

## **ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS #2**

### **Introduction**

General William Booth, the Founder of the Salvation Army charities gave what has turned out to be a prophetic word:

#### **General William Booth**

**“The chief dangers that confront the country in the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell.”**

Notice: the chief danger to a nation is not Communism; not Corona virus; not climate change; the chief danger to a nation is a backslidden church!

I am concerned about the condition of our current American culture. I am concerned about the modern American Marxists now running the country.

*But I am even more concerned about the condition of the current American church.* Why so? Because there is a connection between the condition of the church and the condition of the culture; God always begins with the Church!

America is in a mess because Christ's church is in a mess.

Here was God's message to His people in a similar time to today...

#### **Jeremiah 6:16 NLT**

**This is what the Lord says: "Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls."**

The Christianity in our modern American culture bears little resemblance to the early church. We love the novelty of all new things. We have walked away from the old paths. Let me say it this way...

**We have constructed a new kind of Christianity that accommodates a culture that is addicted to comfort and convenience.**

To what result?

Our pews are packed with unsaved people. Our pulpits are packed with pantywaist pastors. But there is a way we can win; we can still prevail if we repent and ask for the old paths.

### **Theme**

**We have to deconstruct the convenient Christianity of our modern American church culture and return to our roots--radical obedience to Christ.**

What does it mean to 'deconstruct'?

### **Deconstruct**

**To expose or dismantle the existing structure in a system or organization.**

**Collins English Dictionary**

### **Deconstruct**

**To break something down into its separate parts in order to understand its meaning, especially when this is different from how it was previously**

**understood**

**Cambridge English Dictionary**

We have to deconstruct the Americanized version of Christianity that is so different from how Christianity was previously understood.

We have to ask for the old paths.

Tonight I want to talk about how to return to an old path that I am calling...

## **I. "An Inconvenient Christianity"**

### **A. A Prophetic Picture of the American Church**

1. We are standing at the spiritual crossroads of 2 kinds of Christianity: the old path of inconvenient Christianity and the new path of convenient Christianity.

2. So which kind of Christianity is biblical: Convenient or Inconvenient?

### **Convenient**

**Fitting in well with a person's needs, activities, and plans**

### **Inconvenient**

**Causing trouble, difficulties, or discomfort**

3. Current American Christianity is convenient Christianity; it fits in well with your felt needs; it doesn't interfere with your plans or what you want to do.

4. Convenient Christianity is constructed to coddle and accommodate counterfeit Christians who are filling our pews by the millions.

5. Many mega-churches pursue popularity with pulpit ministries that focus on felt-needs and avoid preaching on politics.

a. The acknowledged 'father' of the seeker-friendly church movement is Bill Hybels who built Willow Creek Community Church to a membership of 25,000. In 1979, he apologized for his approach...

**Pastor Bill Hybels**

**"The seeker-friendly church produces numbers, but not disciples."**

b. Charles Spurgeon, the great 'Prince of Preachers', once said..

**Charles Spurgeon**

**The very church the world likes best is sure to be the one God abhors most.**

6. This is why we need to be...

## **B. Asking for the Old Paths of an Inconvenient Christianity**

1. The best description I've seen of the current Christian culture in America isn't from a preacher or pastor; but comes from Matt Walsh, a conservative talk show commentator on the Daily Wire. The talk was entitled...

**Matt Walsh**

**If you find it easy to be a Christian you probably aren't one.**

2. This statement contains a sermon in itself; it confronts the convenient Christianity of all the counterfeit Christians sitting in our churches today.

**Matt Walsh**

**Over 80 percent of the people in this country claim to be Christian, but how many, in the end, will find out the hard way that their claims were false?**

**Our culture seems perfectly designed to lead us into this sort of false faith, primarily for two reasons:**

**Matt Walsh**

**First, it's dangerously easy to be considered 'Christian' by popular standards because, according to those standards, the faith is nothing more than a collection of vague and friendly sentiments.**

**And we know that a man is quite apt to believe that he is whatever the world considers him. If the world looks at the Jesus fish on his bumper, the Bible quote in his Twitter profile, the Christmas lights on his house in December, and says, "There's a Christian," then, as far as he's concerned, he must be one. The world is fooled. He is fooled. God is not.**

**Matt Walsh**

**Second, our culture is hostile to the authentic Christianity. Being superficially Christian in America can profit you immensely (see Joel Osteen, etc.), but a true faith may cost you. Occasionally it may cost you severely, as is the case with business owners who've lost their livelihood for refusing to take part in gay weddings.**

**Matt Walsh**

**The danger comes when we lose sight of how luxurious our situation is, particularly compared to how Christians elsewhere in the world and throughout history have fared. If we delude ourselves on this point, we may think that our religious convictions have somehow been tested and proven just because a guy we knew in high school unfriends us for posting spiritual memes on Facebook.**

3. Up to now, it's been pretty easy to call ourselves Christian because we have never had any real persecution. Now that it's come we will begin to a separation between the 'Convenient' and 'Inconvenient' Christianity.

4. The current climate of 'Convenient Christianity' has created 3 conditions that explain why the Church has very little cultural impact:

## **II. The 3 Marks of Convenient Christianity**

**Counterfeit Christianity**  
**Casual Christianity**  
**Crossless Christianity**

**A. The Problem of Counterfeit Christianity**

1. A counterfeit is an imitation of something valuable or genuine; it looks like the real thing but it's not.

**Bishop J.C. Ryle**

**There is a common, worldly kind of Christianity today that many have, and think they have enough—a cheap Christianity which offends nobody and requires no sacrifice—which costs nothing and is worth nothing.**

2. A counterfeit Christian calls Jesus 'Lord' but does not do what He says.

**Luke 6:46 NLT**

**So why do you keep calling me 'Lord, Lord!' when you don't do what I say?**

**David Platt**

**“Clearly, people who merely profess to believe in Jesus are not assured eternity in heaven. On the contrary, only those who obey Jesus will enter His Kingdom.”**

**David Platt**

**“Jesus is not saying that our works are the basis for our salvation. But in our rush to defend grace, we cannot overlook the obvious in what Jesus is saying here...only those who are obedient to the words of Christ will enter the Kingdom of Christ.”**

3. Counterfeit Christians are hearers of the word, not doers of the word; they are self-deceived; they have what the fathers called a 'false peace'. Jesus addressed them at the end of His Sermon on the Mount, telling us there are many of them!

a. He said many would enter the broad gate and follow the broad way that leads to destruction.

b. Then He said many would be lost who thought they were found.

### **Matthew 7:21-23**

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

4. Counterfeit Christians think they can compartmentalize their faith and live 2 lives; but no...

### **The Biblical Illustrator (Luke 6:46)**

A saving religion is not that which is up in the air, but that which plants its sacred feet on the solid earth of daily life. Such a religion is exceedingly difficult, and there is one power alone which can accomplish it in us. It is the power of God.

#### **B. A Casual Christianity**

1. The last election revealed that there are millions of 'casual Christians' in America.

#### **Casual**

#### **Relaxed and unconcerned**

2. Casual Christians sit on the sidelines and settle for a convenient Christianity that refuses to run the risk of danger on the battlefield.

3. **Casual Christians** won't pay the price to be informed, to vote, or to get involved in government.

4. Casual Christians cling to false doctrines like the 'secret rapture' of the church as away to escape taking responsibility for the condition of their country; instead, they tell us Jesus is coming soon and fix everything.

a. No one ever told them that the 'secret rapture' of the Church itself is a relatively modern-day invention that no one even heard of for the first 1800 years of church history! (More on that soon)

5. Casual Christians are quite willing to surrendering their freedoms to secure a small sense of safety if they will submit to the mandates of the modern American Marxists who tell us they are our 'saviors'. They have the 3<sup>rd</sup> kind of problem...

### **C. Third Problem: Convenient Christianity is a Crossless Christianity**

1. Jesus carried His cross to die for our sins. knew the Father had a cross for Him to bear; disciples know Jesus has one for them as well...

**Luke 14:25-27**

**Now great multitudes went with Him.**

**And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.**

2. Nothing seeker-sensitive here! Jesus requires us to prefer Him above father, mother, family, and even our own life! (Very inconvenient).

**Walter Chantry**

**Six times in the Gospels our Lord refers to His followers taking up a cross. It was one of His favorite illustrations of the principle of self-denial.**

3. Convenient Christianity sees the cross as a piece of jewelry; inconvenient Christianity sees the Cross for what it really is: an instrument of death. It is more than self-denial. It is the denial of self. That's uncomfortable. And Inconvenient.

**Vasily Zhukovsky**

**We all have our crosses to bear and we are constantly trying on different ones for a good fit.**

a. Jesus went to His Cross submitting like a lamb; we go to our Cross squealing like a pig.

**Erwin W. Lutzer**

## **We are all trying to find a lighter cross.**

4. There is nothing comfortable or convenient about the cross! It speaks of a death to our selfishness.

**David Platt**

**“We are settling for a Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves.”**

5. Christ requires us to carry our cross; but the new is not all bad!

**Matthew 10:38-39**

**And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.**

6. Evangelist Paul Washer had a word for Crossless Christians...

**Paul Washer**

**If following Jesus Christ doesn't cost you anything, it's because you have bought into the modern American version of Christianity.**

7. The modern American version of Christianity is 'Convenient Christianity' in all its forms...

### **3 Marks of Convenient Christianity**

**Counterfeit**

**Casual**

**Crossless**

## **III. Close**

### **A. Who Was Thomas Linacre?**

1. Thomas Linacre was appointed as the King's Physician to King Henry VIII England in the year 1509. He was also a Greek scholar, and in his 40's decided he



would read and study the Gospels in the original language. He was stunned at what he read about the radical nature of Jesus requirements for His disciples...

- Take up your cross/Deny your self
- Lose your life for Christ's sake
- Keep His commandments

a. Linacre realized the Christianity Jesus preached looked nothing like what he observed in his church...and said:

### **Thomas Linacre**

**Either these are not the gospels, or we are not Christians.**

2. Testimony: As I have been preparing to preach the rest of this series I have been continually convicted at how far we have wandered away from the 'old paths' of the Christian faith.

3. I have been continually convicted at how we, especially we who are pastors and teachers, **have constructed a new kind of Christianity that accommodates a culture that is addicted to comfort and convenience.**

4. Now the Lord has allowed us to be exposed to political powers intending to take away our comfort and our convenience, I wonder...

- a. Are we prepared for persecution?
- b. Are we willing to suffer and sacrifice if need be?

5. Jeremiah's generation faced a similar situation; and God's words still work for our own day...

### **Jeremiah 6:16**

**This is what the Lord says;**

**"Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old paths, the godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path and you will find rest for your souls."**

6. This is God's precious promise to us if we ask for the old paths and walk in them.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

### **Title Slide**

Heavenly Father, we repent of a convenient Christianity that accommodates a sinful culture instead of confronting it. We ask for the old paths. We ask for grace to walk out the inconvenient kind of Christianity preached by Christ and blessed by you.

And as we humble ourselves and seek your face, we pray you will hear us from heaven and heal our land.

In Jesus name, Amen!