

The Place of our Traditions

As I was reading through the book of Romans many things struck me. Paul was really stressing that there has to be a higher focus for our lives. In one section, he was addressing the Hebrew tradition of circumcision and how that related to a Christian Believer. This made me think. What important traditions are we holding dear? Let's look at a portion of Paul's letter and replace the word "circumcision" with "church tradition," the title "Jew" for "Churched Believer", the word "law" with "rules and regulations." and also replace the word "Gentile" with a modern phrasing "Outsider." Let's see how it reads for us modern day Christians...

Romans 2:17-3:2

"Behold, thou art called a Churched Believer, and retest in the rules and regulations, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the rules and regulations; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the rules and regulations. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the rules and regulations, through breaking the rules and regulations dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Outsiders through you, as it is written. For church traditions verily profiteth, if thou keep the rules and regulations: but if thou be a breaker of the rules and regulations, thy church tradition is made non-churched tradition. Therefore if the non-churched in traditions keep the righteousness of the rules and regulations, shall not his un-churched in traditions be counted for those keeping church traditions? And shall not the non-churched in traditions which is by nature, if it fulfil the rules and regulations, judge thee, who by the letter and practicing church traditions dost transgress the rules and regulations? For he is not a Believer, which is one outwardly; neither *is that practice church traditions*, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is a Churched Believer*, which is one inwardly; and practice or participate in church traditions *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God. What advantage then hath the Churched Believer? or what profit *is there* of church traditions? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

To me, this puts things in perspective. I see that a relationship with Jesus, being part of His family, and sharing this relationship is what one needs to major and focus on. Jesus Christ *is* a minister of all Biblical church traditions...but also concerned for those that are "outside" and watching us practice our traditions.

Romans 15:8-9

“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the church traditions for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers: And that the Outsiders might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Outsiders, and sing unto thy name.”

Jesus was very aggressive on this issue. Let's see how he confronted the devoutly religious Pharisees:

Mark 7:1-13

“When came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, **Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”**

In conclusion, I submit that our traditions do have an important place in our worship... just not the most important focus. These “Outsiders” should be so moved by how we are living, worshipping, practicing, and inviting, that they will respond and become *participators*, not just spectators, of our church traditions.