



## [Matthew 12:9-14](#)

(9) Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. (10) And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—that they might accuse Him. (11) Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift *it* out? (12) Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." (13) Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched *it* out, and it was restored as whole as the other. (14) Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

## [Mark 3:1-5](#)

(1) And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. (2) So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. (3) And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." (4) Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. (5) And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

*New King James Version*

There is an obvious difference between Christ and the Pharisees on the [Sabbath](#). The Pharisees were not there to [worship God](#). Their questions were not asked out of loving concern. They were there as accusing authorities who wanted to judge Christ by their own regulations.

At the time, the Jews had been compiling for a number of years a code of regulations by which they hoped to make it virtually impossible for a person to [sin](#). Eventually, there were 1,521 regulations just regarding keeping the Sabbath! These people did it in

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Matthew 12:9-14 (<http://www.theberean.org>)  
sincerity, a misdirected zeal. What happened is that they turned the observance of the day into a legalistic ritual rather than a loving service toward [God](#) and fellow man.

Consider the actions and words in Matthew 12 and in Mark 3. Is Christ doing away with the Sabbath observance, or is He restoring it to its original, divine value and function? [Jesus](#) helps us understand this by a principle He gives in [Matthew 19:8](#). Referring to divorce and remarriage, Jesus says, "But from the beginning it was not so." So it is here. He is showing God's original intent for the Sabbath.

He is not saying, "You don't have to worry about breaking it," or, "I'm going to do away with this day in the future anyway, so it doesn't matter what we do." Instead, by what He says and does, He focuses attention on His own Sabbath activities: To relieve somebody of a burden, to deliver one from a withered hand. By these acts, we see that the Sabbath is a day of redemption, deliverance, freedom, and [healing](#). It is a day to do kind acts. It is a day to help one's fellow man in some way and to relieve him of some burden, as much as lies within us.

Jesus' healing here was not done to a man whose life was in danger. He had a chronic problem, and it easily could have waited until the next day. He could have said, "Come back tomorrow." Instead, He purposely shows what the Sabbath is for. It is for healing—either physical or spiritual healing.

The man's chronic illness parallels us spiritually: We are chronically sinful! [Jeremiah 17:9-10](#) says that the heart is incurably sick. The Sabbath, then, is a day given to free us from the chronic problems of human nature.

By Jesus' example—His reactions, His words—it becomes clear that God not only intends that "good" be done, but to fail to do good when the opportunity presents itself implies "evil" and "killing." If not, why was He angry? He was angry because the Pharisees were failing to do something to relieve this man of his burden. Instead, they were using him to provoke Jesus into what they considered as sinning so that they might accuse Him. Thus, the person who is not concerned for the physical and/or spiritual [salvation](#) of others on the Sabbath is automatically involved in destructive efforts and attitudes.

One of the Sabbath's uses is to prepare us to be used for the salvation of others. We are not in the position yet that Christ was. He was able, because of His closeness to God, because He was God in the flesh, because He had the [Spirit of God](#) without measure, to do things that we are unable to do. But the principle is there!

There are many such things—as opportunities present themselves—that we can do on

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Matthew 12:9-14 (<http://www.theberean.org>)  
the Sabbath. It is within our power to relieve other's burdens. It may only be giving someone encouragement or writing a letter or telephoning to let another know that he is cared for and thought of. It may be a little thing, but it is within our power to do things like this to help others along the way.

Consider the Sabbath command in Deuteronomy 5: The Sabbath was made to show compassion toward the weak and the defenseless. The command says that we are to give others who are under our authority the Sabbath day to rest. We relieve them—manservant, maidservant, even animals—of the burden of work. They, too, are to be given the opportunity to be relieved of a burden. They are physical. If they are worked constantly, they will wear out more quickly. And so it is wise to give them rest, is it not? It is to our benefit to give them the relief that they need. A similar command is given in [Exodus 23:12](#):

Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

**To learn more, see:**

[The Fourth Commandment \(Part 2\)](#)



**Related Topics:**

[Burdens, Relieving](#)

[Code of Regulations](#)

[Legalism](#)

[Mercy as Larger Obligation](#)

[Pharisees](#)

[Relieving Burdens](#)

[Sabbath](#)

[Sabbath, Keeping Properly](#)

[Sabbath, Liberating Intent of](#)

[The Fourth Commandment](#)

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Matthew 12:9-14 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

Commentary copyright © 1992-2016 [Church of the Great God](#)  
New King James Version copyright © 1982 by [Thomas Nelson, Inc.](#)