

Finishing Well

Lesson #43

Old Gate: We Will Not Walk Therein

Dec. 1, 2021

In Jeremiah's day, the religious leaders minimized the societal trends that represented true sin in the sight of God.

Jeremiah 6:13-15 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest everyone deals falsely.

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore, they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.

Jer. 6:16a 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.

Jeremiah's Exhortation to Repent: God's Counsel

1. STAND Take time to think when you come to a crossroad.
2. SEE Spend time observing > Assess where you are before you blindly follow the crowd.
 - Judah could continue down a broad path of self-destruction or they could turn to God.
3. ASK Old Paths; the Good Way
 - Landmarks along the ancient path that you should see.
4. WALK In the old or good way > Do not Digress

Jer. 7:23 But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And you walk in all the ways that I have commanded you that it may be well unto you.'

5. FIND REST for your soul - God's peace is found only on the ancient path.

Jeremiah's plea offers several points to convince the erring people to STAND FOR TRUTH:

A. "Old or ancient paths" is an appeal to history. REMEMBER

1. Prophets had repeatedly urged the Jews to "remember" the past.

Deut. 16:3b that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.

Deut. 24:9 Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt!

Deut. 32:7 Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations.

Ps. 105:5 Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth.

2. The NT also teaches this principle of motivation.

Luke 17:32 Jesus urged His disciples to remember the disobedience of Lot's wife.

- Desire for pleasures of the world > deluded and deceived

Heb. 10:32 Writer admonished the Jewish Christians to remember their "former days."

II Peter 1:9 Peter declares that some Christians never develop because they have not remembered their history > the cleansing of their sins.

B. Consequences if you do not walk in the old paths > Turns from the past to the future

Jer. 6:19 Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring EVIL upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it.

➤ Note: EVIL has to do with a judgment from the Lord, not moral evil.

Jeremiah turns from the past to the future. If you don't reflect upon the lessons of the past, you can, in the future, reap the reward of trusting your own thoughts. This reference obviously is to the impending captivity. This horror was to come because the people said:

➤ Jer. 6:16c We will not walk therein.

The NT rings with the admonition that a horrible future awaits those who ignore the instructions to walk in God's ways. Peter reminds us of the great Flood of the distant past, and of the coming destruction of this world. [II Pet. 3:12] The Christian must be diligent...

II Peter 3:14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

C. A final motivation to return to the ancient way: Stand For Truth

It is the ONLY way to the REST that is sought by the weary.

Jer. 6:16b Then you will find rest for your souls.

Truth: There is no genuine rest when one wallows in the muck of rebellion.

Jer. 18:11-12 So now, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 'This is what the Lord says: "Behold, I am forming a disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Now turn back, each of you from his evil way, and correct your ways and your deeds!"' But they will say, 'It's hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will persist in the stubbornness of his evil heart.'

We Will Not Walk Therein: Failure To Walk In God's Ways

YET, they continued to bring their hypocritical worship.

Moses warned them: Deut. 28:1, 13 Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.

➤ The words "fully obey," "carefully follow ALL" and "pay attention" had long ago escaped their consideration of importance. Otherwise, they would have never allowed their knowledge to wane. This led them to heed only the messages that "tickled their ears" & made them feel comfortable. No desire to fully obey Him and carefully follow His commands; No desire to pay attention

II Tim. 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

James 1:21 Wherefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

II Pet. 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

- To grow in grace is to mature as a Christian.
- To grow in our understanding of what Jesus did for me and to grow in our appreciation of the grace we have been given. The more we appreciate His love and sacrifice for us, the more we will perceive the never-ending grace of God.

The Scriptures contain all the knowledge we need to learn of God, His Son, and His Spirit. God's desire for His children is their sanctification and transformation.

- To become more holy as He is holy.
- To transform us into the image of His Son.

We must be diligent to meditate on the Scriptures and apply their principles to our lives as we yield to the conviction and power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

Then we will prove II Cor. 3:18: "But we all, with unveiled faces, looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Signs Of Being Complacent, At Ease

3) Presumptuous

- They assumed God was with them and would bail them out as He had done in the past.
- They were arrogant and over-confident > both physically and spiritually
- Thought they were invincible and didn't need God.
- Turned to neighboring allies and their own resources
- Having a presumptuous attitude toward God and His Word is dangerous.

Signs Of Being Complacent, At Ease

4) Indifference

Don't care

Comfortable and don't want or plan to change

Rev. 3:15-17 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. ¹⁷ Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Result Of Complacency It was their lack of will to learn, undoubtedly driven by the false belief that their current knowledge was acceptable. Israel's "religion" had evolved.

There is an inversely proportional relationship between "accurate, honest Biblical knowledge: and "one's sense of spiritual 'maturity' and tolerance to sin." As your knowledge of God's will diminishes, a false sense of "spiritual maturity" often increases.

Apostle Paul's attitude as he grew in the grace and knowledge of Lord Jesus Christ:

I Cor. 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet [fit] to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. [18 years after conversion]

Eph. 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; [24 yrs. after conversion]

I Tim. 1:15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. [29 yrs. after conversion]

We could begin understanding God and His provision for mankind just by believing and obeying His testimony about the beginning. Instead, America is enthusiastically rejecting God's prescription for human flourishing in Genesis 1 and 2:

- God distinguished Himself as the Creator from created mankind but offered the blessing of relationship. Our culture rejects the very idea of an omnipotent Creator, preferring mindless, atheistic evolution instead.
- He created man and woman — distinct but equally made in the image of God. Our culture rejects that binary reality and embraces self-declared gender identity.
- God set man a little lower than the angels and commanded him to exercise dominion over the animal kingdom. Our culture elevates the status of animals and treats human life (born & unborn) as disposable.
- God provided the special relationship between man and woman known as marriage, defining it as the foundation for society and the rightful realm for producing and raising children. Our culture rejects marriage as an unnecessary relic of a patriarchal past.
- Even before the Fall, God gave mankind the gift of meaningful work. Our culture increasingly treats work as a four-letter word and our government actively discourages it among those who most need the dignity and sustenance it offers.

Poll: Majority of Christians shrug off 'Way, Truth and Life'
American Family News: Oct. 26, 2021

Matt. 11:28-29 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

A cornerstone of the Christian faith - and explicitly laid out in Scripture - is the belief:

- Jesus Christ is "The Way, The Truth, & The Life"
- No one comes to the Father except through Me

Of an estimated 176 million American adults who identify as Christian, just 6% or 15 million of them were found to hold a Biblical worldview. WOW!

According to a poll by Probe Ministries, [a nonprofit that seeks to help the Church in renewing the minds of believers with a Biblical worldview]

- 70% of "born-again Christians" believe other religions can lead to heaven.

Born-again respondents were identified based on their affirmative response to the question:

Emergent Leader: "I want a Christianity I can believe in - you know - one without the exclusivity of Christ - the kind where my feelings can rule my faith - you know - universalism."

What deception! This is NOT BIBLICAL.

This philosophy lessens the standard that the Bible contains absolute truth, and even disqualifies Biblical truth as being absolute in many cases. If the Bible is not our source for absolute truth, and personal experience is allowed to define and interpret what truth actually is, a saving faith in Jesus Christ is rendered meaningless.

Bill Bright: "If we exalt one of God's qualities over another, we get a distorted view of God's character. In fact, overemphasizing any one of God's attributes to the exclusion of others can lead to heresy. For example, teaching only about God's mercy and neglecting His role as a judge will prevent people from understanding God's hatred of sin and the future punishment for wrongdoing."

John 10:10 I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

- Abundantly = Life in its fullness

The Apostle Paul's life was full: Trials, tribulations, temptations, persecutions, hated, beaten, mocked, whipped, stoned, imprisoned, and martyred

II Tim. 3:12 all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

II Cor. 2:17 For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

Oops: Seeker-sensitive church model produces numbers but NOT DISCIPLES.

Hybels states: "We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and became Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self-feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their Bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own."

Who can calculate the damage done by leaders *who persuaded leaders* to change the Church to suit the fancy of the world? Don't entice people with the promise that God wants them to be happy and prosperous...it is a perversion of the Gospel.

Church: Wake Up! Lukewarm teaching will produce lukewarm people. Countless false converts and lukewarm Christians sit in the pews. Satan has men fast asleep focused on themselves and the temporal. It is time to wake up, commit to be a disciple of Christ and focus on things of eternal value. The rapture is IMMINENT. The Judgment Seat of Christ awaits.

While 80% of all Americans surveyed in the 2018 study said they believe in God, only 56% said the God they believe in is the one "as described in the Bible."

While a majority of America's self-identified Christians and/or Evangelical believe that God is all-powerful, all-knowing and is the Creator of the universe, more than 50% reject a number of Biblical teachings and principles, including the existence of the Holy Spirit.

Strong majorities were also found to errantly believe that all religious faiths are of equal value, people are basically good and that people can use acts of goodness to earn their way into Heaven. The majority don't believe in moral absolutes.

- Consider feelings, experience or the input of friends and family as their most trusted sources of moral guidance.
- Having faith matters more than which faith you put your trust in.

On the surface, both rubber rafts look the same. But as the tugboat continues its journey downstream, the raft tied to it is pulled further downstream.

- They still see themselves as "*separate from the world.*"
- From the perspective of the cross and what the Lord has commanded for His people, they are drifting further and further away.

From the perspective of those in the raft anchored to Christ, they see themselves feeling more and more distant from those other Christians.

A new form of Christianity is emerging: It embraces religious and cultural liberalism by rebranding evil with names of Bible virtues.

- Revenge is now justice
- Permitting sinfulness is now called love
- Refusing to stand for TRUTH is now called grace

Progressive Christianity: In loving fellowship and spiritual practice, we follow in the historic traditions of Christian faith, interpreting them in light of social and scientific progress.

We find grace in intellectual and contemplative engagement with our faith.

We believe there is more value in questioning than in absolute answers.

We take the Bible seriously because we don't have to take it literally.

We affirm that other religions can be as good for others as ours is good for us. We strive to make our earth a heavenly place of peace, justice, kindness, and beauty: we don't believe anybody is going to hell. We affirm LGBT sexuality and we celebrate same-sex marriages.

Greg Epstein has been the humanist chaplain at Harvard since 2005 and at MIT since 2018.

The New York Times reports that his focus is "teaching students about the progressive movement that centers people's relationships with one another instead of with God."

His book asserts his belief that people can be "good without God."

- a pointed rejection of God's testimony.

Post-Christian Oblivion

When asked about their religious affiliation in nationwide polls, more and more young people are declaring themselves to be "nones." [Pew Forum]

- They refuse to affiliate with any religion, especially Christianity.
- They claim an enlightenment that frees them from belief in any deity.
- These self-claimed atheists worship humanity.
- They believe mankind will elevate its collective consciousness, leading to a utopia without suffering, want, or war.

These modern-day pagans consider the God of the Bible to be an oppressive, patriarchal, white-privilege relic of the past that must be rejected and opposed. They ascribe to humanism that aspires to Satan's false promise "... you will be like God" [Genesis 3:5]. Reflecting on the rebels of Babel, they seek to build and make for themselves a name. The age-old aspiration to "reach for the heavens" in this context implies a clear rejection of the true and living God.

Modern Application of Ancient Foolishness

- Although atheism in America is growing like a cancer, there is nothing new about this lie.

Ps. 14:1 "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

Rom. 1:21-22 Paul spoke of those who willfully flaunt their rebellion.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...

What Does It All Mean? We Will Not

Speaking of the sons of men the LORD said, "They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one." [Ps. 14:2-3; 53:2-3]

This ultra-Left fringe of American politics is committed to:

- Unlimited abortion on demand
- Socialist policies at every level of government
- The sexual revolution in general and LGBTQ advocacy in particular
- Condemnation of Israel

The unifying inspiration for such an unholy mantra is a vehement rejection of God.

There will always be "paradigm shifts" in thinking as long as mankind inhabits this present earth, because mankind constantly seeks to better itself in knowledge and stature. Challenges to our way of thinking are good, as they cause us to grow, to learn, and to understand.

This is the principle of Romans 12:2 at work, of our minds being transformed.

Acts 17:11 Be like the Bereans, weighing every new teaching, every new thought, against Scripture. We don't let our experiences interpret Scripture for us, but as we are changing and being conformed to Christ, we interpret our experiences according to Scripture.

Christian apologist Alex McFarland: Self-described Christians need to open their Bible.

"What we have in our country among professed believers is a Biblical illiteracy problem despite owning dozens of Bibles. According to one statistic,

- 60% of confessing born-again Christians can't name 5 of the 10 commandments
- 81% don't believe the basic tenets of the Christian faith
- 12% think that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife.

Early Christians eagerly soaked up the Word of God. The New Testament letters not only contain direct quotations from the Old Testament but also contain many subtle allusions that were expected to be understood by the reader.

- Revelation does not contain a single direct quotation from the OT
- Yet it has more than 500 allusions to words or phrases from the OT which could only be picked up on by readers who were intimately familiar with the OT Scriptures.

The early church heeded Jesus's statement:

Matt. 4:4: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

"Christian leaders in the first centuries of the faith mandated a rigorous, communal study of the Bible for everyone who became a believer. Every new convert to Christianity spent their first three years of the faith studying through the entire Bible so that it seeped down into their bones."

"To become a Christian meant becoming reconfigured through the Word of God."

- Prior to the printing press [A.D. 1450], most people couldn't read.
- Private devotions were unthinkable until 570 years ago.
- Yet—despite being illiterate—Early Christians became fluent in Scripture by listening to the communal reading and teaching of God's word.

"The first Christians actually lived as if the same God who breathed stars into existence also breathed out His Word for us to cherish, memorize, and read ten thousand times over. They would have been mystified by our modern ability to own, read and yet neglect the priceless written word."

"The Bible is unequivocally clear: The one and only way to go to Heaven is through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Truth: We need to boldly proclaim, 'There is salvation in no other name under Heaven other than the name of Jesus Christ.' God would not have planned from before the beginning of time to sacrifice Himself on the cross for our salvation if there were any other means to reconcile sinful men and women to Himself."

Psalms 18:30 *As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven;*

He is a shield [buckler] to all who trust in Him.

Psalms 37:34 *Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land;*

When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.

Psalms 25:4-5 *Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. ⁵ Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.*