

The Ancient Path (The Pathway Part One)

Written by Paul Anderson-Walsh
Saturday, 06 March 2010 14:10



In his Bible Concordance, Cruden offers a helpful definition of the word “path” defining it as: “a beaten way by which men can walk.” The Bible has several important references to paths and pathways and speaks of both right and wrong paths. Either chaos or congruence awaits the pilgrim.

Even a cursory glance at key Bible passages ought to be enough to convince us that the paths, whilst actual, often refer to “inner paths.” i.e. they speak allegorically or metaphorically about our inward journey. They are the interior roads of the soul and the spirit.

Jer. 6:16 Thus says the Lord: “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. ☐ But they said, "We will not walk in it."

These notes are intended to act as a supplement to the Pathway Mp3s.

www.paulanderson-walsh.com/store/product Audio Pathway Series.php

They are by not intended to be exhaustive notes, rather they are a companion, a tidied-up version of my notes and scribbles offered as an aide-memoir which will hopefully stimulate further reflection and discussion.

The Pathway Series was designed to be an opening which it is hoped would lead people to the narrow-gated path that is the way of life.

In describing the way as 'narrow'. Jesus wasn't saying that it would be hard, rather he was saying that it would be hard-for-us to understand because in contrast to the path that leads to destruction,(the unrighteous an self-righteous-path-of-self- effort), which are both wide and

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easier.

The narrow way is counter to our natural inclinations and thus hard for us to grasp. It is perplexing to say the least to suggest that winning is losing, that losing is finding, and giving is keeping.

The way of grace (the narrow gate) is counter-intuitive to the way of religion, (the broad gate) see Fig 1.

Fig 1

Law & Loes (John 1:17)	Grace & Truth (John 1:17)
Nurture	Nature
Works	Faith
Doing	Being
Behave	Believe
Ethical Life	Eternal Life
Self-Effort	Effortless-Effort
Making it happen	Letting it happen
Rededication	Regeneration

In twenty-years I have yet to met a Christian who has found the ancient path and thus begun his journey into discovering who he really is by: using the bible as his only compass, by going to church, by his intellect or through his religion. If he finds it, he does only after first exhausting every other avenue.

It is the last not first choice of the believer. Why? Because it is the way of no reputation and man greatly prefers that which appears to be “good for food, and pleasant to the eyes to look upon and beautiful to contemplate” Man is naturally drawn to the extrinsic not the intrinsic. Ever since Eden we became outer-persons-tree-of-knowledge-of good and evil. People who mistake life for death and death for life.

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The only way that I know for a man to find the ancient path is to die before he dies. It is worth remembering that the paths that the Lord is calling us to are not new. They are in fact ancient paths. They are as old as the Ancient of Days. The most obvious question that arises from this verse is, why, given the promise of finding 'purification.'

That is sheer awe for their whole-person or in the modern translation finding 'rest' that they were so unequivocal in their rejection of the Lord's counsel?

This is by no means an isolated incident. Consider for example the 30th chapter of Isaiah.

Isa 30:15 ESV

Thus sayeth the Lord, the Holy One of Israel; When shalt thou turn and mourn, then ☐ thou shalt be saved and thou shalt know where thou wast, when thou did trust in vanities then your strength became vain, yet you would not harken. ☐ But you were unwilling, 16 and you said, No!

Q&A

Given the promise of finding purification, rest, awe for our souls, why would Israel refuse so steadfastly to accept his invitation?

Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths of the Lord; and see what is the good way, and walk in it, and you shall find purification for your souls. ☐ But they said, 'we will not walk in them. ☐

PURIFICATION: Original meaning of purification is - what awakens awe' the term here in its original sense is mystical not moral. The notion of awe is apprehension; not panic but capture

SOUL: The essential core - the total person - it is suggestive that what you will find there will impact your total-self

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Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths of the Lord; and see what is the good way, and walk in it, and you shall find purification for your souls. But they said, 'we will not walk in them.

Perhaps the problem is not that she didn't want to take the advice but rather that she couldn't take it. Self-effort is a bias in the human soul. It is a condition that he can only be freed from in death. Hence we say that to die before you die is the master key that opens the door to living His life in this life.

Never forget that logic is no great inspiration. Change comes at the precipice. There must always be a burning platform. A situation that forces change.

At the very heart of the grace message is the essential role that crisis plays in moving us from 'our-way' to Jahweh!

For us to accept and act upon the Lord's counter-intuitive advice requires that we make a crisis leap of faith into Galatians 2:20 (see part 3 Dead to the Law) and when we do we will have the advantage of being able to look in the rear-view mirror of life and see that all progress in the Christian life is predicated upon disillusionment.

We must be confronted with situations and circumstances that we simply have no means of fixing or overcoming in our own strength; we must be brought close to our impotence something that we are not pre-disposed to doing.

However the paradoxical truth is that all we once counted as gain we now count as loss for the sake of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord and all we once counted as loss we now count as gain as it caused us to know Christ Jesus as our Lord.

That salvation is by grace and not race, by faith and not works, a gift not a reward is simply counter-intuitive. It's too good to be true and those who believe that believe that they better be good to be true and so work and offer sacrifices in an effort to gain what is already theirs in

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Christ.

Let us follow the text and see the self-harming consequences of that approach to God. Jer 6:17 I set watchmen over you, saying, Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet! But they said, We will not pay attention.

18 Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them. 19 Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it.

We do well to remind ourselves that we are not punished for our sins; we are punished by them. Evil which is simply self-interest, causes us to walk away from God in pursuit of ourselves. In such circumstances, the Lord is very comfortable allowing restorative disaster to come upon us in order to bring us to ourselves.

Notice that in this case the people reap a harvest in keeping with that which they have sown. We reap from the realm in which we sow. They had sown in the flesh and reaped according to the flesh fruit unto death. (Romans 7:5).

20 What use to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba, or sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing to me. 21 Therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I will lay before this people stumbling blocks against which they shall stumble; fathers and sons together, neighbor and friend shall perish. ESV

It may be worth reminding ourselves at this point that we do not get punished for our sins, we get punished by them. Evil is that which causes us to walk away from the Lord. It is often the case that he will allow disaster to get us back on track. Notice that the disaster the people reap is the fruit of what they have sown.

20 What use to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba, or sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing to me.

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The Lord does not say that the people are not acceptable. He is saying that he doesn't accept what the people insist on basing his acceptance upon, ie sacrifices and offerings.

21 Therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I will lay before this people stumbling blocks against which they shall stumble; fathers and sons together, neighbour and friend shall perish. ESV

The tragic story of Israel is that they had left Egypt but Egypt never left them.

Man's typical response to 'evil' is to do something to appease God. His basic assumption is that God has afflicted him and that he needs to do something to lift the 'curse' so his pre-programmed response is to offer sacrifices.