

How Christians Can Backslide And Not Know It!

By Ollie Bostic

Believers can backslide. Sometimes we even know or realize that we have. One way of backsliding that is commonly spoken of is when believers forsake their relationship with God, His Church and go back into the world. But there is another way that we can backslide while sitting right in the Church pews week after week and not even know that we have done so. "How is this possible", you might ask? There is a kind of backsliding that is very dangerous and is not easily discerned because it involves deceptive, lying spirits and a spirit of error. In **1 Timothy 4:1**, The Apostle Paul predicted by the Spirit, "**The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.**" We can unknowingly receive false teaching and thereby receive a lie. Satan's goal is to lead believers away from the Lord. One way that he does this is by leading believers back into the law through false teaching. He wants believers to be in bondage so that they are not free to serve the Lord and follow His Spirit. There are some out there today teaching that believers have to observe and come under the Old Testament Law in order to be obedient to or obtain blessings from God. Some examples include observing certain commands that God gave Israel under the Law of Moses such as the dietary food laws in the Book of Leviticus, Jewish Festivals and tithing.

There are those that teach tithing from the Old Testament as a **law** for all the Church today. Since tithing is the most common practice in certain Christian circles, this will be addressed later in some detail. There are many New Testament scriptures that teach believers that it is wrong to revert back to the Law of Moses. Many Christians may not realize that this is also backsliding, although it is in a different form. One reason that this can be so very deceptive for believers is that it is masked by the cloak of religious works and may look holy, righteous and good. The Apostle Paul taught the Church that the works of the law couldn't justify us. To keep the ordinances of the law do not give us any favor with God because it is based upon our own works instead of faith in Christ. With this understanding, we need to be able to distinguish what is of law and what is of faith.

Is tithing a work of the law? Tithing was an ordinance of the Old Covenant Law. **Malachi 3:7** says, "**Yet from the days of your fathers, you have gone away from my ordinances and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord.**" This was spoken to the sons of Jacob or Israel regarding God's Covenant with them. (**Malachi 3:6**) In **Malachi 3:3**, God was speaking to the sons of Levi who were priests of God at that time. "**He will purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, (why?) that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.**" Getting back to the last part of verse 7, "**But you said, in what way shall we return? Will a man rob God: yet you have robbed me! But you say, in what way have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings, you are cursed with a curse, for you (Levi) have robbed me, even this whole nation (Israel)**". We can understand that in this passage, God was addressing the Levitical Priesthood because it was their responsibility to bring the tithe and offerings before God. It was their responsibility to represent the people of Israel properly before God in the Temple but instead the priests were mishandling the tithes and offerings. Here, God was also addressing the nation of Israel for their failure to obey the commandment of tithing. The Law of Moses had a curse attached to it if the people of Israel did not do the entire law. (**Deuteronomy 27:9, 15, 26, 28:15**) The divine curse from God came upon them when they disobeyed or even broke one law. (**James 2:10**) In this particular passage in Malachi, God

addresses the manner in which Israel broke His law- in not bringing the tithes and offerings before Him as He had commanded them to.

But what does the New Testament say? Jesus Christ our Lord took the curse of the law on the cross for us. **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.”** (*Galatians 3:13 NKJV*) Since God placed a divine curse on His people, only he could break it. Why was there a curse attached to the law? **“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith. The law is not of faith...”** (*Galatians 3:10-12 NKJV*) In God’s Covenant with Israel, they agreed to obey all of His law or come under God’s divine curse if they did not obey all the laws of the Covenant. (*Deuteronomy 27:9, 15, 28:15*) According to this scriptural explanation, we should be very thankful that Christ redeemed us all from the curse of the law. We are not to go back under what Christ has set us free from. Backsliding into the Old Testament Law is a dangerous thing because we cannot be justified by it before God but only by faith in Christ. If we revert back to the law, we are ceasing to live by faith and are going back to works of the flesh. Not only do we go back to works of the flesh, but also will become into bondage to those very same laws and will not be free to serve Christ by grace in the liberty of the Spirit. In other words, we have the choice of either serving the law or Christ.

The Apostle Paul admonishes the Church, **“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed, I Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised (or keep the law) Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised (or keeps any part of the law) that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You who have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace... You ran well, who hindered you from obeying the truth?”** (*Galatians 5:1-4, 7 NKJV*) The truth of the Gospel is that Christ has set us free from the law, sin and death so that we might serve Him in the newness of the Spirit. **“But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”** (*Romans 7:6*) The Old Covenant Law is a whole entire system that cannot be divided into parts. We cannot pick and choose what parts of the law that we want to keep. For every work of the law that we try to keep, we are straying farther from Christ and His grace. Whether it is Old Testament laws of food, days, or tithing, we cannot earn by works what God so gives freely by His grace. (*Galatians 4:10-11, 1 Timothy 4:1-5*) Today, there are many who are backsliding into the law without even knowing it because they are choosing to believe the lies of religion over the truth of the Gospel. As believers in the New Testament Church, we will be judged on whether we obey the Gospel of Christ or not. (*John 12:44-50, 1 Peter 4:17-18*) We should all make sure that what we believe is in line with the truth of the Gospel. (*Galatians 2: 14*) This is our standard now that we are under Christ in the New Covenant.