"THE TRAP OF TRADITION"

Matthew 15:1-9
4/29/2018

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1 - 2

***Beware of the evils of man-made tradition!**

Man-made tradition results in three evil traps:

I. Man-Made Tradition leads to the trap of:
<u>TRANSGRESSING</u> God's Word (v. 3-6a)
(Tradition offers a religious <u>justification</u> for sin)
". . . ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition"

II. Man-Made Tradition leads to the trap of:
<u>IGNORING</u> God's Word (v. 6b)
(Tradition results in a religious <u>disregard</u> for God's commands)
". . . ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition"

III. Man-Made Tradition leads to the trap of:
<u>REPLACING</u> God's Word (v. 7-9)
(Tradition becomes a religious <u>substitute</u> for sound doctrine)
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Many ask the question today: "Why are there so many religions?"

"The Bible Plus_____"

The Bible teaches that there is a true religion (Ja. 1:27) and false religions (II Cor. 11:13-15).

Wherever there is the real, Satan (to confuse and distort) will always seek to introduce the unreal.

Today, the pure waters of Bible Christianity are muddied by "tradition" Christianity.

Today, some who profess Christ possess a living faith; but others - a "dead faith." Some trust the grace of God for salvation, others the works of man.

Some believe in the finished and sufficient work of Christ at Calvary; and others propose that Christ did not pay it all.

Such conflicts are not new.

v. 1

"Scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem" - The Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem were the ultra-orthodox, extremist, strictest sect.

Several religious Pharisees and a few, select, prestigious scribes (who no doubt carried heavy ecclesiastical weight) formed a delegation and apparently travelled from Jerusalem up north to the Galilean region so as to accuse Jesus of breaking their traditional religious rules.

V. 2

"Why do thy disciples transgress" = This is an indirect way of accusing Jesus. This is a way of saying: "Why didn't you indoctrinate them right?" Since a disciple would naturally be *"as his master"* (Mt. 10:25), if the disciples erred, it was because the master taught them such error.

"In making this accusation, these religious leaders were forcing Jesus to deal with the very foundation of their religious faith. If Jesus rejected the sacred traditions of the nation, then He was a heretic!" (Wiersbe, p. 53)

"The tradition of the elders" -

> ***"Elders" =*** honored rabbis of the past, who passed on a vain substitute teaching in the place of the Word of God (I Pet. 1:18; Gal. 1:14)
>
> ***"Tradition" =*** unwritten interpretations of the O.T. Law, that were passed down from generation to generation, which became the ultimate authority for scribal teachings.
>
> This "tradition" was not good tradition or passed-on teachings from God (II Th. 2:15; 3:6), but had its source in men. From the Pharisees' own mouth, it was the ***"tradition of the elders."***
>
> ***"They wash not their hands" -*** This does not mean they ate with dirty hands, but that they didn't continually wash their hands while eating, using finger bowls, like the Scribes and Pharisees.
>
> The Old Testament's Law concerning hand washing had nothing to do with the common Israelite. God had a special ceremonial law only for the Aaronic priests who had to wash their hands before eating any of the holy bread used in temple worship, and to keep themselves from being unclean or defiled as they served at the temple (Lev. 22:6 - *"The soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water.")*
>
> "These traditions were originally the 'oral law' which (said the rabbis) Moses gave to the elders, and they passed down to the nation. This oral law was finally written down and became the Mishnah. Unfortunately, the Mishnah became more important and more authoritative than the original Law of Moses" (Wiersbe, p. 53).

Just as Roman Catholics look to church dogma to discover what Scripture "really means," most Jews of Jesus' day looked to the traditions of the elders" (MacArthur, p. 452).

For a detailed study of the Jews' ceremonial rinsing, see Edersheim's The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. 2, pp. 10-13.

Two Religions:

External religion says that if a person keeps the outside clean, then the inside will be clean.

Internal religion says that if a person is clean on the inside, then he will keep the outside clean
(SEE: "The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible, p. 341)

God very seriously warns us by saying: *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."* (Col. 2:8)

***Beware of the evils of man-made tradition!**

Man-made tradition results in three evil traps:

I. Man-Made Tradition leads to the trap of:
<u>TRANSGRESSING</u> God's Word (v. 3-6a)
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V. 3

"But He answered" - Jesus answers their question with a question so as to show how they had violated God's Law.

"Transgress" = to overstep a fixed boundary. To cross over into forbidden territory.

"The <u>commandment</u> of <u>God</u>" - This phrase is a deliberate contrast with ***"The <u>tradition</u> of the <u>elders</u>"*** (v. 2)

V. 4

"Honor" = to treat with value. To view as worthy of respect and special treatment.

One who honors his father and mother respects their position as parents and treats them with dignity. Such a son would do anything to meet the needs of his folks.

"Curseth" - to speak bad or evil about.

God was so strong about children respecting their parents, that He instituted capital punishment for anyone who cursed out, verbally abused, or refused to submit to and obey his/her parents

> Ex. 21:17 - *"And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death."*
> Lev. 20:9 - *"For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him."*
> Dt. 27:16 -*"Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen."*
> Prov. 30:17 - *The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."*

V. 5

"But ye say" - a contrast to Verse 4 - *"For God commanded."*

"It is a gift" - the catch-all word they used was the Hebrew word *corban* which meant "it is a gift" (Mk. 7:11).

"Corban" (Mk. 7:11) - "Was the transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning a "gift." The word referred to something devoted to God by an inviolable vow.

"If a son declared that the amount needed to support his parents was *corban*, the scribes said that he was exempt from his duty to care for his parents as prescribed in the Law. Evidently, too, he was not really obliged to devote that sum to the temple" (Ryrie Study Bible note, p. 1411).

Even if children owed their parents money, even if they were obligated to them, if they pronounced their money *corban* - this vow relieved them of paying back their parents.

The justification for not providing for one's aged parents got so extreme that eventually they did nothing at all for them.

By their false teaching, they did not allow a child to do anything for his father or his mother (Mk. 7:12).

V. 6

"True religion" gives and meets needs. It is practical. It touches lives (Ja. 1:27 - *"True religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*)

II. Man-Made Tradition leads to the trap of:
<u>IGNORING</u> God's Word (v. 6b)
(Tradition results in a religious <u>disregard</u> for God's commands)
". . . ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition"

***"None effect"* -** nullified, invalidated. The Word of God was ignored, abandoned, and disobeyed because of the conflicting predominance of man-made tradition.

Why are multitudes indifferent, inattentive, or negligent toward the Bible or Bible teaching? They don't see it as important or worthy of their concern.

How can "religious" people ignore clear commands of Scripture? Answer: They buy into an authority other than Scripture.

Examples: of the specific injunctions of Scripture violated by traditionalist Roman Catholics.

Why do people like "tradition" over the Bible?

--Tradition often accommodates the lifestyle of the sinner, whereas the Bible demands a change of lifestyle.

--Tradition focuses on external ceremony and ritual, whereas the Bible focuses on internal purity and true Godliness (the most hard-hearted unbeliever could easily practice a religious ritual).

--Tradition keeps the worshippers doing and giving, offering eternal life as the reward; whereas the Bible declares you can do nothing to earn eternal life. You must humble yourself and receive it from Jesus Christ by grace.

A cult is any religion which has as its <u>authority</u> something other than the Bible (whether it be a pope, guru, prophet, society (EX: Watch Tower), or book (EX: Book of Mormon).

A "mathematical formula" for determining a Cult:

*A **Cult** is any organized religion which:*

1. **ADDS** to the Scripture
2. **SUBTRACTS** from Christ
3. **MULTIPLIES** Salvation Requirements
4. **DIVIDES** from the Church

As Baptists, one of the distinctives of fundamental Baptist is that we believe that the Bible is our only authority for faith and practice. Our authority is not:

--Not Catholic tradition
--Not charismatic new revelation
--Not cultic authoritative gurus and leaders
--Not creeds
--Not commentaries by human authors
--Not church constitutions

(creeds, commentaries, and constitutions are beneficial only to the degree that they are true to sacred Scripture. But they are fallible and must be open for modification and revision.

III. Man-Made Tradition leads to the trap of:
REPLACING God's Word (v. 7-9)
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V. 7

"Hypocrites" - play actors, mask wearers, pretenders.

They had a pretense, facade, or show of religiosity, but did not have a heart for God.

Jesus authenticates the book of Isaiah and paraphrases Isaiah 29:13, which sadly proclaims, "*Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of man."*

V. 8

Many can pray elaborate, ornate, fancy prayers.

They can seem so spiritual and can impress the listeners with their fair-sounding words and religious phrases, yet their heart is light years away from God.

True love is action oriented, not mere words (I Jn. 3:18 - *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.")*

Traditions do not require the heart in order to do them. "Tradition can be followed mechanically and thoughtlessly without conviction, sincerity, or purity of heart. Because traditions are made by men, they can be accomplished by men. They require no faith, no trust, no dependence on God. Not only that, but they appeal to the flesh by feeding pride and self-righteousness. Often, as in this case, they also serve self-interest" (MacArthur, p. 455).

Beware of the trap of "mechanical" Christian living. Such as going through the motions, but not putting your heart into it. Doing but not being! Doing the work of the Lord without being close to the Lord of the work!

V. 9

Their worship was a hollow, empty, void, meaningless ritual!

The Delusion of man-made religion (See: Col.2:20-23)

1. The world's religion "sounds" spiritual, but it is not (v. 20-22)

   What "ordinances" is Paul speaking about? Such superstitious or legalistic taboos as:

   "You should not touch"
   "You should not taste"
   "You should not handle"

   True spirituality is not a matter of a list of man-made DO's and DON'Ts.

   v.22 - No material thing is to be viewed as a god or idol, but the things God has given us are to be used.

2. The world's religion "looks" spiritual, but it is not (v. 23)

   "A shew of wisdom" = to have the appearance of spiritual wisdom.

   "Is will-worship" = a system of worship that stems from the will of man. Self made worship; man-made worship.

   To the world's eyes, that which looks religious must be:

   1) "Humility" - Pretentious holiness dressed in religious garb and actions

   2) "Neglecting of the body" - human taboos and hard treatment of the physical body.

      --Asceticism -- Monkery -- Nunnery -- are not the secret to moral purity and God-honoring spirituality.

Man-made tradition is a great danger to true Godliness. Without the person even noticing, it becomes a substitute for God's truth.

"Teaching for doctrines" - Their doctrinal instruction did not focus on the Scriptures. it was rooted and based on the rules and regulations of men! Only the Word of God is profitable for doctrine (II Tim. 3:16).

The traditions even affirmed that "the words of scribes are more lovely than the words of the Law," and it became a greater offense in Judaism to transgress the teaching of some rabbi (like the revered Hillel) than to transgress the teaching of Scripture (citied by MacArthur, p. 452).

"People obey tradition (not to please God) but to please men and gain status (Gal. 1:14)." (Wiersbe, p. 53)

When man's wisdom is elevated above God's, man falls into the same trap eve did when Satan induced her to trust her own wisdom above God's. This led to the Fall and to every subsequent sin and evil in the world" (MacArthur, p. 456).

CONCLUSION:

Anything that leads to <u>disobedience</u> to God's Word is not of God!

Anything that robs your <u>interest</u> in God's Word is not of God!

And anything that <u>takes the place of</u> God's Word is not of God!

Ritual, or Reality, which do you have?

You must have reality!

TRADITION

(Study by C.E.C.)

BASIC Roman Catholic BELIEF

One source of Divine revelation, the other being Sacred scripture (see 31).

During the years between the beginning of the Church and the completed scripture, people relied on the Apostles' oral teachings. Then, as cultures were growing, they felt that the Bible was not able to meet their needs, so tradition was developed to meet the demands of men of all ages. This teaching authority resided in the pope (see 216) and authorized theologians. Because of this, tradition became a meaningful part of life.

St. Robert Bellarmine had five rules for recognizing the true Apostolic Tradition.

(1) When the Universal Church accepts as a dogma of faith something which is not found in the Divine Scriptures, it must be said to originate from the Tradition of the Apostles.

(2) When the Universal Church observes something which no one, except God, would have been able to establish and which, in any case, is not found to be written down anywhere, it must be said that it was transmitted by Christ himself and by his Apostles.

(3) Whatever has been observed in the Universal Church and throughout all ages past is rightly believed to have been instituted by the Apostles, even if it is the kind of observation which could have been instituted by the Church.

(4) When, by common consent, all the Doctors of the Church, either in General Council or in their individual writings in books, teach that something descends from Apostolic Tradition this must be believed to be Apostolic Tradition.

(5) It must be believed to be descended without a doubt from Apostolic Tradition that which is held as such in Churches where the succession from the Apostles is integral and continual. **(From 30 DAYS, No. 5, 1992, pp 68ff.)**

POST VATICAN II

"The sacred synod encourages the sons of the Church who engage in biblical studies constantly to renew their efforts with complete dedication and in accordance with the mind of the Church. Sacred theology relies on the written Word of God, taken together with Sacred Tradition" (DEI VERBUM, Vatican II document).

From DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON DIVINE REVELATION, Vatican II, Sections 9,10.

"There exist a close connection and communication between sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tends toward the same end. ... Consequently, it is not from the sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence. Sacred Tradition and sacred scripture form one sacred deposit of the Word of God which is entrusted to the church.

From SIMPLICITY, John Michael Talbot, page 54. "Care must be taken, though, that the Scriptures not be studied in isolation from the ongoing teaching of the church. True, we have the Spirit of God within us to guide and direct us. We have an objective body of teaching in the Scriptures. But remember: it was the church that authenticated these Scriptures, and it is the teaching office of the church which provides the commentary or the instruction to interpret these biblical documents. A balance must be maintained between tradition and Scripture.

CATHOLIC JOURNALS

From 30 DAYS, No. 5, 1992, page 68. "A dangerous trend is gaining ground in the Church diminishing the Revelation so that it becomes just a facet of Scripture. One sign of this tendency is that even Church documents no longer make recourse to Apostolic Tradition, which is without error just as the Scriptures are without error. And like the Scriptures it is born of the Divine Source, Jesus Christ. Five ways to recognize the true Apostolic Traditions, as indicated by this cardinal and saint. (For St. Robert Bellarmine's five ways, see in Basic R.C. Beliefs, above."

CHRISTIAN COMMENT

In order to make God's Word meaningful, the Holy Spirit was sent to be the Infallible Teacher of the Church; He can interpret scripture for any culture. Before the New Testament scriptures were available, Christian teachers used available epistles and the Old Testament. In II Thessalonians 2:15, the word tradition means teachings, and Paul states these were "by word or epistle." The epistle was the Word of God, and Paul's oral teaching was based on Old Testament scripture (Acts 26:22).

Roman Catholic tradition not only adds to the Word of God, it severely alters it.

C.E.C., BOX 99141, LOUISVILLE, KY 40269