

Trademarks of Traditionalism (#3)

Joe Slater

Many of Jesus' contemporaries were hopelessly mired down in human traditions. Unable to prove their points with Scripture, they bullied people through intimidation and depended on the opinions of important officials to impress ordinary people.

Yet another trademark of traditionalism is an unwillingness to listen. As the chief priests and Pharisees (i.e. the Sanhedrin) sought to arrest Jesus, Nicodemus challenged them with this question: *"Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"* (John 7:51). His rhetorical question implied a negative answer. Moses' Law commanded judges to be impartial (Deuteronomy 1:16-17). One accused of a crime had the right to face his accusers, and a conviction required multiple witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15-17). But the Sanhedrin had no interest in listening to Jesus or to Scripture! Much later, when they finally put Jesus on trial, they disregarded the requirements of the Law of Moses, being interested only in railroading Jesus to the cross. Truth was sacrificed on the altar of tradition.

More recent traditionalists still don't listen! They have bitterly condemned anyone who doesn't use Elizabethan pronouns "thee, thy, thou, thine," when addressing God in prayer. Using "you, your, yours," they claim, is irreverent. However, Jesus didn't use different pronouns in prayer to God than He used in ordinary conversation. He used the same pronouns to address God that he used to address His disciples, Satan, and any number of other individuals. Thee/thou/thy/thine are used when speaking to one person; when addressing two or more, "you/ye/your/yours" are used. It has nothing whatsoever to do with reverence. People who grew up using Elizabethan pronouns in prayer should not be criticized for doing so; but to accuse others of irreverence is raw traditionalism.

(More next week!)

All Things Through Christ

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

FedEx used to air an ad spoofing the movie *Castaway*. In it, a long-haired, bearded man rang a lady's doorbell with a large FedEx box in his hand. He said, "I was marooned on an island for five years with this package, and I swore I would deliver it to you because I work for FedEx." When he asked what was in the package, she said, "A satellite phone, a GPS locator, fishing rod, water purifier, and some seeds." For five years, he had everything he needed within arm's reach, but he never opened it.

Christians have everything they need to get to heaven. How? *"Through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them we may become partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:4).

How do we become partakers of the divine nature? By following Christ – not just by saying we are Christians, but acting like Christ who called us. When we learn of Christ and do as He did, we add faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love to our character.

We have everything we need in our Bibles. If we let them lie unopened, we have no rescue to escape from the corruption that is in the world. Unless we are clothed by Christ, we will become unfruitful and ineffective in our ministry for God.

By looking to Christ and imitating Him, we will never fall. Christ supplies everything we need. He richly provides us with an entrance into His eternal kingdom.

--Donna Wittlif (Ft. Worth, TX)

WE WILL GLORIFY THE KING OF KINGS

"To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

Why does God want us to glorify Him?

Well, God is our Father, and parents do enjoy being appreciated. But doesn't it go deeper than that? After all, teaching children to appreciate their parents teaches them to be a grateful people. When children honor and obey their parents, this brings honor to their parents. When we respect and obey God, this brings glory and honor to Him.

If God is not glorified, then one takes all the glory for oneself for what one has, and what one is. This is pride, the cause of all the evil that has ever occurred in this world. Either we worship ourselves or we worship God.

God is the supreme giver. *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows"* (James 1:17 NIV). To acknowledge our dependence on God brings Him honor, praise, and glory. Paul said, *"In him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28a).

God expects this to be done through the church. We cannot dismiss the church since God appointed it as an avenue through which we glorify God.

Jesus came to glorify the Father, and He accomplished it through obedience. *"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do"* (John 17:4). What about us?

Can you disagree with the following statement? If we aren't glorifying the Lord as He demands, we can't be sure of our salvation. But He tells us that the church was established for His children to give Him glory.

Try telling Him the church is not essential!

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)