

The Fiery Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

Text

Jeremiah 17:19-27

Topic

The Jews are exhorted by Jeremiah to quit saying “No” to God with regards to His command that they keep the Sabbath

Title

“No Sabbath for You”

Introduction

The State of California wants you to take a rest.

State and federal labor laws require that employers set aside rest periods during your work day. Here in California if you are a non-exempt worker you are entitled to 10-minute breaks for every 4 hours you work. If an employer does not provide all of the rest periods required in a workday, the employee is entitled to one additional hour of pay for that workday. Employees can sue for violations of meal and rest break provisions going back a period of three years.

God is a big fan of rest breaks:

- After six days creating the world He rested on the seventh day.
- Centuries later His chosen nation, Israel, was commanded to observe rest breaks called Sabbaths. There was a weekly Sabbath, a Sabbath year every seventh year, and a year of jubilee every fiftieth year.

The Jews weren't observing the Sabbath year and the year of jubilee. As for the weekly Sabbath, they went to the Temple for worship but they violated God's command to rest by working on the Sabbath.

Jeremiah was sent to speak out against God's people for their failure to keep the Sabbaths. *Good for him!*

Sooner or later someone is going to try to bust your chops about **your** failure to 'keep' the Sabbath. *Shame on them!*

As I hope to show you, keeping the Sabbath in the traditional sense they mean, of doing no physical work on whichever day they deem the Sabbath, *is the exact opposite of what God intends. **The people who really violate the Sabbath are those who are trying to 'keep' it.***

We'll get to that conclusion by asking two questions as we work through the text: #1 Why Would You Want To Be Burdened **On** The Sabbath?, and #2 Why Would You Want To Be Burdened **By** The Sabbath?

#1 Why Would You Want
To Be Burdened **On** The Sabbath?
(v19-26)

Setting your personal work ethic aside for a moment, if your boss wanted to give you time off, why wouldn't you take it?

God told His people to rest every seventh day, every seventh year, and every fiftieth year. Sounds good to me!

The problem with resting every seventh year was that you were talking to farmers whose lives and livelihood depended upon the annual harvest. agricultural economy. The Sabbath year meant they were not to sow any seed but instead let the ground lie fallow. All debts were to be cancelled as well.

Following seven cycles of Sabbath years every fiftieth year was to be a year of jubilee when, in addition to the requirements of the Sabbath year, all ancestral lands were to be restored and all slaves were to be set free.

You know what that meant? *It meant they had to actively trust in God and not in themselves!* They had to trust, for example, that God would provide them the extra harvest during the sixth year so that they would have

enough food for the seventh year. They had to trust that even though they remitted debts, returned lands, and released slaves, that they would nevertheless prosper.

Think of it. You harvest in the sixth year, then no harvest in the seventh. You wouldn't have a harvest again until the eighth year - *two seasons after your last harvest*. That's a long, long time for a farmer to wait.

The Sabbath's God required weren't about the need for rest; not really. *They were a test of faith in which the Jews must trust in God to sustain them rather than in themselves.*

Once they quit observing the bigger Sabbaths, seemingly without consequences from God, it became easier to violate the weekly Sabbath. Enter Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 17:19 Thus the LORD said to me: "Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, by which the kings of Judah come in and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;

Jeremiah 17:20 and say to them, 'Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates.

Jeremiah preached this message several times at different gates so he'd reach the greatest number of people. Perhaps Jeremiah noticed folks were able to avoid him by using different gates so he stationed himself randomly.

It speaks to me about different approaches to get out the Gospel rather than getting stuck in our old habits. Where are the "gates" we should be standing outside? It's a good question to constantly ask ourselves.

Jeremiah 17:21 Thus says the LORD: "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;

Jeremiah 17:22 nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.

Some were bringing stuff "in by the gates of Jerusalem" on the Sabbath while others were bringing stuff "out of [their] houses on the Sabbath Day." Town dwellers were bringing their merchandise to the Temple to sell to farmers and farmers were bringing their produce to the Temple to sell to

town dwellers. In other words, the Sabbath had become the Monday Sale with the Thursday Farmer's Market thrown in! *Worship While You Work* might have been their theme song.

Jeremiah 17:23 But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.

To paraphrase Captain Barbosa, they were "disinclined to acquiesce to God's request" regarding the keeping of the Sabbath.

Jeremiah 17:24 "And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully," says the LORD, "to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work in it,

Jeremiah 17:25 then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever.

Jeremiah 17:26 And they shall come from the cities of Judah and from the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin and from the lowland, from the mountains and from the South, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, bringing sacrifices of praise to the house of the LORD.

God promised to prosper Jerusalem physically *and* spiritually if they would only quit working on the Sabbath. People from all over would flock to them having seen the example of a people who, though seemingly dependent upon the land and its annual harvest, nevertheless trusted more in God Who had given them the land.

The Gentiles would see that you could trust in God for physical rest and it would convey the understanding that He provided **spiritual rest for their souls**. The Sabbath was evangelistic in that it was a symbol of salvation.

All the Jews had to do was nothing, i.e., "do no work" on the Sabbath.

Ah, but they *did* work on the Sabbath. And they *did* plant in the Sabbath year. And they ignored the requirements of the year of jubilee. In all of these things they showed that trusted in themselves and not in God.

So, you see, the Sabbath wasn't just a day set aside to rest-up physically. It wasn't even just a day set aside for worship. No, **it was a visible exercise of faith in God**.

The Jews *wanted* to be burdened on the Sabbath because they didn't believe, didn't have faith, that God would take care of them.

Our problem, as New Testament nonJewish believers, is a little different. The question we need to ask is,

#2 Why Would You Want
To Be Burdened **By** The Sabbath?
(v27)

The Jews in Jeremiah's day were most definitely required to keep the Sabbath and, because they hadn't, judgment would fall upon them.

Jeremiah 17:27 "But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." ' ' "

The Babylonians would burn and destroy Jerusalem and take its citizens captive. The captivity would last exactly seventy years. Why seventy? It got its duration from failed Sabbaths. Between the Exodus and the Babylonian captivity the Sabbath year had been disregarded a total of seventy times by the Jews in Judah. Their captivity was measured by their failure to keep those Sabbaths.

We are under no obligation to 'keep' the Sabbath - not weekly, not every seven years, not every fiftieth year, not ever.

There are a lot of biblical arguments to support the fact we are **not** required to keep the Sabbath but one verse is really sufficient.

Colossians 2:16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or **sabbaths**,

The apostle Paul wrote that to address the very issue of certain false teachers trying to convince believers they *must* keep certain rules and regulations, like Sabbaths. No; no they don't. No *you* don't!

“But didn’t God rest on the seventh day of creation, thereby establishing the Sabbath as a day of rest for everyone throughout history?”

God did rest on the seventh day of creation **but He did not say anywhere that seventh day was the Sabbath and He did not command anyone to ‘keep’ it until Moses!**

You do not see Adam, Enoch, Noah, nor Abraham (the first Jew) keeping the Sabbath. *You only assume that they did.*

Take Adam for example. God does require a number of things from he and Eve, e.g., “be fruitful and multiply,” “keep the Garden,” and “don’t eat from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.” *He said nothing to them about Saturday being a day of rest.* In fact, while telling them about keeping the Garden, it would have been the perfect time to say, “but not on Saturday.”

Even after the fall, Sabbath keeping is *never* mentioned to our first parents. Nor is it mentioned to *any* of the other godly men and women who preceded the giving of the Law to the nation of Israel.

When Moses came along God gave him the Law for Israel and in it He specified that the Sabbath was especially a requirement for His chosen people Israel.

Exodus 31:16 Therefore **the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath**, to observe the Sabbath **throughout their generations** as a perpetual covenant.

Exodus 31:17 **It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever**; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.' "

No Sabbath was required of believers until Moses and then it was to be between God and Israel only. You cannot find any command to the Gentiles to keep the Sabbath in the pages of Scripture (both Old or New Testament) unless they converted and became part of the nation Israel. And when you do see Gentiles being told they must observe the Sabbath it is presented as a false teaching.

By the way - in the Sabbath command you are told to work for six days then take a day of rest. *That means if you work only a regular five-day week, you are breaking the Sabbath commandment!* By that I mean to say you cannot pick just the words you think are applicable; you either obey the whole commandment or you don't.

Why would anyone want to be burdened by trying to keep the Sabbath? It's legalism, plain and simple. It is doing something for God to show your righteousness. We call that sort of thing 'self-righteousness' and it's not a good thing.

Now I think we are ready to explain how it is **the people who really violate the Sabbath are those who are trying to 'keep' it.**

The Jewish Sabbath communicated that the people could rest and that God would do the work. We've also seen how it was a symbol of salvation.

The Sabbath-rest was a type of our salvation in that we can rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ!

Because of Jesus, we can cease from all works of righteousness and rest in His finished work on the Cross. If I try to 'keep' the Sabbath as a required work to show my righteousness before God, I void the symbolism of resting in His finished work on the Cross. I'm trying to return to keeping the Law as a way of relating to God.

There is a lot of talk in the Book of Hebrews (especially chapter four) about entering into God's rest. The situation in that book is very appropriate to our point. The Hebrew Christians were considering returning to Judaism, including a return to keeping the Sabbaths. The writer of Hebrews exhorts them to *not* return to things like the Sabbath because **Jesus IS their rest.** They'd be taking a giant step backwards, spiritually speaking.

Jesus didn't die on the Cross so He and I could spend one day a week together. Even if it's a really quality day spent in worship. No, He opened up Heaven 24/7 for me. And for you.

I came across an illustration. I wish I had thought of it but I didn't. I'll read it to you.

Imagine that you have just met someone and fallen in love. You spend every moment with them because you love to be in their presence. But your employer requires you to travel to another country to work for a year. You are separated from the one you love. While you are away, you agree that, every week, on Saturday, you will have a video conference call to catch up with each other. You look forward to it every week. You plan everything around it. When the time comes for your video conference you drop everything to spend that time communicating with your beloved. Nothing is allowed to encroach on that time.

When the year is finished, you return home. What do you do? Do you continue to have the video conference call on Saturdays? *No!* You are back home. You communicate and relate *every moment of every day*. The weekly video conference calls are no longer needed. You abandon them in favor of the reality of direct, ongoing relationship with the one you love.

Attempts to keep some version of a Sabbath are like the conference call. It is a step backward just as much for any of us as it was for the Hebrew Christians in the first century.

Many Christians think that Sunday is somehow the new Sabbath day for Christians. It isn't. The early church did, in fact, meet on Sunday. They met on Sunday because it's the day Jesus rose from the dead. The very fact they met on Sunday distinguishes it from the Sabbath. It marked their break from the old covenant to celebrate the new covenant in Jesus Christ. **Nowhere is there any teaching in the Bible transferring the Sabbath to Sunday.**

In our Wednesday Men's Fellowship Geno referred to a quote attributed to Matthew Henry. I was floored by it; it's just so spot-on.

Matthew Henry said, "It's easier to *build* Temples than to *be* the Temple."

There's real insight in those words. For example. Today there is a ton of what might be called program Christianity. A book is published that gives you some plan to follow that will lead you in to a closer walk with Jesus. Just do this one thing, or these four things, or whatever it might be.

They are all essentially telling you to mechanically 'keep' something in order to be more spiritual.

We need to resist everything programmatic by which we only *Skype* with God on occasion. Everyday is a Sabbath rest of relationship.

Do not put yourself under any burden. The Lord wants you to enjoy Him unburdened. Jesus said,

Matthew 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest.**

Matthew 11:29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls.**

Matthew 11:30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

I don't know about you but *I need real spiritual rest.* I won't find it in the keeping of days like the Sabbath. Or in any rules or regulations.

I find it in Him alone.