

CHAPTER 24: The Sabbath

My DEAR COMRADES,

I would like to say something to you about the duty of keeping the Sabbath.

That day was, as you all know, set apart by God to be a special day of rest, and concerning it He said, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." That commandment has never been repealed, and is therefore binding on us to-day.

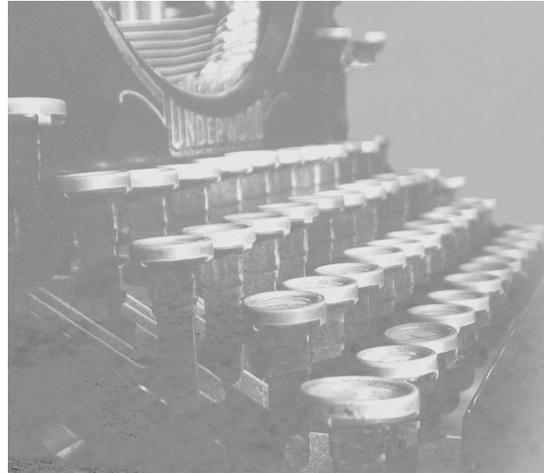
There is, however, I think, a good deal of ignorance and misunderstanding with many people as to the manner and spirit in which the Sabbath ought to be observed. Some seem to think we can keep it or not, just as we choose. Others imagine that the Jew alone is under the obligation to pay any attention to its observance, while in the opinion and practice of many Christians it is abolished altogether.

Now, in order that you may have a correct view of what is expected of Salvation Soldiers, in keeping the Sabbath, I ask your careful attention to what I have to say on the subject.

1. And first of all I remark that it is not my particular sacredness about that particular day which makes it The Lord's day, for all days according to Jesus and His Apostles are alike holy to those who serve Him.

But that it is the doing or the leaving undone of certain things which makes the day set apart for the Sabbath a holy day.

Let me try to illustrate my meaning. Some time ago I held a meeting of ministers and citizens in the city of Philadelphia, in the United States, for the purpose of affording information respecting The Army. After doing so, I threw the meeting open for anyone who wished for further explanations to ask me questions. Among others, a gentleman belonging to a small sect which observes the Sabbath on our Saturday, asked what were the views of The Army with respect to the observance of the Sabbath on the



The
William Booth
Collection

LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

Seventh instead of the First day of the week. I answered that a good Salvationist had seven Sundays a week. The great bulk of my audiences were both pleased and satisfied with my reply.

Now you, my Comrades, will understand that by a Salvationist having seven Sundays a week, I meant that every day of every week ought to be alike sacred to God, and sacredly employed in doing His will. One day, or a thousand years, are the same to God, and all our days and all our years belong to Him, and ought to be equally employed in doing His blessed will. That is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Now if this command of the Holy Spirit, given by Paul is observed, you will see that every meal we partake of will become a sacrament, and every duty we perform will be an act of religion, and every day we live will be a sacred day, a Sabbath of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Yes, every day alike belongs to God. In trying to show the importance of keeping the Sabbath, some people will say, "When God has given you six days for yourself, keeping only one back for Himself, how wicked it must be to rob Him of the one!" But this is a mistaken way of stating the truth, seeing that God commands you to be as truly religious on Monday as on Sunday, and to strive as earnestly to please Him when you are doing your daily work on the six days, as when you are resting in your home, or praying in your meetings, on the other. If you do not obey this rule, you will not be a true Salvationist.

2. While, however, every day belongs alike to God, there is a difference in the character and opportunities of the Sabbath day, and consequently there will be a difference in the character of the service expected from us by God on that particular day; and I would like to show you, as far as is possible, what God expects from us on the Sabbath; in other words, I would like to describe what I think should be a Salvationist's Sunday:

1. It should be a day of rest from all unnecessary labour, both for ourselves and for others.



The
William Booth
Collection

LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

2. It should be a day for the special worship of God, both in public and private.

3. It should be a day of extra effort, by works of love and mercy, for the well-being of the bodies and souls of men.

Let me explain this a little more fully:

The Salvationist should, as far as possible, keep the Sabbath as a day of rest. Such observance of the day has been proved over and over again to be a very beneficial arrangement. It is promotive of bodily health and vigour. Men and animals, and even machinery, will, it is said, last longer, and do more good work in the long run, with one day's rest in the seven, than they will if they work all the time without intermission.

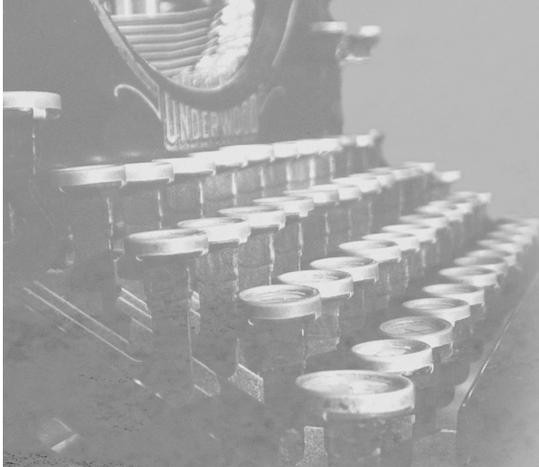
One day's rest from our ordinary labour, per week, is highly promotive of the vigour of the mind, as well as favourable to the well-being of the soul. Out of obedience, therefore, to God, and from consideration of the advantages to be reaped by man, the purpose of God in the ordination of the Sabbath should be thoughtfully considered and carried out.

In the character of this rest, the Salvationist cannot follow the regulation laid down by Moses for the Jews in its strict letter. It was never intended that he should. For example, the climate of a large part of the world will not allow him to do so. In the directions given to the Israelites for the observance of the Sabbath, they were forbidden to light a fire. But without a fire, the Salvationist in many of the countries wherein he is called to live, would perish with cold.

While, however, he cannot keep the Sabbath after the Jewish pattern, let him keep it in the spirit, by avoiding all unnecessary work.

Let him lay aside his week-day labour. Let the hammer and the plough, and the saw and the machine, and himself into the bargain, be unemployed, as far as possible, on the Sabbath.

Let there be rest in his Home as far as practicable.



The
William Booth
Collection

LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

Let there be as little cooking, with the work attendant on it, as possible. It grieves me often to know what an immense amount of Roasting, Boiling, Table-Spreading, Washing-up, and other similar work, is done on the Sabbath in many of the homes of my dear Soldiers. Much of it could, I am sure, be done without. Let the day, as far as possible, be a day of rest.