

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, AND WALK THEREIN

Jeremiah told the nation of Judah, "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" (Jer. 6:16). As a prophet sent to Judah, his job was to try to persuade the nation to go back to the ways of God which they had left. Many good lessons have been preached using this passage and concept as the basis. When the restoration movement took hold in America, that same plea was basically the plea of those old pioneer preachers. The realm of Christianity had departed from the old ways given by God in His word and were desperately in need of asking for those old paths and walking in them. When dealing with the denominational world of today, the same need exists.

However, there are other applications of the concept. There are many congregations of the Lord's church that have, over the years and gradually, left the old paths and begun to walk in the ways of the denominational world around them. Two congregations relatively close by were walking faithfully in the ways of the Lord in the years gone by, but are now following the commandments of men and leading many down that broad and easy way that leads to destruction. They need to look back and see from whence they came and go back to those old paths wherein they used to walk and walk in them again. Most of the seven churches of Asia to which the Lord dictated letters as recorded in Revelation, chapters two and three were encouraged to go back from whence they came. Ephesus had left her first love. Thyatira was allowing false teachers to peddle their wares without opposition. Sardis had died and Laodicea had become lukewarm. All theses needed to ask for the old paths and walk therein.

The same can be said of many who have put on Christ in baptism and are members of a local congregation that is still walking in the old paths. Some individual Christians have died (spiritually), gone to sleep, become again entangled in the pollutions of this world, left their first love or become lukewarm as was the church at Laodicea. These individual Christians are likewise in need of asking for the old paths and walking therein.

In all these cases, congregationally and individually, going back to walk in those old paths will result in finding "rest for your souls". But, too many will answer as did Judah, "We will not walk therein". **RCO**

WELL, WHO CHANGED IT?

A number of years ago, while having a study with a couple of Mormons, the subject of the changes in the book of Mormons came up. It does not say the same thing in many cases as it did in the early eighteen hundreds. The question was posed to these two young men, "if the book of Mormons was God's word when and as it was first published, who changed it?" To be honest, they could not adequately answer that question. In fact, they were amazed to see the differences in the two.

However, somewhat the same question can be posed to many today who avow being members of the Lord's church. Now, there is no doubt that many changes have taken place within the church since her founding in the first century. However, when it comes to changes one must make a distinction between doctrinal changes and simple changes in methods and such. For instance, preachers of the first century never, not one time, ever preached the gospel on the radio or television. Those changes in things that are matters of opinion or expediency do change from time to time and without any need for worrying too much about who it was that changed it.

However, when it comes to anything that God has provided authority for in His word, if it has changed from the way God originally gave it, "who changed it" and by what authority did they do so? A couple of examples will be in order here. God authorized "singing" as the music that was to be used in worship to Him (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Most of the denominational world and even some who call themselves brethren are now using mechanical instruments of music in worship to God. The question is, "who changed it?" Who had the authority to change what God had previously authorized? God authorized "men" to take the leadership role in the church (I Tim. 3:1ff; I Tim. 2:12-14). Today, most denominations and, again, some within the Lord's church have begun to elevate women into leadership positions. The question again arises, "who changed it?" Who had the authority to change the leadership role that was authorized by God in the beginning?

Many other examples could be cited to show where many changes have been made in what God authorized in His word and that these changes were made by someone who had no authority to make such changes. God authorized it all the way He wanted it!