



Dear Friends and Loved Ones,

December 2016

Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls." Jer. 6:16

In the summer and fall, I love to walk the trails in our local parks and forest preserves. I can't tell you how many times I have lost my way because I have no sense of direction. Now which way do I go? How many of us have heard the term *trail-blazing*? If you're like me, you often think of a pioneer making his way through uncharted territory. But, I never realized that *trail-blazing* is actually a way to mark a trail for those coming behind. Outdoor trails are actually marked with a series of *blazes* to mark the direction of the trail.

Did you know that there are three main types of trail blazing: **paint, carvings** or **affixed markers**. A painted marking of a consistent shape, dimension and color or combination of colors is used along the trail route. These are a system by which blazes are used to signify turns and endpoints in trails. Originally a tree would be blazed by hatchet chops. Today, plastic, metal or wooden markers may be affixed to trees, usually with nails. Cairns are carefully arranged piles of stones most commonly used to indicate trails in open areas, such as alpine areas, where no trees are available, or where conditions may make blazes hard to see. Surveyor's tape hung from branches or tied around trees is sometimes used to indicate trail routes. Flags are sometimes used for permanent trails.

Jeremiah 6:16 says, when we are in a place where two or more ways meet, and don't know which way to take; we should stop, and look to the way mark or way post, the trail blazing mark, which points where each path leads, and then proceed. We shouldn't be overconfident that we are right; but should *stand still and see*, and carefully consider where we are going. The Scriptures, God's Word is our *way mark, the blaze*, to direct us which way we should take or observe and do.

Jeremiah points us to the ancient or old paths; these are the ways of righteousness and holiness, which Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others, walked. We are to follow them; and the way of salvation by Christ. *"By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place."* Hebrews 10:20

Jeremiah says the ancient paths lead us to the good way, and that we are to walk in it. It is the best and more excellent way, which is Christ. *Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."* John 14:6 He is the way of access to God, and acceptance with him, the way of all the blessings of grace; he is the way to the Father, and to eternal happiness; he is the living way which is the same yesterday, today and forever; a plain, pleasant, and safe way, a good one; there is no one better, nor any so good; and therefore this must be the right way to walk in, and to which there is great encouragement.

Last, but not least, **Jeremiah says, "and you shall find rest for your souls."** There is rest and peace enjoyed in the ways of God and in the Gospel. When the heart is established with them, the mind is tranquil and serene, and at rest, not fluctuating and wavering, tossed to and fro with every wind. But the principal rest is in Christ himself, in whom the true believer, that walks by faith in him, has rest from the guilt and dominion of sin, from the curse and bondage of the law, and from the wrath of God in his conscience; and enjoys a spiritual peace, arising from the blood, sacrifice, and righteousness of Christ. *Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."* Matthew 11:28

So, this Christmas, we celebrate with you the birth of Jesus Christ, who *blazed a trail* for us all, that leads to peace with God and eternal life. Thank you for blessing us with your prayers and gifts this year, which encourage us so much.

Wayne and Jeanine Allen