

CAN WE KEEP THE SABBATH?

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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 tract 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.

"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.

"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?"

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?" (Ps. 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.

"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." (Matt. 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." (Ps. 50:10-12) Surely you need have no fear of starving, if you serve such a master as that.

Listen to another promise: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Ps. 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."

Again the Lord says: "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." Deut. 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.

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 (Ps. 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."

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." (Ps. 36:16)

Another quite common objection 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."

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.

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 Rom. 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."

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.

Abraham is another individual who is held 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.

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.

We shall find, if we study carefully, that the Bible says much in favor of peculiar people. The Jews were brought out from Egyptian 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 disciples? 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.

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 Tim. 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)

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." (Rom. 6:23) "The soul that sinneth it shall die." (Eze. 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." (Matt. 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 Tim. 4:8)

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."