

The Good Way

by Chuck Smith

In 'The Good Way', Chuck Smith emphasizes the importance of reflecting on our life choices and returning to a genuine relationship with God for true peace and fulfillment.

Duration: 31:28

Scripture: Psalm 143:1-6, Jeremiah 2:2-3, Jeremiah 6:15-17

Topics: "Gods Way"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor emphasizes the importance of returning to our first love for God. He encourages the congregation to turn off distractions like television and prioritize spending time in the Word of God. The pastor urges believers to gather together with other believers for fellowship and to invite others to home Bible studies. By making Jesus the center of our lives once again, we can find rest for our souls amidst the unrest and tension of the world. The sermon references Psalm 143 and Jeremiah 6:15, highlighting the need for repentance and seeking the old paths of righteousness.

Transcript

And now let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm 143. I'll read the first, the unnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even-numbered verses as we stand to read the Word of God.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications. In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness. And enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

For the enemy hath persecuted my soul, he hath smitten my life down to the ground. He hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me, my heart within me is desolate.

I remember the days of old, and I meditate on all thy works. I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee, my soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land.

Hear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth. Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust.

Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee. Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies. I flee unto thee to hide me.

Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God. Thy spirit is good. Lead me into the land of uprightness.

Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake. For thy righteousness's sake, bring my soul out of trouble. And let thy mercy cut off mine enemies and destroy all them that afflict my soul, for I am thy servant.

Let's pray. Lord, even as the psalmist declares he remembers the days of old, so Lord, we remember those days of old, the days when our hearts were toward you completely. We pray, Father, that as we muse on these things, that our hearts would be open today to hear the voice of your Spirit.

We ask that you would speak to us, Lord, even now through thy word. In Jesus' name, Amen. This morning, I'd like to draw your attention to the sixth chapter of Jeremiah, beginning with verse 15, as the Lord is talking to the people of Judah.

The Lord said, Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, and 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.

Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. It seems like we race through life, often not even taking time to stop and catch our breath.

But it's good to stop, at least every once in a while, and ask, Just where am I going? If I continue on this path, where will it lead me? You really need to ask, Do I want to go where this path leads? You see, many people start off on the wrong path, but they don't stop to analyze. To continue in this path, where will it bring me? I am certain that if you would go to Skid Row, and if you would talk to those people that are there on Skid Row, some of them were once successful doctors, some of them were once successful lawyers. And if you would ask them, Was this your desired destination when you started drinking? Did you not stop to wonder where this path would lead you, when you found that you had to depend upon that drink to make it through the day? Those who have engaged in promiscuous sex, and are suffering from the results of promiscuous sex, and some type of venereal disease, if you would question them, When you started this path of promiscuity, did you stop to realize that it could possibly lead to this condition that you are now in? It is wise, it is prudent to stop, to take a look at the path that you are walking on, and to question, Where will this path end? Take a good look at your life.

Look at your goals. What do you hope to accomplish when you come to the end of your journey in life? What will be your legacy? What do you want written on your tombstone? The Prophet is basically saying, Stop. Take a look around.

Look at the path you're on. Take inventory of your life. Are you on the right path? The challenge was made by the Lord to these people because they were on the wrong path.

They had chosen the path of worshiping false idols. Your God is the master passion that rules your life. These people, yes, they believed in the Supreme God, the God that created the heavens and the earth.

But though they still believed in God, He was not their God. They had other gods. There were other things in their life that were more important than worshiping Him.

So the worship of God became perfunctory. It was a duty, sort of, in their minds. But they weren't worshiping God from their hearts.

There were other things that had attracted their attention and their hearts. Many of them, pleasure had become their God. Sex had become their God.

Or material possessions have become their God, the top priority of their lives. God had His place, but it wasn't first. In the law, God said, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

He wants to be first in their lives. Once He was, but that was some time ago. Other things had now crept in and had taken the preeminence in their lives over their relationship with God.

And so God is saying, Stop for a moment. Take a look. See what's happening.

Look at the path you are now walking on. Where do you think that path is going to lead you? When other gods become the primary God of a nation, that nation will soon destruct. But it is true of the individual.

When other gods become preeminent in your life, you are on the path of destruction. God asked in verse 15, Were they ashamed when they committed an abomination? He answered his own question, declaring, No, they were not ashamed, and neither did they blush. What is an abomination? If you go back to Leviticus chapter 18, verse 22, God describes and defines what is an abomination in his sight.

God said, You shall not lie with a man as with a woman. It is abomination. If a man lies with a man as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.

Today we see the rising influence of the homosexual community. Are they ashamed? Do they blush? No. They parade down the streets priding themselves in their abominable practices.

They promote legislation that gives them special privileges. They don't just seek equal rights, they seek special rights because of their lifestyles. The Lord said, Just stand for a God.

And in the beginning, it was a nation that honored God. It was prospered by God. There is an interesting passage that speaks of one of their kings, Uzziah.

And it is so typical of all of the kings. It said, And as long as he sought the Lord, God made his ways to prosper. As long as the Lord was first, as long as he was seeking the Lord, the nation prospered under the reign of Uzziah.

But as we read the account in the kings and chronicles, we realize that this was just true of the nation. As long as the nation kept God at the center and the heart of its worship, it was a nation that was blessed of God. But when they would turn against God, calamity would come to them as a nation.

God is saying, Ask for the old paths. Come back to where you once were in your relationship with me. Back in chapter two, God was saying to them, I remember you and the kindness of your youth and your love for me as a young bride when you followed after me in the wilderness and through that barren land and your heart's desire was holiness to the Lord.

I can remember those old days when you love me supremely like a bride, a new bride. I remember how you were so zealous for me and to live a life that would please me. The old path.

And the Lord is calling them come back to the old path. Come back to your first love for me where you love me above and beyond all other loves in your life. This basically was the message of Jesus to the church of Ephesus in the book of Revelation.

He said, You know, you are a working church. You've got a lot of good things going for you. But I've got this against you.

You have left your first love. They were going on with the motions, but the emotion wasn't there anymore. That first love that originally provoked the activities.

Activities can go on, but the love that brought the activities into existence can oftentimes become dimmed. Such was the case of Ephesus. And the Lord said to them, Remember from whence thou has fallen.

Remember the days when you had such zeal and love for me. Those days when you were willing to abandon everything to follow after me. And then as you look at your condition today, the Lord said, Repent.

You're not where you once were. The fire is no longer burning as brightly. Repent.

And he said, Do your first works over. Come on back to the old path. God calls the old path the good way.

Wherein is the good way? You know, we often hear people talk about the good old days. And I myself often talk about the good old days. Life was much simpler.

Orange County was named because of the thousands of acres of oranges that grew here in Orange County. I can remember in the spring that the whole area just smelled of orange blossoms. That wonderful fragrance.

You'd wake up in the morning and just breathe. And the fragrance of orange blossoms. I remember when I was returning from Missouri.

When I drove over what was then called Olive. It's called Anaheim Hills now. As I came down into the plains here, just the smell of orange blossom.

Month of May. And oh, I thought I'm home. Orange County.

Oh, it even smells good. And thus was Orange County. Bristol Street ended right down here near South Coast Plaza.

It was a dead end two lane street way out in the country. In fact, it was so far out in the country, we used to drag race on the end of Bristol Street down here. Because if a cop was around, you could see him for miles.

Because there was nothing but bean fields. And Greenville, it ended right here at Sunflower Avenue. Another two lane.

Fairview wasn't even around. MacArthur didn't come through. I mean, this was just wide open bean fields.

Harbor was there. But that was the next street over. And then beyond that was just the Santa Ana River.

We could ride our bikes and our dogs could run alongside. There were no leash laws in those days. Mary's Malt Shop was the end place to hang out on South Main Street with their thick malts and great hamburgers.

The good old days. But God is talking about the old days of their worship of Him. When the people were loving God supremely and serving God completely.

Now, we oftentimes look at what we call the good old days here at Calvary. When the hippie kids were coming by the thousands to worship the Lord. The reckless abandonment that they had for the things of the Lord.

How they would come early in order to sit in the front row. The Lord was giving them new songs almost daily to worship. And some of you that are here today were those kids then.

You were the hippies and you were drawn by your love for the Lord. And remember those days when there was just that excitement and thrill of serving. And that's what the Lord is saying.

I can remember the days that you were once so excited about your relationship with me. Those were good days. Those old paths.

You see, we've grown up. We've become more sophisticated. We have more and other responsibilities to think about.

The cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things like thorns have choked out the fruitfulness that you once experienced in your life. That zeal and fervent love that you once had has grown cold. We can remember what it was and the Lord remembers what it was.

And no one can deny that it was a good way. The Lord said, ask for the old paths, good paths, good ways, and walk therein. The Lord was calling them back to walking in the paths that they once walked.

It's possible to turn back the clock. It is possible to repeat the moving of the spirit and the excitement that it generated. I'm certain that it is.

Otherwise, the Lord would not have commanded it and be urging the people to do so. But how does it happen? Jesus told the church of Ephesus that it left its first love. Remember.

Repent. Do your first works over. Turn off the TV.

Get into the word of God. Wait upon the Lord. Gather together with other believers as much as you can.

Invite your friends over to your house and have a home Bible study. Become involved in seeking the Lord with your whole heart. Let him become the center of your life once again.

What will be the result? The Lord said, you shall find rest for your soul. Have you ever seen a day when there was more unrest than there is today? Everywhere we look, we see furious activities. No real peace.

No will rest. It seems like people are so upset. Just watch them as they drive.

So tense. So uptight. The next time you're first in line at a signal and the light turns green, sit there for 10 seconds before you take off.

And you'll see how upset people are, how uptight people are today. Very few people have real rest in their souls. So many things that create anxiety, worry, concerns.

There are so many unfinished tasks yet to be accomplished. But what does it mean, rest for your soul? It means that though you're in the midst of a storm, your soul has real peace. You know that as long as Jesus is on the ship with you, the storm may rage, but the ship won't sink.

He's there. He guarantees your safety. How do we get that rest for our souls? Isaiah said, he will keep you in perfect peace when your mind is stayed on him, because you trust in the Lord.

Our problem is that we get our minds stayed upon our problems. And our problems loom larger and larger as we study them. We need to get our minds stayed on the Lord.

After the first service today, a lady came up with her husband and they said, we've been attending here for 30 years now. And my wife this week found out that she has leukemia. And she broke out sobbing.

And I said, leukemia, nothing to it. As far as our God is concerned. You can't look at man's limitations and let that concern and bother you.

You've got to look at God. How that leukemia is really no problem at all for God to touch and to heal. But you see, we get our eyes on our problems and we begin to fall apart.

Rather than keeping our eyes on the Lord and keeping our eyes on him, we experienced that perfect peace. And so we prayed together. And as we prayed together, the Lord began to minister to her and she went away smiling, because you get your mind on the Lord and the greatness of the God that we worship and the greatness of the God that we serve.

And it brings such peace to our hearts, such rest. You gain that rest by allowing Jesus to be the Lord of your life. As long as he is the Lord of your life, you can know that he will not allow anything to happen to you that is not for your eternal best.

Now, when you take over the reins and you become the Lord of your life, things can happen to you that really become disastrous. But the wonderful thing is, if we will come back to the old path, if we will surrender again to him as the Lord of our life, he can take all of these broken, shattered pieces of your life. He can put them together again.

And you can have peace. My life is in his hands. He's going to put things together for me.

I've made a mess out of my life. But he can put it together and we'll put it together as I allow him to be the Lord of my life. God is pleading with the people because God sees that they're on the wrong path.

The path that they are on is going to lead to destruction. Judah will soon be destroyed by the Babylonians. God knows that God can see that, but still he's pleading with them.

And he's asking them, look, stop, look around, look what's happening. Look what you're doing. You're on the path of destruction.

Continue this path and you will soon be destroyed. Ask for the old paths. They were the good way.

Walk in them and you will have peace, rest for your souls. But the people answered, we will not walk in them. And thus, they were destroyed.

Now, when God comes to you and he says, now, look, stop for a minute. Take a look at your life. Take a look at the path you're on.

Where is that path leading? And if you realize that this path, if I follow it, could bring disaster to me. God is saying, look, ask for the old paths. They were the good way.

You'll find rest for your soul. If you say, no, I won't. Disaster awaits you.

But if you will say, Lord, forgive me. Forgive me for straying away from that relationship that I once had. Forgive me for trusting in myself.

Forgive me, Lord, for trying to take things in my own hands. Help me, Lord, to return to the old path and walk in that close, loving fellowship with you. You'll find that the Lord will take you up and he'll guide you in his ways.

And there will be such peace, such rest, that you'll have a hard time understanding it. As Peter said, it's a peace that passes human understanding. That's what God desires.

And that's what you can have. But you see, ultimately, it comes down to you. Your choice.

God is calling you to come back. You can say, all right, I will. Or you can say, no, I won't.

And you can continue until your life is destroyed. Your choice. Father, we thank you that you just don't let us go.

When we are on the wrong path. But that you stop us. And even as you have stopped us today and asked us to pretty much take an inventory, take a look.

Analyze the path that we're on. Where is it leading us? We ask, Father, that if we are on the wrong path, that if it is leading us away from you rather than closer to you. We ask, Father, that you would bring us back to the old paths.

Back to that relationship we once had. Back to the joy and the peace that we once experienced. When we had complete and reckless abandonment to your will.

Lead us, Lord, in the path of righteousness. For your name's sake. Amen.

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