

Old Paths In This New Year

by Tom Wacaster

2006 is almost history. Twelve months have passed, and we find ourselves standing at the threshold of yet another year. Looking in two directions, we reflect on the old year with its joys and sorrows, its successes and failures, and we look forward to the new year with its storehouse of opportunities and uncertainties. As we enter the new year, the words of Jeremiah come to mind: "Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way" (6:13a). The faithful adhered to the plea. But there were those in Jeremiah's day, as there are in ours, who said, "We will not walk therein." Rebellion is not peculiar to modern man. Someone once noted, "The age of the path does not assure its being good, for sin and error are almost as old as mankind. The old paths must not be confused with just any old path. As many mistakes are made by blindly following an old path as by blindly striking out on a new one." There is a great temptation with every generation to consider tradition as equivalent to the "old paths." I have great admiration for the reformers and restorers of a bygone era, but they are not the authority, and they do not determine the path in which we are to walk. For those of us living this side of the cross, the "old paths" are those trod by our Lord and His apostles, and clearly defined and marked by the inspired writers of the New Testament. It is a proud and egotistical generation that says, "We will not walk therein." On the other hand, it is faith which manifests itself in loyalty to God and Jesus that submits and obeys. Walking in the old paths will not be easy. It never has been. The further society moves away from God, the more the old paths will be ridiculed. Intellectual snobbery will seek to dispense with the "legalism" of the ancient gospel, and the old will be replaced with the "new." Change in doctrine will give way to the collapse of moral absolutes, situation ethics and relativism.

As we enter this new year let us determine that we will walk in the "old paths." More than twenty-five years ago, brother Morris Thurman wrote the following advice: "The old paths will continue to be difficult to travel. They are steep, ever leading toward God; they are thorny, hedged about with the cares, riches and pleasures of this life; and they are straight, narrow, and unpopular, traveled only by the few that find them. But stand, see and ask, that the old paths, the good way, may be found and walked, 'and ye shall find rest for your souls.'"

I wrote the following more than a decade ago. I share it again with our readers by request:

I Am The New Year

by Tom Wacaster

I am the new year; three hundred and sixty five days of unspotted, unspoiled, and unused time. I am a clean slate of opportunity, a reflection of what MIGHT BE rather than what HAS BEEN. My diary contains unlimited resolutions, once made in earnest and then broken in haste. I am the fresh breeze of opportunity that blows across the fields of yesterday's broken and forgotten promises. My features are a mystery, for no one can tell what is in store for tomorrow. Each day brings new insight to what I will be after I have completed my journey. I am the opportunity to achieve those things which for some reason or another were left undone in the previous year. To the financier I am interest accumulated at a fixed percentage rate. To a student I am that one step closer toward receiving an education. To the small child I am another summer camp, Thanksgiving holiday, or Christmas wish. To a parent I contain the joy of watching a child grow and mature. To the young I am dreams and hopes dressed in daily determination. The

youngster wonders why I do not come around more often; the aged wonder why I come so often. For some, this year will bring unparalleled opportunities. For others it will bring disaster and ruin. To all, it will bring us twelve months closer to eternity.