

# The Old Paths

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## “Some Things We Cannot Change”

Jarrod Jacobs

**I**n the long ago, the wise man Solomon said, *“I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered”* (Ecc. 1:14-15). This is a hard truth for many people to grasp. Yet, this true statement is apparent to those who will open their eyes. Put simply, there are some things in life that we cannot change! Let us consider some of these together.

### The Past

As much as we would like to go back and rewrite our personal history, it cannot be done! Our bad decisions, unkind words, and misdeeds are forever written in the past. (For those are the things we’d like to change, aren’t they?) We cannot change those things. David felt the brunt of his past sins as he wrote: *“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me”* (Ps. 51:2-3). The apostle Paul understood this as well. He wrote about his past, saying he was the “chief of sinners” for what he had done to Christ (I Tim. 1:15).

What gives us hope is knowing that while we cannot change our past, we can receive forgiveness for our sins, and make a better future (Acts 2:38)! When we

follow the Lord’s plan of salvation, our past sins can be washed away (Acts 22:16). We can be made right in His sight!

### People

In thinking about things we cannot change, let us not forget that we cannot change people to suit us! For example, a bride-to-be may look at her future husband as someone she can “change” to suit her ideals. After marriage, it will not take long for her to learn that her “changes” she had planned have failed. The reality of life sets in and her plans never materialize.

While we cannot change others, people can change their own ways when they are taught the truth! Is this not the very essence of Bible teaching (See: Jer. 7:3, 5, 26:13; Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 8:22, 17:30; etc.)? God’s plan of salvation, and the intention of Christ coming into the world is based on the fact that people can change their own ways, and willingly turn from sin to follow the Lord! We could list numerous people who changed from unrighteous to righteous when they heard and obeyed the word of God. They did this, not because they were “forced” into it, but because they made a rational choice to do what is right when they were presented with the truth. It is evident that the only one I can control is myself. Thus, the Bible teaches us that people can change themselves, but we cannot change others to suit our whims!

## The Consequences Of Sin

*“The wages of sin is death ...”* (Rom. 3:23). As much as people wish to “white-wash” sin, and even deny the reality of it, the truth is that no one can change the consequences of sin! Sin’s spiritual consequence is death. It has been this way since the beginning (Gen. 2:16-17, 3:3). Sadly, sin’s effect is felt all over the globe: *“There is none righteous, no, not one ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:10, 23). In fact, the unchangeable consequence of sin is so serious, that it required Christ to come and die as a sacrifice for our sin (Matt. 18:11, 20:28; Jn. 1:29; Rom. 5:6-10)! This was necessary, not because Christ’s sacrifice ended sin’s consequence, but so we might escape from sin’s grasp!

### Conclusion

How will we respond to things we cannot change? It is possible that your eternity will depend on your answer!

## “Pointed Paragraphs”

R.L. Whiteside (1869-1951)

♦ If you become a little squeamish about denouncing false teachers, read Jeremiah. If you think people are so hardened in sin that they hate you for preaching the word, read Jeremiah. A careful study of Jeremiah is good tonic for anyone.

♦ To write the word of Christ upon the heart, or, what is essentially the same, to let it dwell in us richly, means more than to commit it to memory. It is to make it the dominant factor in our thinking and in our plans and purposes.

♦ The apostles were practical men. Some were fishermen; one, a tax collector. Both callings teach a person not to believe all he hears.

*(The Kingdom of Promise and Prophecy, p. 17, 99, 45)*

## “Open Doors”

Jarrod Jacobs

**I**n the last week, I have heard from folks who are being touched by different aspects of our evangelistic work. One person told me how she read a tract from us. This tract was not sent to her, but to her friend she was visiting. (She read it while at her friend’s house.) Her conversation with me provided an opportunity to talk about the Lord’s church, about Southside in particular, and offer an invitation to study the Bible together. On another occasion this last week, I talked with someone who has been watching the television program. Again, it provided an opportunity to speak about the Lord, as well as try to get a Bible study with this person.

Really, the purpose behind all such works, whether it is the radio program, the television program, the website, tracts, bulletins, or anything else, is to get an “open door” with people; an opportunity to show them the truth. First of all, such works teach folks the gospel. This is paramount (Rom. 1:16; II Tim. 2:2; Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15). At the same time, such works give us an opportunity, an “open door”, to further talk with folks about the gospel and their soul’s salvation.

Brethren, when folks talk to you and say they saw the television program, or visited the website, or heard the radio program, how do we respond? Do we say, “That’s nice.”? Or, do we realize that this is an “open door”; an opportunity to speak to someone about Christ and encourage

him/her to be right in the sight of God? Don’t let the written word, or the other media we use be the “be-all-and-end-all” of the evangelism! They might never see the need for their own salvation if you don’t talk about it!

When we take advantage of such opportunities, we are acting like Christ. Remember when Jesus was at Jacob’s well outside of Samaria (Jn. 4)? He took advantage of a conversation with a woman about well-water, and turned it into a teaching opportunity, discussing living water (v. 10-14)! As a result of this encounter, the entire town of Samaria heard the truth (v. 28-42).

We see other times when Jesus took advantage of His teaching opportunities. Once was when He spoke the parable of the rich fool (Lk. 12:13-21). This parable was motivated by a brother who would not divide his inheritance with the other. Another teaching opportunity came when a lawyer came to Jesus asking what he could do to gain eternal life (Lk. 10:25). When he was not satisfied with Christ’s answer, he tried to justify himself by changing the subject, and asking “Who is my neighbor?” (Lk. 10:29). This gave rise to the parable of the Good Samaritan. With this parable, Jesus still answered the

man’s initial question, and taught many others in the process (Lk. 10:30-37).

May this same spirit be with us. May we look for opportunities to teach others. Yes, we may use “everyday occurrences” as Christ did, and as a friend of mine did when he turned a conversation about physical health into a conversation about spiritual health. At the same time, when we have such tools at our disposal as a radio/ television program, bulletins, websites, and tracts, why not use them as a “jumping off point” when folks talk to us about how they have been affected by these tools? This is just taking advantage of our opportunities that are so often right in front of us! This is teaching like Christ taught! Who knows, but you can be used by God to bring a dear friend, neighbor, or a stranger to Christ before you die, like Andrew (Jn. 1:40-42), Cornelius (Acts 10:24), Ananias (Acts 9:17, 22:16), and numerous others have done!

“Open doors” are in front of us on a daily basis. Are we brave enough to walk through those doors and save a lost soul?

### ***Thought:***

A mule can’t pull while kicking; and cannot kick while pulling! The same thing goes for people. Are you a “puller” or a “kicker”?

**Changes Made Weekly To:**  
[www.southside-churchofchrist.com](http://www.southside-churchofchrist.com)



***I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!***

**Come and meet with the Southside church in Owensboro.  
Our address: 2920 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303**

### **Meeting Times:**

**Sunday Bible Study** \_\_\_\_\_ **9:30 a.m.**  
**Sunday Worship** \_\_\_\_\_ **10:20 a.m.**  
**Sunday Worship** \_\_\_\_\_ **5:00 p.m.**  
**Wednesday Bible Study** \_\_\_\_\_ **7:00 p.m.**

**“What Is Written”:** Sunday (12:30 p.m.) on 94.7 & 100.5 FM.

**Call: 683-9246 (683-WBIO) with your Bible questions.**

**“The Ancient Landmark”:** airs Monday (9 p.m.), Tuesday (1:30 p.m.), Wednesday (5 p.m.), Thursday (11 p.m.) & Friday (9:30 a.m.) on channel 72.

**Website:** [www.southside-churchofchrist.com](http://www.southside-churchofchrist.com) (Updated weekly!)

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