

As the Sabbath is a Divine institution, so it is to be religiously observed. It is not merely a day of rest from physical and mental toil, a day to recuperate the wearied energies of body and mind. It is a great religious institute. It is not a holiday in the ordinary sense of that term, but a holy-day. The God of the Sabbath calls it, "my holy day," and again, "the holy of the Lord." God thus claims a special property in the Sabbath as His own institution, in the proper observance of which, He is honoured, and the happiness of man secured, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and shalt honour the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

On the Lord's day there must be an *entire cessation from all secular work*. When Nehemiah saw some "treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses, as also wine, with grapes and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day;" then, said he, "I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?" The Lord's call by Jeremiah to His people was, "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, *neither do ye any work*; but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers." "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates." Such is Sabbath law in all generations: *In it thou shalt not do any work*.

Such a prohibition is not to be understood, however, in its most absolute sense. There are secular works that are allowable on the Sabbath. These are commonly designated works of *necessity* and *mercy*. By the former are intended those works which could not have been done on the preceding day, or deferred till the day after. Travelling to and from the house of God—guarding our property when suddenly exposed to danger from fire or storm—preparation and partaking of necessary food—such operations as we are impelled to by circumstances over which we have no control are works of *necessity*, and, although they break in on the literal rest of the Sabbath, are allowable on that day. By works of *mercy* are meant those that are done out of compassion to one's fellow-creatures. Visiting the sick, and ministering to their necessities—visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction—caring for the irrational creatures of which we have charge—these and such as these come under the head of works of *mercy*, as well as of *necessity*, and are lawful on the Lord's day. We have the authority of the Lord of the Sabbath for exempting from its prohibitions such works of *mercy*: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?"