

Ask for the Old Paths

Jay Bowman

Thus says the Lord: “Stand by the roads and look and ask for the ancient paths, where the road way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But, they said, ‘We will not walk in it’ (Jeremiah 6:16).

There is much that is good about our way of life. There are many benefits that we enjoy which were not available to other generations. Modern technology has given life a potential for convenience and pleasantness that was never known before.

And, there is a strong element of goodness and piety about our people. I appreciate that. I admire men and women who will stand up for clean living, clean speech and wholesome moral standards. May God increase their number. Even those who are religiously wrong can have a positive effect on the moral direction of this country through their political and social influence. I am grateful to God for a relatively safe and moral environment.

And, I am thankful for faithful brethren who love the Lord, who live clean lives and reverence God’s word as the only authoritative source of spiritual and moral guidance. And yet, I can see a definite trend away from Biblical morals that is carrying our nation and our brethren farther and farther away from God.

You can see it in the language people use. On television, in the movies, in magazines and newspapers there are words now regarded as “acceptable” that were abhorrent a few years ago. I remember when Bob Hope was kicked off the radio for language that would be little more than a by-word today. The FCC is doing very little to control this. You can see it in the rise of divorce throughout the country and even in the church. If you add to that figure the number of couples who are unhappy, though not divorced, you can see why millions of young people grow up bewildered, insecure and confused.

Lack of parental affection has triggered an outbreak of homosexuality that has brought its own new set of problems: spiritual, moral, legal, sociological, political, medical, et cetera.

You can see it in the rise of atheism, defiance of the God of the Bible and in the rise of false religions throughout the land. Educational and governmental leaders are allowing atheism to eliminate God and religion from the classroom. This, under the guise of the separation of church and state.

You can see it in the epidemic of social diseases born of a generation of “free love” and moral degeneracy. Unwanted pregnancies have brought about the disgraceful slaughter of millions of unborn babies.

Ever-increasing problems of drunkenness and drug addiction have made it unsafe to walk on the streets or drive on the highways. This problem goes uncorrected because of legislators and congressmen who are drunkards and users and who are therefore sympathetic to the drunkard.

If ever a country needed to “ask for the old paths” it is our country. If ever a people needed to stand at the crossroads and the centers of public concourse to urge a return to biblical morals, it is ours. We have drifted far away from those divine moorings in the last twenty to thirty years. In their social and business dealings, men need to insist on the old paths, the traditional moral standards. In their political choices, men need to insist that municipal, state and national leaders stand up for biblical morality.

This is “where the way is good.” Righteousness brings an abundant harvest of divine blessings. God is gracious and generous to those who love and serve Him. Impiety and immorality bring sure destruction. Whatever a man or a nation sows it will most assuredly reap.

And, we need to ask for the old paths religiously as well. Most religious people do things in His service that He never authorized or approved. Even some of our brethren are claiming that we need no authority for the things we practice.

But, that is why God gave us the Bible, so we could learn what it takes to please Him. The Bible is the revealed will of God. It records those commandments and examples relating to acceptable service by the people of God in the first century. We need to produce Bible authority for everything we teach and practice as a religious service. Paul required (Colossians 3:17) that everything—whether in word or deed— be done by the authority of Jesus Christ. Only when we do this can we be assured of His approval. Only then can we “find rest for our souls.”