

Point by Biblical Point through the Ray Comfort Article Freedom From Sabbath-Keeping
by Bruce Bertram

Ray Comfort has taught many good things. He's done a lot of hard work answering atheist's objections to Christianity, and written some worthwhile books. I have quoted him in my book Whole Bible Christianity from his article Hell's Best Kept Secret. However, he has also taught some things that are off-track biblically. This article in particular contains so many typical Christian half-truths, logical fallacies, biblically incorrect teaching, philosophies of men and misunderstandings that it will serve as an excellent illustration for many of the wrong teachings from the church I have been addressing for years. I have interspersed my remarks in the text of Ray's article in a different font and set off by square brackets.

Freedom From Sabbath-Keeping by Ray Comfort

We are told by those who insist that we must keep the Sabbath Day, that we are in great error because we worship on the first day of the week. [Not everyone who recognizes that believers have the privilege of observing the Sabbath make these statements. My personal view is that if someone doesn't want the living oracles, fine. Just don't be telling me that observing them is not biblical. The problem here comes in when we are told NOT to observe the Sabbath, and that this position of non-observance is biblical. As far as "worshipping" on the first day of the week, worship is never defined in the Word as attending a church meeting. Singing, preaching, teaching and so on can be part of worship, but are useless if obedience is not first and foremost. If you want to have a meeting on Sunday, fine with me.]

And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden." (Isaiah 29:13–14, ESV)]

We are informed that Sunday comes from the Pagan belief and worship of the Sun god. [Probably.] We are told that Jesus and Paul kept the Sabbath Day as an example for us to follow, [maybe they just kept the Sabbath day because they wanted to] and that the Roman Catholic Church is responsible for the change in the day of worship. [Actually, they changed their Sabbath to Sunday, and ALSO the day of meeting. These are two separate ideas. A day of meeting is not prescribed in the Word. The Sabbath is for all believers and is in the Word.] If we continue to worship on Sunday, then we will receive the mark of the beast. [Unknown. I do not have a clue who will receive the mark and who will not. However a mark is much more than a tattoo. In the Bible people are marked by behavior first, then with physical (or perhaps spiritual) marks Ezekiel 9:4.]

Let's briefly look at their arguments. First, nowhere does the Fourth Commandment say that we are to "worship" on the Sabbath Day. [True. Worship was every day. The act of resting on the Sabbath is worship. Worship has taken on an inadequate meaning in the intervening centuries,

and it used to be that worship included sacrifices. But worship has always been obedience at its root.] It commands that we rest on that day: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, 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 thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11). [Notice that he does not answer the issue he raises: why does the church not "rest" on the Sabbath?] Sabbath-keepers worship on the Saturday. [No. Sabbath keepers might MEET on Saturday, but worship is obedience and for every day.] Do they know where the word "Saturday" comes from? It's from the Latin word "Saturnus--Saturn + Old English dæg day." Obviously Saturday is from the pagan day of worship of the planet Saturn (astrology). [In spite of the attempt at sarcasm, I can agree here. However, Saturday is also the seventh day, and therefore the Sabbath. The name of the day is not important. But the Sabbath is. It is also written:

"And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, "I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered." (Isaiah 56:6–8, ESV)]

If a Christian's salvation depends upon his keeping a certain day, surely God would have told us. [It is not that salvation depends on keeping a certain day. There might be some that equate the two, but the issue is more involved. We might as well ask the question "Does salvation depend on loving God?" or "Does salvation depend on doing what God says?" or again "Is repentance a command?" If we love God, if we have salvation, we obey His commands. That is plain in the Scriptures as we have already quoted. It is also written:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:12, ESV)

Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you." (John 14:23–25, ESV)

And He DID tell us how important the day is. Many times. It is also a biblical fact that the Sabbath was established in the Garden and that it is HIS Sabbath. He is indeed LORD of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5). The problem here is the underlying assumption that somehow there are TWO bodies, Israel and the Church, when the Bible clearly teaches only one Body (Ephesians 4:4-6, Romans 9-11). Another point is that Adam and Eve were told that eating from the tree of knowledge was death. That Law has not changed. We choose

knowledge when we choose to ignore the Sabbath or any other command God gives us.] The Scriptures tell us that at one point, the Apostles especially gathered to discuss the attitude of the Christian to the Law of Moses. [This is biblically incorrect. The council in Acts 15 met mainly to discuss salvation by circumcision (verse 1). This was proved to be wrong. Salvation was coming to Gentiles without circumcision and by grace through faith just as Abraham and JUST AS THE JEWS (who had the Law). Verse 5 also asks a question about following the Law, which was answered in verse 21 (Moses is read in the synagogue every Sabbath.) This meant 1) Moses is read. 2) Moses is read in the synagogue where all believers met at the time. 3) They met every Sabbath.] Acts 15:10-11, 24-29 was God's opportunity to make His will clear to His children. [Biblically incorrect. God had been making His will clear to His children for a long, long time.] All He had to do to save millions from damnation was say, "Remember to keep the Sabbath holy," and millions of Christ-centered, God-loving, Bible-believing Christians would have gladly kept it. [Not so. He already said many times to remember the Sabbath, and just about as many times was ignored. He is still being ignored today as is evidenced by this article by Ray. Many Christians do not want to obey God's commands. Mostly because we do not want an objective, absolute standard. We want to give ourselves permissions to sin. It is written:

Were I to write for him my laws by the ten thousands, they would be regarded as a strange thing. (Hosea 8:12, ESV)]

The only commands they gave were to refrain "from meat offered to idols, from blood, things strangled and from fornication." [These four were most assuredly NOT the only ones given. It is logically incorrect to say that these four were the only commands expected to be followed. The others were assumed to be in effect and "Moses is taught in the synagogues every Sabbath." These four were given as a starting point so table fellowship could be established between the Jews and Gentiles. Otherwise we would not have gotten three dietary commands. Especially when many Christians say that "ceremonial" commands have been eliminated.]

There isn't even one command in the New Testament for Christians to keep the Sabbath holy. [1. This is called an argument from silence and is a logical fallacy common with Christians. I have asked over and over and still get no comprehensible answer – how many times does God have to tell His children His will? Why limit, without biblical guidelines at all, any message from God to the Body to the New Testament? 2. The New Covenant is the Law written on a new heart of flesh by the Spirit.] New Testament references to Sabbath-keeping instruct us not to listen to those who tell us what day to keep (see Colossian 2:16), and that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man (see Mark 2:27). [First, Colossians 2:16 says no such thing as he suggests. In fact, it teaches the opposite. We are not to allow others to judge us for our *observance* of the feasts. Paul clearly tells us in the chapter not to allow other people, using the philosophies of men, to judge our observance of the Law (such philosophies as are being put forth by Mr. Comfort in this article, for instance.) Verses 4, 8, 20, and 22 clearly state this principle. In no way shape or form is this to include any teaching of God. The second part of Mr. Comfort's sentence (quoting Mark 2:27) is a beautiful example of the blindness of the so-called "church" and many of its teachers. Clearly, by his own quotation, the Sabbath is made for man.] The Sabbath was given as a sign to Israel (see Exodus 31:13-17). [The Sabbath was given to His

people. Again, there is only one Body. This body has been in existence for 6,000 years. Israel is the olive tree, and modern believers are grafted in to (believing) Israel. See Romans 9-11.] Nowhere is it given as a sign of the Church. [This is because there is no church in the Bible. It exists only in translations.] Thousands of years after the Commandment was given we can still see the sign that separates Israel from the world--they still keep the Sabbath holy (Ezekiel 20:12-13). [They have learned, at least in part. Obviously the church has not.]

The Apostles came together on the first day of the week. [False. The apostles broke bread together all the time Acts 2:42. It was never limited to the first day of the week. Acts 13:44 for another instance says that "The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the Word of the Lord." And to use Mr. Comfort's reasoning, nowhere is the first day of the week instituted as a regulation.] The breaking of bread was on the first day of the week (see Acts 20:7). [Biblically and logically incorrect. The breaking of bread happened about three times a day seven days a week at mealtimes. Acts 20:7 merely says they had gathered together on the first day of the week. There is no command to do this and this only.] The collection was taken on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2). [This is another logical fallacy argument from silence. Mr. Comfort should know better. This collection was a special one for Jerusalem. Speaking of no Sabbath command in the NT, there is also no command to tithe.] When do Sabbath-keepers "gather together?" On what day do they break bread or take up the collection? It's not on the same day as the early Church. [Biblically incorrect. The real "early church" met frequently, but especially on the Sabbath. See previous reference to Acts 13:44. Acts 15 (already cited by Mr. Comfort) says that "Moses is taught in the synagogue every Sabbath."] They tell us that history informs us that the Roman Catholic church changed their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. What has that got to do with the disciples keeping the first day of the week? That was the Roman Catholic church in the early centuries, not the Church of the Book of Acts. [This is the logical principle known as "birds of a feather flock together."]

Romans 14:5-10 tells us that one man esteems one day of the week; another esteems every day. [Romans 14:1 also tells us that Paul is talking about men's opinions, not Scripture. The Word of God is not in question here. It is the opinions of men. The examples in Romans 14 are not in the Law. This is similar to Colossians 2 in that we are not to judge each other by men's opinions or philosophies. In addition, other people besides believers had their own holidays. It is clear in this passage that Paul is referring to days outside the Law.] Then Scripture tells us that every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind. [This in no way states that anything a man thinks is okay. We are to be persuaded to follow what is right, and what is right is God's Law.] We are not to judge each other when it comes to the issue of on what day we should worship. [Sure. People can meet on any day they like. The Sabbath, however, is fixed. It is convenient for many to also get together on that day. If it is too much work then skip the meeting, meet on another day, and make sure to honor the Sabbath as God has commanded believers. Again, worship is every day and by obedience. It is not a meeting for some singing and listening to a guy drone on for 45 minutes.]

Jesus did keep the Sabbath. [So Jesus kept the Sabbath but He isn't an example to follow?] He had to keep the whole Law be the Perfect Sacrifice. The Bible makes it clear that the Law has

been satisfied in Christ. [No references given, because there are none. Jesus was blameless but the Law wasn't "satisfied" as in "eliminated" (Mr. Comfort's implied meaning). He paid our penalty for disobedience. He did not eliminate the Law.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17–19, ESV)

Or "fulfill" as in eliminate either. It wouldn't make any sense for Jesus to say "I have not come to abolish but to abolish" now, would it?] The reason Paul went into the Synagogue each Sabbath wasn't to keep the Law. [Why not? He was a model of a Law following Jew by his own admission, wasn't he?

⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. (Philippians 3:5-6 NASB95)

A quick look at the book of Acts shows Paul observing feasts (20:6,16, 24:17, 18) fasts (27:9) vows (18:18; 21:23-26) Sabbath (13:14, 42, 44, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4) circumcision (16:3) temple worship (22:17, 24:11, 17, 18) teaching from the Law and the Prophets (28:23) and keeping the Law (21:24, 22:3, 23:6, 24:14). Paul was obviously a model of a law-following Jew before and after conversion.]

If it was, then it was contrary to everything he taught about being saved by grace and grace alone (Galatians 3:11). [No, it wasn't. Salvation is by grace through faith, but the Law is a lifestyle and discipleship method. Just like it would've been in the Garden or any other time in history. Going into the synagogue wasn't about salvation. It was about meeting together. Since Saturday was a day of rest, it made sense to walk down to the local synagogue to get together with others and read the Word.] It was so that he could preach the Gospel to the Jews. This is clearly evident as one reads the Book of Acts. Paul had an incredible evangelistic zeal for Israel to be saved (Romans 9:1-2). To the Jew he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews (see 1 Corinthians 9:20). That meant that he went to where they gathered on the day they gathered. [Paul was not a hypocrite or a lip-syncher (following the Law with lips only). He actually was a law follower by his own admission as we've seen. To become a Jew to Jews means he would fellowship with them as a Jew with all their traditions. In 1 Corinthians 9:21 (the next verse after the one cited by Mr. Comfort) Paul says "to those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law." This does NOT mean that he didn't live the Law (or living oracles as Stephen called them in Acts 7:38) and that others cannot live them either. It simply meant that when he was with Gentiles he lived the Law of God with Christ as his example – not getting caught up in the traditions of the Jews.]

D. L. Moody said, "The Law can only chase a man to Calvary, no further." [As nice a guy as Mr. Moody might've been, he isn't the Word of God. His opinion is just that – an opinion of man. According to the Bible, Christ is the goal of the Law. He still is the goal of the Law as it is written:

For Christ is the end (goal) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:4, ESV, parenthesis added).

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law. The curse of the Law is death, not the Law itself.] We are no longer in bondage to it. [We were never in bondage to it before. The bondage was to the opinions of men.] If we try and keep one part of the Law (even out of love for God) we are obligated to keep the whole Law (Galatians 3:10). [This only means that if we are going to rely on it for salvation righteousness, we would have to keep it completely. It does not mean the Law goes away. It does not mean the Law isn't an excellent lifestyle and discipleship method. It does not mean that following the Law is wrong, only that misusing it is wrong (see Galatians 5:4).] That means that we shouldn't separate it into the Moral, Ceremonial and Civil Law and keep the parts we choose. [Agreed.] If we keep part of the Law (even out of love for God), then we are obligated to keep the whole 613 precepts. [Biblically incorrect. No references. Paul is referring to salvation by circumcision (2:12, "the party of the circumcision") which is not in the Law. Never was. Salvation by circumcision was made into a law by rabbis. Paul says that if cutting off a piece of flesh results in enough righteousness for salvation, maybe the people who believe this should go the whole way and cut it all off. Then they would really be righteous!]

If those who insist on keeping the Sabbath were as zealous about the salvation of the lost as they are about other Christians keeping the Sabbath, we would see revival. [If the church was more zealous about actual salvation than they are about making proselytes we would see the building up of the Body instead of adding bodies to a mega-church. The implication is also that Sabbath-keepers are holding back revival. I would say that what is holding back revival is repentance, especially repentance with regard to the church's near-cessation of following God's Laws.]

Charles Spurgeon said, "I am no preacher of the old legal Sabbath. I am a preacher of the Gospel. The Sabbath of the Jew is to him a task; the Lord's Day of the Christian, the first day of the week, is to him a joy, a day of rest, of peace, and of thanksgiving. And if you Christian men can earnestly drive away all distractions, so that you can really rest today, it will be good for your bodies, good for your souls, good mentally, good spiritually, good temporally, and good eternally." [Good teachers can still be wrong, and Spurgeon is wrong. First, he gets the Sabbath wrong by calling it "legal." There is no such thing as "the old, legal Sabbath" in Scripture. To see the Sabbath (and the Law) as "legal" shows the hard heart of Mr. Spurgeon. The main task of the Jew through the Law was to love the Lord our God with all the heart, soul and strength as in Deut. 6:5. It is also written:

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be

slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today. (Deuteronomy 7:9–11, ESV)

Second, the fact that they mostly didn't love Him doesn't negate the Law. Third, the fact that Spurgeon misreads the Sabbath for the Jew as a "task" falsely paints the Jew in a negative light as "working" for something. Some of them may have turned the Law into work or tried to work for salvation, but misuse of the Law does not negate the Law. To a believing Jew (there IS a difference between believing and unbelieving Jews) the Sabbath is always a day of joy, rest, peace and thanksgiving. To be in the Father's Word and resting as He instructed is the source of these blessings. Rejecting His Word or trying to have a legal relationship with God makes the Sabbath day a "task." Fourth, I venture a guess that Spurgeon did not know the gospel as well as he claims. The good news was preached to those at Sinai (in the form of the Law) according to Hebrews 4:2. How could this be? Because the gospel is usually mis-defined by the church. The real gospel is "God with us," which is why the Law is the gospel. It was God coming to live with His people, and the Law was to facilitate that residence. Just as it does now.

Jesus did not give us "freedom from the Sabbath" He freed us from sin. Sin is lawlessness or behavior apart from His Law (1 John 3:4). After we are freed we become slaves to righteousness. As it is written:

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:17–18, ESV)

Righteousness is God's Law.

And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:8, ESV)]

Besides all this, it makes no sense at all that God has freed us from a day off!