

Tradition

Mark 7:1-13

INTRODUCTION:

A Lesson Text: **Mark 7:1-13**

1. Especially vss. **8-9**
2. No self-respecting Pharisee would have ever claimed to be doing that, but they were blinded to the problem they had created for themselves . . . They had created conflicts where none needed to exist.

B. Many of the major battles in the church today revolve around a single word . . .

TRADITION.

1. Song styles
2. Approaches to ministry
3. Congregational organization, programs, and procedures.
4. Structures for Bible classes
5. Types of preaching
6. Translations of Bibles allowed to be used in classes and services.
7. Order of worship . . . and the periodic rearranging of the order.
8. And a host of other subjects and issues are subjects of conflict. We will return and examine this area more under question #2.

C. The real underlying issue is tradition.

1. In and of itself tradition is neither all good nor is it all bad. Other factors determine which it may be . . . Right or wrong . . . unifying or divisive . . . helpful or hurtful . . . Needed or should be left alone.
2. Some feel that because something is deemed a tradition, it should be changed. No so! Sometimes change can do more harm than good.
 - a. Sometimes that change is for the worse and not for the betterment.
 - b. Sometimes the change moves people's minds away from the truth rather than closer to it.
 - c. Sometimes it is interruptive and can interfere with a more soothing atmosphere for worship.
 - d. Sometimes, a change, while not inappropriate or wrong in and of itself, may open the flood gate to other changes that are. The devil is sly!
 - e. Sometimes changes that are appropriate may be made in such large numbers and in a machine-gun speed fashion that it can unsettling in and to the congregation and can result in negative reactions that could have been avoided.
 1. Sneaky, behind closed-door changes will divide a congregation!
 2. The congregation needs to be informed ahead of time not just at the first time the change is enacted and carried out.
 - a. Human beings, including Christians, do not like to be blind-sided

. . . They will not respond positively.

b. People need to think ahead and adjust in order to be able to worship with undue concentration on the change itself. We assemble to worship God . . . not change! We need to be concentrating on worshipping God.

f. All major changes should be made by someone authorized to do so, with the approval of the elders, and someone should communicate the information thoroughly and completely to the assembly, fully explaining how or why the leadership feels this will benefit the congregation

D. Perhaps some questions will help us to more profitably explore the subject of tradition.

WHAT IS TRADITION?

A. Definition: **TRADITION** is the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another.

B. This is usually done without written instructions. Anything written down is usually written after the fact.

C. "Tradition" and "traditions" in the Bible.

1. The word "Tradition" appears 8 times in the Gospel accounts (3 in Matthew and 5 in Mark) . . . 3 times in the Epistles.

2. The word "traditions" appears 3 times, all in the Epistles.

WHAT ARE SOME TRADITIONS?

A. Most of the forms held in the local congregation would qualify as tradition.

B. Examples:

NOT A TRADITION	TRADITION
Meet on Sunday	Commandment: Every week
	Times of Worship
	Length of Service
Worship	Order items are conducted
	In spirit & in truth
Music (Singing)	Accapella - Melody in heart
Frequency of Lord's Supper	Commandment: Every 1st Day
Prayer	Approved Examples
Contribution	Commandment
Preaching	Approved Examples
	Announcements - Edification
Helping others (Benevolence)	Who - How - Where - When?
Teaching others is commanded	Who - How - Where - When?
	Gospel Meetings

- > Vacation Bible Schools
- > Extending public invitation

- Contribution: Eilaboun & Ka'fir Yosef
- Lord's Table on higher level and pulpit on floor where table had been.
- Sermon preached, and before closing of service, an elder offered the invitation.

HOW ARE TRADITIONS FORMED?

- A. They generally begin with a sincere individual.
- B. That person wants to serve more effectively or promote a higher level of holiness.
- C. A method, application, or interpretation is turned into a rule and in time set up like concrete.
- D. Some form of Scriptural support is found for the rule until it becomes a part of the culture. Later, a more careful study of the Scripture may reveal it was taken out of context, twisted, and misapplied, but the tradition has taken hold and now outweighs what the Bible said. Example: Religious leaders in Jesus' day.

HOW GOOD ARE TRADITIONS?

- A. They help us order our lives.
- B. They provide sameness, security, and stability.
- C. They encourage community by providing a measure of belonging.
- D. They can help us in ministry.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF TRADITIONS?

- A. **Traditions can encourage hypocrisy.**
 1. Traditions are usually easier to obey than truth.
 2. Tradition focuses on action rather than on principles and spirit.
 3. Truth focuses on attitudes that produce actions.
- B. **Traditions can supplant Scripture.** Mark 7:9-12
 1. Tradition makes obedience easier as it need not come from the heart . . . Just go through the motions . . . Just go with the flow.
 2. Tradition tends toward conformity to make it appear there is obedience when really there may not be.
 3. We often hold onto tradition rather than hold to Scripture.
- C. **Tradition can twist Bible doctrines.** Mark 7:14-16, 21-23
 1. It twists depravity by allowing a focus on externals rather than heart realities. "I went through the motions, so I must have worshipped."
 2. It lowers the standard of righteousness to mere adherence to a list.
 3. It turns the fear of God into the fear of culture.

D. It can contribute to spiritual blindness. Matthew 15:12-14

1. Emotional reactions reveal the inner workings of the soul.
2. Beware when intense emotions arise over non-biblical matters.
3. Beware of leaders who lead by tradition or by an appeal to tradition.
 - a. Do not bind where God has not bind . . . That is legalism.
 - b. Do not loose where God did not loose . . . That is liberalism.

E. Traditions can stifle ministry. Mark 7:17-20

1. Traditions tend to be maintained long after they have lost their usefulness.
2. Oddly enough, most traditions began as "far-out" thinking.
3. Today's changes will become tomorrow's traditions just as today's traditions were yesterday's changes.

HOW SHOULD WE HANDLE TRADITION?

- A. We must reaffirm our commitment to the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures.
- B. **We must distinguish the difference between tradition and truth.** Note: **While truth can become tradition . . . Not all tradition is truth.**
2 Thessalonians 2:15 - "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.
- C. We must reject tradition that contradicts the Bible!
- D. We must allow room for traditions in areas of expediency.
- E. **We must develop a growing, discerning life of spiritual reality based on the Word and not on the feelings and traditions of men.** "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'" **Acts 5:29**

CONCLUSION:

- A. Tradition/custom has its place . . .
 1. **JESUS** had a good tradition. "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read." **Luke 14:6**
 2. **PAUL** had a good tradition. - "Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.'" **Acts 17:2-3**
- B. We should not allow God's people to be divided by tradition. Sometimes a tradition isn't Scriptural (book, chapter, verse), even though it is often held as if it were.
- C. Remember the definition of tradition: **TRADITION** is the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another.

C. Closing statements regarding Tradition & Change.

TRADITION

- **TRADITION** is the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another.
- In and of itself tradition is neither all good nor is it all bad. Other factors determine which it may be . . . Right or wrong . . . unifying or divisive . . . helpful or hurtful . . . Needed or should be left alone.
- Scriptural traditions can be good in matters of commandments.
- Traditions in areas of expediency can become troublesome and divisive.
- Traditions in areas of expediency that are holding back the Lord's work should be revisited and changes made where needed to further advance the cause of Christ.
- Some are more committed to upholding a tradition than upholding the Scriptures.
- We must reject traditions that reject what the Word of God teaches.
- We must develop a growing, discerning life of spiritual reality based on the Word and not on the feelings and traditions of men.
- When a choice must be made between a tradition and what the Bible teaches, the Word of God must be the choice . . . Yea, the deciding factor.

CHANGE

- Change just for the sake of change is dangerous because the attitude and not the content or scriptural benefit is the main motivation.
- Sometimes the change moves people's minds away from the truth rather than closer to it.
- Sometimes change is interruptive and can interfere with a more soothing atmosphere for worship.
- Sometimes, a change, while not inappropriate or wrong in and of itself, may open the flood gate to other changes that are. The devil is sly . . . Be careful!
- Sometimes changes that are appropriate may be made in such large numbers and in a machine-gun speed fashion that it can be unsettling in and to the congregation and can result in negative reactions that could have been avoided
- All major changes should be made by someone authorized to do so, with the approval of the elders, and someone should communicate the information thoroughly and completely to the assembly, fully explaining how or why the leadership feels this will benefit the congregation spiritually

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE . . . Even today, “. . . 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'” **Acts 5:29**

D. God's Plan for Man's Salvation