

I THINK THAT EVERY FAMILY HAS ADOPTED CERTAIN “FAMILY TRADITIONS”,,, TO THEM HELP DEFINE,,, WHAT’S SUITABLE BEHAVIOR,,, WITHIN THE HOME AND TO HELP SHAPE FAMILY IDENTITY!

FOR EXAMPLE,,, IN SOME HOMES,,, THE FAMILY HAS ADOPTED CERTAIN EXPECTATIONS,,, FOR PROPER FAMILY ETIQUITE,,, LIKE;

(*) IF YOU WANT TO EAT WITH THE FAMILY,,, COME TO THE TABLE,,, IMMEDIATELY AFTER CALLED.

(*) YOUR HANDS MUST BE CLEAN,,, AND,,,

(*) YOU NEED TO SAY THE MEAL PRAYER WITH US.

BUT,,, WITHIN OUR FAMILIES,,, ARE NOT **THE ONLY PLACE**,,, WHERE “TRADITIONS” SEEM TO GOVERN AND DEFINE GROUP IDENTITY!

IT HAPPENS WITHIN THE CHURCH TOO!

IN TODAY'S GOSPEL,,, WE SEE THAT “TRADITIONS” HAVE OFTEN BEEN ESTABLISHED TO DEFINE AND GOVERN RELIGIOUS IDENTITY.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, THEY WERE ESTABLISHED TO SHOW OUR LOVE AND RESPECT,,, FOR ONE ANOTHER,,, AS DEMANDED BY CHRIST.

SO,,, IF THEY'RE MADE TO EXPRESS LOVE,,, THEN;

(*) WHY DO PEOPLE TREAT EACH OTHER SO POORLY?

(*) WHY DO PEOPLE ACT WITH SUCH VIOLENCE AND HATRED TOWARDS OTHERS?

(*) WHY DO RACISM & HATE CRIMES,,, STILL EXIST?

(*) WHY ARE PEOPLE FILLED WITH SUCH GREED,,, &

(*) WHY DO WE BETRAY AND DECEIVE ONE ANOTHER SO OFTEN?

THE QUESTION OF:

WHY PEOPLE DO WHAT THEY DO,,, TO ONE ANOTHER,,, IS A QUESTION,,, THAT'S PLAGUED THE HUMAN RACE,,, SINCE THE BEGINNING OF HISTORY!

THE BIBLE TELLS US,,, THAT:

THE WAY THINGS ARE,,, IN OUR WORLD,,, IS NOT THE WAY,,, THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE!

GOD CREATED **A GOOD CREATION**,,, BUT,,,
GOD'S GOOD CREATION,,, **HAS BEEN INFECTED**,,, BY
SOMETHING CALLED,,, **SIN!**

SIN,,, IS VITAL TO THE HUMAN RACE'S REJECTION OF
GOD AND AGAINST GOD'S WAYS. **IN OTHER WORDS**,,,
MAN'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM GOD!

CREATION,,, HAS FAILED FROM IT'S ORIGINAL GOOD
INTENTION. IT'S BECOME A PLACE OF PAIN AND
DARKNESS. A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CAUSE PAIN
AND OFTEN TIMES,,, **"HATE ONE OTHER!"**

I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT A LEADING REASON,,, WHY
THERE'S SO MUCH HATE WITHIN RELIGIONS TODAY.

I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT "TRADITION"!

WHAT THOUGHTS COME TO **YOUR MIND**,,, WHEN YOU
HEAR THE WORD **"TRADITION"**? PERHAPS **POSITIVE**
THOUGHTS?,,, **LIKE;**

FAMILY GET-TOGETHERS,,, AT THANKSGIVING,,,
CHRISTMAS,,, BIRTHDAYS,,, WEDDINGS OR ANY
OTHER FAMILY RITUAL,,, THAT OUR FAMILIES LOVE
TO SHARE WITH EACH OTHER AND ENJOY?

OR,,, DOES THE WORD **"TRADITION"** BRING-UP,,,
NEGATIVE THOUGHTS? LIKE:

RULES,,, THAT LIMIT OUR CREATIVITY,,, OR,,,
ROUTINES,,, THAT HAVE NO REAL MEANING IN OUR
LIVES?

HOW ABOUT TRADITIONS IN THE CHURCH?

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE,,, CONDEMNS THE RELIGIOUS
LEADERS OF JESUS' DAY,,, BUT,,, NOT FOR HONORING
TRADITION!

BUT,,, HE CONDEMNED THEM,,,

FOR PLACING MAN'S TRADITIONS,,, ABOVE THE
COMMANDMENTS OF GOD,,, THE WORD OF GOD!

THE PHARISEES ACCUSED THE DISCIPLES OF
VIOLATING THEIR **"TRADITIONS"** AND JESUS
RESPONDED,,, BY ASKING THEM,,, THIS QUESTION:

WHERE IS YOUR HEART? ARE YOU OBEYING FROM THE
HEART? IS YOUR HEART PREPARED TO APPROACH GOD?

GOD GAVE THE ISRAELITES 10 COMMANDMENTS AS GUIDELINES,, FOR THEIR SAFETY,, PROTECTION,, AND,, TO APPLY TO THEIR DAILY LIVES.

HOWEVER,, OVER 500 YEARS BEFORE JESUS WAS BORN,, THE SCRIBES DEVELOPED IN EXCESS OF 630 RIGID TRADITIONS,, ON HOW TO PUT THE ORIGINAL LAWS,, INTO PRACTICE.

THIS CAUSED THE PEOPLE,, TO FALL INTO,, WHAT'S REFERRED TO AS; LEGAL BONDAGE,, TO THE TRADITIONS OF MAN,, RATHER THAN **TO THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW,, THAT WAS GIVEN BY GOD!**

THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES,, FOLLOWED JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES,, AND THEY OBSERVED THEM EATING,, WITHOUT WASHING THEIR HANDS.

SO,, THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS,, CONSIDERED THEM TO BE CEREMONIALLY UNCLEAN,, AND ASKED;

WHY DO YOUR DISCIPLES,, NOT FOLLOW THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS AND EAT A MEAL,, WITH UNCLEAN HANDS?

**AFTER CONSIDERING THEIR HEARTS,, JESUS SAID:
*WELL DID ISAIAH PROPHECY ABOUT YOU HYPOCRITES!
AS IT IS WRITTEN,, THESE PEOPLE HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIPS,, BUT THEIR HEARTS ARE FAR FROM ME.
IN VAIN,, THEY DO WORSHIP ME,, TEACHING,, AS DOCTRINES,, HUMAN PRECEPTS.***

**THEN JESUS CONTINUED:
*YOU HYPOCRITES! YOU GO THROUGH THE EXTERNAL MOTIONS OF WORSHIP,, YOU DO WHAT APPEARS TO BE THE RIGHT THING,, BUT YOU DON'T CLEANSE YOUR HEART. YOU DO NOT PREPARE YOUR HEART FOR WORSHIP.***

OBEDIENCE,, WITHOUT THE HEART,, MEANS NOTHING!

MANY CHRISTIANS TODAY,, ARE JUST LIKE THAT!

THEY THINK:

IF I'M OBEYING THE COMMANDS OF GOD AND DOING THE RIGHT THINGS,, THEN,, I'M OBEYING!

DOESN'T CHRISTIAN LIFE,, CONSIST OF OBEYING GOD? WELL,, YES IT DOES! BUT,, THERE'S MUCH MORE TO IT. YOU SEE,, GOD'S MORE CONCERNED WITH THE CONDITION AND ATTITUDE OF OUR HEARTS,, THAN WITH WHAT WE DO EXTERNALLY!

OF COURSE,, WE'RE TO OBEY,, BUT UNLESS OUR MINDS AND SOULS,, ARE PREPARED,, AND CORRECTLY MOTIVATING OUR ACTIONS,, WE'RE NOT REALLY,, IN TRUE CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

MAN LOOKS JUST AT OUR OUTWARD APPEARANCE,, BUT SCRIPTURE SAYS: GOD LOOKS AT OUR HEARTS!

GOD WANTS OUR HEARTS FIRST. NOT OUR EXTERNAL "*JUNK*". HE WANTS TO TRANSFORM US,, FROM THE INSIDE,, THROUGH HIS MOST PRECIOUS LOVE AND GRACE.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, OUR HEARTS DETERMINE OUR TRUE CHARACTER. NOT WHAT WE "*APPEAR*" TO BE,, ON THE OUTSIDE!

WHAT GOD SEES ON THE INSIDE,, IS WHAT AND WHO WE REALLY ARE! SO,, WHAT GOD SEES,, WHEN HE LOOKS INTO OUR HEART,, IS OUR TRUE CHARACTER AND OUR TRUE CHARACTER,, WILL,, AT SOME POINT,, COME OUT!

SCRIPTURE SAYS:

FOR OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART,, A MAN SPEAKS AND ACTS.

WITHOUT A CONVERSION OF HEART,, ON THE INSIDE ANY EXTERNAL CHANGES,, RITUALS AND WORKS,, ARE NOTHING BUT SUPERFICIAL.

WE'VE BEEN CREATED TO WORSHIP! HOWEVER,, IF OUR WORSHIP DOESN'T COME FROM A JOYFUL,, THANKFUL HEART,, IT'S NOT TRUE WORSHIP!

EVERY EXTERNAL THING THAT WE DO,, IN OUR LIVES,, SHOULD DEMONSTRATE OUR LOVE AND JOY OF HEART,, FOR THE ONE WHO ASVED US,, JESUS CHRIST!

**NOW,, AFTER ALL THAT THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES HAD SAID TO JESUS,, HE TOLD THEM;
*NOT TO PUT MAN MADE TRADITIONS ABOVE GOD'S COMMANDS,, OR,, HIS WORD,, WHEN HE SAID:
YOU DISREGARD GOD'S COMMANDS,, BY CLINGING TO HUMAN TRADITIONS.***

**SOMETIMES,, IT SEEMS LIKE,, NOT MUCH HAS CHANGED IN THE PAST 2000 YEARS. WE STILL OFTEN BREAK THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. JESUS SAID;
IF YOU BREAK ONE,, YOU HAVE BROKEN THEM ALL!
IN CHURCHES TODAY,, MAN HAS “*MADE-UP*” THEIR OWN; “LEGALISTIC TRADITIONS & MAN MADE RULES”!
*UNFORTUNATELY,, MANY OF THESE,, ARE TRADITIONS AND RULES,, THAT ARE NOT SPIRITUAL,, BUT OUTWARDLY,, THEY APPEAR TO BE HOLY!***

IN SOME CHURCHES TODAY,, YOU'RE REQUIRED TO USE ONLY A CERTAIN TYPE OF BIBLE,, YOU MUST DRESS A CERTAIN WAY,, YOU CAN'T GO TO CERTAIN MOVIES,, YOU CAN'T DRINK OR SMOKE,, AND THEIR CHURCH LEADERS CHOOSE THE TV PROGRAMS,, THAT YOU CAN OR CANNOT VIEW.

IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN CHURCH FUNCTIONS,, LIKE BAPTISMS,, WEDDINGS,, OR TO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENTS,, YOU MUST HAVE A “GIVING RECORD**” OF AT LEAST SIX MONTHS AND THERE ARE MANY,, RESTRICTIONS ON THE SACRAMENTS OF HOLY MATRIMONY,, DIVORCE,, ANNULMENT OR RECEIVING THE HOLY EUCHARIST.**

**JESUS SAID:
*COME TO ME,, ALL YOU THAT LABOR,, AND ARE HEAVY LADEN,, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.***

**JESUS MADE THIS STATEMENT ABOUT THE CONDITION,, FOR THE PREPAREDNESS OF OUR HEARTS,, WHEN HE SAID TO THE CROWD;
*I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND IT'S NOT WHAT ENTERS A MAN FROM THE OUTSIDE,, THAT DEFILE HIM,,***

IT'S THE THINGS THAT COME FROM INSIDE HIM,, THAT DEFILE HIM.

WHEN JESUS USED THE TERM "THINGS" ,, HE EXPLAINED IT,, BY SAYING;

FOR WITHIN PEOPLE,, FROM THEIR HEARTS,, COME EVIL THOUGHTS,, UNCHASTITY,, THEFT,, MURDER,, ADULTRY,, GREED,, BITTERNESS,, REVENGE,, MALACE,, DECEIPT,, LUSTFULNESS,, JEALOUSY,, ENVY,, IMMORALITY,, FOOLISHNESS,, ARROGANCE,, AND BLASPHEMY,

ALL THESE EVILS,, BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, COME FROM THE INSIDE AND THEY DEFILE!

**IN THE BOOK OF JAMES,, SCRIPTURE SAYS;
THAT ALL SIN IS BIRTHED FROM WITHIN OUR
HEARTS.**

WE CAN'T JUST SAY: THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT!

OUR OLD SIN NATURE,, REMAINS WITH US,, AND THE ONLY WAY TO BRING IT UNDER CONTROL,, IS TO ALLOW JESUS,, TO TRANSFORM OUR HEARTS,, THROUGH THE SANCTIFYING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!

FOR HE CARES MORE ABOUT WHO WE ARE ON THE INSIDE,, THAN WHO WE APPEAR TO BE,, ON THE OUTSIDE.

SO,, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO ALLOW JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT,, TO PREPARE YOUR HEARTS,, SO THAT YOU CAN WORSHIP HIM,, IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH AND NOT IN SUPERFICIAL,, EXTERNAL RITUAL,, LIKE THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES.

**NOW,, I KNOW! SOME OF YOU MAY BE ASKING,,
"HOW CAN I ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT,, TO ALLOW ME,,
TO RECEIVE HIM".**

WELL,, IT'S REALLY NOT THAT HARD!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, IF YOU DESIRE,, TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT,, INTO YOUR HEARTS,, BY FAITH,, JUST REPEAT AFTER ME,, THIS SHORT;

“PRAYER TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT”

FATHER GOD,,

***THANK YOU,, FOR SENDING YOUR SON,,
TO DIE FOR MY SINS,,
THAT I MAY WALK FREE.***

***THANK YOU,,
FOR THE WONDER,, OF HIS RESURRECTION,,
AND THE PROMISE,,
THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT,, WOULD BE AMONGST US.***

***THANK YOU,, THAT I TODAY,, RECEIVE,,
THAT ETERNAL SPIRIT,, WITHIN MY HEART,,***

***WHEN I ASK,,
THAT I RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT NOW,,
IN JESUS NAME.***

AMEN

***THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT
+++ AMEN+++***

(1,512) WDS,, 7 PGS