Let Us Return to The Old Path
Jeremiah 6:16 NKJV

*Thus says the Lord: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.”*

*Jeremiah 6:16 New King James Version*

**P R A Y E R**

**I N T R O D U C T I O N**

Having been a country boy all of my life, I have always had a certain fondness for old paths.

Paths are different than roads or highways or interstates.

Paths are narrow, roads are wide.

Paths are commonly made by the foot of man or the hooves of beasts. Whereas roads are made with machinery.

Paths are traveled by few. Roads are traveled by many.

A path beckons us to slow down and take our time. While a road urges us to speed up and get there as quickly as possible.

A path allows us to escape the hustle and bustle of every day life and just take a casual stroll beside a quiet stream or through a woods filled with the chorus of singing birds.

A path takes us back to a time when life was much simpler….perhaps even taking us to a familiar place of special childhood memories.
Yes, there is something special about a path.

In VERSE 16, Jeremiah sounds a message to the Israelites…..

Thus says the Lord: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the OLD PATHS, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls…….”

To you and me, Jeremiah’s invitation sounds like a sweet sounding message inviting us to a place of peace and serenity. But to the Israelites of old, Jeremiah’s message was like the blaring sound of a bugler awakening them from a deep sleep.

Background & Exposition

It had been nearly 1,000 years since Israel overtook Jericho and claimed the Promised Land as their own.

For a period of time the Israelites remained faithful to God. But over the course of time they began drifting farther and farther off the path of their forefathers.

…….They no longer held to the “old-fashioned” teachings and beliefs of their forefathers.

…….They had disobeyed God by intermarrying with people from heathen nations who worshiped false gods rather than the One True God. In time the worship of the Israelites became more pagan and worldly in nature.

Sadly, they saw this as “progress” ……a broadening of the narrow religious views once held by their forefathers.”
The Israelites in Jeremiah’s time now considered themselves to be much more sophisticated and enlightened than the Jews of Moses’ day.

But what they saw as PROGRESS wasn’t progress at all. Instead they had REGRESSED. They had moved farther and father away from God.

Thus God commanded the prophet Jeremiah to sound forth this message:

Thus says the Lord: In other words, “You better listen up, because this is God speaking to you!

Stand in the ways and see: The picture Jeremiah is painting here is of a “Y” in the road. He is telling them to stop and take a good look at where you are!

One road will take you back to God.

The other road……the one you are now on will take you farther and farther away from God.

And ask for the OLD PATHS. By referring to it as “the old paths” Jeremiah is warning the Israelites of the dangers of taking “new paths,” such as the one they were currently on.

You see, the world is constantly changing. New religions pop up every single year. New philosophies…..new ideas …….new teachings……..new beliefs abound.

And the world’s philosophy is that anything that is different than the OLD is better! That anything that represents change from the old is progress!

Spiritually speaking, the NEW PATH is never, I repeat never better than the OLD PATH, and we’ll see why in just a moment.
How did the Israelites respond to JEREMIAH’S message?

Look at the last part of verse 16…….

But they said, “We will NOT walk in it.”

What they were saying was, “Jeremiah you old coot, you old fogy, you don’t know what your talking about!” “You keep right on practicing your old-time religion and preaching your old-time message and just leave us alone!”

Jeremiah’s heart was broken because he knew this “NEW PATH” they were on would eventually bring God’s righteous judgment upon the Israelites.

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TRANSITION

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When I look at many of today’s Churches I fear that just like the Israelites of Jeremiah’s day, we have forsaken the OLD PATH for the NEW.

Many Churches seem to have bought into the idea that any change from the old-fashioned teachings and old-fashioned values and old-fashioned ways of our parents and grandparents is AN IMPROVEMENT…..that CHANGE FROM THE OLD IS ALWAYS A MARK OF PROGRESS.

Is change always better? Is new and improved really improved?
ILLUSTRATION: Back in 1985 the Coca Cola Company came out with a new and improved product they called NEW COKE.

Supposedly this formula was much sweeter and tastier than the original COKE. Well this turned out to be one of the biggest marketing disasters in history!

As it turned out the NEW COKE wasn’t better after all. In fact, COCA COLA’S sales dropped dramatically as consumers clamored for the OLD ORIGINAL COKE.

After seven years, the COCA COLA COMPANY decided to remarket the ORIGINAL COKE and guess what? Sales skyrocketed.

Many Churches today seem to be “marketing” what they believe is a NEW and IMPROVED BRAND of Christianity.

This New and Improved brand of Christianity features a New Style of Preaching.

The new gospel message is “seeker friendly.” In other words the messages are “watered-down” and “sugar-coated” in such a way that a non-Christian would never be made to feel uncomfortable about his or her lifestyle.

The messages are all about God’s love and grace and mercy……….and how to get along in the world……..and how to be prosperous and successful in the world.

The old-fashioned messages on SIN or BACKSLIDING or GOD’S WRATH and JUDGMENT are never heard, because those messages leave a “bitter aftertaste” that might drive people away.
The New and Improved brand of Christianity also features New Style of Music.

It’s a brand of Christianity that caters to everyone’s musical tastes, from the old traditional hymns to middle-of-the-road praise music……to hard christian rock.

The New and Improved brand of Christianity features a New Style of Dress.

One can now come into the Holy Presence of Almighty God dressed in attire that is no different than what he or she might wear to Wal-Mart or McDonalds or to a ball game.

Now let me ask you something. Is this so-called NEW and IMPROVED brand of Christianity really NEW and IMPROVED?

Is the SHOW TIME RELIGION better than the OLD-TIME RELIGION?

Is making people FEEL COMFORTABLE more important than making people FEEL CONVICTION?

If JEREMIAH were still living I believe he would say to today’s Church……..

Thus says the Lord: “Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the OLD PATHS, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.”
This is not to suggest we need to go back to the days of FUNERAL HOME FANS……..POT BELLY STOVES and HARDWOOD PEWS.

And this is not to suggest that EVERYTHING ABOUT TODAY’S CHURCH IS WRONG and EVERYTHING ABOUT THE CHURCH of A GENERATION OR TWO AGO WAS RIGHT.

What it does mean however is that we need to STOP and take a good look at THE PATH we are on and ask ourselves, “Are we on THE RIGHT PATH?”

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Let’s briefly consider two reasons why we should seek THE OLD PATH.

First of all…..

I. The Old Path Is The Godly Way

1. God’s way is often referred to as a “PATH” in the scriptures, because it is taken by FEW not many.

2. Listen to what the Word of God tells us about “HIS PATH.”

   PSALM 16:11 You will show me the PATH of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

   PSALM 17:5 Uphold my steps in YOUR PATHS that my footsteps may not slip.

   PSALM 23:3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS for His name’s sake.

   PSALM 25:4 Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me YOUR PATHS.
PSALM 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my PATH.

PROVERBS 3:5,6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your PATHS straight.

PROVERBS 12:28 In the way of righteousness is life, and in its PATHWAY there is no death.

MATTHEW 7:13.14 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and BROAD is the road that leads to destruction, and MANY enter through it. But small is the gate and NARROW the ROAD (path) that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

3. You see the OLD PATH is the GODLY WAY…..

It is the same path that was walked by NOAH and ABRAHAM and MOSES.

The same path that was walked by ISAIAH and JEREMIAH and EZEKIEL and DANIEL.

It is the same path that was walked by PETER, ANDREW, JAMES and JOHN..........And by PAUL and SILAS and BARNABAS and TIMOTHY.

It is the same path that was walked by THE MARTYRED SAINTS and our RESTORATION FOREFATHERS.

The path that was walked by our PARENTS and our GRANDPARENTS and our GREAT-GRANDPARENTS before us.

4. It is not a WIDE path, but rather a WELL-BEATEN NARROW path ......A path that follows THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD to the ETERNAL HOME GOD HAS PREPARED FOR US!
But not only is the OLD PATH the GODLY WAY…..

II. The Old Path Is The Good Way

1. Listen again to those words GOD spoke through the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 6:16…….

   “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the OLD PATHS, where the GOOD WAY is, and walk in it, then you will find rest for your souls.”

2. The world would have us to believe that ALL PATHS are GOOD and it doesn’t matter which one you take.

   Well consider this…….

   Is a path that teaches you can believe in Buddha or Mohammed or Confuscious or Allah and still go to heaven A GOOD PATH?

   Is a path that teaches you all you have to do to go to heaven is to live a good, clean moral life A GOOD PATH?

   Is a path that teaches you all you have to do to go to heaven is simply to have FAITH in GOD a GOOD PATH?

   Is a path that teaches you that you can live a WORLDLY, SINFUL LIFESTYLE and still go to heaven a GOOD PATH?

   Is a path that “caters its MESSAGE and its MUSIC to please man rather than to please GOD” a GOOD PATH?

   Is a path that teaches me to TRUST in my feelings and my personal experiences more than the Word of God A GOOD PATH?
SOLOMON tells us in Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

3. My friend no matter how GOOD a PATH may seem, if it doesn’t lead to eternal life, its not a good path, is it?

4. There is only one, I repeat, only ONE GOOD PATH and that is the OLD PATH.

The old path that teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.

The old path that teaches us man is a sinner and in need of a Savior.

The old path that calls us to a life of holiness and righteousness.

The old path that teaches we must come to JESUS in FAITH BELIEVING He alone is our hope of SALVATION........ REPENTING of our sinful ways......CONFESSING Jesus as our LORD and SAVIOR.......being BAPTIZED for the remission of our SINS.....and LIVING A LIFE OF FAITHFULNESS to the Lord until we die.

5. And when we are on that OLD PATH we will know it because we will find REST and PEACE in our souls in knowing we are headed down the PATH that will take us to eternal life!

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CONCLUSION

When I was a student at Johnson Bible College we had chapel services five days a week. And you thought being in Church on Sunday morning was tough.

In my years as a student at JBC we got to hear some pretty good chapel speakers and some who quite frankly were not so good.

One of my favorite chapel speakers was an old preacher named DUKE JONES. Brother Jones was probably in his late 70’s or early 80’s at that time. He had such a sweet, Christ-like spirit!

I don’t remember a lot of what Bro. Jones said in his messages, but there is one thing he said I’ll never forget.

He said, “I want to say something to all you young preacher boys sitting out there this morning. Don’t ever stop preaching on the grand old themes! Don’t ever stop preaching on SIN and REPENTANCE and the OLD RUGGED CROSS. Keep on preaching the grand old themes of the gospel.”

I have always tried to follow Brother Jones’s advice in my preaching. That’s why next Lord’s day I want to begin a thirteen part sermon series I have entitled, THE OLD TIME GOSPEL SERIES.

In this series I’m going to preach some messages on those grand old themes we USED to hear preached on all the time but rarely hear preached these days.

Lord willing, I will preach some OLD TIME GOSPEL MESSAGES on subjects like…… The Bible……and Jesus Christ……..and Repentance and Baptism……..and The Old Rugged Cross……and Backsliding…..and Heaven and Hell and the Second Coming of Christ.
My prayer, and I ask that it be yours’ also, is that as we travel down these OLD PATHS, that God will use these messages to start a REVIVAL here at Christian Hope Church of Christ!

Here’s what you can do to help…..

First, make a commitment to be here each and every Lord’s day for these next thirteen weeks.

Second, I ask that you pray for me as I prepare these messages.

Thirdly, I want to ask you to make a TEN MOST WANTED list of your family and friends who are not Christians or who are but have strayed away from the Lord, and pray for them by name each and every day.

If you will commit to doing these three things, I believe GOD will truly bring a REVIVAL to this Church!

Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls!