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Keeping the Sabbath Holy, ^{30 Feb 1963} A compilation

The Sabbath is a holy day. God's command concerning it is - "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made Heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Ex. 20:8-11.

The Sabbath day, therefore, is a day of rest and worship. It is a day when the mind should be free from all earthly toil and care, and when the heart should turn to thoughts of the Creator and His mighty works in bringing the world into being, and in saving a poor fallen race of men from the curse and blight of sin. It is a day for holy reflection. No one on the premises of the Sabbath keeper is to be allowed to do any work. The son, the daughter, the manservant, the maidservant, and the animals are specifically mentioned in the command. None of these must be allowed to labor. The Sabbath-keeper who is engaged in some line of business cannot hire someone to take his place on the Sabbath and thus keep his business running while he rests; the housewife cannot leave the hired maid to cook the Sabbath dinner while she attends the Sabbath morning service. The son or the daughter who may not regard the Sabbath cannot be permitted to labor on the premises of the father or mother on the Sabbath. All must rest. Even the domestic animals are to have an opportunity to refrain from toil on this holy day.

One's secular business never becomes so urgent as to constitute a legitimate excuse for breaking the Sabbath. In Ex. 34:21 we read: "Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest." There is no time of the year when the farmer is so busy as in harvest time. Often it will seem that in order to save his crops from rain and wind he will be compelled to labor on the Sabbath. But even this emergency is not sufficient to constitute an excuse. That day must be held sacred at all cost. It is a perpetual covenant between God and His people. Ex. 31:13,16, and He desires that its holy hours should be jealously guarded.

No buying or selling of foods or other wares is to be done on the Sabbath. God's plan for Israel as stated by Nehemiah was, "And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath." Neh. 10:31. This instruction, however, was not always regarded by the people. Nehemiah bears record of this also in connection with a powerful Sabbath reform message which he delivered to Israel. He declares:-

"In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and brining in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals.

"There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

"Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath?

"Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.

"And it came to pass that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should be no burden brought in on the Sabbath day.

Note that the instruction was that even the gates should be shut. This of course was spoken concerning the city of Jerusalem, but the principle will apply to each household. All secular business with the outside world should be finished before the Sabbath begins, and at the going down of the sun Friday evening the gates should be shut. The Grocer should understand that the gates are shut, and that all groceries must be delivered before the Sabbath begins, or wait until it is over. Never should he be allowed to deliver his wares an hour after the Sabbath has begun. The same is true of the Baker, the ice man, the milk man, etc. It is not sufficient to say that "we paid for it before the Sabbath and he is only delivering it." Our gates must be shut to all business just as much as bargaining and paying for it.

Nor is the day to be given over to the preparation of foods which have been purchased the day before. On Friday, "the preparation day", all preparation of food should be made so that the Sabbath may be spent in rest and quiet. It is necessary of course that food should be served on the Sabbath, but this is a very small task when proper preparation has been made.

When the Lord rained bread from Heaven He gave the people a double portion on the sixth day so that they would not have to gather it on the Sabbath. Then the instruction was given them, "Bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe (boil) that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up up for you to be kept until the morning." Ex. 16:23.

And not only should the body rest, but the soul should be free and at peace with God. God's promises and blessings should be recounted; the mind should be called in from worldly thoughts and cares, and should be centered upon things divine. To those who will thus keep the Sabbath God's promise is most precious. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

The following instruction written some years ago by the servant of the Lord is indeed timely for the church today:

"All through the week keep the Lord's holy Sabbath in view; for that day is to be devoted to the service of God. It is a day when the hand ought to rest from worldly employment, and when the soul needs to receive special attention.

"From the very cradle the children ought to be educated and right impressions to be given to the mind. They are to be instructed in regard to the knowledge of God and His holy command-

ments. Neither infants, nor children, nor youth, should hear an impatient word from Father, Mother or any member of the household; for they receive impressions very early in life, and what parents make of them today they will be tomorrow, and the next day and the next. The first lessons impressed upon the child are never forgotten.

"Then search the scriptures, parents. Be not only hearers, but doers of the word. Meet God's standard in the education of your children. Let them see that you are preparing for the Sabbath on the working days of the week. All preparations should be made, every stitch taken, on the six working days: all cooking for the Sabbath should be done on the preparation day. It is possible to do this, and if you make it a rule you can do it. The commandment is "Bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that which ye will seethe, for tomorrow is the rest day of the Holy Sabbath." That day is not to be given to the cooking of food, or pleasure seeking, or worldly employment. Explain your work and its purpose to your children, and let them help themselves and their parents in their preparation to keep the Sabbath according to the commandment. Lead your children to consider the Sabbath as a delight, the day of days, the holy of the Lord, honorable. Do not allow yourselves to spend the precious hours of the Sabbath in your bed. The heads of the house should be astir early.

"On Friday, the clothing of the children looked after during the week, should all be laid out by their own hands, under the direction of their Mother so that they can dress quickly without any confusion or rushing about, and hasty speeches. Dress, then come to the table without levity, Boisterous noise and contention should not be allowed any day of the week; but on the Sabbath all should be quietness. Loud tone commands should not be heard at any time, but on the Sabbath they are entirely out of place. This is God's holy day; the day that He has set apart to commemorate His creative works; a day which he has sanctified and hallowed.

"In many families boots and shoes are blacked, and stitches taken, all because these little odds and ends were not done on Friday. They did not "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." It is dishonoring God to make the Sabbath a feast day, a day of baking and of boiling, of blacking boots and performing works that should be done the six working days. Do not dishonor God by bringing down its sacredness to the level of the common working days.

"In the morning the family should gather about the table quietly, and it would be well if on the Sabbath there should ever be a simple, palatable meal, yet something that would be considered a treat, something they do not have every day in the week. Then, before or after the meal, should come the family worship. This should be a service in which all the children should take part. All should have their bibles, each reading a verse or two. Then a simple hymn should be sung, followed not by a long and wearisome prayer, but by a simple petition, telling the Lord in the simplest manner their needs, and expressing their gratitude for God's mercies and blessings. This invites Jesus as a welcome guest into your house and heart. In the family, long prayers of remote things are not in place, and make the hour of prayer wearisome, when it should be considered a privilege and a blessing. Make the season one of interest and joy; never let the children consider it a burden.

"On the Sabbath parents should give all their time they can to their children, that they may make it a delight. I have seen many families where father, mother, and the older members

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of the household take themselves away from the younger children, and leave them to amuse themselves as best they can. After a while the children become weary and go out of doors, and engage in play or some kind of mischief. Thus the Sabbath has no sacred significance to them. In pleasant weather the parents can take their children out for a walk in the fields and forest, and talk to them of the lofty trees, the shrubs and flowers, and teach them that God is the Maker of all these things. Then teach them the reasons for the Sabbath; that it is to commemorate God's creative works. After working six days, He rests the seventh, and blessed and hallowed the day of His rest. Thus the most profitable instruction can be given.

"The sweet story of Bethlehem can be repeated. Present before them Christ as the Babe of Bethlehem, a child obedient to his father and mother, a youth industrious, helping to support the family. Thus you can teach your children that Christ was a child like themselves, and that He knows the trials and perplexities, the temptations, the weariness, the joys and the happiness of youth. Read the interesting stories in Bible history. Thus the day to them will be the best of the seven. But if the parents loiter in bed on the Sabbath and rise late, all is confusion and bustle to prepare for breakfast and Sabbath-school; the day becomes wearisome, the Sabbath desecrated; no holy feelings are inspired or come into the house. The Sabbath-school becomes a dread. I counsel you, my Sabbath-keeping brethren and sisters, to "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." You must change greatly. Many of your habits and practises of the Sabbath are displeasing to God. If you would train your children to observe the Sabbath according to the commandment, you must do it by precept and example. The deep engraving of Truth in the heart is never wholly effaced. The impressions made on the heart in early life are seen in after years. They may be buried, but they will seldom be obliterated. Teach your children that the commandments of God must become the rule of their lives. Circumstances may occur to separate the children from their parents and from their homes, but the lessons of instruction given in children and youth will be a blessing to them throughout their lifetime."

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E.G. White.