

The Gospel of the Sabbath

We live in a world of unrest. Sin has set everything awry. Great numbers live unsatisfied lives, although constantly seeking for satisfaction. Many are carrying a load of anxiety which is crushing the joy out of life and making their service bitter with hard bondage. The struggle for existence, the apparent triumph of injustice, and the misfortunes which never seem to come singly, are bringing a bitterness of soul and a hardness of heart into the experience of a larger number than we are wont to think. To such the most optimistic philosophy becomes a mockery, and exhortations to virtue and happiness are the mere mouthing's of hopelessness and despair. With minds distraught and nerves frazzled, they seek to forget their troubles in a whirl of excitement which often ends in tragedy. Angels weep and Satan rejoices when the hope of better things is thus extinguished, and the light of life goes out in a horror of great darkness. Are such experiences the inevitable lot of the human family? Is there no hope of deliverance from such a living death?

If we accept the evolutionary philosophy and rely upon "resident forces" as the only conquering power, we must resign ourselves to the principle of the survival of the physically fittest, even though they may be morally the most unfit, and regard the sufferings of the many as the necessary accompaniment to the advancement of the few. Such a view may nourish the pride of those who regard themselves as the fortunate few, but to average people, who constitute the great majority, it will mean the car of Juggernaut with a different label. It does not solve the problem for the man at the bottom of the pit to know that he is one of the rounds of the human ladder by which others have climbed to safety. He is still left in the pit, an unwilling sacrifice for the benefit of the few. The philosophy of continuity which shuts out all interference from without, is cold and heartless, and leaves us hopeless and "without God in the world." Ephesians 2:12. It is like the mirage to the thirsty and fainting traveler, which may inspire a temporary hope, but only to deepen his despair. It is a base counterfeit.

There is only one cure for restlessness, and it is found through the work of Him who said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. Sin is the root cause of all our troubles, and Jesus Christ gives rest from sin. For this our hearts cry out.

"O where shall rest be found—
Best for the weary soul?
'Twere vain the ocean depths to sound,
Or pierce to either pole."

The answer is found in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to this we will now give our attention, that we may enter into this rest.

There are many standpoints from which we may study the gospel of our salvation, but now we shall do so from the standpoint of the Sabbath. And first remember that the Sabbath was instituted and given to man before the entrance of sin into the world. God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." Genesis 2:2, 3. Four things are here stated:

1. God rested on the seventh day. SOTW 105.1
2. God blessed the seventh day. SOTW 105.2
3. God hallowed the seventh day. SOTW 105.3

The reason for thus blessing and hallowing this particular day was that God rested on that day. No other day was ever treated in this way, and because it has thus been treated it is distinguished by two expressions, "the seventh day" and "the Sabbath day." Do not overlook the important fact that the seventh day is God's rest day, and that He blessed it and gave it to man before the fellowship between God and man had been disturbed by sin. God created man and blessed him on the sixth day (Genesis 1:27, 28, 31), and to man, who had already been blessed, He gave the day which He had blessed, having Himself rested from all His work on that day. This is the origin of the Sabbath. It was instituted before the reign of sin began, and it will continue after the reign of sin has come to an end. Isaiah 66:22, 23. It is the perpetual memorial of that going forth of the power of God whereby the life of God became clothed with visible forms. "The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity." Romans 1:20. "That which hath been made was life in Him." John 1:3, 4, margin.

By virtue of his having been created in the divine image with the capacity to recognize and worship God, man was entitled to, and was granted, the privilege of most intimate communion with his Maker, the fellowship of life with life, of spirit with spirit, then which there can be no closer union. Such fellowship could be maintained only so long as the heart of man was in tune with the heart of God; and when man deliberately chose a way of life out of harmony with the will of his Creator, he forfeited all right to, and all capacity for, the privilege and blessing of communion with God. Had it not been for the provision made "before times eternal" Blank Page (2 Timothy 1:9) in the gospel of the grace of God, man would have utterly

perished when he by his own act cut himself off from the life of God. Voluntary obedience to the will of God is the only possible basis for fellowship with God.

Before man was sent forth from the garden of Eden, there was proclaimed to him the good news of victory to be gained over the enemy through the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15)- victory through suffering-the assurance of rest from sin. Of this rest the original Sabbath became both the reminder and the pledge, and so the Sabbath had its place both in the law and in the gospel. When the meaning of love to God and love to one's neighbor was developed in a definite way by the voice of God Himself at Sinai, the Sabbath was given a central place (Exodus 20:8-11), and the reason for its observance was clearly stated. And when the gospel of salvation through the mediatorial work was proclaimed by instituting the services of the sanctuary, and the possibility of fellowship with God was thus made known, the Sabbath was appropriately made the sign of the creative power which alone can sanctify a sinner. Note these words; "Verily ye shall keep My Sabbaths: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am Jehovah who sanctifieth you." Exodus 31:13.

I wish to emphasize this connection between the Sabbath and the gospel of sanctification, as established by the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the ever-recurring reminder of God's rest from all His work at the close of the week of creation, and in the gospel of the grace of God it becomes the sign and the pledge to man of the restoration of that rest from sin which is the experience of sanctification and the basis of a restored fellowship which was forfeited through sin. The fitness of the Sabbath to be such a sign and pledge becomes apparent when we consider that the same creative power which was exhibited in the original work of bringing the world into existence, and which operated through the mediating agency of the eternal Son of God (Hebrews 1:2), is the power of God unto salvation when mediated through the same Son of God in the new creation (Romans 1:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17), whereby the image of God is restored in the soul, and the fellowship interrupted by sin is renewed in Christ. The spiritual significance of the Sabbath is clearly set forth in the third and fourth chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews. The experience of the children of Israel is taken for the basis of the instruction. They were promised rest in a land out of which the Lord was to drive their enemies before them, if they would be obedient to His voice, but their failure to obey led to the loss of that rest. Thus, it is stated: "To whom swear He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief." Hebrews 3:18, 19. Immediately there follows a warning lest the experience of Israel should be repeated in the Christian church: "Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did

not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard. For we who have believed do enter into that rest." Hebrews 4:1-3.

Plainly it is the rest of faith which is here considered, the rest of soul which comes by believing on Christ as the Saviour from sin, the rest which is forfeited through unbelief, which means disobedience. But it is equally plain that this rest of soul is in some way directly connected with the seventh-day Sabbath, for there follow immediately these statements: "He hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all His works; and in this place again, they shall not enter into My rest." Hebrews 4:4, 5. This connection is simple and significant. The seventh day is God's Sabbath, His day of rest, in which He rested from His work. "He rested, and was refreshed." Exodus 31:17. After man's rest in God was disturbed by sin, the gospel made provision for the restoration of this rest through the operation of the creative power of God in the new creation, and physical rest on the seventh day became the sign of the spiritual rest, the rest of soul, which results from the saving work of Christ. The rest which Joshua endeavored to give to the children of Israel was not the final rest, and so we read: "There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from His." Hebrews 4:9, 10. The original work of God in creation was absolutely perfect, for "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." Genesis 1:31. But as for man, "there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one." Romans 3:12. To rest from our own works and to enter into God's rest is therefore to cease from our sinful works and to accept the finished work of Christ in our behalf, and the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is the outward sign of such an experience.

The gospel of the Sabbath is therefore the good news that Jehovah has "wrought all our works for us" (Isaiah 26:12) by virtue of the new creation, and that the observance of the original Sabbath is our confession that we are saved by the work of another rather than by our own work. This is our constant testimony to the saving power of Christ. It is evident that there cannot be such a thing as the change of the Sabbath from one day to another. This has been attempted, just as foretold in prophecy (Daniel 7:25), but has not succeeded, and in the very nature of the case it never can succeed, since it is God's Sabbath which was given to man, and it is forever true that the seventh day is God's Sabbath, and that He never rested upon or blessed and sanctified any other day. The attempted change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week is a mark of apostasy from the true God and from the true gospel, an apostasy which is clearly foretold and described in the Holy Scriptures (2 Thessalonians 2:17), and which all lovers of Christ and His saving work should repudiate. "If thou turn thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of Jehovah honorable; and shalt honor it, not doing thine own ways, nor finding

thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah; and I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth; and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it." Isaiah 58:13, 14.

During all the centuries from creation until now there have always been those who have witnessed to the true gospel by the observance of the original Sabbath of the fourth commandment, even during the Dark Ages, when the apostasy was at its height and when the light of truth seemed almost extinguished; and to-day there is a world-wide movement which is proclaiming the everlasting gospel "unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Revelation 14:6); and while rejecting the evolutionary philosophy in all its forms, it is urging a return to the original gospel of the saving power of God in Christ, and to the observance of the original Sabbath of the Lord as the sign of His sanctifying power. I have testified this gospel in many lands, and have with my own eyes seen the fruit of it in every continent upon the face of the earth.