

# The Sabbath

## Galilean Ministry Part 13

Mark 2:28 and Matthew 11:28-30 2/17/2018

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Summary: The OT Sabbath law was a temporary symbol/shadow being cast by the reality of spiritual rest (salvation). The real Sabbath is the day you enter God’s rest (the whole Christian life and ultimately heaven). So we no longer need the symbol. Jesus’ response implies he is going to make a change regarding the Sabbath. Matthew introduces these Sabbath conflicts with Jesus’ invitation to find rest in him. To do so, come to him and place yourself under the authority of his teaching, trusting in his soft heart, and you’ll have rest from self-justification, the pursuit of happiness, fear, etc.

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**Mark 2:28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”**

**Matthew 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

## Introduction

On August 31, 1986, the cargo ship Khian Sea was loaded with more than 14,000 tons of trash from waste incinerators in Philadelphia. The city would burn its trash and ship it away because they were out of landfill space. The plan was to take it to a landfill in the Bahamas, but when the ship arrived, they wouldn’t accept it. So they tried another location, where they were also turned away. That ship wandered at sea for 2 years, was turned away from 11 countries in 3 continents, sometimes at gunpoint. How many

of us are like the Khian Sea – floating through life loaded down with a bunch of garbage, with no place to take it? You go to church, hoping to unload some of it there, and so often you find that the only thing that happens is even more gets piled on top of your load. What do you do when the weight on your shoulders is too much, and the pressure is making life a burden?

We left off last time with Jesus and the disciples walking away on the Sabbath with the Pharisees standing there in the grainfield wondering what hit them. Once again they thought they had Jesus dead to rights, and with a couple sentences he shows that the Pharisees were not only in the wrong in that instance, but their entire system and way of interpreting the Bible is wrong. Then Jesus drops yet another claim to deity on them, calling himself the Lord of the Sabbath.

That was the 4<sup>th</sup> of the 5 conflict events Mark gives us in rapid fire in this section. The 5<sup>th</sup> is in that first paragraph of ch.3, and it's also about the Sabbath. Of all the points where Jesus could have confronted their religious system, the Sabbath was the most important. That's the one he hits hardest, and most often. The Sabbath is a really big deal to Jesus, and today we're going to see why.

I'm going to hold off on starting ch.3 until next time. Tonight I want to devote a whole session just on Jesus' statement in Mk.2:28 (**I am the Lord of the Sabbath**) from a theological perspective. I want to make sure we understand the doctrine of the Sabbath because was so important to Jesus, and it's a point of so much confusion for people. In the OT the Sabbath was Saturday, now we worship on Sunday – are we supposed to observe the Sabbath today? And if so, which day? The answer is yes – it's more important to keep the Sabbath today than it was in the OT. And the consequence for not observing it is far more severe now than it was then.

## **Lord of the Sabbath – Changing it Up**

When they accuse Jesus' disciples of violating the Sabbath, you expect him to say, "They didn't violate the Sabbath; they just violated your traditions." But instead of saying that, he says, "I'm Lord of the Sabbath." If you accuse someone of breaking a law, and instead of saying, "I didn't break the law," his response is to say, "I'm in charge of that law," what does that imply? Is this an indication that as Lord of the Sabbath Jesus is going to make an adjustment? Is Jesus about to change it up? Yes, I believe he is, and that becomes evident as the rest of the NT unfolds.

## **The Purpose of the Sabbath Law**

### **Sabbath Shadow**

#### *Shadows are Temporary*

Let's go back to the OT. At the time of Moses, God created the Sabbath law – no working on Saturday, as an illustration of something that would be revealed later. Illustrations don't point to themselves. They exist to help us understand a greater reality. The Bible calls those illustrations "shadows." They aren't the reality. They are just a shadow being cast by something greater. And so they are temporary. Once you have the reality, you don't need the illustration anymore. That's why we don't have animal sacrifices anymore. Now that the true Lamb of God was sacrificed, we don't need the shadow illustrations anymore.

#### *The Sabbath is a Shadow*

And the Sabbath law is one of those shadows.

**Colossians 2:16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival ... or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

So the Sabbath law was a shadow in place only until Christ, which means it's no longer binding on us today.

**Romans 14:5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.<sup>1</sup>**

You're free to consider Saturday special if you want,<sup>2</sup> but you're just as free to consider all days the same. So you don't have to observe the OT Sabbath restrictions. If you want to work on Saturday, knock yourself out.

## Sabbath Reality

### *Not Abolished*

"So is the Sabbath abolished?" No – not by a longshot.

**Hebrews 4:9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.**

The Sabbath is still in place and it's more important to observe today than it was then because for them it was just a symbol, but you and I are dealing with the real thing. To say the Sabbath is abolished now would be like saying forgiveness is abolished because we no longer offer sacrifices.

The Sabbath is still in place. So what day is it? Some say it's Sunday. But that's not in the Bible. After the resurrection, the church moved the day of corporate worship to the first day of the week because that's the day Jesus rose, but there is nothing in the Bible that refers to Sunday as any kind of Sabbath. You can work on Saturday, and you can work on Sunday (as long as you don't neglect corporate worship).

Ok, so what day is the Sabbath day? Are you ready? The Sabbath day is ... Saturday. (Right now the Sabbath is Saturday. Tomorrow the Sabbath will be Sunday, and yesterday the Sabbath was Friday.) "Where are you getting all that?"

**Hebrews 4:7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, ... "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." ... 9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.**

The Sabbath is the day you enter into God's rest, and the day for doing that is today! Your first Sabbath day was the day you first believed.

**Hebrews 4:3 Now we who have believed enter that rest**

Rest from what? Daily physical work like in the OT? No, that was just an illustration. This is a rest, not from the things that wear out your body, but from the great burdens of life that wear out your soul.

What are those? What comes to your mind? Maybe really hard decisions – those can be burdensome, right? Or maybe the responsibilities of life - earning a living, taking care of the house, getting all your work done. Worrying about family members, dealing with health problems.

Those come to mind, but I would suggest those aren't really the heaviest burdens of life. Sometimes they weigh you down; other times they don't. But there are deeper burdens that run in the background of your soul like a computer virus that bog down your system. And they are what make all those things I just listed burdensome. In fact, they make all of life burdensome. I'll mention three of them.

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<sup>1</sup> In each of the other examples, Paul labels the more restrictive view as that of "weak" faith and the freer view as coming from strong faith.

<sup>2</sup> However, one must take care not to observe special days in the way the Galatians did and were rebuked for perverting the gospel (Gal.4:10).

## ***The Burden of Self-Justification***

The first one is self-justification. You see this with the Pharisee in Luke 18 who was laboring so hard to justify himself (I fast twice a week and give 10%...). He was working so hard to justify himself, and he still went away unjustified. It's amazing how dominating the drive to justify ourselves really is. And it takes a million different forms.

In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell sacrificed an Olympic gold medal because his event (the 100 meter) was held on Sunday, which he considered to be the Sabbath, so he refused to run, because he wanted to observe the Sabbath. The second best runner in that event was Harold Abrahams, who had spent his career working toward this, and was scared to death that he might not win. He told his trainer: "In one hour's time ... I will raise my eyes and look down that corridor, 4 feet wide, with 10 lonely seconds to justify my existence."

You might hear that and think it's a little melodramatic. You have to win this one race to justify your entire existence? But the truth is, we all think like that. Most of us don't lay all our worth on one, single event like that, but we really are striving to justify our existence.

For some women it might be the nagging question, "Am I a good mom?" She can ask other questions – Am I a good athlete? Am I a good speller? Am I a good citizen? And if the answer comes up "no," she shrugs her shoulders and says, "Oh well." Those questions don't haunt her. But the question, "Am I a good mom?" just seems to press down on her soul like a ton of bricks. She needs the answer to be yes to justify her existence. For a teenager it might be, "Am I pretty/good looking?" Or "What do people think of me?" (Especially the opposite sex.) For a man it might be, "Am I a failure?" It's different for different people. For you it could be about your character, or your competence, or your accomplishments, but there's area in your life that needs to be an A or B+ in order for you to be a worthwhile person. And the thought of falling short in that area really does haunt you. And it burdens you, because you fear that you are indeed falling short. We're all striving to justify our existence, and we're all finding it difficult. Even people who are extraordinary, like Harold Abrahams.

### ***Because of Sin***

Why is that? It's because of our sin. I know the evil that's in my heart, and I know how far short I fall from what I should be in so many different areas. And the painful reality that I can't escape is the horrible truth that my existence really *isn't* justified. I've failed so much. I've rebelled against my Creator. I've committed cosmic treason. I have deep seated evil in my heart. I'm shot through with it. I'm not what I should be. Why should I be allowed to exist? That's a heavy burden.

**Psalm 38:4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.**

And the only way to keep from being crushed is to latch on to that one thing that justifies my existence. "At least I'm a good mom." "At least..." fill in the blank. We desperately need something to cancel out our inadequacy, the effort to do that is exhausting, and if you question how pervasive that is, just look at how rich people get when they write a book or have a seminar that teaches people how to feel good about themselves.

## ***The Burden of Happiness***

So self-justification is one burden that weighs us down and saps a lot of our energy. The second one saps even more energy. It's the burden of trying to be happy. Most of our energy in life goes to that. It's why you eat what you eat, it's why you choose the relationships you choose, the jobs you choose, the house and car and church and everything else you choose. We crave all kinds of things in life – companionship, fun, fulfillment, pleasure, success, respect – the list goes on forever. And we crave those things because we want happiness. And you will wear yourself out to get what you think will bring that happiness.

**Proverbs 23:4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich.**

**Isaiah 55:2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?**

We labor for things that we think will satisfy. And if we think a sin will satisfy, we will wear ourselves out pursuing that.

**Jeremiah 9:5 ... they weary themselves with sinning.**

Seeking happiness is wearying because so many of the things we think we need to get that happiness are outside of our direct control. A lot of things you can't do just because you don't have enough money, or there are physical limitations, or people get in the way. You find yourself saying all the time, "If he/she would just..." But they won't. Your kids won't put their stuff away. Your husband won't lead spiritually. Your wife won't... your boss won't... the congress won't... the press won't stop... people won't get on board with making you happy.

The work of chasing happiness is exhausting because so much is outside of your control. And that unfulfilled longing weighs on you.

### ***The Burden of Fear***

And even heavier is the fear that you won't be able to get what you need to be happy in the future. You can handle not having happiness now if you're pretty sure you'll have it soon. But when you're afraid that your marriage will never be good, or in the future you won't be able to pay your bills and you'll be out on the street, or your health will fail, or you'll be rejected, or somehow you won't have what you need to be happy or to justify your existence, that weighs on you. Fear is an incredibly heavy burden. Romans 8:15 says people are enslaved by fear.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Weariness***

Those are some of the great burdens of life, and they make you weary. And when I say weary, I'm not talking about, "Oh, I'm tired, I'll take a nap." This weariness is the kind of unsettled distress that makes it so you *can't* sleep. It's inability to rest.

**Isaiah 57:20 the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.**

They can't rest because there is no way out from under the burden. And there is no escape from the chaotic, tossing sea churning up mire and mud because that tossing sea is *inside* them. The mind confused, the will frustrated, the emotions upset, the desires disappointed, the imagination disillusioned, the memory plagued with regret, the conscience accusing, the spirit weighed down, the soul dried up, the heart heavy. That's the weary, burdened soul that desperately needs Sabbath rest.

### ***Salvation Rest***

What was the Sabbath Day in the Old Testament? Just a day off once a week? No, it was a shadow being cast by a much greater promise of spiritual rest from the great burdens of life. It was to be a deep, rejuvenating, life-giving rest, not just for your body, but for your weary soul. And that invitation to spiritual rest is the way Matthew introduces the stories of these Sabbath conflicts Jesus had with the Pharisees.

These Sabbath conflicts we are studying in Mark 2 and 3 – those same two events are also recorded in Mt.12. Ch.12 begins with the story of the disciples picking heads of grain on the Sabbath, and Jesus

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<sup>3</sup> See also Heb.2:15.

defending them by saying, “I am the Lord of the Sabbath” in v.8. But look at how Matthew introduces that section.

**Matthew 11:28 Come to me, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you... and you will find rest for your soul.**

Jesus promised rest. And in every Jewish mind, when they hear rest, they think one thing: Sabbath. Rest meant Sabbath, and Jesus promises rest, and then immediately gets into it with the Pharisees over their interpretation of the Sabbath. Jesus is redirecting attention from the shadow to the reality. He’s taking us beyond physical rest to spiritual rest.

And spiritual rest is another way of describing salvation.<sup>4</sup>

**Isaiah 30:15 ...In repentance and rest is your salvation**

Why is the Sabbath so important? Because the Sabbath is the Gospel. It’s the Lord Jesus Christ inviting us to throw off the great, crushing burdens of life by entering into God’s rest.

## Ongoing Rest

So the Sabbath day, for you, was the day you first came to Christ. The great reality that had been illustrated in all those countless Saturdays all through the OT was fulfilled in you that day you first came to Christ in faith and entered into God’s rest.

But that wasn’t the end of your coming to Christ. The whole Christian life is a continual coming to him. And if you study Hebrews 3&4 you’ll see that the final, ultimate entrance into God’s rest is when we go to heaven. That’s our great hope.

But let’s think a little more about enjoying his rest now, on a daily basis, as Christians. As believers, we all understand that you can’t earn favor with God by good works, or by any other means. We know that truth like back of our hands. So we would never dream of trying to justify ourselves in God’s eyes by our own efforts, right? But we do try to justify ourselves in our own eyes by our efforts, don’t we? You work so hard to try to become good enough in the eyes of your spouse, your dad, your kids, co-workers – whoever it is whose approval you crave. And especially yourself. And a lot of times you don’t even realize that you are resting on something besides Christ to justify your existence until that thing is lost. You lose your child or your marriage or you wash out of your career or you see your accomplishments go up in smoke. And you don’t even realize until that moment that you are clinging to that thing to justify yourself in your own eyes.

## Sabbath Invitation

**Matthew 11:28 Come to me, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you... and you will find rest for your soul.**

## Jesus’ Promise

Jesus comes to a broken, burdened human race that is in a futile scramble to justify their existence. They are in a futile scramble to somehow be good enough – to be acceptable. Running in the background of their soul 24/7 is the nagging, painful awareness of their massive inadequacy and insufficiency and defectiveness. And Jesus says, “Come to me and I’ll give you Sabbath rest from that.”

And Jesus says to all who are weighed down under the load of not being able to get the things they think they need to be happy, or the fear that I won’t have those things in the future – I’ll lose my health when I’m old, or I’ll lose my spouse or my job or my house or whatever. Jesus says, “Come to me and I’ll

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, rest is not all there is to salvation, but it covers enough of it that it seems to stand for salvation in passages like Mt.11:28-30 and Hebrews 4:1-10.

give you rest from that. I will provide you access to the happiness you crave even with all those people and circumstances refusing to cooperate. The weight and pressure will be gone, because you will have access to joy at all times no matter what happens in your circumstances.”

And he says to those pinned to the ground with oppressive fear, Jesus says, “The closer you approach to my presence the more you’ll see those fears evaporate.”

**2 Corinthians 7:5 ... [We] had no rest ... conflicts on the outside, fears within. 6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us.**

Come to Christ and all the great burdens of life – the background burdens that make everything else in life heavy – they are all lifted. That is what the OT Sabbath restrictions were supposed to symbolize. That’s why we know the Pharisees were so far off in their way of interpreting it, because their heavy, burdensome, condemning way of observing the Sabbath didn’t symbolize anything like that.

## God’s Rest

Now, here’s where this really gets good. It’s not just that you enter rest, but you enter God’s rest. What is that? That’s from Genesis 1 – the creation. I heard one guy describing this once – he said, “God created everything in 6 days, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day he was so exhausted that he rested.” No. God was not tired. I suppose he assumed that because why else would a person rest?

Well, there are two reasons why a person rests from work. One is fatigue. But there is another reason. The other reason for ceasing work is that it’s done. When you are so satisfied with the work that nothing more can be added to it. You look at it and say, “It is good. My work is done here. It is finished.” That’s where God was after day 6. The work of creation was done, it was good, it was finished, and so he stopped working at it.<sup>5</sup>

So what does it mean for us to enter God’s rest? We are entering a rest that is both kinds of rest. On our side, it’s renewal and rejuvenation from being wearied and burdened. But it’s also God’s rest – the “It’s done” kind of rest.” Jesus said it on the cross: It is finished. What is finished? The work of making us acceptable. This endless work you do trying to justify your existence and become good enough for God, or your dad, or your spouse, or yourself. That work is finished. Finished why? Because Jesus stepped in, finished the task of making you acceptable and good enough, showed it to the Father, and God said, “Behold, it is very good.” And his words thundered from heaven: “It’s done!” You can stop striving to justify your existence and become good enough. Why? Because *it’s the Sabbath day!!*”

### *Enjoy God’s Acceptance*

So how do you observe the Sabbath? By coming to Christ for rest, and relying 100% on what he has done for you, rather than on your own achievements or efforts. Learn to enjoy God’s acceptance of you in Christ. I mentioned Eric Liddell, who thought he was observing the Sabbath by not running on Sunday. But a much better example of observing the Sabbath was when his character in the movie said this: “God made me fast. And when I run, I feel his pleasure.” That’s the Sabbath – feeling the pleasure of God and enjoying the acceptance and approval of God through Christ, rather than being loaded down with the burden of making ourselves acceptable. Abrahams was burdened an hour before the race, even though he wasn’t running yet. Abrahams was weary, even while resting, and Liddell was rested, even while exerting himself.

## Come To Me

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<sup>5</sup> That is, he stopped the work of creation. He did not cease activity. God is always working (Jn.5:17).

## **Psalm 62:1 My soul finds rest in you alone.**

Augustin made that same observation. He said, “God, you made me for you, so my soul is restless until it finds rest in you.”

A lot more people can relate to the first half of than to the second part. We can all relate to “my soul is restless.” But not as many can relate to the sense of finding rest in God. So how do you get that rest?

By taking a break? Stop reading your Bible and praying for one day a week and take a breather from ministry and seeking God and serving God? No. If you want spiritual rest, the work you need to stop doing is the work of seeking justification, happiness, and hope and security in this world, and replace that work, not with inactivity, but with the work of seeking those things in Christ. Jesus tells us to do three things to get this rest. You get the rest not by doing nothing, but by doing things that give your rest and renewal. Jesus mentions two things that will give you rest. First, you must come to him.

## **28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest**

Draw near to him. Seek his presence. Nearness to him will give you strength and refreshment. The more time you spend in his presence, the less burdened you’ll be.

We’ve studied the concept of seeking God’s presence in detail in the *Loving God with All Your Heart* series, and the *What’s So Great About God?* Devotional. I’m not going to rehash all that now, except to just say that experiencing God’s presence means consciously and intentionally enjoying the experience of one or more of his attributes. If you need renewal and refreshment, don’t go on vacation; draw near to Jesus. Seeking his presence is hard work, but there will never be a time when you experience fellowship with him and come away depleted or exhausted. You will always come away renewed and strengthened.

## **Take My Yoke**

So that’s the first way to get the rest – draw near to the Lord. The second thing is really counterintuitive.

## **28 ... take my yoke upon you ... and you will find rest**

Most of the time in the Bible the term *yoke* is connected to slavery.<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 6:1 and Galatians 5:1 both speak of **the yoke of slavery**. It can also refer to the requirements that a ruler places on those under him. In 1 Kings 12 they said to Rehoboam:

**1 Kings 12:4 Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.**

And you could also use the term “yoke” to refer to being under the authority of a body of teaching.

**Acts 15:10 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?**

The rabbis called people to take up the yoke of God’s Law. And that is the way Jesus is using the word “yoke” here, because that’s exactly what he says: **take my yoke upon you and learn from me**. He’s defining what he means by yoke – place yourself under the authority of the body of my teaching. Being a Christian is not a matter of what you did sometime in the past when you prayed a prayer or walked an aisle. Being a Christian is a life of learning from Jesus how to obey everything he commanded, and submitting to the requirements that he lays out in his teaching. Some people, under the guise of what they call “free grace,” teach that Christ requires nothing of you. That’s as wrong as it can be. To have a

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<sup>6</sup> Pastors have often assumed that the imagery in Mt.11 is that we are being connected to Christ like two oxen being yoked together. But the figure of a yoke representing an authority was so prevalent, that is the idea that would have come into the people’s minds. And even if someone did think of it in literal terms, they would think of a human yoke, not an animal yoke. A human yoke was designed to spread the pressure of pulling a plow across both shoulders evenly.

yoke on your shoulders means to pull a load, and the load is the requirements that the authority or law requires of you. That's why Jesus essentially uses the word "yoke" synonymously with the burden.

**Matthew 12:30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**

So yoke = burden.

## **Easy and Light**

Now, does that sound strange? How does a burden give you rest? Jesus says it gives you rest because the yoke is easy and the burden is light. Easy? Are Jesus' requirements easier than the rules of the Pharisees? They said hate your neighbor, he said love your neighbor. They said no adultery and murder, he said no lust or anger. Jesus required great joy when persecuted, and giving up everything and taking up your cross and following him. How is that easier than anything?

### ***Humble and Gentle***

Jesus answers that question in a wonderful way. He doesn't explain the details of how it works; instead, he tells us something about himself. The reason you get rest by taking up his yoke and submitting to his teaching is very simple: it's because of what Jesus is like.

**29 ... take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am humble and gentle in heart**

This is the only place in the Bible that speaks of Jesus' heart. It's a special verse, and it's Jesus describing himself. He says, "If you place yourself under my authority and teaching, you don't ever have to worry about my throwing some heavy, burdensome weight on you, because I'm not like that. I'm not that guy. I don't do that; it's not in my nature. You don't have to be afraid of what I'm going to require of you, and you can be assured that submitting to my requirements will do nothing but give you rest. Why? Because I have such a soft heart toward you."

How many times have you felt like you're such a screw-up, and what you should be seems so far off that you just feel like God is almost impossible to please? That's because the god you have in your mind *is* impossible to please, but the real God isn't. He's not hard; he's humble and gentle in heart toward you.

So that's the general answer Jesus gives us. But how do we reconcile that with the fact that the Christian life is very difficult? Paul took up this easy yoke and he had unceasing anguish and trouble and heartache and constant concern for the churches and suffering almost beyond his ability to bear. As I said earlier, the ultimate fulfillment of the Sabbath is heaven. But there is a very real and wonderful sense in which we enjoy Sabbath rest here and now in this life. Let me just quickly suggest four – four ways Jesus' yoke and burden are easy and light:

### ***1) Beneficial***

First, it's easy because it's good for you. The word translated **easy** means good or pleasant. When used of a person it's the normal word for *kindness*. This work is richly rewarding. You don't feel burdened when the reward of a task is a lot greater than the cost. Taking the trash out feels burdensome because the reward is so small. But if someone offered you \$10 million to take out the trash, you'd be thrilled to do it. When my dad and I were hunting, after a particularly difficult hunt up and down some steep mountain, my dad would say, "If I had to do this for my job, I'd quit." We work much harder in our leisure than at work, and it's not burdensome (in fact, we'll pay money to do it), because of the reward.

The Lord Jesus Christ does make some very big demands. But his commands are not burdensome because what he gives is always so much better than what he requires. If we feel burdened by it, it may be that we've lost sight of the rewards.

## ***2) Tailor Made***

Another thing that makes it light and easy is that it's what we're designed and suited for. If you get the right yoke on an ox, it actually feels good for him to pull a load – it's what they were made for. Like a little boy running around. Little boys were made to run full speed, and so it's far more burdensome and oppressive to them to sit still for an hour than it is to run around like a maniac. It's not burdensome to do the work you were designed for. It's renewing and refreshing and rest-giving.

**John 4:34** “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

God created you to do the work of Christ. And so doing that work will be more fulfilling to you than sitting on a beach somewhere.

## ***3) Enabling Yoke***

Third, his burden is light because the yoke is an enabling yoke. Jesus gives you strength. In Matthew 23 he rebukes the Pharisees because they tie up heavy burdens and put them on men's shoulders, and don't lift a finger to help them. If Jesus rebukes them for not lifting a finger to help people bear their yoke, then we can be sure that Jesus is different. If we take up his yoke, he helps us bear it. It's like when Jesus told the paralytic to stand up and walk. When the man made the effort to obey, that's when he got the strength. When you place yourself under the yoke of Jesus' teaching, you are strengthened to obey it.

## ***4) It's Our Only Burden***

A fourth reason why his burden is light is it's the only burden we have to carry. Jesus is our only Lord, which means we don't ever have to do anything other than what he calls us to do. We get worn out spiritually when we try to do all the work Jesus called us to do plus some other things that we called ourselves to do, or something family or people around us expect us to do. We get it in our head that we need to do more than God has required of us, and we create a work load that requires more than 24 hours per day, and more than 7 days per week, and we get burned out, because we can't ever just do what he called us to do and then trust him to take care of the rest of the universe. If you are burdened, throw off every other yoke, and take up Christ's.

Those are a few ideas of how his burden is light, and there may be others. For years to come we can all study more about how Christ's yoke and burden brings us rest. But to answer the question we started with – what should you do when you are weighed down and overwhelmed? – the answer is, come to Christ. Move toward him. Seek his presence.

## **Conclusion**

Can you imagine some 30-year old Jewish peasant stands up one day and says, “The whole world can find rest from all their toil and weariness by leaning on me.” Anyone else says that and the people standing there get a good chuckle and that's the end of it. Jesus says it and they become some of the most precious, most comforting, most memorized words ever uttered in human history.

**Matthew 11:28** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Happy Sabbath day!