

Traditions

Ponder: Who led the invitation song in Acts 2?

Scripture: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15, NKJV).

Is tradition good, bad, or indifferent? (Hint: The answer is "yes"!)

Tradition: that which is handed down from one person to another. The gospel, for example, was handed down from God the Father to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit, to the Apostles and other inspired writers and speakers, and finally preserved for us in the New Testament. Whether the inspired men spoke it or wrote it, we are to hold to it. This "tradition" came from God.

Not all traditions, however, have that noble source! Jesus fought valiantly against the corrupt traditions to which many Jews held fervently. He asked the Pharisees, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:3). The fifth commandment said to honor your father and mother; but these hypocrites used a tradition to excuse their failure to provide for aged parents. Their tradition didn't come from God, but actually contradicted His command!

Other traditions, harmless in and of themselves, became sinful when treated as tests of faithfulness to God. The Pharisees challenged Jesus' disciples because "they do not wash their hands when they eat bread" (Matt. 15:2). This pertained not to personal hygiene, but to a ritual involving very little water. It supposedly removed ceremonial uncleanness. Washing one's hands caused no harm, but Moses' Law said nothing about it. The Pharisees erred by binding it as law.

Some traditions today are harmless and, in some cases, even helpful. At Justin we have Bible study on Sunday morning at 9:30. Scripture doesn't mandate Bible classes, but certainly allows for them. It's a helpful tradition. Likewise, most congregations use an invitation song following the sermon. But who led the invitation song after Peter's sermon on Pentecost? I've heard brethren question the soundness of congregations that don't have an invitation song following the sermon. But the invitation song is a tradition – a helpful one in my opinion, but a tradition nevertheless.

Let us diligently keep God-given traditions, avoid sinful ones, and be careful not to bind helpful traditions as if they were divine law!

Hymn: "How Precious Is The Book Divine"

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help us to hold to your word, to avoid sinful traditions of men, and to see the difference between our traditions and Your holy word. In Jesus' name, Amen.