

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Go Forward Not Backward

By Denise Bostic

In the Old Testament we find it written that the Lord gave the prophet Jeremiah a powerful word to give the people of Israel: Reform your ways and your actions! (*Jeremiah 7:1-3 NIV*) Why was the Lord commanding them to reform? It was because they were not listening to or paying attention to *what God was saying to them* but instead many had turned to sin and worthless false religion. The Lord said, **“but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I commanded you that it may go well with you. But they did not listen to or pay attention; instead they followed the stubborn inclination of their evil hearts, they went backward and not forward.”** (*Jeremiah 7:23-24 NIV*)

The Lord is giving a similar word to the modern day Church as well. He desires that we too, reform our ways and actions to coincide with His. Some believers today are making the same mistake as the ancient Israelites by returning to sin, the world and false religion. Those that do so are in effect, listening to and obeying these things rather than listening to and obeying the voice of the Lord. Whenever we obey someone or something other than the Lord, we will find ourselves *going backward and not forward* spiritually.

The Lord speaks personally and perpetually by His Spirit to His people throughout all generations that we might not only learn but also practice His ways so that things might go well with us. (*Hebrews 3:7-9*) These scriptures read, **“Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.”** The Church today can learn lessons from Old Testament Israel by not repeating their mistakes. (*1 Corinthians 10:1-11*)

God always moves in a forward motion. He wants us to be continually growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord so that we may receive the blessings and benefits that He desires us to have. (*1 Peter 3:18*) Because God is moving in a forward motion, we will find that if we are truly following Him, we will be *advancing spiritually* or moving forward as well. According to God’s own words, His voice is not limited to history alone but He is also speaking today to a new generation of believers. It is the will of God for us to be consistently moving forward by growing and progressing in Christ and the things of the Kingdom of God.

What is God speaking today? First we must understand what He *is not speaking*. Some believe that the Lord is speaking from the premise or terms and conditions of the Old Covenant Law but not so. *Remember, God is always moving forward, not backward.* The Lord will not go backward into an Old Covenant that has been abolished or made obsolete by a New or better Covenant. (*Ephesians 2:14-16, Colossians 2:13-14, Hebrews 8:6-13*) Since His sacrificial death, burial and resurrection nearly 2000 years ago, we will find that He speaks according to the terms and conditions of a *New Covenant* that He has ratified with His very own blood, making the Old Covenant obsolete or ineffective. (*Hebrews 8:6-13*) The Church must understand that anything and everything that the Lord speaks to us today will be based upon the New Covenant that He has instituted. (*Hebrews 1:1-2*) As believers, whatever we receive now must come from the foundation of Christ and the New Covenant for it to be truly legitimate.

Now that we have received Jesus Christ and the New Covenant, we must never move backward into sin, the world or false, worthless religion for to do so will lead us away from Christ and His grace. The Gospel declares that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that there is no other name under heaven besides

His that we may be saved. We believe that He is the way that God has made for us to be reconciled to Him. For those who turn their backs on Christ, His sacrifice and the blood of the New Covenant, the Gospel declares that there is no other payment for sins and those who do this can expect nothing but judgment and the wrath of God. (*Hebrews 10:26-27*) God's promise to us however is that all who abide in Jesus are not appointed to suffer wrath, but instead will be delivered from it. (*Read I Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9*) He is truly our place of safety and protection from the wrath to come.

The Lord's character and nature does not change. He did not like it when Israel went backward and He also reaffirms the fact that He does not want His Church to go backward either. We are warned in the New Testament scriptures that the Lord's soul shall have no pleasure in those who draw back or *go backward* and do not continue to move forward by faith. In fact, because the New Covenant is based upon better promises and the greater and ultimate sacrifice of the blood of God's very own Son, the punishment for rejecting and dishonoring Christ are much more severe. (*Hebrews 10:28-31*) As believers and followers of the Lord Jesus, however we should truly understand and receive the all-sufficiency of His sacrifice and count ourselves among those who continue to walk by faith, patiently do the will of God and receive His promises with all confidence. (*Hebrews 10:35-39*)

Even in the face of such sure, divine promises and warnings, unfortunately there are some around the globe who, after coming to Christ and receiving salvation, are returning to their lives of sin, the world or their former false religions. Why do some go backward and not forward with Christ? Many may think that those who are going backward spiritually are only those who are not attending Church, but we will find that believers can go backward while sitting right in Church week after week. How is this possible? It is possible by following someone or something rather than Christ.

What are some of the reasons some go backward instead of forward? The answers may be many but in this word in due season we want to focus on the major reasons that some believers go backward and not forward.

1. According to Jesus some have no root or they have not been rooted and grounded in the faith and when trouble or persecution comes because of God's word, they fall away. (*Matthew 13:20-21*)
2. Some are more consumed with the worries of this life and amassing wealth than the Kingdom of God and because of this become spiritually unfruitful. (*Matthew 13:22*)
3. Others are trapped in the deceitfulness of sin and become captives of the devil and do His will instead of God's (*II Timothy 2:24-26*)
4. Some go backward into Judaism or the works of the Law of Moses and fall away from Christ and His grace. (*Galatians 5:1-4*) (*I Timothy 1:6-7*)
5. Others are taken captive through deceptive philosophy, which depends on human traditions and principles of the world rather than on Christ. (*Colossians 2:8*)
6. Some are led away through false teaching whether through men or deceiving spirits. (*I Timothy 4:1-3*)
7. Others are disobedient to God by observing religious traditions of men rather than God's commands. (*Matthew 15:1-9*)

The Word of God gives us plenty of warnings concerning spiritual reversion. We also find within the Bible however, that the Lord also gives us plenty of admonition and encouragement to advance or *move forward* by placing our trust entirely in Him and His ability to keep us by His grace. According to the word of the Lord, His grace is all-sufficient to carry us through any and all things that may attack our faith throughout our spiritual journey in this life but we must receive His grace and power to obtain ultimate and complete victory over all of life's tests, trials and hardships. We must keep our eyes fixed continually on Him to be able to stand firm until the end. (*Hebrews 12:2 NIV*)

It's unfortunate that many needing salvation and even some new converts have not truly seen or experienced the power or reality of Christ due to weaknesses in the Church and thereby look for fulfillment in other religions or things of the world. The Lord has ordained that the Church display His glory and power in the earth so that others may be drawn to Him and the things of the Kingdom instead. In order for the Church to accomplish this in great measure, we must *reform* and *conform* to His way of doing things in order for His glory and power to be released and manifested in a tangible way as to draw others to Christ. As we do, we will see an increase in the glory and power of God upon the Church and as a result, people in the world will see that God is very real!

How do we reform and conform to God's ways? He gives us answers in His Word.

1. **After we receive salvation, we need to become rooted and built up in Christ.**

Colossians 2:6 says, **“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thanksgiving.”**

It's important to understand that when we receive Jesus as Savior, we are also to receive Him as Lord as well. In order to do this, we must fully surrender our lives to God's will and give up our self-will to allow Him to fully reign over our lives. We should seek out Churches and spiritual leaders that will help us to be rooted and grounded in the truth of Christ and His word.

2. **As believers in Christ, we must not allow the worries of this life or love of money to take us away from God or cause us to be spiritually unfruitful.**

Instead we should put God first and place our trust in Him for everything pertaining to this life. Jesus said, **“But seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”** (*Matthew 6:33*)

3. **Do not become trapped by sin and be taken captive by the devil.**

The Bible teaches us that we are look to God to help us escape temptations. (*I Corinthians 10: 12-13*) We are also told to **“neither give place to the devil.”** (*Ephesians 4:27*) We must live to do the Lord's will instead of the devil's bidding. If we find that we have been caught in the snare of the devil, we can recover ourselves by repenting and acknowledging and receiving the truth of God. (*II Timothy 2:24-26*)

4. **Live under New Testament grace and not the Old Testament law.**

Today, there are many falling into the trap of legalism or returning to the Mosaic Law under the guise that God is restoring it in these last days. This is not true however. The New Testament teaches us that we are under grace and not law. Believers are also plainly warned of the dangers of reversion to Judaism after they have come to faith in Christ. (Read Romans 7 and the Books of Galatians and Hebrews.) To go backward into the Old Covenant Law is to fall away from Christ and His grace. (*Galatians 5:1-4*)

5. **Receive and live by the principles of Christ instead of the principles and philosophies of this world.** (*Colossians 2:8*)

We are taught in the world not to conform to the patterns or principles of this world after we have come to Christ, but instead each of us are admonished to **“be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is- his good, pleasing and perfect will.”** We are able to do this as we offer ourselves to God completely, as living sacrifices. As we commune with God, renew our minds with His Word and put it into practice, we will be able to conform to His ways and become Christ like. (*Romans 12:1-2*)

6. **“Test (prove) everything. Hold on to the good.”** (*I Thessalonians 5:21*)

The Apostle Paul prophesied that in the latter days (of which we are now living) of those who would spread their deceptive teachings among believers and by so doing would cause some to abandon their faith in Christ. (*I Timothy 4:1-3*) Because of this existing threat of deception, it's imperative that all believers be careful about what they receive into their hearts and minds. We should always test everything by searching the scriptures and depending on God for true spiritual discernment to know what is true and what is false. (*I John 4:1-6*) We need to rely on our Helper, the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth and help us to distinguish between the spirits. (*John 16:12-15, I Corinthians 12:7, 10*) We do not need to fear deception but peacefully trust in God to reveal His truth to us.

7. Reject the traditions and religions of men that do not line up with the Gospel or Law of Christ.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for esteeming and obeying the traditions of men over and above obedience to the commands of God. (*Matthew 15:1-9*) We also find in the New Testament that Paul proclaims that there is no other true gospel but the gospel (or message) of Christ. Traditions of men that do not line up with the Gospel are to be rejected by those claiming to follow Jesus. (*Galatians 1:6-9, 2:14*) We are to embrace the entire gospel and reject teachings of men that conflict with the teachings of Christ and the New Covenant.

This would include other religions of the world that do not base their beliefs on the gospel of Christ. (*Galatians 6: 6-9*) If we truly believe in Jesus, we will also believe His message or gospel that He brought to the world. The gospel of Christ declares that there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved. God, our true Creator, only made salvation available through His Son. It is not made available through mere men or other religions. Any religions of the world that teach another way to salvation have an illegitimate message because its authenticity is not backed up by the authority of God. (*Acts 4:12*) Jesus declared, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** (*John 14:6*) Only Jesus can restore us back to God the Father, only He can give eternal life.

The Lord is the ultimate Reformer and came to this earth to bring true, godly reformation through the institution of a New Covenant. (*Hebrews 9:10*) The word **“reformation”** in the original Greek means, **“a time of setting things right”**. Jesus, God’s Son, came to set things right among men and to bring us back to God’s way of saying and doing things. Everything that God the Father wanted us to know, He has literally poured into Jesus. (*Colossians 1:18-20*) If we truly want to know what the Father is speaking, we should fix our eyes upon Jesus; listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and obey the teachings of the New Testament. Whenever the Church or the people of God are off-track spiritually or going backward and not forward, the Lord will bring *reformation*. The Lord wants His Church to be advancing and not retreating in these last days. He wants us to move forward and not backward.

Today, we need to be able to hear what God’s Son is saying by the Spirit to His Church. (*Hebrews 3:7-8, Revelation 3:6*) The Lord is advocating change in this season. He desires to bring us correction and get us on track with His divine will, plans and purposes as He has declared through the Word. Yes, we need to run the race that’s set before us but also make sure that our faith in and labor for the Lord is not in vain. (*Make sure to read I Corinthians 15:2, 14, 17, 58, II Corinthians 6:1, Galatians 2:2, 21, 3:4*) If we do this, we can truly be glad and rejoice both now and at the coming of the Lord.