**“Can We Keep the Sabbath?” The Signs of the Times, 15, 43.**

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 November 11, 1889, p. 632.32}

“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 November 11, 1889, p. 632.33}

“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 November 11, 1889, p. 632.34}

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 November 11, 1889, p. 632.35}

“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 [anxious] 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 fullness thereof.” Psalm 50:10-12. Surely you need have no fear or starving, if you serve such a Master as that. {SITI November 11, 1889, p. 632.36}

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 November 11, 1889, p. 632.37}

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 November 11, 1889, p. 632.38}

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 November 11, 1889, p. 632.39}

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 November 11, 1889, p. 632.40}

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 November 11, 1889, p. 632.41}

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. E. J. W. {SITI November 11, 1889, p. 632.42}

**“Can We Keep the Sabbath? No. 2” The Signs of the Times, 15, 44.**

E. J. Waggoner

One of the most common objections that people urge against keeping the Sabbath is that it is peculiar, and that very few people observe it. There are two classes of people who make use of this argument. The first class attempts to make capital out of it against the Sabbath, and argue that since the Sabbath is observed by so very few people, it cannot be right, assuming that the majority must be right. The second class believe that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, but have not the courage to live out their convictions of duty. They say, “If everybody else would keep the Sabbath, I would be glad to do so too.” {SITI November 18, 1889, p. 632.43}

The first class might easily be convinced if they wished to be. Let us see to what absurdity the theory that the majority must be right will lead us. Less than four hundred years ago it was the universal belief that the earth was flat, and that it was stationary. For hundreds of years no one had thought of questioning this belief; and when, finally, a few bold spirits ventured to advance the idea that the earth is spherical, and that it moves, they were regarded as fanatics and dangerous heretics. But the proof that the earth is round was convincing, and now all enlightened nations hold to that belief. Now if it be true that the majority must be right, we must conclude that several centuries ago the earth was really flat, but that, as people advanced in knowledge it gradually assumed its present shape. Many other conclusions equally absurd must be accepted if we hold to the theory that whatever is popularly believed is right. But the advocates of that theory rarely urge it on any subject except the Sabbath. The truth is that the opinions of men have no effect whatever on facts. Men’s opinions change, but the truth is always the same. {SITI November 18, 1889, p. 632.44}

Those who dare not venture out alone to obey the truth, may have their faith strengthened by considering some cases that are on record. Paul says in Romans 15:4, that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” {SITI November 18, 1889, p. 632.45}

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews contains a list of notable men. We are referred to Noah, who “walked with God” in an age when the “wickedness of man was great in the earth,” and “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” It must have been no slight effort for Noah to face the world with such an unpopular truth as that the world was to be destroyed by a flood. No doubt he was jeered at in a most unmerciful manner, and considered a fool, but the event proved the wisdom of his course. Had he waited for people enough to accept the truth for that time to make it respectable, before commencing to build the ark, he would have been drowned with the rest. {SITI November 18, 1889, p. 632.46}

Abraham is another individual who is help up as an example of faith. I think we do not generally realize the full extent of the sacrifice that he made when he obeyed the command, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, and unto a land that I will show thee.” His father’s family, as we learn from Joshua 24:2, 3, were idolaters. No doubt he had to endure much opposition and ridicule from his relatives, for thus leaving them and going away with apparently no object whatever, without even knowing where he was going. No one who starts out to obey God in these times can have a darker prospect to all outward appearances, than Abraham had. Had he drawn back, instead of becoming the father of all the faithful, his name might never have appeared among them. Other instances might be cited indefinitely. {SITI November 18, 1889, p. 632.47}

Who does not honor those moral heroes? and who has not wished that he might be even like them, and be accounted worthy to share in their reward? Well, who is there that cannot? They were men, subject to weaknesses and temptations the same as men are nowadays. They lived in the world, associated with their fellow-men, and transacted business, the same as men do now. How, then, did they become so honored of God?-Simply because they were willing to be regarded as peculiar; they thought more of God’s approval than they did of the applause of men. For this we hold them in high esteem, yet we shrink from doing what we commend in them. We may, however, be like them if we will, for their cases are recorded, as Paul says, simply for our encouragement. {SITI November 18, 1889, p. 632.48}

We shall find, if we study carefully, that the bible says much in favor of peculiar people. The Jews were brought out from Egyptians bondage that they might serve the Lord, and be a peculiar people. Paul says in Titus 2:14 that Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” The apostle here speaks especially to those who are “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” It seems, then, that the people of God need not hope to become popular in these days any more than in the past. Christ was very unpopular: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” John 1:11. Very few believed on him, and they were of the most despised class, and at the last even these forsook him, while he suffered the most bitter persecution. And what does he say to his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” Those, then, who are waiting for truth to become popular before accepting it, will wait in vain. {SITI November 18, 1889, p. 632.49}

One thought in regard to this expression, “peculiar people.” The idea is not meant to be conveyed that people are to strive to make themselves conspicuous by their peculiarity. The people of God are peculiar simply because they are “zealous of good works,” in a time when men (professed Christians) are “lovers of their own selves,” “despisers of those that are good,” etc. 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Christ was peculiar in this respect, yet he was a pattern of humility. This people are to be like him; not despised on account of individual peculiarities, but because of their steadfast adherence to truth. “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” John 15:18, 19. {SITI November 18, 1889, p. 632.50}

Who is not willing to suffer with Christ? When he endured so much for us, can we not endure a little for him? If it were possible for us to get to heaven without any suffering, would we not feel ashamed to say that we had never suffered for him? We have also this to comfort us, that whenever we suffer for the truth, he suffers with us, and accounts all injury done to his people as done to himself. And to crown all, we are assured that “if we suffer we shall also reign with him,” and that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” E. J. W. {SITI November 18, 1889, p. 632.51}

**“Is It a Sin?” The Signs of the Times, 15, 45.**

E. J. Waggoner

It is not an uncommon thing for those who teach that it is a Christian duty to keep the Sabbath, to be met by the inquiry: “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 November 25, 1889, p. 632.52}

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 November 25, 1889, p. 632.53}

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 November 25, 1889, p. 632.54}

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 November 25, 1889, p. 632.55}

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. {SITI November 25, 1889, p. 632.56}

“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 November 25, 1889, p. 632.57}

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 November 25, 1889, p. 632.58}

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 November 25, 1889, p. 632.59}

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 November 25, 1889, p. 632.60}