; 2:12. And David says that those are at liberty who keep the law. Psalm 119:45. Here, again, we see perfect harmony. Again Paul says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Romans 8:14. John tells us that those whom God in his great love calls his sons, and who have a hope to see him as he is, purify themselves. 1 John 3:1-3. And Peter completes the chain of testimony by saying, “Seeing ye have purified our souls in *obeying the truth*,” and he adds that this purifying is done “through the Spirit.” 1 Peter 1:22. {SITI October 19, 1882, p. 463.6}

But it is not necessary to multiply proofs. That there can be no inharmony between God’s word and his Spirit is so self-evident that no one who professes to be a Christian should presume to question it. Indeed, the Bible is the work of the Holy Spirit itself. We read, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1:21. May the Lord help us humbly to follow the leadings of the Spirit, that we may be guided “into all truth” (John 17:17), and finally share the promise of our Father to “see him as he is.” E. J. W. {SITI October 19, 1882, p. 463.7}