

# The Old Paths

By definition, a pathway is a route or a way of reaching a destination. A pathway is often narrow, and formed or trodden by the feet of persons or animals. We sing in a familiar song of Zion: “The pathway of a child of God goes through a wilderness, yet every moment closer home it leads me nonetheless” (SHZ 470:1). In it, the songwriter relates how step-by-step the travel of faith continues, until it one day leads to heaven’s glory.

God’s Word also reminds us that “here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb. 13:14). It is said that the child of God has his feet firmly planted into the soil of this earth, but his heart is in heaven.

## **Former Saints Trusted in God’s Promise**

The Bible tells us much about the path of the former saints as they endeavored toward heaven. It tells, especially in the Old Testament, about the journey of the children of Israel as they traveled from the bondage of Egypt to the Promised Land. Their journey was long and tiring—so tiring that many gave up hope of ever reaching the destination. Yet, many other Old Testament travelers did reach the destination. They traveled by faith, trusting in God’s promise of a better dwelling place.

The Bible gives testimony of them: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). It is no different today. By faith, the child of God endeavors on the same narrow path toward heaven.

## **“Strait Is the Gate, and Narrow Is the Way”**

A person may wonder how narrow the pathway to heaven is. Many today would like to make the way to heaven very broad, accepting a way of life that is contrary to God’s Word. Jesus says, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13,14). Those on the outside of God’s kingdom must enter in through the “strait gate,” through repentance, forsaking their former life to believe and live as children of God in His kingdom here on earth.

The child of God can also lose sight of his or her destination. There are those today who have left God’s kingdom seeking a different or easier way. It is only because of sin that this happens. Sin separates man from God. The child of God remains on the narrow way of faith by believing on Christ’s merits and putting sin away.

## **Signposts Give Direction**

Every well-traveled road has important signposts that give needed directions to the destination; the road of faith is the same. When questions and trials in life become especially difficult, one does well to turn with assurance to God’s Word for direction and comfort. The psalmist says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105).

God through prophet Jeremiah writes, “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” (Jer. 6:16). In our time the enemy of souls raises many difficult questions, which can consume our thoughts. When we struggle wondering which way to go, may we find “rest for the soul” by taking the old and good paths of which Jeremiah speaks.

A well-worn path is one that is easy to follow; it shows that many have traveled the same exact way. It’s important to visit and discuss around the most central matters of living faith. How do I believe? Do I believe as the saints of old? Am I

following in the same footsteps that they traveled? How will I make it to heaven? Is my understanding in accordance with God's Word, and the teaching of God's kingdom?

### **God's Word Instructs, Guides**

God's Word comforts and encourages, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1).

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Ps. 1:1-6).

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### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What do the travels of the children of Israel teach us? How do their travels compare to our travel today? Did they fight similar battles?
2. How can we approach a fellow traveler who is struggling in faith, perhaps wavering between wanting to stay on the "old path," and feeling the enemy's enticement to follow a new or different path. What is important to remember in these discussions?
3. What can help us to remain in the "old paths?" Share examples.