

Perversions of a Biblical Church

Traditionalism

ILLUSTRATION: A group of appreciative tourists watched a demonstration put on by the Royal Artillery of the Queen.

- The six man team worked with flawless precision.
- Actually, only five of them worked with precision.
- One of the soldiers positioned himself about 25 yards away from the cannon and stood at attention during the entire exhibition, doing nothing.
- After the exhibition, one of the tourists asked the staff officer to explain the duty of the man standing off to the side.
- “He’s number six,” came the reply.
- “Yes, but what does he do?”
- “He stands at attention.”
- “Yes, I know, but why does he stand at attention?”
- No one knew why number six stood at attention.
- None of the other five knew, the man himself didn’t know, and even the commanding officer didn’t know.
- After many hours of research through old training manuals, it became clear what number six was to do. He was to hold the horses.
- The problem was that horses had not been used for decades.

In the following passage, Jesus attacks a “mis-purposed” tradition.

Matthew 15:1-9 NKJV Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, (2) "Why do Your disciples transgress the **tradition** of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." (3) He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your **tradition**? (4) For God commanded, saying, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO CURSES FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO DEATH.' (5) But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"-- (6) then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. (7) Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: (8) 'THESE PEOPLE DRAW NEAR TO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. (9) AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.' "

A. Tradition can be a beautiful thing.

Tradition: (Greek) Paradosis – transmission, precept, to surrender over

1. It comes from a compound word (paradidomi) meaning to come near and give, entrust, bestow, or show.
2. The word picture here is of a “changing of the guard.”
3. It depicts what happens when a ruling king passes his crown to successor.

Tradition consists of three elements:

1. **The principle (what is important)**
 - a. This is the truth that is communicated, taught or practiced.
2. **The purpose (why it is important)**
 - a. This is the significance the truth has on our life; the ramification of the principle.
3. **The preference (how it is practiced)**

This is the method or physical circumstances surrounding the practice, observation and teaching of the principle.

B. Traditionalism is a perversion.

TRADITIONALISM: Turning the preference into the principle.

This happens when we magnify the preferred practice to overshadow the purpose.

This is exactly what happened with the Pharisees.

- There was a Jewish custom of which a man could honor God by declaring their profit or holdings “corban” which meant it was set apart as a gift for God.
- The Jewish custom was that a person could do this even at the expense of not providing for their parents in need.
- This violated the command of God to honor your father and mother.

Each element of Tradition has one of two origins:

1. **Heavenly**
2. **Human**

Colossians 2:8 NKJV Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

We must ask ourselves:

Principle: Is it God’s truth or Man’s truth?

Purpose: Is it God’s reasoning or Man’s reasoning?

Practice: Is it God ordained or Man ordained?

C. God’s passion is that which is of eternal value, not physical.

- *Deuteronomy 6:5-9 NKJV You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. (6) "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. (8) You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (9) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*
- *Matthew 22:35-40 NKJV Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, (36) "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" (37) Jesus*

said to him, **'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'** (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second is like it: **'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'** (40) On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

- **Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV** And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

D. Four Truths about Tradition:

1: Without God, Tradition is nothing more than sentiment.

2: Tradition that is not relevant is pointless.

3: God's glory never disappears, it simply relocates.

- A. While the priests were looking for God in the temple, God was purging our sins on the cross.
- B. God had not disappeared, He has simply moved.
 - a. The Jews had missed it because their agenda had taken the place of God's agenda.
- C. Unspeakable evil has been accomplished through personal agendas disguised as divine.

4: It is possible to miss the glory of God because we are blinded by the shadow of what used to be?

- A. **Luke 19:41-44 NKJV** Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, (42) saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. (43) For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, (44) and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

B. What used to be:

- 1. It used to be that the church was the glue of the community.
- 2. It used to be that Sunday was the Lord's Day.
 - Businesses closed.
 - Trains didn't run.
 - There were no sporting events.
- 3. It used to be that church "services" were times to encounter the living God.
 - People prayed with power.
 - People worshiped with passion.
 - People ministered with purpose.

C. Realize this:

- 1. The same holy fire that stirred hearts 50 years ago, stirs hearts today.

2. God is the only constant.
3. The problem is not that the world has changed, but that the church has lost the presence.
4. The Presence of God makes the difference
 - It was the Presence of God that empowered the Children of Israel;
 - It was the Presence of God that empowered Apostles;
 - It was the Presence of God that empowered the early church;
 - It was the Presence of God that empowered the revivals in our parents and grandparents day.
 - And it is still the Presence of God that empowers the church today!
5. If the Presence of God is not in our church, it is because Presence of God is not in our homes.
 - In the early church, the Presence of God fell in the homes first.
 - This carried over to the synagogue not the other way around.

D. We have two choices of response:

1. We can spend our time mourning the loss of what used to be by complaining about the way things.
2. We can acknowledge that times are different,
 - distinguish between what is God ordained and simply what we have become accustomed to,
 - determine to seek God
 - and let Him change us and make us relevant to the world around us.

Conclusion:

ILLUSTRATION: The Taj Mahal - In 1629, when the favorite wife of Indian ruler Shah Jahan died, he ordered that a magnificent tomb be built as a memorial to her.

- The shah placed his wife's casket in the middle of a parcel of land, and construction of the temple literally began around it.
- But several years into the venture, the Shah's grief for his wife gave way to a passion for the project.
- One day while he was surveying the sight, he reportedly stumbled over a wooden box, and he had some workers throw it out.
- It was months before he realized that his wife's casket had been destroyed.
- The original purpose for the memorial became lost in the details of construction.

We will give an account before God of what we have passed on to others.

We must make sure that we are preserving what matters and letting go of what doesn't.

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