

## The Sabbath and the Lord's Day

W. Kelly.

"And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" Acts 20: 6, 7.

We are about to consider at this time, as most of you know, the testimony of scripture to "the Lord's-day," a term which is no invention of man. Indeed that very phrase of itself, given as it is by the Holy Ghost, to one who has an adequate sense of the force of scripture, would be conclusive for the object now in view; which is to assert its authority, to explain its special place in God's word, and to enforce its claims on every Christian heart. It is scarcely needful to say that I am not about to present it as having anything to do with the sabbath. Such a reference must always weaken and obscure the Lord's-day. In fact, it tends to destroy the character of an institution which those who love the Lord desire to hold firmly and enjoy with all their hearts.

Of course I am aware that there are many pious men who think that there must be a sensible loss, if we exclude from the Lord's-day the place which the sabbath possessed of old; and this indeed justly in the minds of those saints of God who had peculiar associations with Israel before our Lord came, and all through His earthly ministry. It is not, again, as in the least degree denying the importance of the sabbath that this distinctness of character is asserted; for it will fall within the scope of what I am now about to open if I a little draw out the contrast between the two days. But I say "contrast" advisedly. It will be my place to show that it is not simply a question of what is expedient, or what the church has inaugurated, or what the world acknowledges in the codes of law. I claim for it divine authority, although that authority be exercised in a characteristic manner. This may strike the minds of some Christians as singular, for the simple reason, that they have been habitually accustomed to regard the law as the only expression of divine will.

One understands that such should be the thought of an infidel. I remember sometime ago reading — an unhappy task, but still it did come within the scope of my duty to read — the essay of a well-known freethinker of our day, who takes this very ground — that the only thing which is authoritative, definite, and even positive, is the law. This we can understand of course in an unbeliever, for the sad and sufficient reason that Christ is no more than a blank to him. He may admire this or that in Christ, but he sees neither His personal glory nor the perfection of His ways as displaying God and man here below. Still it does seem an egregious thing that any person looking at the Ten Commandments should say that there alone, not in Christ, we find what is positive, and that what the New Testament furnishes is only negative. For any one to read, "Thou shalt not do this," and "Thou shalt not do that," and then declare that this is positive, on the one hand, and on the other to behold the revelation of God in Christ in the New Testament, and then tell me that this is negative, is certainly strong. Yet one can understand an infidel saying so; but it is no less singular than painful that children of God in our day should be found on the same platform as far as this is concerned. They at least ought to know that Christ alone, not the law, is the perfect expression of God in man. It does not become the saint of God to be thus blind to His moral glory.

I hope to show at this time, then, that there is not the smallest need of endeavouring to supplement what the New Testament lays down as to the Lord's-day. There is a clear and ample

intimation of God's mind and will as to it; for though it may come in a way which to minds accustomed to the law, and owning no other rule, must certainly seem strange, it will be their great gain if disabused of so serious an error. The truth is that the manner in which the Spirit of God has brought out the Lord's-day in the later revelation is in exact keeping with the fullest unfoldings of divine grace and truth. It is bound up with Christ Himself, and yet more manifestly with His work. Hence, it is lack of faith and of spiritual intelligence, as well as a slight of revelation, to rest it on abstract grounds, especially on one so low and foreign to Christianity as the law of nature. It is in striking contrast with a perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages. It is not true that one day in seven is the sabbath but the seventh day, any more than the dream of a change in the sabbath to the first day to constitute the Lord's-day.

I shall proceed to show that the Lord's-day is an essential part of Christianity for the believer while here below. It is not a human or ecclesiastical arrangement that comes in, desirable in its way, and to be accepted with thankfulness but destitute of a divine claim. I believe, on the contrary, that, while given of the Lord no less than the sabbath, its nature, association, and object are far higher. No Christian man can intelligently put a slight on the Lord's-day. I know there are those who, affecting a kind of ultra-spirituality, will tell you that, for their part, all days are alike the Lord's-day to them. My answer is, that it would be more true to say that to such *no* day is the Lord's-day. Such is the effect of not owning the Lord's-day as pre-eminently His. The theory of making every day to be His ends in the practice that no day is really so. It is want of faith as a starting-point; and where faith is lacking, all else fails. By little degrees, perhaps with rapid steps if they are bold, such men will begin to treat every day as being theoretically the Lord's; but they will soon allow themselves such a latitude on the Lord's-day as is, in my judgment, disgraceful to the Christian, and a dishonour to the Lord Jesus.

It will be apparent, on the contrary, that, though the day was brought out as a fact, just as with other characteristics of the New Testament, there was light enough for faith to act on and understand from the very birthday of Christianity. From that moment when Christianity had its proper being and impress, the Lord's-day was marked out by the Lord Himself, and all through from beginning to end the Lord's-day has assigned to it, by the distinct sanction of the Spirit of God, a clear and distinctive and momentous place for the heart and conscience of every Christian. Further, it is well to press the grave observation, that those who confound the Lord's-day with the sabbath invariably and necessarily lose the true idea of the latter, if not of the former also. Certainly the height of the truth that is connected with the Lord's-day is never appreciated under that confession, whereby you descend from its heavenly character to an earthly one. Again, to put it on sabbatical ground is to forfeit the light which shines so richly in it when duly understood. For what people call "the Christian sabbath,"\* as it is a term entirely unknown to the scripture, so also is a plain confusion of the law of God with His grace.

\* The Westminster Confession expressly declares that the Lord's-day "is to be continued till the end of the world as the Christian sabbath." One can only grieve that godly men should be bound down to so palpable a departure from the truth of God, and forced while under its authority either, like most, to remain ignorant of scripture as to this weighty matter, or to defile their consciences if they know better, like a few.

But let none suppose that I mean by this that the sabbath was not a most important institution. A large part of scripture refutes such a notion. Further, I wish to guard all from the mistaken thought, that what God instituted with such solemnity as the sabbath, from the beginning of man's earth, is really done with. Not so. Scripture is distinct that the sabbath will have a place again; that it will yet be a day of gladness and joy in the earth; that it is associated with the blessing that is coming upon all the

creation; that, in short, it will not be the Lord's-day but the sabbath, when Jehovah shall fill the world with the goodness that is natural to Himself. When evil has been put down, when Satan has been dealt with, when the Lord will have His way manifestly from sea to sea — at that glorious period the sabbath will have its own proper and honoured place. Hence we find, in the book of Ezekiel for instance (which gives us most interesting glimpses into the future that is reserved for the people of God, and for their land here below), that the sabbath comes forward once more into prominence. So also one may see in the prophet Isaiah. There is no need of accumulating such scriptures now; but those referred to plainly prove that, not in some figurative sense, but in all strictness, the day is at hand when God will vindicate His people for Himself — when Israel will be no longer a remnant of deceitful tongue, abandoned to the grovelling acquisition of gold and silver, but when, contrariwise, they will be Jehovah's witnesses. Poor alas! has been their testimony hitherto — false witnesses against the only True and Faithful! But they are yet to be bright witnesses of divine mercy in the reign of Messiah's glory. And when that age comes, the sabbath, I repeat, will resume its place for the earth.

Israel shall then observe their new moons also, and, as we are told, they will celebrate the feast of Tabernacles, as well as Passover, but, remarkably enough, *not Pentecost*. Look at the book of Ezekiel, and you will find a striking absence of the latter feast in the picture of the future. If his visions had been a figure of what God is doing at this present time, Pentecost must have been, I do not say, the exclusive but assuredly the most prominent feast. Instead of this, the prophecy of Ezekiel shows us conspicuously the absence of Pentecost, the reason of which seems to me as manifest as it is beautiful. The types that were given under the law had a bearing on, the heavenly people as well as on the earthly. Pentecost in particular and confessedly sets forth the gathering of a heavenly people; and that heavenly people, now in process of gathering, has, if I may say it, so absorbed the feast to itself, that Israel will have no Pentecost in the day that is coming. They will have the Passover; none can do without that sign of Christ sacrificed. It does not matter whether it be earthly people or heavenly, the Lamb and the Lamb's blood are essential for any to be in living relationship with God. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed" not merely "for us," but for them also. They accordingly will have the great foundation feast of Passover. But the distinctive feast for them in that day will be the feast of Tabernacles, as we have seen, because it is the day when glory shall dwell in the land, not merely be seen in heaven, but descend and dwell in the land — when God therefore is accomplishing His glorious thoughts and plans for this long groaning but then delivered earth. In that day then, along with all this, there are naturally the new moons. She that, ruling the night, had given her light, and had long faded away, will shine out once more with renewed brightness. Israel will again become the great vessel of reflected glory here below.

But we, Christians, in that day shall enter into the glory itself. We have to do with Him whom we are permitted to see with unveiled face even now; for meanwhile the power of the Spirit of God has brought us into this nearness, and has made true the feast of Pentecost so completely in the heavenly people, that there is no place by-and-by for the earthly people to keep it suitably. Such is the way in which God has arranged with the utmost skill these remarkable shadows of good things to come.

In that day the sabbath too will resume its place on the seventh day as of old. Meanwhile a new creation in Christ has come in, and I will presently show how this has linked itself with the Lord's-day, and in what its character essentially differs from the sabbath.

The sabbath was instituted, as we know, at the beginning. It formed the close of the week devoted by God to making the heavens and the earth which now are. It set forth the precious truth, that He who had deigned to work in forming the earth for man always looked onward to a rest which the renewed creature should share; not merely a rest for us, but for Him and us together, when there will be no more working. The sign of this was the sabbath or seventh day.

Nevertheless it is not exactly true that the sabbath was made a command at first. God sanctified it; but no man can prove that the sabbath was taken up and acted on in any formal manner. Scripture is silent about it, and it is wise for us not to go beyond scripture. But this we do know, that the Lord sanctified the sabbath, and there are tokens here and there that it was known by men. Even the very heathen were not without some traces of it. But the word of God bears the remembrance of the six days of creation and of the sabbath in the institution of weeks. This we find appearing every now and then (as at and after the flood, for instance); so that it is plain that, more or less, the sabbath was known from the beginning. But here it was connected with creation. And what was the state of creation? Man had fallen, and all placed under him was ruined before God. I am aware that man tries to cover that ruin, not daring to face the solemnity of such a fact. Even godly men sometimes try to patch it up. But the way of truth is always to own the havoc that sin has brought in, confessing it to God, and looking for His deliverance, not men's effort to conceal, deny, or remedy it.

But now we must open another book; we come down to Exodus. There is a change. A people in flesh are called out by and to God; everything accordingly is regulated by His law. Their whole life — private, public, social, religious — everything comes under His legislation and authority.

This then gives occasion to another step on God's part as to the sabbath. It is not only the sanctifying of it as the pledge of His rest for creation, but, further, God imposed the keeping of the sabbath on His people, binding, it up as an essential part even of His ten words. Even before this He had marked its importance when the manna was given distinctly and solemnly. There was a direct infraction of that which God made so apparent, that His people were without excuse if they did not heed it, not that there was a command even then, we may notice. But if there be a true way of learning God's mind, it is in weighing what He does as well as what He says. And the God who had given Israel the manna gave them a double portion on the sixth day, but none on the seventh. Was this in vain? Was it not for the express purpose of guarding against any activity on His people's part, even in gathering manna on the seventh day? The sabbath, and the people's rest on it, were thus made sufficiently apparent to any who wished to learn what God's will was about the matter. All the rulers came and told Moses that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread; but they are told that this is that which Jehovah had said, "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto Jehovah," when the manna, though kept, did not stink nor breed worms. Yet were some bold enough to despise His ways and words; but the Lord as yet contented Himself with a solemn reproof, without as yet making His people to be the executioners of His judgment because of those that regarded not the works of Jehovah nor the operation of His hand.

Soon after, however, it was not left to a sound judgment formed on what God did, nor to such words as we have heard, but He blended it with the law, and indeed made it to be the one special exception to its general character, for all the rest of the law is moral. The sabbath has another nature quite distinct. The very heathen would acknowledge that no man should steal, do murder, or commit adultery. Every human conscience, unconverted or not, recognizes these and the like. Indeed it may be mentioned here, that a great enemy of Christianity, the Emperor Julian, in speaking about the law, acquiesced in all the rest but the denunciation of idols and the keeping of the sabbath. He owned that the moral commandments were perfectly right, but tried to make out that they had all known them before. And if he classed along with the sabbatical law the command against idols, he need not; for there were not a few Gentiles who knew the wrongness of such objects of worship. Heathen conscience could easily feel the absurdity of an idol; but the sabbath is purely prescriptive, owes its existence to the revealed facts of creation, and hence derives all its authority from God's word. This is what gives its particular importance.

If there is any commandment of the ten, therefore, that rests on God's claim simply, it is the sabbath. Thus because the child does the will of his father, and shows far more the spirit of obedience, if he obeys him, not merely abstaining from or hating what his own conscience knows to be wrong, so the Jew proved it much more by simply bowing to God's command about it. If one were merely to cleave to the moral commandments, it might be no more than honouring one's own conscience. If I bow to God's command, where my own conscience says nothing apart from His word, it is evident that His authority is dear to me. Therefore this was what gave the sabbatical law such immense force, and justly so, to an Israelite. For this reason the sabbath acted as a test, rather than the other nine commandments; so it was the special sign between Jehovah and Israel. None of the other commandments could have been, or was, such a sign as the sabbath-day. It was the peculiar and easily recognized badge that distinguished the Jewish people from all others, and hence in the law and prophets it is thus referred to. But you see it, in fact, constantly brought forward by God, and attached to all other things — what it did not matter. We have already noticed how with the giving of the manna the sabbath was marked for the observation of Israel; so, if God set up a tabernacle, the sabbath came in afresh. Indeed, as has been remarked by another, it followed, no matter what the dealing or institution might be. If He appointed feasts, the sabbath stands in the very front of them, the first and foremost of them all, as it points to the crowning result for God and man. It differed essentially from all the others, in that all the other feasts came but once a year, whilst the sabbath was recurring every week. Nevertheless, if God was giving His people an account of the feasts, not only did the sabbath come within the list of the feasts, but it came as the foremost of them.

There was nothing therefore in the legal system that had a more pointed and constant importance in the mind of God for His people Israel than the sabbath, and accordingly by this day they were tried peculiarly. (Comp. Lev. 26: 34, 35) They were surrounded by jealous neighbours; but who ever dared to take advantage of the sabbath as long as Israel walked in any measure with God? When they fell away from Him, when they had broken down in every particular in which His honour was concerned, when they had been swept away into captivity because of their idolatry, God did not sustain them in the sabbath. It is remarkable that, when they returned from captivity, and when they had enemies to contend with, the Gentiles took advantage of the sabbath, and pressed it craftily against the Jews by attacking them on that day because they knew that there would be scruples on their part to fight on such a day. While under the direct government of God it never was attempted.

All this is surely striking enough, as showing the ways of God and His modes of dealing with His ancient people. But we come now to a still more solemn crisis, when our Lord came into their midst; for never do we get the truth fully about anything until we connect it with Christ. How did He then act as to the sabbath? And how did the Jews use the sabbath-day as to Christ? The answer will be fully and clearly found in the Gospels.

First, How did Christ use the sabbath as to men? He pointedly wrought miracles upon it He walked with His disciples through the corn-fields; and they in their hunger rubbed the ears of corn to satisfy it. But there were watchful and jealous eyes, which viewed it not so much with hatred against them as with suspicion against Him; for He it was that bore all reproaches. As the reproaches that fell on Jehovah fell on Him, so on Him came all the reproaches that fell on the disciples. He was the constant butt and object of all attacks, yet was He the ever present shield for the faithful in their weakness and exposure. So He pleads for the guiltless, reminding them how little their own law was understood by those who wrested it against His disciples.

Did the Pharisees talk about this act of His hungry followers as an infraction of the sabbath? They had better turn to their temple, and look a little more closely at their priests. Did they not bring

their sin-offerings on the sabbath? For if sin were known, it could not be put off till another day. The Israelite that was burdened with the sense of a wrong to the Lord, or his neighbour must own it at once, if he feared God. The priests might be in a bad state; the sabbath was holy: but to put off was perilous; for to slight sin is to ensure worse sin. Therefore he that had a defiled conscience brought his offering, and thus owned his sin. And the priests that offered, as well as the person that brought the offering, were all guiltless before God. Why then did not those zealous sabbatarians find fault with God's provision on the part of the priests and the people when offering for sin on the sabbath?

But further our Lord refers to a most remarkable case in the past, a type of Himself. David, the beloved of God, when he too was cast out with his hungry followers, did once on a time partake with them of the bread set apart for the priests alone. Was this a sin? It was Saul's and the people's sin that there was no bread for David. It was their sin that the true anointed was an outcast. And the bread that was holy at a holy time was profaned in the hour of their wickedness. If it had no sanctity in the presence of a rejected David, how much less in the presence of a rejected Christ? This was the argument; for assuredly a greater than the priests and a greater than David was there. Hence a greater sin was done than in the ordinary days of Israel, or even in the special days of David. Thus the Lord retorted the conviction of sin on the heads of those that would have condemned the disciples.

But on the very next sabbath after the Lord Himself acts; it is not merely that He defends His disciples. He goes into the synagogue, and in full congregation singles out a man with a withered hand. And there He not only heals the man in the presence of them all, convicting the hypocrites that would have condemned Him once more, hating Him for the grace that ever flowed out to the miserable; but, further, He told the man to do an act which, had there not been a divine object in view, could have been dispensed with readily. He particularly marked it therefore in such a fashion as to show that it is no question of God's having complacency in their sabbath-keeping, but of His acting for His own glory in a ruined world. This work of love is what God deigns to be about. Now this was exactly what they resented. So the Gospel of John gives just the same truth, and with yet fuller evidence. A man that lay impotent in the presence of Bethesda, waiting for an angel to come down, found that a greater than all angels was there, who needed not to trouble the waters. A word was enough; for power accompanied it, and the man was healed. But Jesus directed him to arise, take up his bed, and walk, sabbath though it was. Could he not have left his bed there, or at least then? Yes; but so to act at His word who healed him was a plain and much galling testimony that God had no communion with their Sabbaths. Was not God thereby showing that, if there was to be the blessing the sinner needed as he is, He must work, and this on the sabbath; for man was waiting in sin and misery without His blessing? What folly to talk punctiliously about the sabbath from amidst the ruins of sin! If sinners were to be saved, there was no time to be lost. If the Blessor came, would He not give the blessing at once? So grace reckons, even as Christ then wrought. But what so offensive to self-satisfied man? Accordingly therefore the Jews were filled with hatred against Him who thus judged their thoughts and ways, bringing in God in this full opposition of His own grace to man in his selfish hypocrisy.

Thus the Lord showed how He used the sabbath against Israel in their pride.

I have now to speak of a darker page: what indeed more solemn? How did the Jews use their sabbath against Jesus?

The sabbath, sad to say it, was the only day right through, evening and morning, that the Lord Jesus spent in the grave. Yes, and that sabbath was a high day! Thus over the grave of the crucified Christ did unbelieving, guilty, rebellious Israel keep holiday. They had to their own rejection rejected

the Son of God. He lay in the grave; and they kept their sabbath. And where was God? and what were His thoughts? Where His affections and His glory? In that grave that they had made for His Son. They had cast Him down into death, and He had taken all from His Father's hand — the worst and most ignominious of deaths. But God was there in the cross accomplishing for ever His greatest work. No sabbath was He keeping, but working in the depths of His grace, that salvation might flow not from His mercy only but in His righteousness. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The counsel of peace was between them both. The work of the Father and the work of the Son had testified to man's sin and God's grace all through His ministry. We now look on the deepest point of all — not only the Christ, the Son, abandoning Himself to do God's will, but abandoned of God because He was bearing the judgment of sin on the cross; and this in order that God might be for ever vindicated and glorified even in respect of sin. And now the work is done. "It is finished." The hour then was for the Son of man to be glorified. God was glorified in Him; but if glorified in Him, God would glorify the Son of man in Himself, and would glorify Him straightway. Instead of waiting for the kingdom, and for Israel to be gathered for the millennial day, God would glorify Him at once. The people were not ready, nor the land either. What in short on the creature's part was ready as it should be? On God's part, however, all things were ready. But new counsels come in when Israel still rejects and God carries out His great heavenly work. The efficacy of Christ's work is first of all applied to what was unseen. Only faith sees the heavens opened and the Son of man at God's right hand. For Son of man He went up, as He came down Son of God (as He is now, and was from eternity to eternity). Then it was in perfect grace; now He goes up in accomplished righteousness, and sits on the right hand of God. In due time follow the glorious consequences of that work. And grace forms in Saul of Tarsus a suited witness: but I will not anticipate further.

On the day, however, that Jesus burst the bonds of death and rose from the grave, He first of all sends out a message by Mary Magdalene, whom He had previously delivered from the complete power of demons. She is now sent to the disciples with the message of the risen conqueror of Satan. He that had the power of death was conquered for ever. Accordingly on the day that speaks of light and life from the grave — that proclaims the mighty work of redemption accomplished for ever — the Lord Jesus sends a message to His own, who thereon are gathered together, and in the midst of them Jesus finds Himself. It was the first day of the week, the day of His resurrection. Such beyond doubt is its character. It was no longer creation-rest: for this had been broken. Nor was it any longer legal rest. For where was this now? Man ought to have learnt from the ways of God; for he might be commanded as he was in the law; but the very aim of all was to prove that sin had made him altogether incapable of doing God's will or of answering to His nature. The dealings of God were as excellent as His commands were all righteous. It is man that is all wrong. Here lay the real difficulty and the constant dead-lock in Israel. It was from no fault of the law. The failure is entirely from the sin of man, not excepting the chosen and favoured people; and the divine object in the law was to bring this out distinctly in Israel's history, and make all that have ears to hear feel their sins and confess them to God — the very last thing the Jews (like any other self-complacent men now) thought of doing. What they themselves used the law for was simply to make out an appearance of righteousness of theirs; what God gave them the law for was to demonstrate that they had none of their own.

But now the gospel shows and proclaims another thing — the righteousness of God; for it is He who in Christ has interposed now. The law demanded man's duty to God and man, compelling those who are thus convicted of sin to own their ruin and cry to Him for remedy. Alas! Israel were hardened. Yet under the law man had done his worst. Instead of really producing fruit for God, according to the parable in which the Lord set out their history, they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him," and slew and cast out the righteous One. Thus had man not only broken the law, but rejected utterly and

absolutely God come in goodness in the person of Jesus. Man had put the Son of God to death on the cross; and what does God next? He interposed, and from that lowest abasement to which His Son become a man could be subjected God raised Him up and set Him at His own right hand, far above every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.

Thereon comes in Christianity. Evidently it is based on the rejection by man of the Lord Jesus, in which God has accomplished atonement. For in the cross sin has been judged. It may not be put away in fact; but it all is to be, and on the basis of that mighty work. But sin is judged before God in the cross, and those who believe are entitled to know all its consequences gone for their souls; that is, their sins are forgiven, and sin itself is already dealt with to faith. But, as we know, none of this great deliverance as a matter of fact appears outwardly yet. That is to say, the evil of the world goes on as badly or worse than ever; nay, in the saint the old nature is there, and will surely break out if unjudged; and Satan, instead of being dethroned, is still the god of this world; and this was manifested at the cross of the Lord Jesus. Christianity does not mean in the slightest degree that the world, or human nature, still less that Satan, is better since then. I need not say that the truth is far from that. It is not even that Satan is put down from his access as an accuser before God (for this awaits another dealing at a future day), but that God is glorified, and has accepted meanwhile an infinitely efficacious work for the believer. Not only has a divine person been manifested full of grace and truth, but before God is that accomplished work, whereby the believer stands in the acceptance of Christ. It is no longer a mere hope grounded on a divine promise; but the work is done, and the present efficacy is perfect before God, so that the Holy Ghost is come down to be the witness of this to the soul of the believer, the seal of redemption, and the earnest of the coming inheritance when we shall appear with Christ in glory.

Such is Christianity; and the consequence is therefore that God at once inaugurates a new day. It is no longer the last day of the week; for they speak not truly who say that the sabbath is *a* seventh day; that is, any day of the seven. There might be rest for man all the same, but in that no memorial of God at all. A seventh day blots out all record of God's past, and all hope of God's future. The very idea of it destroys from the sabbath every atom of what is divine. Such tampering with scripture, and in particular with the sabbath, makes it to be no more than a human thing. Those that think that any day would do equally well, show that they know nothing, heed nothing, of God's intention in the sabbath. They are alive to the human need and boon. Its place in the mind of God, and for man's highest welfare, is lost to them. On the contrary, I maintain that it is of the very essence of the truth as to the sabbath that it is the last of the week, or seventh day; not *a*, but *the*, seventh day, and no other. This is the day that God sanctified, the remembrance of creation and the type of His rest. But then the rest was not yet. Creation-rest was ruined; law-rest, though commanded, never had a real footing for sinful man. What is the consequence? On the ground of creation or law there is no hope for man, because of sin. But grace, God's grace, enters; and now it is a question of God's giving rest for the soul, if not yet for the body, in Christ the Lord.

There is no rest from labour yet, as we see in Hebrews 4; the rest of glory is of course future. It will all come, but only when Christ comes. There is rest given in Christ to the weary; there is rest which the Christian finds who takes Christ's yoke, and learns of Him who is meek and lowly of heart. These are respectively suited to the Christian and to the heavy laden; but what rest can rightly be as yet from the labour of love in such a world as this? For the spirit there is perfect rest in Christ and peace before God, but at the same time no rest from toil or sorrow, no settling down in the world which cast out Christ save to the selfish and unbelieving.

And here I may observe that it is a mischievous thing to apply Hebrews 4 to the question of the soul's present rest by faith. This is not at all the point that the apostle Paul is there discussing, but

rather the danger for the believer of seeking present rest, seeing that we are passing through the wilderness and have not yet reached Canaan. We are as yet pilgrims and strangers. He is warning the Hebrew believers of their danger in valuing present ease. This is not our rest. Some might take things quietly because they knew themselves justified. But the believer is really redeemed to serve and suffer for a season here. Every one knows that there is a danger of turning to the folly of present ease for souls when relieved from fear; and a very particular danger it is for those that have gone through a great deal of sifting at their conversion, lest they forget that this is but the beginning of a course of trial and testimony on earth. No bad thing either for any one so to judge self; but the danger is that there is apt to follow a kind of reaction, unless grace keeps one simply looking to Christ. When persons have gone through much trouble of conscience, and have found themselves saved by nothing but grace, they enjoy peace thankfully; but it is very possible for them to think that after this they are free to take all else easily. Not so. It is after this that they are set in freedom of heart to labour for the Lord, as those who are still in the desert. Far am I from saying that they are not to enjoy His love more and more. They are free, and need, to draw near in thanksgiving and praise surely; for there are two distinct ways in which divine life works: the one is upward toward God in worship, the other is downward toward man in love; and grace gives us both now. But we, if wise, wait for rest when God rests in the scene and day of glory. Now is the time to fear and to labour.

Hence therefore, as the Apostle exhorts, he who believes in the Lord Jesus now is called into this blessed participation of the mind of God. Having been set free in virtue of the work of Christ from guilty fears (most just and real), being delivered from that sense of condemnation which the Spirit of God had lately pressed on his conscience, he has peace with God, and rests in our Lord Jesus Christ. But he is only for that very reason guarded against taking his ease in the world. And this belongs to the very nature of Christianity and to God's object in it. A Jew naturally expected that, when Christ came, he would himself have ease and rest. There would be neither evil to avoid nor enemies to contend with, all being put down for him at least at the beginning of Messiah's reign. Then would every kind of blessing be brought in for his enjoyment. For danger will not then lurk in the earth and the things of the earth; but men, Israel especially, take all good freely from God. And so it will be; for the millennial kingdom will ensue a time of ease and joy here below, when good will be at peace and evil must hide its face, banished from the scene by the power of God, then manifestly the possessor of heaven and earth. But this is not the experience which Christianity is now forming, while we await Christ from heaven and suffer with Him on earth.

Now, on the contrary, the Spirit brings in what is heavenly and unseen into the midst of a visible state of things where all is contrary to God, and faith has to make its way against the current, living by the word of God. It is now a state of things characterised (let us not forget it) on the one hand by the utter rejection and cross of God's own Son, on the other by His exaltation at God's right hand on high. The cross was the expression of the world's extreme hatred to God, Christ's session above of God's perfect satisfaction in the work of redemption. Christianity is based on the one and displayed to faith in the other. There is for the sinner the cross of Christ; but there is more for the believer. Christ is risen: what is the meaning of it? Has His resurrection no voice to the Christian? It is not simply that He who brought all grace and manifested all righteousness was ignominiously and in hatred rejected; but that in His death and resurrection my sins are forgiven, sin is judged, righteousness is established, and a new and intimate relationship (His own) with His God and Father are given me by faith in Him. He is coming soon to have me with Himself in the Father's house; but meanwhile He has for a season left me in this world while He is gone out of it into heaven. Consequently He has given a heavenly character to me, to my standing, worship, walk, testimony, conflict, and hope, to everything in short with which grace puts me in present communion. For this is not our home or abiding-place; for the

Christian it is where Satan reigns. Am I then to have communion with things that are around me here? If a Christian, through the grace of God my communion is with the things that belong to Christ at His right hand. All that is of the world is not of the Father. Christ, and now He is on high, is the test of everything. But it is there that the secret lies; it is in Him who is gone to the right hand of God. Hence therefore Christianity is essentially heavenly. It is built on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Hence the first day of the week at once becomes the characteristic day for the Christian, and whenever this is not kept in view, a man always tends to slide down into Judaism. Such is the effect of talking about a Christian sabbath, especially if it is a sober judgment, and not idle talk. People who so think and speak have a distinct view neither of Judaism on the one hand nor of Christianity on the other — little more than a wretched medley of the two systems. Is not this too sadly and surely just what we find in Christendom at the present moment? Hence therefore not unnaturally the prevalent confusion — I was about to say the unholy, but one may call it without exaggeration the unhappy alliance — between the law and the gospel.

Do not, however, mistake my mind as to this grave subject. The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good. Every whit of God's requirements in the Old Testament is worthy of the utmost reverence on the part of the believer. No godly man of intelligence that values grace will ever disparage law. But it is one thing to give each its place and application, quite another to confound them. For this there is no warrant whatever in the word of God. The law has its own function, and its due application is to deal with man fallen and wicked. It was a wholly different thing when He who had no sin, the Son of God, deigned to be born of woman and to come under law, and made it honourable, glorifying Him who gave it by His servant Moses. And a different thing there will be in the day of Jehovah when it is written on the heart of Israel according to the new covenant. Then will His mighty hand maintain His own when Satan is bound, and a new heart is given to His people, the heart of stone being taken away. Indeed, they are happy if only unhappy, for I confess that in too many cases this misuse of the law is associated with positive unholiness, and this not merely personal failure but in principle. For when they know they have sinned, they fly to Christ's blood as a Jew to his sin-offering, and thus by fresh application to His sacrifice try to maintain an intermittent peace, thus proving how little they, though believers, really know the gospel. Their standard of practice is proportionately low. They do not understand what it is to walk in the Spirit. They have not submitted to the truth that they are dead, nor entered thus into the deliverance of Christ.

But now that man is dealt with as lost, and the believer as saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, what is it for the righteous to take up the law as their rule? As far as my experience goes, darkness ensues, and with it weakness and failure. Sense of grace comes to ruin for the soul. For it is invariably found that, when God's children take up the law as the rule of walk, it cannot but gender bondage.

I dare say many remember as well as myself what it was to be endeavouring to keep the sabbath in olden time. What was the consequence? Holy, happy peace? Not so; but the soul anxious, self-condemned, and unhappy. The most solemn and grievous result of all was, that under this mistaken system, the more righteous people were, the less happy they found themselves. What a strange conclusion if it were God's will and word! most simple if it is not. Those who took things easily (I may call them free and easy, perhaps without offence) got through the sabbath pretty well, as far as they themselves thought doubtless; but it was a grave and sorrowful matter for such as strove to keep this law in the midst of the inconsistencies of Christendom, and with such conscience towards God as the law and the prophets inspired. They might fast and pray, but the more they strove, the more miserable they were. They might endeavour and try to guard it in the simplest things, but it always ended in

failure; and therefore they never were happy under it, but often if not always ill at ease; and no wonder, for the whole principle was a mistake for the Christian.

But now comes the positive side; and a very important question practically arises — What does scripture connect with the Lord's-day?

I answer, first of all, let us see its true character. It is not the day that was sanctified by creation rest. It is not the day of law which the law commanded Israel to keep the main test amongst them of God's authority. What is it then? What is emphatically connected with the first day? I answer, resurrection-life in Christ and the grace of God. In contrast with creation, the Lord's-day tells of the new creation; in contrast with law, it speaks of the grace which has brought salvation. Christians therefore have no reason to be ashamed in comparing the first day of the week which God has given them with the sabbath which He imposed on Israel. On the contrary, I claim for the Lord's-day a higher sanctity, deeper principles, and the strongest, yea, an immutable, foundation. If the sabbath can boast much, the Lord's-day incomparably more; for as the one is connected with the first Adam, the other is with the second Adam; and as much as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is the Lord's-day higher than the sabbath. The sabbath, I repeat, was for *man* — for man in the flesh — for man as he was under probation — for man dealt with as living under the law of God. Undoubtedly there are many who think that man is under probation still, and that the Christian is under the law of God, just as a Jew used to be; though they may add that the law is not to justify him but to rule the walk — that we are under it for the latter, and not for the former. Well, it may be convenient for you to say what the law is to do; but let me tell you this, that if you are under the law, God does not allow you to say what the law is to do, and what it is not. If you are under the law, and you fail, what can the law do to you? It can do nothing in justice but condemn, curse, and kill you. This is its declared object — this its necessary function. If you are under the law, and you fail to meet the law, what can, what ought, the law to do but punish you? And what is its punishment but death? Are you to alter all this too? But theology is bold, demurs, and says, "Oh, I am not under the law to be punished!" But the question is not what you say about the law, but what the law says to you. Theory, or theology, cannot stand against scripture. The truth is, your thought is an imagination of men, and a mere attempt to get out of a difficulty. They see in the gospel that the believer in our Lord Jesus is justified, and then, though they put him under the law as a rule of life, they try to get out of the dilemma this throws them into by pleading that they are only under the law for walk, and not for condemnation. Do they not mean that the Christian is under the law to break it with impunity? What sort of a rule of life is this? It is not the gospel but a mitigated, emasculated, sanctionless law. It is not Christ and the truth. Where do they get such a thought in the word of God? Nowhere.

There I do find the question raised and answered in one of the most important and simple and withal comprehensive epistles of the New Testament. I am not speaking now of those to the Ephesians or the Colossians — it is no wonder that such men do not understand Ephesians or Colossians — nor yet of the Book of Revelation. But let us take Romans; and surely every Christian of moderate light ought to be familiar with that epistle at any rate, and to rejoice in the truth the Holy Spirit has there furnished for every day's need. Now what is there laid down as to the law? Where it is a question of the life exercised in the walk of the Christian, he is formally declared *not* to be under the law but under grace. Such is expressly the doctrine of the apostle Paul. In the sixth chapter of Romans the discussion is not how a sinner is to be justified, but how he being justified is to walk. Does the mercy of God in the gospel leave the soul free to live in sin? The answer is, Not so; for he is dead with Christ to sin, and he is not under the law, but under grace. It is substantially the same truth everywhere else, as in 1 Cor. 9: 20,\* 21; 2 Cor. 3; Gal. 5: 18; 1 Tim. 1: 7-10. Never do we hear the theological or at least the

Puritan fiction, that the Christian is freed from the condemning power of the law as a question of justification only, but under the law as a rule to live by. Such a notion is clean contrary to the apostle's teaching, who declares that we are *dead with Christ* to the law as well as to sin. These theologians do not know what death with Christ means; they do not understand their own baptism in His name.

\* I call the reader's attention to the omission in the commonly received Greek text, as well as in the Authorised Version, of the important clause,  $\mu\grave{\eta}\ \delta\upsilon\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma\ \upsilon\pi\grave{\omicron}\ \nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\nu$ , "not being myself under law." The passage reads thus: — "And I became to the Jews as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to those under law as under law (not being myself under law), that I might gain those under law; to those without law, as without law (not being without law to God, but under law to Christ), that I might gain those without law." (Compare Rom. 8: 3, 4.)

Now the Lord's-day is the day of grace, and not of law; and this is manifestly consistent with the power and ways of grace. The reason why no Christian is absolved from what is due to God is illustrated by that day when grace triumphed in a new creation through our Lord Jesus.

And look at the beautiful way in which the Lord Jesus introduced it. There is no command in the New Testament such as — "Thou shalt keep the Lord's-day." Why should the sabbath be in the Old Testament, not in the New? Why the Lord's-day in the New, and not in the Old? If you look over the Ten Commandments, you will find that the principle of prohibition runs through them generally. The people to whom they were uttered had no inclination to keep them. Hence the command ran in these terms — Thou shalt not do this, Thou shalt do that — because they wanted to do the contrary. Is this the case with the Christian? Has it come to this pass, that children of God do not really desire to keep the Lord's-day? I should be sorry to think one counted it a burden. They are sanctified to obedience; they are called to the law of liberty. If it were a question of imposing the first day of the week on the world, I can understand a command given to keep the first day; for it is and must be irksome to all who know not His grace. But this is not at all the intention of the Lord as to those who know Him not.

With the sabbath the ground, nature, and end were altogether different. It must be repeated that it formed part of the law, and was distinctively a sign between God and Israel. The sabbath was never given to the Gentile as such, whatever may be the reasonings of men. If a Gentile came and put himself under the wing of Israel, of course he kept the sabbath; but *as a Gentile* he had nothing to do with it. The sabbath was Jehovah's sign to Israel; and the effort to prove that it was imposed on all alike does no less in principle than deny that fact, and the scripture which declares it. It could be no longer a sign to His elect people: if it was equally binding on all, it was not peculiar to Israel. How could it be a sign to one if it was the common duty of all? But the fact is, that the Lord has decided that question clearly, and so do the law and the prophets. "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am Jehovah that doth sanctify you." . . . "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed." (Ex. 31: 13, 17) "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am Jehovah that sanctify them." (Ezek. 20: 12.)

Now look at the Lord's-day. How different from the sabbath! The latter was a day that involved yourself, your family, your servants, even your very cattle, your ox and your ass. As to them all, Jehovah the God of Israel and the Creator had a care, and brought them within the beneficent scope of the seventh day; and no wonder, for it was the sign of the rest of creation, and man, and all animals subject to him, were a part of creation. It might be the lower part; but still it was a part which God did not forget in His law. But what has an ox or an ass to do with the new creation?

This radical distinction of the sabbath as expressive of creation and law, and of the Lord's-day as expressing resurrection and grace, is what people do not seem to see, and hence they are apt to make mistakes in practice. The ground of the difference is evident. The moment one gets hold of the principle of the Lord's-day, not only must all the inferior part of the creation be left out but those that are unconverted also. These beyond doubt are not overlooked by God, who sends them the gospel; but He does not place converted and unconverted on the same footing of relationship, nor consequently require the same duties. What do unconverted men with grace and the new creation, but pervert or despise them? I do not deny their obligation in presence of the great facts and truth of the gospel. They have and read the word of God; they own the duty of prayer and of praise. This may all be, while the believer must know that it cannot be such prayer and praise as faith presents in the Spirit. But if the question be the true principle of the Lord's-day, and the intended scope of its application, the answer is, that the Lord's-day essentially is for the Lord's people. May I not go farther, and question whether a Jew could understand its meaning? Certainly even in the days of the kingdom he is not called to its observance. Of course I am speaking of him who not only is a Jew but abides in his unbelief of the gospel. The Lord's-day is naturally unintelligible to the unconverted now. Nor will it be a question even for Israel in the millennium; for they will never have it as we have now. There will be an arrangement altogether different for them. Of course they will see it in the New Testament, and will understand that there were saints before them who kept that day, and how they kept it; that they gathered together on it, and remembered the Lord's death, worshipping their God and Father, edifying each other. They may understand all this; but as to the deep principles involved in it, I doubt much whether they will ever enter into them, at any rate with any real intelligence; whereas to understand the truth of them in Christ, and walk faithfully in accordance with it, should be the distinctive characteristic of the Christian.

It may have been noticed, for instance, in the verses read at the beginning (Acts 20), how the apostle Paul loved to spend seven days in a place. Can there be a doubt what was in his heart? Was it not to cover the Lord's-day? He loved to spend at least one such day with the saints; so we see in more than one passage. It was the great day of assemblage for the children of God. Not that they never assembled on other days; but there might be no small difficulties in those early times. It may have been so indeed sometimes even for the Lord's-day. Still this was the day that commanded the hearts of the disciples. It is evident that, if there had been no distinctive day, the brethren could not be so justly blamed for forsaking the assembling of themselves; but such a fault would at once be felt if there was a known day, and a day not merely chosen by the church or sanctioned by all but one that the Lord had stamped with His own resurrection image. Such certainly is this day; and so marked is it by the presence of our Lord Jesus, that I will just refer to the point for a moment before we touch on the statements of the apostle Paul.

Our Lord is shown to have revealed Himself repeatedly during the course of the resurrection-day to disciple after disciple, from His appearance to Mary Magdalene first of all until He stood in the assembly of the saints on the evening of that day. Thus there was a succession of manifestations throughout. Nor do I doubt that a Christian is entitled to know an especial presence and enjoyment of the Lord Jesus on the same day of the week that is not vouchsafed on any other day. If his faith does not take this in, so far there will be loss for his soul. The word of God must be the ground of it, and to make this the more marked, what do we find there? Does the Lord appear on the Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday, etc., as we call them? Not a word about it. He passes over all the intervening days, but the next first day following He appears again. What could more significantly mark that day to all who remember Him and delight in His ways?

This to me is most expressive of the mind of the Lord, not in the shape of a command or even a promise which would have called one back to the relationship of Israel. At any rate a formal pledge might suppose a kind of unwillingness or want of intelligence on the part of the saints of God. What the Lord looks for is love that understands Him. A single eye gives entrance into His mind. He rose on that day: we understand it. He comes again and again on that day: we understand it all. That day remains fixed for us as "the Lord's-day,"\* even as the Holy Ghost designated it expressly in the closing book of the New Testament. (Rev. 1: 10) The time was come so to stamp that day long familiar to the Christian heart, now designated as pertaining to the Lord no less than His supper. From first to last there is no command, nothing like a legal claim; but the more, not the less, do both appeal to the faith and devotedness of all who love Him. As the supper is His, distinct in character and aim from all others, so is His day to the Christian.

\*I am aware that the late Dr. S. R. Maitland, followed by a very few others, ventured to deny that the expression ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ refers to "the Lord's-day," and to argue that it means "the day of the Lord," into which he supposed the prophet was carried forward in Spirit. The fact is however that, first, the expression is pointedly distinct from that prophetic phrase, ἡμέρα κυρίου with or without the article (for it is used either way according to the exact shade of thought intended); secondly, it is the form constantly and regularly used from the earliest ages to express, according to Christian feeling, the first day of the week, as Jews would say, or Sunday, as Gentiles said. Hence Justin Martyr, wishing to defend Christians and their faith before heathen, uses their term, but in a sort of apologetic way, τῇ τοῦ ἡλίου λεγομένη ἡμέρα (Apol. i. 67, ed. Otto, 1842, i. 268- 270.) Where no such motive operated, the phrase of St. John is employed, as in the alleged Epistles of Ignatius to Magnesians, ix., μηκέτι σαββατίζοντες, ἀλλὰ κατὰ κυριακὴν ζωὴν ζῶντες; so also in Clem. Alex. Strom. v. vii. 12; in Iren. Fragm. vii., ed. Bened. 342, and in Euseb. H.E. iv. 23, 26, v. 23. There is no need to multiply later references, nor to prove that it was so understood by the Latins or by those who spoke in other tongues. It is as certain as any such matter can be that the meaning is "the Lord's-day," and nothing else. On that day it pleased the Lord to give His servant John in the Spirit those visions of the future which make up the book of Revelation and close fittingly the canon of scripture.

Let us now consult once more the Book of Acts. When the disciples were brought into their blessed place as the church of God, the Holy Ghost came down, and they were so filled with joy and gladness that they could hardly keep away from one another. So we find them meeting every day; and I have no doubt from Acts 2: 46, that they then partook of the Lord's-supper every day. It was not merely what people call, and indeed what scripture calls, a love-feast. They did this too. But a love-feast meant nothing more than that the saints united in partaking of a meal with the word of God and prayer. They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people, even as the Lord at first. (Luke 2: 52.) That is, they enjoyed every sort and measure of communion with one another as fully as they could. But the Lord's-supper was far more than this since, it is the communion of Christ's body and of His blood. It was not a mere token of brotherly intercourse, but the most solemn though joyful act of Christian worship. They also broke bread at home. This is the Lord's supper.

Accordingly, at first, they used to break bread together day by day. And so far, is there anything contrary to scripture in taking the Lord's-supper on any day whatever? There is a principle laid down which justifies it whenever circumstances of an extraordinary kind call for it. Acts 2: 46 is the clearest proof that under such a claim (of which spirituality alone can judge aright) it is no unauthorized thing to take the Lord's-supper every day.

But from Acts 20: 7 we may assuredly gather a little more. We learn thence that there is one day

above all others appropriated to the supper of the Lord. No doubt other acts of worship or divine service may accompany it, such as prayers and praises; and if there be present any that need a word from the Lord in the way of a discourse on the grace of Christ or the truth of God, there is the fullest openness for it. The assembly of God is free to receive not only all that falls in with her own thanksgiving, but also everything that might contribute to the real edification of the saints of God. And therefore, as we find in 1 Corinthians 14, all these different elements are in exercise there, singing, prayer, thanksgiving, and blessing, but also speaking to edification and comfort. Yet the central object and chief motive for the heart in thus coming together is the remembrance of Christ in the breaking of bread. So we find it here: — "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread."

I am sorry to be obliged to point out a necessary correction here. But you will understand that the change has already been made *from* the truth. I am only seeking to bring souls back *to* the truth. The real words\* of the Holy Spirit here were: "When *we* came together." Now no doubt at first sight it seems a little harsh. I will read to you how it runs, and you will see that it is a little difficult. In the most authoritative text of this verse, according to the oldest and best MSS., it reads thus: "Upon the first day of the week, when *we* came together to break bread, Paul preached unto *them*." One can readily conjecture how the change took place. The copyists, seeing "preached unto *them*," thought that "when *we* came together" did not well harmonise, that there must be some mistake, and that "*we*" had probably slipped in instead of "the disciples." The truth, however, is, that "*we*" is right, and that the real intruder is "the disciples." It was the apparent jar of which the correction sought to get rid. This was wrong. Always accept this, my beloved brethren, as a true canon in such questions as to the word of God: never cut the knot of a difficulty in scripture, but wait till God untie it for you. There are difficulties in His word. What is to be done with them? Submit to them; own that you do not understand; pray to God till, in the use of all right means, He clears them up. But never force the word of God. That appears to have been done here. Some of the scribes cut the knot of the difficulty by changing "*we* came together" into "the disciples came together;" thus they thought that the latter would agree better with "*them*."

\*It is a question of the true Greek text, not of our version only. Ἡμῶν is read by the Sinaiticus ABDE, twenty cursives, all the ancient versions of value, save perhaps the Coptic, and several of the Greek fathers, as against HLP and most cursives.

But now let us simply take the clause as God wrote it; for there cannot be a legitimate doubt, to any competent person who has examined the matter, that I am giving the true form of the verse. Thus it will be found in every critical text of value, no matter whose it may be; and so you will find it in every correct version of the critical text — "Upon the first day of the week, when *we* came together." Why *we*? Because all had a common interest. Had it been said, "when the disciples came together," it might possibly have been thought that it meant no more than the disciples in that place, who had the habit of meeting together on the first day of the week. But as it is "when *we* came together to break bread," the principle takes in all saints. All are found here in a common character. The family word, "*we*," so familiar to the Spirit, is used — "when *we* came together." It is not merely the mode adopted by the disciples in Troas. It is the habit of the saints wherever they might be — of Paul, and Luke, and every one else. The only question that could be raised is, whether the writer does not mean by this to put himself along with the rest when he says, "When *we* came together to break bread." This I doubt not he does; but that the phrase goes farther we see from the context, which implies the fixed and regular habit of all the saints of God, wherever they had the opportunity, to meet together for the Lord's-supper on the first day of the week.

Thus we have a by no means unimportant truth, with historic simplicity, conveyed in this verse. There had been a time when every day, under the peculiar circumstances of the Pentecostal assembly, was devoted amongst other things to breaking bread together; but that state of things soon passed. The saints were scattered. Persecution drove them from Jerusalem, some here, some there, to other lands. We see no more the meeting to break bread day by day among the Jewish Christians; but we do hear among the Gentiles of an established fact to which the apostle puts his seal as one of those that had authority to order and arrange things in the name of our Lord Jesus. To meet and break bread was the settled habit of the saints then for the first day (not of the month or quarter, but) of the week.

Further, take notice, that "Paul preached." It is not "unto us" — this is not said — but "unto them." The propriety appears at once on reflection. Paul did not exactly preach (ἐκήρυσσεν, or εὐηγγελίζετο); for it is a totally different expression from that of preaching, and had no reference at all to proclaiming the gospel. It is simply "discoursed" (διελέγετο): no doubt it was upon profitable truth for any servants of God that might accompany him; but it was particularly addressed to the disciples that were in Troas. This seems the reason why it is said "to them," rather than "to us." Of course all the rest profited; but it would at this time have been a less appropriate word to say that Paul preached to us. It would not have so correctly expressed the address of Paul to the saints there. When it is said, "We came together to break bread," Paul, etc., are included. When the writer says "Paul preached unto them," he points to the apostle discoursing to these saints who rarely enjoyed such a privilege. Thus, I think, the propriety of the change is sufficiently manifest, though at first sight it might seem a little difficult. Indeed it is always the truest and wisest way to accept scripture according to the best authorities, and to wait on Him till we gradually see the beauty and fitness of every word of the living God.

It appears to me then that from these scriptures we have gained some very important points as to the Lord's day. We see that the Lord did not leave His saints isolated. By His will is the gathering of the members of His body to worship. So it was the Lord had begun with the disciples; so it is the Holy Ghost continues now that the assembly is formed in unity. How beautifully harmonious is the truth! We do not find that the risen Lord met with them every day during the forty days before He ascended. The Spirit records at any rate His meeting with them on two successive first days. So when the day of Pentecost was now accomplishing, they were all together in one place. It was the *Lord's-day* again. Then if in the joy and fellowship of Pentecostal blessing we hear among other peculiar but suited effects how they broke bread day by day, we learn that things afterwards recurred to the Lord's institution. He Himself had met with them, not merely with one or more, but "with the disciples;" and again on that day of the week following He stood in their midst. (John 20: 19, 26) The same thing becomes the regularized method which the Spirit of God records for us, sanctioned by an apostle's presence, and this too among the Gentiles. There might be other gatherings together; for it is in no way meant that the wants of the saints of God could be satisfied with simply gathering together to break bread on the Lord's-day, weighty as this may be. Still it is presented so as pre-eminently to include the heavenly family; even as the Lord's-supper is what appeals to all Christians, and no wonder; because His death brings before us that which is of all things the most momentous before God, humbling for man, and affecting to those who remember Him. In the Lord's death what is there for the heart! What there *is* some of us perhaps know a little — all of us, I am sure, far too little. Yea, rather what is *not* there? I might challenge the universe to say what there is not in the Lord's death; and sure I am that heaven would only bring out the answer to the call with incomparably greater appreciation of it than by earth. For the Spirit, though here, is sadly hindered by our feeble faith.

But still the Holy Spirit *is* here to give us power in the face of all hindrances. And it is precisely

while we are passing through the wilderness, whilst we prove what the world, flesh, and Satan are in their enmity to God, that grace gives us this day as a witness of Christ's resurrection and the pledge of our own. It is not now a command to rest on the sabbath with the consequence of death for those who despise it. This is law. Far different is the way of grace. Now that through our Lord Jesus we are brought out of death by His death, we have entered into life. We stand on wholly new ground in Him risen. We are put on no probationary trial to see whether we shall stand or fail. The grace of God has delivered us. Already saved, we are in Him blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. And as of old visibly, not less truly does the Lord now deign to be in our midst. The Holy Ghost is come down to give us, among other privileges, the enjoyment of Christ's presence; and this is what pre-eminently is our portion when we assemble in His name. How precious to read God's word together! What a mercy to have liberty and opportunities for proclaiming the good news! How many ways of serving the Lord with old and young, the sick and the poor, in which Christian life may express itself and be exercised!

But the first day of the week has a character of its own, a blessed and constant call for every saint, where Christ is all; and here it is accordingly where, if it were an apostle, he finds himself one of God's family. It is "we," not I and you. "When we came together to break bread." Doubtless, the Lord's-supper apart, the apostle had his special place. Having the first of all gifts in the church, he exercised it as the Lord guided. A blight is on the assembly that would silence any gift which the grace of God has given for common profit. A blight is on all the individuals that say or feel so satisfied with what they are and have attained that they want nothing more. Those who know so well in their own conceit, be assured, know nothing as they ought. Whatever edifies is most appropriate for us when gathered together. The Lord would soon blow on the self-complacency that declines what He is pleased to give.

Here we find the apostle not only discoursing freely to the saints, but using his liberty to so great a length that it proved indeed a danger to one present that was heavy. Yet it furnished an occasion for the display of the power which the Lord had given, not for destruction, but for His own tender mercy and gracious power.

I have already shown the main object of the Lord's supper; but it is not the only one. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians there is another connection with the Lord's day which must not be passed by. It occurs in the last chapter. The apostle says, "Concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the assemblies of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him [or at home] in store whatsoever he may be prospered in, that there be not gatherings then when I come." (vv. 1, 2.) Here again is a duty of love associated with the first day of the week. If it were a mere question of the saints remembering their poor brethren, there seems no reason why the collections might not have been from time to time as need was made known. Nor is it certainly a bare question of laying by at home, though it is well known that some learned commentators declare this to be the meaning of "by him." As if it were some great matter, they tell us that "laying by him," as a phrase taken by itself, means nothing more.

Supposing this to be certain, and I am not going to dispute with them about it, is this all? Did the apostle mean nothing more? It does seem to me that the truth greatly supplements what they say; for one may justly ask the question, Why, if so, stress should be laid on the first day of the week? Why not on any other day? Why was the collection (for this it was) on that day above all others? Beyond a doubt it is good and wholesome for a Christian to lay by at home for the need of others. It is well that he should consider gravely, and not on mere impulse or when he is on the spot, what he is going to give in the Lord's name. It is evident that the Lord meant each believer to challenge his heart in view of any

prosperity he may have had in the course of the week. But that each was to accumulate a separate store in his own house from week to week appears to me the merest assumption, and indeed mistake. The apostle would have it to be a grave matter of enquiry before the Lord, and of course therefore rather a question raised at home than, as is common in modern times, an emulous act when people flock together, or perhaps at haphazard, whether they be duly provided or not, and often under moving appeals to act on their feelings. All these are but poor ways of giving, and by no means answer to the intention of the Spirit of God here for His saints on the first day of the week.

The apostle wished giving to be a grave habit, and one that should be settled, as we have been prospered, with one's self or at home. He wished to avoid a special collection at the time of his visit, not merely, as it seems to us, because his time could be better employed than in such diaconal work, but because he felt it to be an affair for the Christian conscience and heart, not for influence of his own, still less for emulation, nor yet the gusts of some passing impulse. What a contrast is the getting a popular man to come and preach a moving sermon in order to work upon people's feelings! Far different is the principle laid down here. He urges on the saints to consider gravely before the Lord, and each by himself to lay by at home, not to act on impulse, but conscientiously, according as he had been that week prospered.

Accordingly the saints at Corinth, as elsewhere, are called in the name of the Lord to give on the first day of the week. "Let every one of you," *i.e.* each of them. Is this always remembered? It is not the rich alone. Is there not sometimes the thought that they are to give that can out of their abundance? Is Christ in this thought, or self? Not a word about wealth is breathed here, but "as he may have been prospered." The poor man may be prospered just as really in proportion as the rich; perhaps it might be even more sensibly. Many a rich man has nothing in particular different one week from another, but the poor man may often have; and the Lord thinks about the poor. The Spirit of God takes care to give him who has been ever so little prospered during the week a living and personal interest in everything that is connected with the name and saints of the Lord. Certainly it is not meant that those who are always in prosperity, and may not have any special abundance, should think themselves absolved from their duty of gravely considering with a view to giving. God forbid! Thus did the Lord ordain, that the poorest might not conceive himself left out, that the simplest might know that he has an integral interest in all that concerns the glory of God. There is too the gracious wisdom that connects all with Christ and His resurrection, and thus with the joy and the deliverance and the eternal blessing into which we are brought and know we are brought, and which we are intended to manifest in gathering together to His name, breaking bread in the remembrance of Him. What an association for our little contribution to the poor saints!

This then is the meaning of the first day of the week as here introduced, showing plainly that, as in the verse stated, there is a laying-up by each at home, so on the first day of the week they contributed when they came together; for we have already seen they always met on that day. Be it so, then, that the laying-by was at home, the day on which it was done implies that whatever might be thus separated to the need of the saints was not to be kept there. As they came together then, so they had fellowship in casting their offerings into the common treasury of the church in the name of the Lord. This appears to me the point here in connecting all together. Where would be the force of pressing the collection for the saints on the first day of the week, if it went no farther than each laying by at home? Why might it not be as well done on any other day? We can see its importance if they contributed on that day what each laid by at home, when they came together to break bread. Thus was communion best maintained among those that belonged to Christ; especially as it was also for the express purpose of avoiding collections when the apostle came. He would not mix it up with personal feeling. He

desired not that money should be drawn out because *Paul* was there. He would have souls exercised in love and liberty but withal conscientious care, and the motive Christ for the needy that are His. And He is always there; and this especially, let me repeat, on the first day of the week. No doubt withal there is liberty for every holy service in prayer, preaching, and visiting; and we may well thank God for all. But these are not confined to the Lord's-day, having their place as God gives opportunity on any if not on every day; whereas the breaking of bread is the standing institution of the church's communion; and the Lord's-day is the standing day for it, though it might be every day. The Lord's-supper and the Lord's-day answer to each other, being mutual complements in the witness of Christianity; and as the one is especially the expression of Christ's death, so is the other especially of His resurrection.

Thus too is all duly kept in its place and tone. For we are not meant to come together in sadness, in a spirit of mourning, or with garments of heaviness. There is set forth then the most affecting sign of our Saviour's humiliation in unfathomable love, the most solemn witness of our sin and shame and ruin. How overwhelming the evidence in His death that we were sinners, and what sinners we! But no less is it a demonstration of our blessedness through His infinite work as believers. God is not only satisfied as to sin and our sins, but glorified, and ourselves by grace washed, sanctified, justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. And our Lord, though on high, deigns to be with us till He come again and take us to be with Him.

Meanwhile the Lord's-day,\* where the grace and truth expressed in it is understood, and the Lord's-supper, observed as it should be in its original integrity as the central institution for the gathered worshippers in spirit and in truth, have their own appointed and appropriate aim — the best means according to God's wisdom — for the testimony and enjoyment of Christian privilege here below in His assembly to His glory. May our part, if indeed we are Christ's, be holily and happily in it all evermore. Amen.

\* I reject, it is scarce needful to add, the broad church laxity of such Presbyterians as the late Dr. N. Macleod, who put the Lord's-day on human, not on divine ground; and the criticism of the late Dean Alford on Rom. 14: 5, 6, who confounded the question of Jewish days, which some wished to impose on the Christian, with that of the Lord's day. The essence of the modern school is to take away the Sabbath, without leaving the Lord's-day — in my judgment, a grievous error and sin. The truth is that they, like too many others, have superficial thoughts on the one hand, of man's ruin on the other, and of God's grace in redemption and the new creation; and hence their slight of its sign. How few Christians really understand Christianity!