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**LOST -- THE OLD PATHS**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

From his vantage point on the hillock, the old man watched them as they practiced shooting with their bow and arrows. Tall, carefree and gangly the boys were, but careful and exacting with their aim and their shooting. How like their father they looked! he thought, as he shifted a bit on the stump where he sat. Yes, they were so much like their father. Even to the unruly

shock of red-brown hair that stubbornly refused to stay long beneath their bright orange hunting caps.

The old man sighed. A chilly breeze seemed to latch on to the sigh, catch it and carry it along the ridge then waft it suddenly down to the boys' ears. They turned, bowstrings stretched taut and tight, ready for the arrow to take its flight, and smiled at the man.

"You all right, Gramps?" one of them asked quickly.

He nodded his head, keeping his eyes on them.

"Watch the bull's eye," the other called out lustily as both arrows, released simultaneously, found the center of the red mark on the practice target.

"We did it, Gramps!" they chorused exultantly. "We did it again, Gramps."

"You're great, boys. Great!" the old man cried, getting slowly to his feet and working his rheumatic legs. They stiffened so easily anymore, his legs. And so quickly, too, he thought, as he walked along the hillock awhile then made several trips around the stump before settling down again upon the sawed-smooth, flat stump to watch. And to think.

His body trembled ever so slightly as he thought of the changes made by his son and family. Not that he ever really forgot about the changes: how could he! But sometimes everything rushed in upon him with the force of a mighty gale or a cyclone, or, even, with the magnitude of a mountainous wave.

How he missed Helen! Always, they shared each other's burdens and heartaches and sorrows, as well as their joys and happinesses. They were so close to each other, seeming to be able to read what the other was thinking. And he guessed this was another of God's great and good gifts to those whose love was steadfast and true and whose commitment to each other withstood the storms of married life and seemed only to solidify and cement their love in a sweeter, more enduring bond.

He leaned his head on the walking stick held by his hand. Sixty years they had shared each other's life, Helen and he. They had been good years. Truly good years. Christ had been the center of their lives and of their home. Always! They rejoiced with unspeakable joy when Helen gave birth to their son after fifteen years of waiting -- and praying. A daughter followed two years later but was received back into the tender arms of the One who gave her after only a two-day stay with them.

They reared their son by the Word of God, meting out punishment and discipline as needed but with massive doses of love, always explaining the "why" of and for the punishment or discipline. He was a loving, kind and obedient son, their boy. Always. He sought the Lord at an early age and was genuinely converted and, later on, was sanctified wholly. He loved the Lord and became an avid reader of the Bible, reading it through year after year, following its tenets and adhering to its teachings. He delighted in the law of the Lord and became a soul winner for the Savior, who gave His life as a ransom for the sinner.

The old man's body trembled. If only the boy had not gone away to college. Oh, if only. . .! But he had. Sure, sure, it had once been a great religious college; trained and prepared many a young man and woman for the mission field and the pastorate and the field of evangelism and teaching, too. A great college in those long ago years. A spiritual college, indeed. Then, little by little -- here a little, there a little -- the new professors and teachers insidiously began destroying the old landmarks and, by devious means and measures, began tearing down and making light of the doctrine of the church and its standards.

You must never, never use such obnoxious terms as the old man, carnality and death to the self life, they declared emphatically, stoutly and firmly. It was outdated, they stated vehemently; outdated and totally undignified and, most certainly, unrefined. People of culture, refinement and "class" were turned off and insulted by and with such declarations, so they emphasized. And many believed and followed their new teachers and professors in their pernicious ways -- downward.

The "deeper life" was preached and taught and soft-pedaled in tones of moderation and compromise. Little matter that Romans 8:7 stated emphatically, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Also, "Knowing this, that

our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6). Ephesians 4:22-24 was extremely explicit and clear when it stated, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Yes, the newer, "more refined" terms and way of preaching insidiously but steadily and surely took over in the Bible schools and many of the pulpits until the thunderous tones of the fearless men of God became mere echoes of the past and a floodtide of worldliness and carnality swept into the church and the glory departed. Programs, entertainment and fun became chaffy substitutes for revivals, cottage and regular prayer meetings, tent meetings, camp meetings and all-night prayer times. Modesty was suddenly considered outdated; immodesty replaced her once pure, meek and gently-blushing sister with a brash and blatant brazenness such as was never seen before. She even had the audacious "courage" to flaunt her latest styles in the church choir. And was she at all ashamed of her display of immodesty? ". . . Nay, they were not at all ashamed, 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, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" Jeremiah 6:15-16.

The chilly breeze swept along the ridge again, this time with a bit more force. The old man buttoned the mackinaw all the way up to his neck. His hands shook and his body trembled. The chill wind was biting; the fear in his heart was frightening. What would become of his son? he wondered. He had followed an "hireling" down the road of new teaching -- new philosophy, until nearly everything that was once sacred and foundational and doctrinally sound was eroded and blown away. Scripture that was once loved and cherished and taken literally now was "a matter of one's private and personal interpretation."

The flood of worldliness had literally inundated his son's home; television and videos became the god of the family. Almost every waking, available moment was spent in front of the screen, "bowing" before the shrine of smut, moral filth, cursing, drinking, immorality and perversion of the lowest and vilest nature and kind. And still he maintained he was "all right with God."

Again the old man leaned his head on the walking stick. Tears fell freely from his faded blue eyes on to the leaf-strewn carpet-floor. So long as they had a minister at their church who fearlessly preached the Bible, not sparing in declaring the "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" of God's Word, and having all night prayer meetings and Holy Ghost revivals, the church remained spiritual and carnality and the world were held at bay. It was when the new, younger minister came, after the older, former man of God retired, that things changed. Oh, how they changed! And, gradually, the old man's son changed too, declaring to his father, "We could have been wrong, Dad."

He felt the sting of those words as keenly now as the day the boy uttered them to him. Could have been wrong! he thought again, as he had done dozens and dozens of times since having heard them. Never! Never! God's Word was yea and Amen. In Him and with Him there was never any variableness nor change; nor would there ever be. What He said would never change: His Word was forever settled in Heaven. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. St. John 1:1.

The man looked at the boys. How he loved those boys! If only they could witness and be in one old-time, Holy Ghost filled revival meeting! They would see the difference between the old paths and the new. And, he felt sure, they would choose the old paths, down whose trails the dust of formalism and modernism were washed away by the tears and the prayers of saints. They would see -- and feel -- the difference between the gods of the world and the God Almighty -- All Powerful and, in seeing and sensing, they would move in the right direction -- the way of the old paths.

He sobbed. He prayed -- earnestly. The boys loved him; loved him deeply and greatly. They listened to him; listened to what he told them about God and God's Word and the movings of God upon the church when the truth was preached without fear or favor by God's ministers.

They were spending more and more time with him, wanting to know more about the days when revivals were spiritual and powerful and when

God visited His people with Holy Ghost power. He would pray and fast and hold on to God until they were traveling on the old paths of full salvation. Yes, he would. They were slowly moving in the right direction.