

## Old Paths for the New Year

Jeremiah 6:16

I have just one verse of Scripture to build the message upon today. It is found in Jeremiah chapter six, verse 16 where we read: *“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”*

There are several initial observations we should take note of from our text. First, Jeremiah the prophet is quoting the Lord. Jeremiah’s message is not his own. His calling as a true prophet of God required him to deliver the Word of God to the people. It is interesting to note that when God called Jeremiah he told the Lord that he could not speak. He told the Lord that he was nothing more than a child. Jeremiah shrunk back from the thought of standing before his nation or any other group of people to speak for the Lord. But the Lord said unto him, *“Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.”* Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched Jeremiah’s mouth and the Lord said unto him, *“Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”* And so Jeremiah accepted the call of God to carry the Word of God to the people. Our text is an example of Jeremiah speaking the Word that God put in his mouth. And so Jeremiah says, *“thus saith the Lord.”* I must warn you today. It is a grave

mistake to ignore the Word of God. When we proclaim the Word of God we are declaring “thus saith the Lord.” Only the foolish and short-sighted and unbelieving continue on their frivolous way upon hearing the Word of the living God! Don’t be among them my friend.

Next, the text contains a very specific admonition from the Lord. It is the Lord that instructs us to “ask for the old paths.” Not new paths, but old paths! I must warn you today of a common temptation that wields great power over rising generations. It is the temptation to depart from the old paths as Satan casts them in a bad light. He does so by insisting that the old paths are not the sole way to truth. In fact, he will insist that the old paths are just the dogmatic proclamations of bigoted fanatics. Satan howls with disdain against the idea that everyone must travel the old paths. He clamors for new paths that supposedly lead to a better world. But alas my friend, his new world is a world without God. He promises greater light, but only increases darkness. He promises new paths that produce greater freedom, but the naïve discover too late that the new paths are a web of deceptive bondage that drags the soul down to the depths of hell!

My friends we need the old paths of the Lord in this New Year! David said, “*Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.*” Indeed, that needs to be our prayer as well. Let us “ask for the old paths” wherein is the good way and let us walk in them and we shall find rest for our souls!

Notice again that we should “ask for the old paths” because therein lies the “good way.” The old paths are good because they lead to the fear of the Lord and because they are the paths of righteousness. These paths show us the path of life itself. Sadly the Lord says of the children of Israel in the book of Isaiah, “*I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walks in a way that was not good, AFTER THEIR OWN THOUGHTS*” (Isaiah 65:2). Sadly, there

are many in our own day doing exactly what the children of Israel did those many years ago. They walk after “their own thoughts.” Let me say it this way: *if you are not walking in the old paths, that is, if you are not following the Word of God, then you are following after the thoughts of mere men.* The old paths speak of the Word of God. Those who refuse to ask for the old paths are choosing rather to follow the words of mere men! Unfortunately, the words of unbelieving men carry far more weight in America today than does the Word of God. We have strayed from the old paths. For example:

Isn't it true that our nation was not always a nation overrun with idolatry? Isn't it true that our nation once honored God, Christ, and His Word in our schools? Isn't it true that our nation once embraced the basic definition of marriage as one man for one woman for a life time? Isn't it true that our nation did not always allow no fault divorce? Isn't it true that our nation once held the expectation that men and women would marry before having children? Isn't it true that the proliferation of pornography was once unheard of in our nation? Isn't it true that the murder of the unborn child was unthinkable at one time in our nation? My friends, we have forsaken the old paths and our nation has embraced a supposed new progressive way of thinking. But the new paths are nothing more than the old lies of Satan himself. And the ways that seem right to the unregenerate minds of modern day Americans will at the end prove to be the ways of death!

Listen to these words from Jeremiah and let me apply the last verse of this reading to our own nation:

*“1 Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. 2 And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely. 3 O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved;*

*thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.*

*4 Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. 5 I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. 6 Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.*

*7 How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses” (Jeremiah 5:1-7).*

America is guilty of the same unfaithfulness found in verse 7 . . . The Lord continues to allow material prosperity in America, but what has she done to the Lord in return?

Now let me show you one final thing in our text. Jeremiah preached in a day when the dark clouds of God’s impending judgment could be seen off on the horizon. Jeremiah would live through the heartbreak of that judgment. He saw his nation ravaged by a foreign power. He saw many of his people die. He watched as his nation lost her sovereignty and her freedom. Jeremiah says in the book of Lamentations, *“mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.”* His heart was broken. The devastation was overwhelming. But know this: at the heart of Jeremiah’s message to the people was a very real invitation. In spite of their backslidings the Lord said to the people in our text, *“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths.”* In effect, the people to whom Jeremiah ministered stood at a crossroad. They could either continue down the path of rebellion, or they could ask for the old paths. That is,

they could repent and travel the old paths again. The Lord implores them to “ask for the old paths!” And proceeds to give a powerful promise when he declares: *“and ye shall find rest for your soul.”* The invitation was real. The promise was real. Instead of judgment, the nation could enjoy “rest.” However, the people said “we will not walk therein.” The decision to refuse the old paths finally brought judgment upon the people.

In this New Year will you choose the old paths? Or do you believe the Bible is out of date and no longer relevant in our day? I must say that the old paths are quite narrow. The old paths reject the idolatry of multiculturalism, they reject the lie of marco-evolution, they reject the pagan concept of millions of years, they reject the lie that mankind is basically good in his nature, and they reject the lie of universal salvation apart from the blood of Christ. You see, the old paths bring you to the knowledge of the Creator/Redeemer, the only true God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The old paths teach you to respect the authority of God’s Word. The old paths lead you by the way of the cross of Calvary and on to a borrowed, empty tomb! The old paths will lead you to an altar of personal repentance where you can call upon the name of the Lord and be saved! Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your soul!