

SABBATH KEEPING

BY A DAUGHTER OF SARAH.

WHEN the brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus come together on the first day of the week, it is not to observe the day as a Sabbath, but to remember their absent Lord according to his appointment. The keeping of a Sabbath day is nowhere enjoined upon them; but on the contrary they are counselled by the apostle of the Gentiles to beware of observing days.—(Gal. 4:10, 11; Col. 2:16, 17).

In writing to the Gentile believers, at Rome, he says, “One man esteemeth one day above another; and another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth (*margin*, observeth) the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day to the Lord, he doth not regard it.” From this it is evident that the keeping of a Sabbath day is not among the things required in obedience to the Gospel of Christ. The apostle gives permission to any weak one in the faith, who may entertain a scruple on the subject, to observe the day to the Lord; but he is not to judge his brethren in the matter, who have no such scruple about any particular day; but who regard every day holy to the Lord, having consecrated themselves and all they have to his service for ever.

But there are some who say that part of the law given by or through Moses to the children of Israel, viz., the Ten Commandments, remains as given, and is to be accepted in its entirety by those who have entered into the New Covenant, which was confirmed by a greater than Moses, and who is proclaimed to be the end or finishing of the law, and that therefore we are bound to keep the fourth as well as the other nine commandments. Now it would be a very serious matter, if we should discover like king Josiah that we have been neglecting the word of the Lord, and leaving such an important duty unfulfilled as the keeping of the Sabbath. Let us see under what conditions it was to be kept, and what was commanded to be done to those who broke the Sabbath law, and then we shall be able to judge and be fully persuaded in our own mind whether the ordinance of the Sabbath remains to be observed or is among the category of ordinances which were taken out of the way, being abolished in him who hath made of Jew and Gentile one new man in himself. In Exodus 31:14, we read “Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore for it is holy unto you; every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant.” Here is the Sabbath law, and the penalty incurred by anyone who broke it. The Children of Israel were commanded to put to death those who broke it—(Num. 15:32, 35). If we are under this law we must do the same. We dare not pick out (like Saul who was rejected for his disobedience), one part, and say “I will keep this part of the commandment, and leave out another part of it.” We are either under the law, and bound to keep it out and out, or we have been delivered from it, and fulfil the spirit of it in the new commandments we have under Christ.

Paul terms the law a ministration of death, and so it was, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Let us take the third commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." What was the penalty incurred by the breaker of this commandment? "And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him; as well the stranger as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death." If we are under this law we are bound to carry it out as God commanded. Take the fifth commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The blessing promised to the keeper of this commandment must lead to the conclusion that the children of Israel in the land promised them, alone, can answer to the people to whom this law was given. It cannot apply to the saints at the present time for they are not in possession of the land, and therefore cannot remain long in it, though obedient. Was there any penalty to be inflicted where this law was disobeyed? Yes, "if a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, and the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them. . . . And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die, so shall thou put away evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.—(Deut. 21:18, 21). Here is the law of the ten commandments—a ministration of death. Are we under it? If we are, we are bound to carry it out in every particular. Take the sixth commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." Was there a penalty incurred by the breaker of this law? Yes, "He that killeth any man shall be put to death." Here again is the ministration of death.—(Lev. 24:17). The saints are not at liberty to carry out this penalty at the present time. Take the seventh commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Was death the penalty of the breach of this commandment? Yes, "The adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."—(Lev. 20:10). If the ten commandments are binding upon us, then we must carry them out to the full. The saints are not at liberty to carry out this penalty at present. But are they binding upon those who believe and obey the Gospel of Christ? No. Though Abraham's seed, we are delivered from the law by Christ, who has redeemed us by his precious blood to himself. We are now only under law to him.

But although not under the law, our lives are in harmony with all its requirements, because the love of God and the love of our neighbour is the spirit and essence of the law, as enjoined for obedience. We are not only delivered from the law, but from its curse. Under the law, death was the penalty of its deliberate breach. Under Christ, all manner of sin is forbidden; but all manner of sin shall be forgiven to those who confess and forsake it. Under the law, a man was permitted to take vengeance upon anyone who did him an injury, but under Christ we must wait until God avenge us. Under the law, a sinner was to be put to death. Under Christ we must wait for him to come and avenge the unjust, and transgressors of every sort. We have to bear with them, and suffer at their hands; we must not return evil for evil but contrariwise blessing, even as Christ our example prayed for his murderers. Under the law, the keeping of the Sabbath was to be rewarded by present manifold blessings in the land. Under Christ we are waiting for that Sabbath keeping which remaineth for the people of God, and which was foreshadowed under the law. There we shall rest from our toil and sorrow, which has lasted all through the long night of the times of the Gentiles. Then shall we rejoice before the Lord when Jerusalem shall arise and shine, and when all nations shall flow up to her to learn the law of the Lord, that they may walk therein. Then shall the Gentiles be under law to Jehovah, and then shall all families of the earth be blest, walking in obedience to Him; keeping Sabbaths and new moons, and the appointed feasts. Meantime, the brethren and sisters of Christ are strangers and pilgrims, seeking to please God by

obedience to His commandments. These commandments are preserved to us in the sayings and writings of Christ and his apostles. If the keeping of the Sabbath, and the other nine commandments remained to us for observance, surely so momentous a subject would not be left in obscurity, especially as a council of the apostles was convened for the special purpose of considering whether the Gentiles were to keep the law of Moses. Surely this would have been the time to say that the Sabbath must be kept and to warn the brethren against neglecting to keep the Sabbath day. They did not mention it, nor in any of the letters preserved to us do any of the apostles ask the brethren to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Their reasoning and persuasion is all in an opposite direction. Christ and his commandments is the burden of their teaching. Let us rejoice, brethren and sisters, that Christ has made us free, and let us stand fast in that liberty, taking good heed to the law which he has given us, which he sums up himself under two heads, viz., to love God with all our heart, and to love one another fervently. If these dwell in us and abound, we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the work of the Lord; and may hope for an entrance abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us cease to jangle about the law from which Christ has delivered us, and let us rather study the things which have been commanded and consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.¹

¹ (2001). *The Christadelphian*, 16(electronic ed.), 509–512.