

# Walking in the old paths. (Quality: very good)

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Preacher: Pickett, Michael ( 1943-2021)

- [ 0 : 00 ] To help us, I would direct your prayerful attention this morning to the prophecy of Jeremiah, chapter 6 and verse 16.
- Jeremiah's prophecy, chapter 6, the 16th verse. 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.
- 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.
- [ 1 : 14 ] Jeremiah was a very young man when the Lord first called him to this solemn work of the ministry, to be a prophet of the Most High God.
- We can perhaps calculate that he was below the age of 20 when he first began to speak.
- The Lord therefore using a young man to bring forward an old message. And throughout a very long and hard pathway, this prophet would live to see the fulfillment of many of those things.
- Eternal woe unto those who turned from the old pathway of their ancestors, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, of Joshua, of David, of Hezekiah, right down to the day in which he prophesied.
- And eternal blessings to those who would hold fast to those things which had been established among God's people.
- [ 2 : 57 ] How solemn then it must have been when having passed through many difficulties in his life, seeing and hearing the rejection of the people toward his ministry, being dealt with at times very harshly in his career, that at length in old age he lived to see the temple burned with fire, the walls of Jerusalem broken down, God's people, God's covenant people being taken into captivity, many dying by the sword, many starving to death.
- Jeremiah finished his life being dragged, as it were, into Egypt against his will.
- And it is reckoned, although we cannot be clear on this, the scriptures are silent, that he died a martyr's death. These words then stand before us today very solemnly because what was spoken by Jeremiah unto this people in his day is spoken unto us in our day.
- The scriptures being of no private interpretation, that which was spoken by God. And you will recognize the very opening of this verse, it is, thus saith the Lord.
- We worship a God who is eternally unchangeably the same. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- [ 5 : 11 ] And we need in this day when so many voices are speaking contrary things to remember this, that it is an eternal Jehovah, he is the same.
- God does not contradict himself. he does not have one message to one generation and a different message to another generation.

That which was relevant to God's people in Jeremiah's time is just as relevant to us in our time. These scriptures are ancient.

They go right back to the beginning of time. people. And yet, there is a pertinency with them which is so needful for us in our day and generation.

Then what is the message? And I believe that this verse, this well-known verse, the 16th verse of the 6th chapter of Jeremiah, really sums up the whole of Jeremiah's ministry throughout those many years that he faithfully proclaimed the word of the Lord.

[ 6 : 35 ] What does he say? And what does the Lord say to us today? The message, I say, being the same. Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.

With this promise appended unto it, and ye shall find rest for your souls. I want firstly, as the Lord may be pleased to help me, to set before you what some of these old paths are.

And to remember that those old paths are the good paths. These well-tried and trodden paths of the saints of God throughout all the ages of time.

And they will be the paths which God's people will choose today. Firstly, and it seems providential that I should be here today, and perhaps I can speak in a way that I wouldn't normally speak.

Firstly, I want to bring before you the historical path. faith. You know, our churches are founded upon sound doctrine.

[ 8 : 16 ] God, in his infinite mercy, raised up men of esteem who gathered together around the word of God and sought to bring in an order and a practice which was suitable in recognition of the true worship of God.

God, the foundational principle of our churches is our articles of faith. Those articles of faith are little known among our own people.

And I believe it's a great failure of our churches that these things are not known among us because there, whether the wording is such as is modern or not, and some would complain that the wording is rather old fashioned, but look at the principle behind it.

What was the desire of those godly gracious men of old? To set forth a faith and a practice which was in accordance to the word and rule of God.

And if we hold fast by these things, by these old paths, our churches have been founded and they have been maintained, but we are in danger of losing them in this our day and generation because men and women by and large are seeking after easier and lighter things.

[ 10 : 07 ] They're doing the very things which Jeremiah here is warning against. They are turning away from these old paths.

They're saying we want something new, we want something different. We want some order, some practice, some doctrine which we have not had before.

and how sad it is that many of our young people are turning away from our churches and I believe are being deceived by an evangelical likeness, a road which never leads to God.

to hold firm to our most holy faith is one of the great blessings that God has given to our churches.

Stand ye in the ways and see. look upon these things.

[ 11 : 20 ] Prove them. You know when Israel came out of Egypt and saw that Pharaoh and the army of Egypt were pursuing after them they must have been greatly dismayed.

What could they do? They had nowhere to go. And you know what it is when a person is greatly troubled they tend to walk or to run to and fro.

Not in reality getting anywhere. The word of God to them was stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which he will see this day.

And sometimes we need to stand and reflect upon the goodly heritage that God has so favoured us with.

To count our blessings one by one. To see that the favour that God has bestowed upon our churches when we remember and some of us who are older can remember many godly gracious souls who not only profess their religion but who also lived their religion.

[ 12 : 45 ] And they were a testimony and a strength to our churches in their day. Now we are in our own generation.

We are called upon to be faithful. But what are we to be faithful to? Well in the last chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews we are called upon to follow those who have the rule over us.

In other words those who have given us an example. We are to follow not them as persons but we are to follow their faith. And we too in our day and generation are to be faithful unto the doctrine of our churches.

You know if we go against our own doctrine then it can only lead us into confusion. It is good that we know and understand what our doctrine is.

But if someone should challenge us as to where we stand on certain issues we are able to clearly remonstrate with them. Stand ye in the old past.

[ 14 : 10 ] Stand ye in the old ways. Because these things are founded upon another old way.

And that is the word of God. God when all is said and done. And it is a mercy if we can take our doctrines, the rules of our most holy faith to the word of God and compare them.

And find that what the word of God says reads exactly the same. because here in this volume is the declaration of God unto his people.

In the book of Deuteronomy it speaks of those hidden things, those secret things. And it says secret things belong unto God. And we're not to try and feather them out.

And there are many secret things in the ordering of our lives and ways things that we do not understand in God's providence. We are to leave them.

[ 15 : 29 ] But that which is revealed is for us and for our children. And God has revealed in his word all that we need for this life and for the life which is to come.

Jesus said in these scriptures these are the things he says that are recorded concerning me.

In them we think we have eternal life. These are they which testify of me. And it should be our desire daily continually to search the scriptures and to search for Christ in the scriptures because Christ is in all the scriptures old and new testament all the types and shadows the ceremonies and the law all point to the Lord Jesus Christ.

What did the apostles have to speak concerning? What was their doctrine? It was Christ first and Christ last and Christ all and in all.

But you young people you might say that there are many things which are hard to be understood. But if the apostle Peter could say that of his brother Paul's writings things hard to be understood then how are we to understand them?

[ 17 : 06 ] Then I will point you to another old way and that is the old way of prayer. We have so many exhortations in the word of God to pray.

Pray continually. Pray without ceasing. Pray in the Holy Spirit. Pray if thou canst says the hymn writer. If thou can or if thou canst.

But pray by faith in Jesus name. What a wonderful thing it is that God has granted unto us creatures of the earth a throne of grace a place where he has promised that he will both hear and answer prayer.

Then we are to avail ourselves. We are to seek the help of the Holy Spirit. The disciples came to the Lord Jesus and they said Lord teach us how to pray.

They were not offended but they needed one to teach them and the Lord gave them a pattern of how they were to pray our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name.

[ 18 : 30 ] And we are to ask the Holy Spirit and to say that we know not how to pray as we ought to recognize that sin is mixed in all that we think or say or do but even in our most holy things they are marked by sin but the Holy Spirit whose office it is to lead sinners to Christ will show that sinner how to pray and it will be every time that we need that help and at times it will be with groanings which cannot be uttered may not be audibly that we speak unto God but God who sees the heart of man knows also his desires stand ye in the way and see and ask for the old paths where is the good way and walk therein our practice is another old path which we are to ask for it is much despised in the day in which we live but the

Lord has been pleased to own and bless the preaching of the gospel to the conversion of men and women and we are to ask that the Holy Spirit may give us a heart and mind that will be receptive unto the word of God you know we can attend the means of grace we can sit under the ministry of the word I had a very solemn conversation a few years ago with an uncle and he said that his mother carried him into the church when he was a small baby that all his life and he was in his 80s he had attended unto the same chapel sat under a faithful ministry but he said to me something very very solemn he said but

I never received anything for my soul that is very sobering to think that a person can sit in a chapel pew for 80 odd years and receive nothing do these things try us do they trouble us do they trouble us that we receive so little how much do we hear of what the Lord's servant set before us how much do we inwardly digest of the truths that are proclaimed in our hearing how much do we take home with us and beat out before the Lord how much makes an impression upon us that it alters the course of our very lives because isn't that the very process of conversion it changes a person from what he was into a new creature he can say all things have passed away behold all things have become new what do we know of these things what do we care about these things do they travel our consciences from time to time as we lay upon our bed at night perhaps do these things come as an impression upon us how much did

I hear how much did I receive what changes it made in my life stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths where is the good way and walk therein now doubtless there are many other ways which we could speak of and which we could fill the time with but I believe I have laid before you some of those important ways in which a person is to seek but we come to the question how will he seek for these things it is only as the Holy Spirit may lay that desire in our hearts a change must take place and that is not a superficial change you know we can agree with what is being spoken we may have a good spirit of discernment to be able to judge the ministry of the word we may understand the doctrines of the church and we may lay them to heart and we may say well we could never go to that church because we cannot agree with their doctrine and so there is an understanding formed in our minds concerning these things but that isn't conversion conversion is a real change what do we know of ourselves have we ever been brought in guilty before

God have we ever had to mourn over our sins have we been brought to humble confession before God have we a faith a living faith in our hearts you see it's easy if we have been brought up to attend a strict Baptist chapel to say yes I believe in these things I believe that there is a God I believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners the devils believe and tremble but if we know ourselves to be sinners and we have faith to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ in humble confession these are the two great principles of conversion repentance toward God and faith in the

[ 25 : 53 ] Lord Jesus Christ but we must know them and I mention one more pathway and that is a pathway of living experience real religions more than notion something must be known and found what do we know by experience of the doctrines of the church of the preaching of the gospel of the setting forth of Christ as the saviour of sinners to know that Jesus died I suppose in the days in which we live it is something to be admired but it's not sufficient unless we can say that he died for me Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners but can we say

I am a sinner and nothing at all but Jesus Christ is my all and in all has he become that one thing needful is he the object of your chief desire Jesus crucified for me it is to know something of these things it is to know them as a living reality and we can judge this as we look back upon our lives because with every one of us it was not always so and we can look upon a time when we were quite content to live in sin to live without God to live a life of pleasure to fulfill all our desires but did

God stop us in our mad career as he stopped Paul upon that Damascus road and Paul was brought to humble himself in the dust before the Lord Jesus and there the Lord Jesus spake to him what do we know of this as an experience we come into the house of God is it our prayer as we sit down in our pew to say Lord Jesus speak to me what a mercy what an inestimable favour if the Lord Jesus Christ should speak to you we read of those appearances in the Old Testament and I have been much impressed about the Lord coming to Solomon you know that he came to Solomon and asked him what he would desire and Solomon asked for wisdom and the

Lord gave him his desire and gave him wisdom above all men but gave him also that which he did not ask for he gave him riches his honour but later on we read and the Lord spake to Solomon a second time and that impressed upon my mind that it's not every day that the Lord spake to the Old or to the New Testament saints it was if I might put it this way a rare occasion that he came to them and so it was a tremendous blessing when the Lord came and spake unto his servants now it's the same today the Lord speaks unto his people Jesus speaks and speaks to thee say poor sinner lovest thou me and can you say with Peter yea

Lord thou knowest all things thou knowest that I love thee what a favour then if sitting in a congregation whether it be large or small that the Lord should appear and speak to you should single you out among all the others for this wonderful for this special privilege that you could say that I heard the voice of Jesus perhaps I can speak to you from personal experience when the Lord would call me to the ministry I can take you to the very spot where the Lord spake preach I say this that it wasn't an audible voice but it might as well have been because it was so clear to me that it was the

[ 31 : 10 ] Lord that he spake and he said this two words go preach that was sufficient that was all I needed except that the Lord would open the door into the ministry which later on he did but those words are as clear to me today as they were when the Lord spake them and if the Lord should so favour you that he should speak to you you'll have those words in everlasting remembrance and so experience of a real change and a real desire to humble ourselves before God in repentance and to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is that necessary way for all of God's people thus saith the Lord stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths where is the good way what a paradox this is and what a contradiction it would be to the majority of men and women living in this world today they wouldn't consider it to be a good way were they do you think

Lazarus of whom we read this morning would have considered it to be a good way think how hard his lot was there sitting at the rich man's table full of sores in a miserable condition naturally speaking the dogs coming and licking the sores and all that Lazarus had to feast upon were the crumbs which fell from the table found but it was a good way in reality for Lazarus because a good way can be proved whether it has a good end or not and the end of Lazarus was to be found in the bosom of Abraham there to be found in the glories of heaven to be in that place where every tear had been wiped from his eyes where he lived in uninterrupted communion together with his

Lord what a privilege what a blessing what a good way it was that led him unto God the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that broad is the road that lead us unto destruction and many that be that walk therein but straight and narrow is the way that leads unto God let us remember that in this day when so many say well you can go this way or that way and they all end up in heaven no my friends there is one way that leads us unto God and it is a way of obedience if he loved me said the Lord Jesus Christ keep my commandments and if we have a love to the Lord Jesus Christ we do not find his commandments to be grievous we do not find his way to be a burden but we love the ways of

God we love to walk therein because we know it is a good way it is a way that is crowned with God's blessing now like Jeremiah of old his way was opposed even the men who were priests men of religion spake against Jeremiah they accused him of many things but Jeremiah held fast by the faith he was a reformer in his day a man who stood firm upon the principles which he knew were right in the sight of almighty God and the Lord blessed him there is no doubt about it the Lord blessed him in that pathway where is the good way and walk therein there is another way that I would bring before you and that is a way that is often despised and very often rejected and that is the practical way the old

Puritans used to speak of that practical part now what does the word of God say do good unto all men especially those of the household of faith the Lord Jesus Christ when he was upon this earth he went about doing good and if we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ walking in his ways then surely we should be doing good in this world and not evil some say that we should confine ourselves to Christians alone but that is not what the word of God declares yes there should be a priority but we are to do good unto all men it is a walking out of our religion you see if we hear these things preach week by week and as your pastor sets before you the gospel week by week if you hear them and agree with them and say yes he's right in everything that he says and yet you don't put into practice the things that you hear then sadly we would have to say that he has laboured in vain and spent his strength for naught there is a walking out our religion they should take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus we should not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus

[ 38 : 01 ] Christ nor ashamed of that cross upon which our prince died but rather our light should shine among men that they should see our good works and glorify our father which is in heaven you know when Gadsby died Manchester came to a stop and it wasn't only those that attended his chapel there were many poor people in Manchester who had good reason to thank God for William Gadsby and a mark of respect the shops were closed the streets were lined as his coffin was carried through the streets now there he was a witness to that people they saw God in William Gadsby should they not see God in us what a mercy if we have such a religion that manifests and magnifies the person and work of the

Lord Jesus Christ that they can see Christ in us but there is that reflection the shining forth of the person of the Lord Jesus and ye shall find rest for your souls why in those words I believe there is a subject a consideration which would take many sermons to preach and ye shall find rest for your souls when we are weary at the end of the day how good it is sometimes we may make that observation how good it is to lay down upon our beds and rest ye shall find rest for your souls the wicked never will find rest for their souls only those that are safe and secure in

Christ shall have that eternal rest the Sabbath is a setting forth of these things and that's why in our churches we hold fast to the doctrine of the Sabbath day it is a day of rest a day set apart to the glory of our God it sets forth heaven that eternal rest of the saints in the glory of Christ forever and forever when all our labors here below have come to an end we have a rest there is a rest that remaineth unto the people of God the promise has been given unto us the fulfillment of it is yet to come but as sure as the promise is given so it will be fulfilled in the lives of every believer they shall enter into that glorious rest but before

I close it is necessary that we just comment on the last portion of this word but they said we will not walk therein what a solemn reaction to the testimony of the Lord through his servant here he has faithfully set before them the blessing if they are to stand in the ways and see and ask for the old parts and yet they have rejected his teaching they have rejected his counsel they have said we will not walk therein now our hearts by nature are exactly the same we're no better than they there is a rejection in us by birth and by nature that says we will not have this man Christ Jesus to reign over us it's evident if we were to go out into society today and ask them what they think of

Christ they would say we know him not like those who stood before Pilate and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ so he is rejected today and so we find that the shops are open that men and women are going about their pleasures that life continues on the Sabbath day as upon any other day they reject the teaching of the word of God and they say effectively we will not walk therein now our hearts I say are exactly the same we by nature are no better than they therefore I say again it is absolutely essential that there is a change that comes about in our lives that rather than being enemies to God we become the friends of God and that we have a desire and that it is found in our hearts that we also will ask for those old paths and we will see them as the blessing that they really are but they are a blessing specifically for

[ 43 : 59 ] God's people and for them alone now are we counted among God's people the Lord is he our God we can demonstrate this will you serve the Lord or not and this is the evidence of whether we are willing to take up the cross of Christ and to follow him well may this if nothing else remains upon your mind or your spirit today may this are we made willing to take up the cross of Christ and to follow him and may that be a serious consideration upon your minds and in your hearts we must leave it there the Lord at his blessing Amen Amen