

*From Where I Sit . . .*

## **"SEEKING THE OLD PATHS"**

Contrary to what some have thought, there is a real hunger and appreciation today for "the old paths." I received a refreshing email from a friend who had read a recent article I wrote in which we discussed religious changes and affirmed that these "differences really make a difference" if they alter what God had to say on a particular matter. My friend grasped the significance of having Bible authority for what we do and honoring that authority once we have it. The comment made to me was, *"One day I would like to be a part of a congregation that holds firm to this belief. . . Continuing to do what God authorizes will set you apart from other religions. And it is good. Too many religions have conformed to the ways of the world."* My friend is not a member of the Church of Christ as we know it, but her spirit is precisely the spirit that drives us to "search the scriptures" as did the Bereans of Acts 17:11. It is the spirit that the prophets signified that God's people must have.

Jeremiah called upon Judah and Jerusalem with this same spirit in Jeremiah 6:16, *"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."*

Distinctive doctrinal sermons, based on informed Biblical studies, and presented plainly in a loving spirit (Eph. 4:15) provoke widespread interest. Young people are often the first ones who manifest zeal and excitement at such preaching. Many of them want to know how to discuss Bible questions with their friends. Quite often in Bible classes they are eager to know why things are done the way we do them, and if this is what the Bible really teaches. Many of them can offer Biblical reasons for the "oneness" of the Lord's church.

Studies have shown for several years that growing churches are those which take a strong doctrinal stance. The old-line liberal denominations which refuse to take a strong stand on issues have been losing membership for some time. Why should we repeat their failures? I am often amazed at how boldly some television evangelists proclaim their messages without fear of "running people off" who might disagree with them. I'm afraid that more and more of our preachers have their hands tied from fear of displeasing the crowd. Sarcasm and a bitter spirit have no place in the pulpit, but loving, strong affirmations of what the Lord requires of us are a "must." Paul admonished Timothy: *"Preach the word"* (II Tim. 4:2). He proceeds to warn Timothy of those who would not *"endure the sound doctrine."*

The prophet Jeremiah noted that *"the prophets prophesy falsely,"* but he said the real tragedy was that *"my people love to have it so"* (Jeremiah 5:31). Isaiah was sent to a rebellious people whose plaintive plea was: *"Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits"* (Isaiah 30:10).

The warnings of the apostle to the Galatians cannot be overlooked. He said, "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*" (Galatians 1:8). Let us return to an emphasis upon a "thus saith the Lord." May the word of God ring out from the pulpits and classrooms of every congregation. If we stand for God's Truths and know that for which we stand, we may thereby be "*rooted and grounded in love,*" and we will be no longer "*children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*" (Ephesians 3:17; 4:14). Our feet will be planted upon the solid rock of God's Sacred Truths.

..... Terry Broome

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