

# A Law of Love

by E.J. Waggoner

from The Present Truth, August 25, 1898

One Sabbath day Jesus and His disciples were passing through a cornfield, on their way to the synagogue,

## **Matthew 12**

<sup>1</sup> ...and His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

<sup>2</sup> But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, "Behold, Your disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day."

Would Jesus defend His disciples in an unlawful course? Not by any means, for He said,

## **Matthew 5**

<sup>17</sup> Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

<sup>18</sup> For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

And He used still stronger language, to show the changeability of the law, which includes the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy. Said He,

## **Luke 16**

<sup>17</sup> It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

That law was in His heart (*Psalm* 40:8). It is evident, therefore, that Jesus had no sympathy with lawlessness.

Yet Jesus defended the action of the disciples in plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day, and rubbing the grains out in their hands, and eating, to satisfy their hunger. This was not, as some think, a setting aside or ignoring of the law, to make room for a higher claim, that of human need, but it was in view of the fact that what the disciples did was per-

fectly in harmony with the law. To the Pharisees Jesus said:

### **Matthew 12**

<sup>7</sup> If you had known what this means, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.”

The Pharisees accused the disciples falsely, in saying that they were doing what was not lawful on the Sabbath day.

### **1 John 4**

<sup>8</sup> ...God is love.

His law is a law of love.

### **Deuteronomy 33**

<sup>2</sup> The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of His saints; from His right hand went a fiery law for them.

<sup>3</sup> Yea, He loved the people...

This is a part of “the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel” (*Deuteronomy* 33:1). The blessing of God is “life for evermore” (*Psalms* 133:3), and “His commandment is life everlasting” (*John* 12:50).

God’s law is not negative; it is positive, life-giving. It does not need to be set aside, in order that human needs should be met; no; it is impossible for one jot of its claims to abate; but the law makes provision for the satisfying of human need. Yea, the law exists for the sole purpose of satisfying the desire of every living thing.

Many people get the idea, and too often they get it from professed Christians, that to serve God and keep His commandments means to make one’s self miserable. What a libel that is upon God’s goodness and fatherly care!

The words of the Lord are spoken to us, that our “joy may be full” (*1 John* 1:4). To the one who knows the Lord and His law, it is a delight. It is not that one shall compel himself to like something that is disagreeable; that is not Christianity;

but it is that men should find that the commandments of God are “more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (*Psalms* 19:10). The true Christian rejoices in the Lord, and delights to do His will, because he cannot help liking what is so good.

In keeping with the common idea that Christianity deprives men of all that is desirable in life, very many people have the idea that the Sabbath is a yoke of bondage imposed upon them. Consequently they reject it entirely, while others accept it in much the same way that they would take bitter medicine. They think that they must do it in order to be saved, and they reluctantly take on the Sabbath, and either pity themselves for the hard road they have to travel, or else they complacently boast of the great “sacrifice” which they have made for the Lord. It is difficult to know just what to call such dealing with the Sabbath of the Lord; but one thing we may be sure of, and that is, it is not Sabbath-keeping.

### **1 John 5**

<sup>3</sup> This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.

Therefore the Sabbath commandment is not grievous. “The Sabbath was made for man,” not against him. It is not something that is imposed upon man, but something given to him; it is not a burden for him to carry, but it carries him, and eases him of his burdens. It is not hard, but easy, to keep the Sabbath, even as it is not hard, but easy, to rest. Rest is not work. The true keeping of the Sabbath is the entering into God’s work; and since that work is finished and perfect, we find rest in it. Keeping the Lord’s Sabbath,—God’s rest,—is absolutely to trust in Him, allowing Him to work His perfect will in us. It is the perfection of faith in God.

God has laid up righteousness for those who trust in Him (*Psalms* 31:19). We are made righteous by faith. He gives righteousness. All our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags; there

is no real righteousness except the righteousness of God, and that cannot be had apart from Him. We can have no perfect righteousness except as His presence gives it to us.

But “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (*Romans* 6:23). So the righteousness that God gives us is eternal life.

The Sabbath is part of God’s gift of righteousness. Indeed, it is the perfection of His righteousness, for it is perfect rest in Him. To keep the Sabbath is to trust God implicitly and absolutely, to rest in His love. Therefore the Sabbath brings to us God’s free gift of everlasting life in Christ.

The greater includes the less. He who does that which is greatest, will certainly do that which is less. As nothing is too hard for the Lord, so nothing is too small for Him. Whoever believes that God will keep him alive throughout eternity must certainly know That He will provide for his needs day by day.

If a man is in fear about his daily support, that shows that he does not trust God for eternal life; for it is absurd to say that I trust God to keep me eternally, but do not trust Him for today. So we see that the Sabbath of the Lord—the seventh day of the week—is the great test of our faith in God.

It is made the busiest day in the week by most of the world. To keep it as the commandment of God requires, seems to be cutting one off from his daily bread. A man who has not faith in God cannot do it; but the one who trusts his whole being with God for eternity, can trust Him to give him his daily bread while he keeps the Sabbath. He will see that the Sabbath, instead of being a hardship, reveals to him God who gives to all life and breath and all things.

We see, therefore, that the record of the passing through the cornfield on the Sabbath day, as well as the miracles of healing which Jesus did on that day, is for the purpose of

showing us that in the Sabbath God gives Himself to us, with all the strength of His life. The lesson is,

**Matthew 6**

<sup>33</sup> Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Do not despise or reject the gifts of God. He gives all good things. He is solicitous for our welfare. He desires that we shall live, and enjoy life. But we must not be afraid to trust Him. We must not act as though we thought there were concealed poison in His gifts: and we must know that the Sabbath is the blessed gift of God. It is for our good both here and in eternity.

**Psalms 34**

<sup>8</sup> O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusts in Him.

<sup>9</sup> O fear the Lord, you His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him.

<sup>10</sup> The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.