

Trademarks of Traditionalism

Joe Slater

Human traditions that are compatible with God's word can be a blessing or a curse, depending on whether we make them our servants or our masters. For example, families gathering on the fourth Thursday in November for Thanksgiving dinner can strengthen family ties and remind us of how blessed we are. But what if a family chooses to forego that practice for whatever reason? We would be foolish to conclude that they don't love each other or are unthankful for their blessings.

When we make human religious traditions masters rather than servants, they make God's word of no effect and make worship vain (Matthew 15:6, 9). The Jews of Jesus' day had many traditions. Some of them conflicted with the Law of Moses, so Jesus rejected them. Other traditions weren't inherently evil, but became wrong when the Jews treated them as if they were divine law. Jesus refused to submit to such spiritual blackmail.

Traditionalism has certain trademarks, one of which is intimidation. In John 7:32-52 the Sanhedrin sent officers to arrest Jesus. The officers were so impressed with Jesus that they returned without taking Him. *"No man ever spoke like this Man!"* (7:46). The Pharisees reacted with a blistering personal attack designed to bully them into submission: *"Are you also deceived?"* (7:47). Their clear implication was, "Anyone who is favorable toward Jesus is a gullible dupe who has been deceived." Of course, many of the common people believed in Him, but the Pharisees dismissed them as mere riff raff: *"This crowd that does not know the law is accursed!"* (7:49).

One who has a true proposition with real evidence has no need to intimidate people to get them to accept it.

(More Next Week)

How Dirty Can One Get?

"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?"
(Matthew 27:22)

Barabbas or Christ? Pilate was basically asking, "How dirty can you get?" The chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas, an insurrectionist and murderer, instead of the Christ. Every attempt that Pilate used to release Christ was in vain. He knew Jesus was an innocent man, as did his wife who had a disturbing dream about the situation. Even the flogging, mockery and ridicule wasn't enough to stop the crowd from calling for his crucifixion. When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere with the crowd, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, *"I am innocent of this man's blood."*

We live in a society that is constantly seeking the bizarre over the sane and sensible. Why has Jesus drawn so much negative press? What evil has he done? He was nothing but good, compassionate, and caring. We cherish those good people who pass through our life and leave us a better person. Jesus was all of that and more.

The problem isn't with Jesus, it's with those who have claimed to be his followers throughout the centuries. Religious fanatics and bizarre behavior in the name of religion hasn't helped. Many think that this behavior is the result of Jesus' teaching, but it isn't! It's the result of mankind's perverted nature in seeking to establish a righteousness of their own. From the cross Jesus said, *"Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34). A great number of people don't know what they are doing in the name of Christianity. Many others don't know the Man they are opposing. Jesus patiently waits for us to get the answer right, but time is running out. Our lives are but a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

What will you do with Jesus, my friend? Neutral you cannot be. Someday your heart will be asking, dear friend, "What will he do with me?"

Roger Holm (Tijeras, NM)

WORKING TOGETHER: IT TAKES ALL OF US

In Mark 2:3-12 a paralyzed man needed help to come to Jesus. Fortunately, he had friends willing to help. His friends picked up the mat on which he was lying and carried him to the house where Jesus was. Not just one or two men could have done the job. It took all four, each carrying his corner of the mat.

But wait! The story gets even more intriguing as we find that so many people were in the house that the men couldn't get their stricken friend inside. They lifted their friend, mat and all, onto the roof, made a hole, and lowered him into the room where Jesus was (Mark 2:4).

Jesus was impressed with the men's faith and said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you" (2:5). The man immediately arose, took up his mat as Jesus directed him, and went out from the presence of them all. Then they glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this before" (2:11-12).

Friend, do you know that there are many in any given community who will never find the truth or hear the words of Jesus about salvation without our help? If any one of those friends had dropped his corner of the mat, the paralyzed man couldn't have reached Jesus.

As a Christian, have you dropped your corner? Or are you carrying it to the best of your ability to serve the Lord?

Every member is needed to shoulder the responsibility for helping the Lord's work to progress. We need Bible School teachers. We need parents who set faithful examples for their children. We need men who dependably serve in leading prayers and songs. We need men who aspire to serve as elders and deacons.

Let us all carry our corner!

--Richard Dent (via *Old Paths*) adapted