

The Fourth Commandment

Lecture by Rev Dr John Kennedy

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The purpose of this lecture is to direct attention to:

1. The divine authority and perpetual obligation of the Fourth Commandment
2. To consider what the Fourth Commandment requires
3. To inquire how the Sabbath law is regarded in our land
4. To inquire how the Sabbath is sanctified by ourselves.

1. The divine authority and perpetual obligation of the Fourth Commandment

This commandment is the fourth of the statutes composing the moral law, which, because of the number of commandments that are found in it, is usually called the Decalogue. It is the last of those written on the first table of the law, and which declare the form in which love to God should be expressed in obedience. There could be no doubt in the mind of any who compassed Mount Sinai that the law thence promulgated issued from Jehovah, for "the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel". Amidst "blackness, and darkness, and tempest" shone the flame of the "devouring fire". The awful blast of the trumpet thundered, and a "voice of words" came forth from the fire. The mountain quaked, and all the earth around it was shaken. It was no wonder that the people were overwhelmed with terror, when even "Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake". Who amidst the assembly, before such a scene as Sinai then presented, hearing the awful thunder and "the voice of words", and feeling the earth quaking beneath them, could doubt that they were in the presence of Jehovah, and that from Him came the law which, on two tables of stone, was delivered to them by Moses. Thus came from God to Israel the Fourth Commandment, with all the other words of the Decalogue.

The words of the law, spoken by Jehovah's mouth, were engraved by His finger on tables of stone. Surely this suffices to indicate that this summary of duty was intended by Him to be perpetual. The Ten Commandments alone were thus written by God. Not thus did He write the rules prescribing the typical service of Israel, for the binding obligation of these was intended to be but temporary, and must in due season pass away. But the Decalogue was intended to be perpetual, and there was therefore a divine engraving of it on stone.

But it may be said, yea, it has often been said, that the observance of the Sabbath was made binding, by the law given forth on Sinai, only on the children of Israel. Not so, for the terms of the commandment bring its obligation to bear on "the stranger", and godly Nehemiah enforced the observance of it on Gentiles as well as on Jews. True, the revelation of the moral law was given exclusively to Israel in the wilderness. They, and they only, heard "the voice of words" coming from the awful glory of "the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire". But what was then given to them on tables of stone was placed in their custody for all mankind. It was not because they were God's peculiar people that they were under obligation to obey the moral law, but because, like all other rational beings on the face of the earth, they were bound to keep all the commandments of God. It was not the obligation but the revelation of the Decalogue that was peculiar to Israel.

And as to the Fourth Commandment, it requires only what was required from the beginning. The Sabbath was instituted by God in Eden, and was there both enjoined and observed. The

first day of human history was a Sabbath, and those who feared the Lord in the pre-Mosaic times, doubtless, remembered "the Sabbath day to keep it holy".

Christ distinctly tells us "that the Sabbath was made for man", not for the Jew only. There was a Sabbath long before there was a Jew. Man, everywhere, and at all times needs it, and men of all nations are enjoined to observe it; and all who despise it act not only unwisely, but wickedly.

And what reason can be given for representing the Sabbath as a Jewish institution? Why should the Fourth Commandment, rather than any other, be represented as but of limited and temporary obligation? There is certainly nothing in the form of it to give it a peculiarity on account of which it should be so regarded and treated. The tribute which it demands for God must surely always be due to Him; and what reason can be given why the memorial of His rest, after the work of creation, should not be continued? And if the giving of a Sabbath to man be a boon, what but a change, affecting the goodness of God, could account for its being withdrawn? The Fourth Commandment is "good", as well as "just and holy", and while the goodness of God is unchanged, it cannot cease to require the keeping "holy" of the Sabbath. I could imagine some reason for saying that the Fifth Commandment has a Jewish cast, because the promise subjoined to it refers to "the land which the Lord" their God had given to Israel. This, it might be said, is surely spoken only to the Jews, because of the evident reference to the land of Canaan, which, according to the promise of the Lord, was given exclusively to them. But the question as to its perpetual obligation is conclusively settled in the New Testament, for Paul, writing to the Ephesians, asserts the binding force of that commandment, and calling it "the first commandment with promise", insists on the perpetual connection between obedience to it and the promise which is subjoined to the precept: "It *is*", not it *was*, he tells us, "the first commandment with promise".

The claim of the Fourth Commandment rests on *moral*, not on *positive* grounds. It demands for God what is due to Him in His unchanging supremacy, majesty, and glory. Can we conceive of rational beings under the reign of One who is "infinite, eternal, and unchangeable" in His being, and in all His attributes, not under obligation to separate themselves, at certain seasons, from all employment besides, in order to do homage in worship to the Most High? Why, even to an earthly sovereign – a fellow creature – direct homage is due when the sovereign chooses to require it. The time prescribed for this must be remembered, and used for the appointed purpose. And is it to be imagined that men who, because of their lot on earth, are necessarily employed about mere secular things, can be free from an obligation to detach themselves "from their worldly employments and recreations" in order to render homage to "the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy"? It is inconceivable how any mind, influenced by right views of the greatness of Jehovah, and not forgetful of our entire dependence on His goodness, could approach to think of the obligation of the Fourth Commandment not being *moral, and therefore universal and perpetual*. And if the homage demanded is due to God, He has the right to determine when and how that homage is to be rendered. Our Queen demands a right to fix when a reception takes place, and how those who are to be presented shall appear in her presence. And surely this right must be conceded to God. He has exercised this right, which rests on His supremacy as Jehovah. He has determined that a seventh of each week shall be devoted, so far as possible, in consistency with meeting the claims of necessity and mercy, exclusively to His worship – the ground of that allotment being given us in His own example as Creator. Surely, then, not only is the demand for a Sabbath one resting on unchanging moral grounds, but the portion of time to be observed as a Sabbath is unalterably fixed.

There are thus two fixed points, which can admit of no change, in the requirements of the Fourth Commandment – the one is that there be a Sabbath devoted exclusively to the service of God, and the other is that one day in each week shall be so devoted. Neither of these is at all affected by the change implied in making the first day of the week the Christian Sabbath instead of the seventh. This change was made by Him who had a right to do so, and who in

view of it declared Himself to be "Lord of the Sabbath". How could He who appointed the Sabbath at the beginning, and who promulgated the Sabbath law from Sinai, be expected to exercise His lordship over it by setting it aside? It was in view of its continuing to be under His administration, as exalted to the throne, the Son of Man proclaimed Himself its Lord. If He discountenanced a Pharisaic observance of that day, and was so careful, both by precept and example, to rebuke those who substituted a punctilious formality for the true spiritual observance of the Sabbath, is that a reason for supposing that the Sabbath law was to be abrogated? Nay, is not His care, regarding its being rightly observed, a reason why we should be assured of the Lord's regard for it, and that, under His reign, the Fourth Commandment would be of binding force till time shall be no more.

Was Christ not entitled to effect the change? He was the Creator, in memorial of whose rest the seventh day was appointed to be the Sabbath. In His view all His creation work was good, and He rested, in complacency, His eye on all that He had finished. A memorial of that rest we might expect Him to give, and it was given to man, and the Lord made it man's interest as well as his duty to observe it. And if He who acted thus in connection with His finished work, as Creator, performed a work still greater – a work in which was manifested, as in no other work besides, the glory of all His name, and to which all creation and providence were subordinated, how could we but expect a memorial of His entering into His rest when that work was finished?

Instead of the change of day being inconsistent with the perpetual obligation of the Fourth Commandment, it is that perpetual obligation which makes the change imperative. Just because the seventh day was the Sabbath of old, as a memorial of the rest of God after finishing His work as Creator, the first day must be so now, as a memorial of His rest after finishing the work of redemption.

The antecedent action of God demands the change. If it He owed to Himself, to make the one day a memorial of His rest after creation, all the more does He owe it to Himself, to set apart the other as a memorial of a rest still more glorious. For it is He who appointed the Sabbath of old, who, in His resurrection from the dead, began to "enter into His rest", after the work of redemption was finished. The very instinct of the church would crave the giving of a memorial of that day. And it was given, and that too in such a way, as, while not removing the memorial of the Lord's rest after creation, gave to His rest, after redemption, the place which was due to it, because of the exceeding greatness of the work which preceded it. Sufficient, in the tribute rendered to God, as a concession to the greatness of creation work, is the retaining of the proportion of time to be observed as a Sabbath holy to the Lord. What kind of mind must be that of a man who imagines that, because of the fuller manifestation of the divine glory, and the glorious commendation of divine love, through Christ crucified, a tribute which Jehovah was wont to claim is no longer exacted, and should no longer be rendered?

And that the day was changed by divine authority from the seventh to the first of the week, is sufficiently proved. The example of Christ and the practice of the Apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, sufficiently prove this to be the case. What can be more authoritative, as a directory to the Church, than the example of the Church's Head and the practice and writing of His inspired Apostles? And we have His example in His coming once and again to His disciples after His resurrection to countenance their meeting for worship on the first day of the week. And the practice of the pre-Ascension days was continued thereafter by the Apostles; and Paul, writing to the Corinthians, mentions "the first day of the week" as the day of gathering together for worship, as well as of "collection for the saints".

The very lack of an express enactment making the change imperative is an eloquent tribute to the authoritative action of God bearing on the Sabbath in the days of old, and to the value and authority of Christ's example. There was no need of a re-enactment of the Sabbath law, for He who enacted it at first sufficiently declared that He intended it to be perpetual, and with Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning". And if He countenanced the change of the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first, what can be more authoritative than His example as

a rule of duty?

Why then, it may be asked, is there such a desire to get rid of the perpetual obligation of the Fourth Commandment, as requiring the observance of the Christian Sabbath? Not, certainly, because there is any reasonable ground for supposing that the Fourth Commandment has been removed from its place in the Decalogue, nor because the change of day is not only *allowable and authoritative, but morally necessary*. This desire to be rid of a Sabbath law arises from *its being peculiarly testing*. It requires the actual surrender of one day in seven to be a holy Sabbath to the Lord. The refusal of such a surrender is a palpable thing, of which even a very slumbering conscience must take note, and regard as sin, and which must be apparent to the eyes of onlookers. It is in order to escape from the strictures of conscience, and to secure boldness to sin before men, that there are such efforts to prove that the Sabbath law is repealed. This is the secret spring of the whole anti-Sabbatarian movement. Ungodly men desire to be free to do as they list on the day of the Lord, and they think they can secure this by an impotent attack on the perpetual authority of the Fourth Commandment. They, forsooth, who are but worms of the dust, are to overthrow the arrangements of the Most High, and over His shattered law are to reach an emancipation from being under responsibility to God! This is their daring behest, and they imagine that by flippant objectioning, which but betrays their ignorance and their profanity, they can secure what they desire, and thus obtain a triumph, which entitles them to be mockers of the saints of God.

2. What is required in the Fourth Commandment?

Looked at in the light of this commandment, the Sabbath is a day which the Lord has "blessed" and "hallowed". He has set it apart from every other day by so blessing it that it becomes a blessing to all who rightly observe it. No one who has not proved it by a spiritual observance of it can know what a blessing it is, or has a right to pronounce any judgment regarding it. But none ever honestly proved it who did not experience it to be a blessing from the Lord. And the Lord has "hallowed" it. He has done so in setting it apart from other days as specially His own – as a day to be devoted to His worship.

In accordance with this dedication of it by God, the Sabbath is required to be remembered and kept holy. In order to "remember" it one must think of it as a day which the Lord has blessed, he must be conscious of his need of such a blessing as the Sabbath was intended to be, and be anxious to enjoy it, as well as have the divine authority of the commandment bearing on his conscience. And he must "keep it holy". He must act becomingly towards it as a day which the Lord has hallowed. He must heartily call it "a delight", as it is "holy to the Lord and honourable", and seek grace to preserve him from devoting any portion of it to any work which accords not with the design of God in hallowing it. The worship of God, private and public, is the work to which the hours of one entire day in seven is to be devoted, except in so far as, in connection with our lot on earth and the course of providence, we are called to engage in "works of necessity and mercy". From love to God, expressed in regarding His Sabbath as "a delight", and in seeking the enjoyment of His gracious presence and fellowship on that day, we must be quite willing to withdraw ourselves from "all such employments and recreations as are lawful on other days", and heartily devote ourselves to the service of God.

According to the terms of the commandment, not only is the individual bound to keep the Sabbath holy, but each one having influence is bound to exert that influence in endeavouring to secure the observance of the Sabbath by those who are under him. The Parent and Master are thus bound to use their influence. They are specified in the words of the commandment; but the same obligation rests on all who hold a position of influence to a greater or less extent over their fellow-men. All employers of labour, all judges and magistrates, all employed in connection with the executive government of the nation, the legislature, the Sovereign, are all under obligation, imposed by divine authority, to use all their power in securing that the Sabbath of the Lord is hallowed.

3. How is the Sabbath observed in Scotland?

It would be far more pleasant to consider the past than the present of our country's relation to the law of the Sabbath. The time was when the Sabbath law was so observed in Scotland that she was marked, because of this, as singular among all lands; and while her practice was a joy to all lovers of the law of God it won for her the honour of being reproached by all who were enemies of truth and godliness. To some extent that reproach has not been quite removed. Scotland has not yet become such that her distinctive Sabbatarianism is so blotted out by the increased of practical ungodliness that she can no longer favourably compare with other nations. But it is sad to think of how far her departure from "the good way" of Sabbath-keeping has already gone. What a contrast a Scottish Sabbath now presents to that of earlier times – to that even of the generation which has just passed away! Think of our railway trains rushing over all parts of the country with their thousands of passengers, disturbing the Sabbath quiet and tempting so many to forget that there is a "God in the earth who judgeth righteously" – think of so many open shops along the streets of our cities, on the day of rest, which is the day of God, and receiving such support as tempts ungodly men to extend the traffic – think of the increasing crowds of those to whom the Sabbath has become a day of amusements, who never think of entering a place of worship, and who by their conduct prove that vice is the ally of ungodliness – think of how even those, who are not prepared utterly to abandon the public worship of God, are beginning to act as if an enforced partial attendance in the courts of God's house earns for them a right to do what they please on what remains of the Sabbath – think, too, of the easy tolerance of such practices already so apparent in the unfaithful supineness both of the Church and of the State while all this desecration of the Sabbath is in progress – and what a contrast the Scottish Sabbath of today presents to that of times gone by! And what unspeakably greater contrast is the present observance of the day of the Lord to "what is required in the Fourth Commandment"!

To this sad result, unfaithful discipline, on the part of the churches, has greatly contributed. On a communion Sabbath members of the church are allowed to come to the table of the Lord, who, on all other Sabbaths of the year, care not even to appear to have any regard to the requirements of the law of God, and not a few will leave the table of the Lord to rush to amusements in the evening. And this is endured! And a church, pledged to preserve the purity of the house, and the sanctity of the day of the Lord, endures it! In this respect what a contrast church discipline presents to that of other times. There may have been an extremeness in the mode of exercising discipline in earlier times, but it expressed zeal for the honour of God's law, and for the purity of His house. An opposite extreme has now been reached, which expresses no more creditable feeling than indifference as to the claims of God, and as to the welfare of precious souls.

And the action of the State, in relation to the Sabbath law, combines with that of the churches to hasten Scotland's departure from "the old paths". All legislation in defence of the rest and sanctity of the Sabbath is refused, and almost all forms and measures of Sabbath desecration are tolerated. Of this we, in this county, have had a notable example. A wanton and flagrant desecration of the Sabbath, by railway officials and their servants, occurred, and not only was there no interference on the part of the executive to put down the excuseless traffic, but all exertions were put forth, by those who should be "a terror to evil-doers", to protect it, and arrangements made for shooting down the men whose only crime was a pronounced expression of zeal in behalf of the Sabbath law of heaven and of Scotland, in the event of their persisting in their opposition to what they regarded as defiant transgression of the Fourth Commandment. The civil magistrate thus became a praise to evil-doers, and a terror to them that do well. Woe to Scotland when such are those by whom the law is administered! But what was done in connection with the Sabbath desecration at Strome, is, in spirit, in accordance with the rule of all the action, or inaction, bearing on the Sabbath, of the executive throughout our country. An instance so flagrant as that to which I have referred, of a condoning, by those in authority, of the conduct of men who, in their eager thirst for gain, scruple not to trample

the law of God under foot, cannot yet be quoted; but the spirit which appeared then in a form so exceptionally pronounced, seems to be that by which our rulers are animated; and in due time, if the Lord does not graciously interfere, the people of our country will learn tamely to submit to any action in which it may be expressed.

And the leading newspapers of the country add their influence to all that tends to remove the authority of the Fourth Commandment from the consciences of the people. One of these, the most widely circulated, and whose name claims for it the position of being the representative of Scottish opinion, the organ of infidel Liberalism, is never more earnest and envenomed in its paragraphs than when it utters its ignorant sneers at all Sabbath keeping, and pours out its abuse on those by whom the Sabbath law is defended. On some minds this must tell. The reiteration of its sceptical mockery of what is Scriptural must, to some extent, affect the feeling of those who are unacquainted with the Word of God, and care not seriously to consider any subject to which their attention may be directed. And the number of such may be counted by thousands. There are a few whom its attacks on all that was once deemed sacred in Scotland cannot affect, except with indignation and sorrow – indignation because of how what is sacred is boldly profaned, and sorrow because of how views are propagated which tend to the temporal, as surely as to the spiritual, deterioration of the people. This would seem to be the *aim*, as well as the natural *result* of the work, of *The Scotsman*, for, while it pleads for a wholesale Sabbath profanation, it strenuously supports the oppressor against the poor crofters of the Highlands. If any zeal is exhibited by them on behalf of the Sabbath, the poor Highlanders are abused as criminals, but when their grievances are being inquired into, all its kindness is reserved for those by whom these were imposed. Remorseless is the cruelty of those who would insist on a continuance of the oppression that offers to our people, as the only alternative, starvation in their fatherland, or emigration to the further ends of the earth, in order that a pampered aristocracy may have their desired amusement. And this is the outcome of the infidel Liberalism of our times! But more cruel still it is to endeavour to induce our working classes to utterly abandon the “godliness”, which has “the promise of this life”, as well as of “that which is to come”.

What infatuation the conduct of our aristocracy and of our rulers indicates, when by the example of the former, and the guilty indifferentism of the latter, the country people of this nation are induced to treat with contempt the claims of the Fourth Commandment! The next commandment which follows is that which secures for them a right to be respected and obeyed, and in no measure can any one be truly disposed to yield to them their due, who have ceased to pay respect to the claims of God. By refusing to follow and enforce the Sabbath law, they are doing what they can to secure a revolution in our native land. *From the Sabbath-breaking masses will come the great danger of the future*; for a people, trained to disregard the demand of God, that His Sabbath shall be hallowed, and whose grievances remain unredressed, shall soon cease to have any respect for those to whom, according to the law of God, they owe dutiful submission.

4. How is the Sabbath observed among us and by ourselves?

This is a question which each one of us is bound to consider, for on each of us rests an obligation to do what the Fourth Commandment requires. You cannot by any possibility get rid of this obligation. And the obligation is divinely imposed. Some may imagine they are in a position up to which the claim of the Sabbath law does not rise – that it is something to which the vulgar alone are called to have respect. And the poor, amidst the pinching straits of their lot, may think that to them Sabbath keeping is impossible, and is therefore not required of them. Others still, found among the highest and among the lowest in rank may imagine that, by the aid of men of advanced opinions, they have reached a conclusion which entirely disposes of the Sabbath law, and relieves them of all responsibility in connection with it. And, besides all these, there are many who think that any seemly measure of outward respect for the Sabbath is a full discharge of all that is dutiful; while there are some whose official work is

such that they cannot refrain from seeming to respect it. But to each one of all these classes the question is addressed, and to it an answer must be given, if not earlier, most certainly at the bar of the great court of assize at the last day.

How are you affected towards the Sabbath in your heart? Do you rejoice in prospect of it, not because its rest from toil is craved by your wearied body, and by your mind from worrying business, but because it is a day "holy to the Lord, and honourable"? Are you on that account really disposed to call it "a delight"? Does the prospect of enjoying communion with the Lord, and of enjoying "peace" in "His ways" give you gladness? Does your desire for this induce you to pray to God in prospect of the Sabbath for His presence and His blessing?

And when the Sabbath comes, how are you employed in your closet? Is there any true spiritual worship there? Do not imagine that there can be any genuine worship in public if there be no true worship in secret. If you seek God at all you will seek Him in your closet. True godliness is not a bit of gaudy patchwork for the eyes of men to observe, it is a spiritual living with God in secret prayer, in which there are wrestlings for His blessing, sighings under the hiding of His face, gladness in the hope of His favour, joy in meditation on His glory and His love as revealed through Jesus Christ, and glimpses by the eye of faith of the coming glory, and foretastes of it such as cause fervent longings for the time when that glory shall be reached. What know you of such exercises as these in your closet on the day of God?

And how is it as to family worship on Sabbath? Is there an altar to God in your household? Do you enjoy the service of compassing it? Do you in that work seek the face and strength of the Lord? O, how sad it is to think of families that never take part in any such service! And sad, too, is the case of all heads of households who regard family worship as an uninteresting routine which, if they dared, they would altogether omit!

And how is it as to household duties on the Sabbath? Is unnecessary work avoided? Are such arrangements made and observed, as will admit of as many members of the household as possible attending in the place of public worship? What is done by parents in the religious instruction of their children? This is a duty binding on every parent, and it must fare ill with every community in which this is neglected. The home is the nursery of the church, and nothing else can supply the place of parental instruction of the young. The tendency in these days is to delegate this work to the teachers in our Sabbath schools. Many parents feel as if the opportunity of sending their children to be instructed elsewhere had relieved them of all responsibility in connection with their being taught at home. But this is an utter mistake, and is an evil, in connection with our Sabbath school system, which ought to be carefully guarded against. True, there are parents who are both indisposed to be dutiful to their children, and quite incapable of rightly instructing them. Other instruction than that which their parents can give them is required by the children of such as these, but let that be given to them in their own homes, by office-bearers of the church and Christian friends to whom such work would be "a labour of love". The parents might thus learn while their children were being taught, and might, by the blessing of God, be stirred up to, and fitted for, the discharge of their duty as instructors of their children.

Our Sabbath school system, in the measure in which it tends to separate parents and children, cannot but have an injurious effect. It causes a separation of them beyond what is immediate. The Sabbath school is becoming the children's church, as distinguished from the parents' church, and it is becoming a rarer thing than once it was to see the parents and children together in the house of God. In some places already the extreme has been reached, of the entire absence of children from the house of God, when the Gospel is preached, and the proposal has been made and partially acted on of having a quite separate children's church. And with their work in the Sabbath school, which is naturally looked on as their only public worship on Sabbath, how apt are the children to associate what they have been accustomed to in their ordinary gatherings during the week! And how prejudicially this must tell on their respect for the day of the Lord! Sabbath keeping cannot therefore be expected to be the fruit

of large gatherings of children in Sabbath schools. And the habit of confining the religious teaching of the young to the Sabbath school tends, on the one hand, to make the parents utterly regardless as to their duty, and, on the other, to make the rising generation indifferent as to stated attendance in the house of God.

I am afraid that neither Sabbath observance, nor regular Sabbath attendance in the place of worship, shall be found to be the fruit of our Sabbath schools. But they seem to be indispensable, and the church's work should, in connection with them, be to do what is possible in order to secure that the children shall be taught at home by parents competent to instruct them, and that the children of undutiful and incompetent parents be taught in circulating little groups in the several households to which they belong.

And what is your Sabbath reading? There never was a time when so many books for Sabbath reading issued from the press. "Sunday" – the heathenish name for the Lord's Day – is put on the title page of some of these, and this is almost all that is Sabbatic about them. Tales and illustrations are mingled with singularly light religious pap, in order to gratify a taste that says of the Sabbath, "When will it be gone?" and to which searching the Scriptures is a weariness. There is nothing that ought to take the place of the prayerful study of the Word of God; and let your other reading be confined to works which have been approved by the church and blessed by the Lord.

And what is your public worship? How are you affected towards it? Are you truly conscious of your need of grace to prepare you for engaging in it in a spiritual frame of mind? Do you feel your need of receiving instruction, and are you more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools? Know you what it is to feel sad in His house when the Lord withholds His gracious presence? Has "a day in His courts" been to you, in your experience, "better than a thousand"? Or has your coming to the house of God been to you a mere matter of habit – a mere lifeless formality?

These are questions which demand the serious attention of each one of you all. Dare not to make so light of the claims of God, as not to care what answers you can honestly give.

I desire, before I close, to warn you, and especially the young, against examples and misrepresentations from which you may be in danger.

I would warn you against the *example of Sabbath walking*. Such an example is presented to you, though certainly not by any who, in their practice, are entitled to your respect. Still, the very habit of seeing others doing what, in your conscience, you cannot approve, may have an evil influence, and as the observed transgression of the law of God increases, in that measure is the volume of the current which endangers your steadfastness. I know few more excuseless things than this Sabbath walking. If the plea of health is used to justify it, how can men expect that to benefit their health which they dare not ask the Lord to bless! And if they can only plead that they do it for recreation, because they feel the Sabbath to be dull, how can they dare to act in a way which so plainly indicates their dislike of the day and of the Word of God? And surely what ought chiefly to be sought on the Sabbath is what would be an eternal benefit to the soul; and, if so, what possible advantage, in order to the acquisition of this, can be found in the society or surroundings of those who go forth on His day, openly to exhibit their contempt of the Lord. This way of profaning the Sabbath has often been the beginning of a career of crime. Beware of it, my young friends.

Beware, too, of following the example of those who *cannot dispense with having their letters and newspapers on Sabbath*. No one can listen to the plea of necessity in favour of sending for letters to the Post Office on Sabbath, or of requiring that these be delivered to them. Forsooth, they cannot dispense with them, though in London, the busiest and wealthiest city in the world, no letters are received on Sabbath. If the exigencies of business might be pled anywhere in behalf of a Sabbath delivery of letters, surely it is there. And in our paltry villages,

petty businessmen must have their letters, to whatever extent this may involve a profanation of the day of rest! And some of our gentry, as if anxious that all should be informed of their contempt for what is sacred, will send their mounted couriers to the country offices, to which they laboured to secure that despatches should be carried. They need not be so careful to exhibit their disregard for the law of God, for the information, given in this pronounced form, was already in possession of the public. Men of graceless hearts and benighted minds were not suspected of being able to endure to lack the contents of letters and newspapers, the only kind of reading which they can appreciate, and by which they can be pleased. If they are determined to call the Sabbath a weariness, let them do so to their own eternal ruin; but by no law is a right given to them, by an ostentation of their ungodliness, to grieve the hearts of those who think that "the law of God is holy, and just, and good".

And be not cheated with infidel objections to careful Sabbath keeping, however smartly and sneeringly these may be uttered. As the tide of declension is moving on, an impression is produced in the hearts of those who are adrift that all things which they are leaving behind them are but relics of darker times. Adherence to what is antiquated is all that is implied, they say, in the conservatism that cleaves to "the old paths" and "the good way" in which our fathers walked. It is characteristic of young men that they do not like to appear to be behind the age. They must be abreast of the intelligence of a century so enlightened as this is. They must cast away the old clothes of traditionalism, and must learn to sneer at the days and ways that are gone, that they may be like those who assume to be the leaders of thought – the advanced guard of the army of progress. They must neither think nor speak like the men of earlier, and, therefore, more benighted times! To minds of this cast access is easy to the idea of the Sabbath and of Sabbath keeping being things of the past, and therefore not to be respected. But, my young friends, be not led away by this affectation of progress with its contempt for what is past. There never was a time when in science there was more utterly baseless speculation, and in which more structures of lies were reared within the religious sphere than now.

There never was an age of more hasty thinking and of more hazy utterance than the present in all things affecting what is divine and spiritual. But God is unchanging. On that grand truth firmly plant your foot in faith. The law of God is unchanging. That truth is another strong foothold. On these be "steadfast and unmovable" in the midst of all present unsettlement of thought and practice; and all the influence which may be brought to bear upon you will not suffice to cause you to regard Sabbath keeping as a thing which any generation should leave behind it.