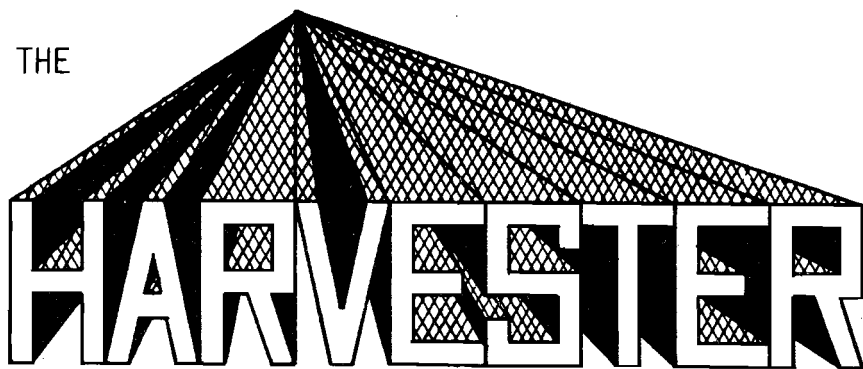


THE



"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

November 1990

No. 059

TRADITION

Have you ever given any serious thought to the role tradition plays in our lives? Almost everything that we do has some aspect of tradition. Instead of trying to think of something that involves tradition, try to think of something that does not. It's not easy. But before we start unjustly condemning tradition, we should realize that it is a necessary part of our lives and culture. Even religion is loaded with more than its share of tradition.

I was surprised at what I found when I looked up the word 'tradition' in the dictionary. Here is the full entry as found in Webster's New World Dictionary: "1. the handing down

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orally of customs, beliefs, etc. from generation to generation. 2. a story, belief, etc. handed down this way. 3. a long-established custom that has the effect of an unwritten law. 4.a) among Jews, the unwritten religious code regarded as handed down from Moses. b) among Christians, the unwritten teachings regarded as handed down from Jesus." I believe the fact that such a non-religious publication as this would offer this definition, is a great example of how significant tradition is in religion.

But the greatest example comes from the Bible itself. Paul says to *"withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received from us."* (II Thessalonians 3:6) This verse clearly refers to the Gospel of Christ as a tradition. Clearly then, all traditions cannot be bad.

The Old Law and the New are filled with tradition. Our task is to separate those traditions established by God and those established by man. Furthermore we must judge, according to the Bible, which of the traditions are proper for Christians and which should be avoided. Under the Old Law the Jews kept many traditions that were of heavenly origin. However, the death of Christ negated the need for the observance of such traditions. So even though something can be established through the scriptures, that does not necessarily mean we have the obligation, or even the right, to observe it. For instance, this point has been missed by those who choose to worship on the Sabbath, rather than on Sunday.

In this country it is a tradition to eat turkey on Thanksgiving. This is obviously of man made origin, but does this make it wrong? Of course not. There is absolutely nothing wrong with

traditions that man originated IF they do not conflict with God's holy word. Unfortunately many people have taken it upon themselves to bring their own ideas and innovations into the Lord's church. Musical instruments in the worship service, Sunday School, and women teachers are but a few examples of how man has corrupted the sanctity of God's church with his own worthless ideas. There never has been, is not now, nor never will there be one inch of room in the church for the traditions of men.

Christ Himself spoke in condemnation of the traditions of men. He admonished the Jews for replacing God's law with their own tradition. *"Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"* (Matthew 15:3b) Hereby we see that traditions can be in violation of God's law. *"Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."* (Matthew 15:6b) *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* (Matthew 15:8-9) We are told in very clear language that any worship that involves traditions of men is not true worship, and as such will not be recognized by God. We must exercise the utmost care in how we worship the Lord. It should be as close as possible to the pattern set forth in the New Testament. Unfortunately though, this is not the practice of many so-called "religious" denominations. Some will even go as far as admitting that portions of their doctrines have no actual scriptural basis, but rather, are based solely on TRADITION. I ask you, are these people Christians, when they do exactly what Christ said NOT to do? When will man ever learn to give up his foolish ideas in favor of God's infallible wisdom?

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In Colossians 2:8 Paul warns, *"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."* Once again we have an exhortation to follow and practice exactly what God has commanded. We are more fortunate than the early disciples in one way. We have the written word of God at our disposal to study and meditate upon. If a question arose among the early Christians they had to find someone with the authority to answer it; an authority which came only from God. It would have been very easy for them to be deceived by false teachers. But today, with the Bible at our fingertips, there is no excuse for not knowing the way of truth.

The wise man Solomon warned us that *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* (Proverbs 14:12) People so often accept something because *"it's always been done that way."* And since nothing seems wrong with it, it must be alright. This is the attitude that is cultivated by our society today, especially in the area of religion. But regardless of how long something has been done, or how steeped in tradition it is, if it was wrong when it started it is still just as wrong today. Let us not accept the traditional religion of our parents, friends or family, but rather accept the traditional religion which was delivered to the early saints by the Lord's

apostles. *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the TRADITIONS which ye have been taught, whether by word or by epistle."*(II Thessalonians 2:15)

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. What prophet was confined in the courtyard when Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem?
2. What was God about to do when He said, "Should I hide from Abraham the thing I am about to do?"
3. How should Christian wives behave toward unbelieving husbands?
4. What book of the Bible first mentions the working of brass and iron?
5. What was the first group of people displaced by the Israelites coming out of Egypt?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. In Biblical times, how long was one isolated until it was certain whether or not he or she had leprosy? FOURTEEN DAYS (Lev. 13:4-8)
2. How did Jesus tell the two disciples to identify the man who would lead them to the upper room? HE WOULD BE CARRYING A PITCHER OF WATER (Luke 22:10)
3. How many souls were added to the number of believers after Peter's message at Pentecost? ABOUT THREE THOUSAND SOULS (Acts 2:41)

4. After hearing that all his possessions and children were gone, Job fell to the ground and did what? WORSHIPPED GOD (Job 1:20)
5. In the time of Samuel, what did the people want in order to be like other nations? A KING (1 Sam. 8:19-20)

AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS

(A Series to Promote Church Attendance)

Which is the most important service of the church? Many would say the Sunday morning worship service since we partake of the Lord's Supper. True, that is a very significant assembly for all Christians everywhere. However, the most important service of the church may be the one we willfully neglect. It is important because that particular service could be the very one which keeps us from obtaining the crown of life.

I realize most people do not want to think about missing the services of the church in those terms. But the day is coming when the Lord *"shall gather OUT of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."* (Matt. 13:41-42) As members of the church, will we be counted among those who *"offend"* and *"do iniquity"*?

Many years ago it used to be preached that "if you didn't belong to the 'Church of Christ', you were going to hell!" But careful study along with a sincere heart (and a more humble attitude) has shown that even some members of the 'Church of Christ' will not *"enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). We have

already noted Matthew 13:41-42, which is a passage we should meditate upon more soberly. Just being a 'member' of the Lord's church does not guarantee anyone entrance into that heavenly mansion. We must be faithful members, working members, and fruitful members. The unprofitable servant is one who offends his Lord and will be cast into hell (Matt. 25:30).

Another way we can offend our Lord is to forsake the *"assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is"* (Heb. 10:25). Evidently, this was becoming a problem or a bad habit during the early days of the church. Why else would the writer of Hebrews refer to *"the manner of some"*? Unfortunately it seems to have become an 'accepted' short-coming of every congregation today.

Do we not care that we offend Jesus Christ by not showing up at church at the appointed times? by choosing to do our will over His when we willfully neglect the church services? We are no better than those who slapped and spat upon and crucified our Saviour. Yet we see nothing wrong with that, either! *"It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment."* (Mark 6:11)

It is offensive! It is lukewarmish! It is un-Christ-like to purposely abandon *"the assembling of ourselves together."* The key word in that last sentence is 'purposely.' Do we purposely forsake the church services, knowing we are doing wrong (Jas. 4:17)? The scriptures plainly teach this is INIQUITY and worthy of being cast straight into HELL!

RAY

A gossip is a person with a keen sense of rumor.

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Oct. 26-28	Second Ave. Church Opelika, AL	W.C. Cofield (Woodland, AL)
Nov. 2-4 (F-Su)	Brushy Creek Church Lucedale, MS 7:30 pm Fri & Sat	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Nov. 2-4	West Broad Street Wedowee, AL	Jim Maher (Okla. City, OK)

[illegible]

- C - Cheerful, courageous, a church-goer, converts others.
- H - Hopeful, honest, helpful, hospitable, humble.
- R - Reverent, responsible, righteous, reliable.
- I - Industrious, informed, inspiring.
- S - Sincere, slow to anger, shares with others, serene.
- T - Tolerant, temperate, thankful, trustworthy.
- I - Instrument for good, increasing in grace.
- A - Alert, appreciative.
- N - Neighborly, never coveting or gossiping.
- P - Patient, practical, participates in children's activities.
- A - Affectionate, approachable.
- R - Religious, reasonable, relaxed.
- E - Enthusiastic, even-tempered.
- N - Nice, neat, never breaks a promise.
- T - Tactful, tender, thoughtful.

-- Selected --