

Some Thoughts to Start the New Year

(Written by a retired Tennessean minister)

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.’ But they said, ‘We will not walk in it’” (Jer. 6:16).

I wish the old paths were before us instead of behind us.

I liked the old paths, when Moms were at home and Dads were at work;

Brothers went into the army, and sisters got married before having children.

Crime did not pay; hard work did; and people knew the difference.

Moms could cook; Dads would work; Children would behave.

Husbands were loving; Wives were supportive; and children were polite.

Women wore the jewelry, and men wore the pants.

Women looked like ladies; Men looked like gentlemen; and children looked decent.

People loved the truth and hated a lie.

They came to church to get in, not to get out.

Hymns sounded Godly; Sermons sounded helpful; Rejoicing sounded normal; and crying sounded sincere.

Cursing was wicked, and drugs were for illness.

The flag was honored; America was beautiful; and God was welcome.

We read the Bible in public, prayed in school, and preached from house to house.

To be called an American was worth dying for;

To be called an American was worth living for; to be called a traitor was a shame.

I still like the old paths best.

A Hard Head

“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’ (Ecc. 12:1). *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2Cor. 3:18).

I once saw, lying side by side in a sculptor's workshop, two heads made of metal. One was perfect. All the features of a manly, noble face were clear and distinct. The other, however, had scarcely a single, recognizable human characteristic. It was marred and spoiled. The sculptor said, This one is badly distorted because the metal was allowed to cool before it was stamped out, and therefore it wouldn't take the impression. Likewise, many souls might have been stamped with the likeness of the Savior while they were still warm with the vitality of early youth, but they allowed themselves to grow cold through pleasure, sin, and error. Thus, now they are misinformed, hardened, and lost.

Finding Fault

“Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault” (Mark 7:2). Let us suppose I am looking for a field of corn to buy. I travel around seeking for a field which contains good corn. Finally, I see a field which strikes my fancy. The owner says that he will sell it. I then enter the field to see if the corn suits me. As I pass down the rows, the stalks are tall and strong. Almost every stalk has two massive ears hanging from it. However, I pay them little attention. I am looking for something else. Finally, I find it. Over in a low wet corner I find a scrawny little stalk with one little nubbin on it. I pull up the stalk, nubbin and all. I take it to the owner and say, “This is very poor corn. Just look at that nubbin!”

Anyone can easily see that I wasn't being fair. I wasn't really looking to see what the field of corn was like. I was just trying to find fault with it. It would seem that I was not really interested in buying the field. I was just looking for the nubbin, and in my search for the nubbin, I overlooked all of

the good corn. There is an old proverb which says, "He who is looking for faults in his brethren will surely find them."

Jesus Loves Me (Senior Version)

Jesus loves me, this I know,
Though my hair is white as snow,
Though my sight is getting dim,
Still He bids me trust in Him.

(Chorus) Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
The Bible tells me so.

Though my steps are oh so slow,
With my hand in His I'll go
On through life, let come what may,
He'll be there to lead the way. (Chorus)

When the nights are dark and long,
In my heart He puts a song,
Telling me in words so clear,
"Have no fear, for I am near." (Chorus)

When my work on earth is done,
And life's victories been won,
He will take me home above,
Then I'll understand His love. (Chorus)

I love Jesus. Does He know?
Have I ever told Him so?
Jesus loves to hear me say,
That I love Him every day. (Chorus)

"Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come" (Psalm 71:18).

Into the Wood

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

The story is told of an old violinist whose music charmed audiences with its soothing, mellow sound. Wherever he played, the old violinist received a warm response. When asked the secret of his music, the man pointed to his instrument and said, "A great deal of sunshine must have gone into the wood, and what has gone in, comes out." Isn't that true for us? What's gone into your soul lately?

A Moments Wisdom

--"Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God." (Aeschylus, 524 BC)

--“We advise all who feel hemmed in by a closed and stifling world to open the Old and New Testaments. They will there find vistas, which will liberate them, and the excellent food of the only true God.” (Emmanuel Suhard)

--“Every philosopher and statesman who has discussed the subject of human governments, has acknowledged that there can be no stable society without justice, no justice without morality, no morality without religion, no religion without God.” (James Gibbons)

--“There would be more marriages made in heaven if there were more young people who with the thought of their future children, were prayerfully willing to give God a voice in their final decision.” (Leo Trese)

--“The work of divine justice always presupposes the work of mercy; and is founded thereon.” (Thomas Aquinas)