




Dropping Tradition; Accepting Truth

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"
(Acts 17:11).

That sounds like every pastor's dream congregation. These people—

-  Were noble.
-  Received the truth quickly.
-  Searched the Scriptures daily.

Sorry to say, not every one is like the people just described. Some want to stay with man-made traditions that they have received. However, not all traditions are bad. The apostle Paul passed biblically based traditions on to the churches where he ministered. These traditions were based on truth found in the Word of God. They were not just the opinions of men. The Word of God, not tradition, is the final test of truth. Traditions should not be given doctrinal status. Tradition is not bad unless it conflicts with the Word of God.

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

Many people pick and choose what they want to accept, believe, and obey from the Word of God. If they could, they would rip pages out of God's Word. They think, "Holiness? I don't need that!" They may say, "Baptism in Jesus' name doesn't fit well with my

traditions. I won't take that." "Baptism of the Holy Ghost? I really don't think that is for us today." Men's rejection of certain parts of the Bible does not change God's Word.

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written" (Romans 3:3-4).

Our attitude should be, "They don't want it. I want it. I'll take it."

The Day the Sacred Stone Was Dropped

A story is told from Japan of a man who inherited a sacred stone from his father. His father had received the stone from his father and his father before him. The sacred stone had been in the family for many years. It was kept in a place of honor and highly valued. Even though the man did not really understand the reason for the stone, he believed in the tradition.

One day the man was taking a trip across the ocean in a boat. A storm arose. The boat began to toss and then sink. The man had several belongings with him and had to choose which he would try to save. He chose the sacred stone. However, as soon as he entered the water, he began to sink. He could not swim hard enough to get his head above the water. He sank deeper and deeper and knew he was about to drown. A decision had to be made. He thought, "Do I hold onto the stone and die, or do I let go and live?" He quickly concluded that living was more important than the sacred stone. The man dropped the stone into the deep and quickly

swam to the surface. As he broke through the surface, he breathed in deeply and knew that he had made the right choice. Life is more important than a tradition that will only weigh you down and finally bring death. We must be careful that we never hold traditions more sacred than the Word of God.

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

Is there anything in my life that I hold as sacred that the Bible tells me to drop and walk away from?

South Africa has the world’s largest man-made hole. Here a man named Cecil Rhodes (who funded the Rhodes Scholarships) began to make his riches. Miners dug there and were able to find diamonds. Soon many miners rushed there and were digging as deeply as they could. They did not realize the largest diamonds were found near the surface. That is a lot like the Bible. As we dig deeply into God’s Word, we can find spiritual treasures. However, the most valuable diamonds are found right on the surface of God’s Word. His truth is not hidden so deeply that it is difficult to find. Truth is easy to find and easy for anyone to understand. It only requires a careful search at the surface of God’s Word.

Much confusion exists over what it takes for a man to be saved. Many ask, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). This is a simple question to answer. It is not necessarily answered by tradition, nor by digging deeply into the Word, as if difficult to find. It is right there on the surface, easy for all to find, see, believe, and obey. This

question was answered the day the New Testament Church was established.

Question Asked on the Day of Pentecost

“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).

The Answer Given

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).


If someone in your church were to ask this same question, would he receive the same answer?


The Apostle Peter went on to say, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).


Are you called by God? All those that the Lord calls are entitled to the promise given above. If you do not obey Acts 2:38, you are saying that you have not been “called” by God.

Some feel baptism is not important. It was important in the Book of Acts. In Acts 16 a badly beaten preacher named Paul believed it was so important that he baptized the jailer in the middle of the night. It could not wait until morning. (Today baptismal classes are taught for weeks and sometimes months. Pastors announce baptismal services few and far between. Prolonged baptismal classes or prolonging baptism is not scriptural.)

Baptism must have been important if Paul with wounds on his back was willing to baptize the jailer. Can you imagine the physical pain Paul suffered? Some would likely have said, "Can't it wait until I feel better? I've just been beaten for the cause of Christ."

 Baptism must have been important for God to take Philip from a great revival in Samaria and send him down a lonely road to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8).

 It was important enough for God to send a man named Ananias to a street called Straight to baptize Saul (Acts 9).

 God also sent an angel to Cornelius and a vision to Peter to prompt him to go and baptize Cornelius. (Acts 10) Peter risked getting into trouble with church authorities over baptizing Gentiles.

Some argue over the method used in baptism. Biblically it was done by immersion in the name of Jesus. In fact, the Bible says:

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

O Taste and See That the Lord Is Good!

Perhaps, you have not been taught any type of Christian tradition. Maybe you have not been searching for answers to, "What must I do to be saved?" You may have even had bad experiences with churches and so-called Christians. This final story is for you.

A farmer had an orchard of orange trees. His friend came to visit one day, and the farmer offered him one of his oranges to refresh him. The farmer was surprised when his friend refused to eat one of his oranges. This had happened on one other occasion, and it provoked the farmer to ask, "Why don't you ever want to eat one of my oranges?"

His friend hesitantly responded, "I really don't like your oranges."

The farmer asked, "What is wrong with my oranges?"

The friend answered, "They are very bitter!"

The farmer looked at him with a puzzled look and asked, "When have you eaten one?"

He responded, "One day I picked one of your oranges, at the edge of the orchard, close to the road. I found it to be very unpleasant."

The farmer roared in laughter. He explained, "The trees that I planted at the edge of the orchard are indeed bitter. I did this on purpose to discourage the children from stealing the oranges. However, the trees in the middle of the orchard are very good and produce a very sweet fruit. You just needed to come into the orchard, pick an orange, eat and enjoy."

Many times a person on the edge of accepting the truth of Christianity and God's Word experiences bitter things like guilt, conviction, and condemnation (blame). But, when he moves on into the midst of the church, he finds that the closer he gets to God, the more pleasant and sweet the Christian life becomes.

“O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psalms 34:8).

Truth is being revealed to you. Will you drop tradition to accept truth? Will you obey the treasures of salvation revealed on the surface of God’s Word? Will you taste and see that the Lord is good? The choice is yours.

Study Questions

1. What qualities did the Bereans possess?

2. Are all traditions bad? Explain.

3. When is a tradition considered to be bad?

4. What did you learn from the story of the sacred stone?

5. According to the diamond story, where were the best diamonds found?

6. How does this relate to the Word of God?

7. On the Day of Pentecost the question was asked, “What shall we do?” What was the answer given?

8. Where can you find a good answer to “What must I do to be saved?”

9. Provide three biblical examples that show the importance of baptism.

One More Story

In 1900 a hurricane ravaged Galveston Island. Only one old bridge connected the island to the mainland. It served as the evacuation route for thousands. The coming hurricane was spotted, and advance warning was given. There were no visible signs of the storm so the residents of the island decided to do nothing. Six thousand people were killed when the storm hit, and Galveston was destroyed. “Today a strong concrete sea wall stands as a barrier against such disaster, but also as a reminder that a century ago, thousands of people heard a message of warning and chose not to respond.” (Adapted from *A Man After God’s Heart* by Luis Palau.)