

Introduction to Titus

Tradition or Truth?

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Ritual without reality

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We are sometimes faced with rejection of our teaching of God's word by spiritually immature believers and non-believers. Most of them show that their belief may be grounded in tradition rather than in Biblical truth.

People may believe what they do, because they were raised in a family that went to a certain church. They may have been involved early in life in a church that taught them incorrectly. If asked, many do not really know why they are a part of a particular religion.

Maybe it was their culture that influenced their beliefs. They are not even sure what being a part of the religion teaches and likely have not done their due diligence in asking questions about what they are being taught. These people just go along, doing religious things and avoiding the truth of God's word.

They do rituals and read holy sounding readings and pray prayers with no personal meaning. Why do people do this? TRADITION!!

Many well, meaning people do not know Jesus Christ. Going to church or doing religious things makes them feel good about themselves. These people consider themselves to be good people, but their empty attempt of glorifying God, is nothing more than glorifying themselves before mankind. The truth of God's word is there to be learned, but a spiritually weak person cannot see the deception of religion, that can be hidden in tradition. (These include water baptism, covenants/mosaic law, works for justification, and sacrificial offerings to name a few.)

Water Baptism - Matt. 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Covenants/Mosaic Law -

Heb. 7:18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness.

Heb. 8:13 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Not of works for justification -

Eph. 2:8-9 For by Grace you have been saved through Faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God
Not of works that no one would boast.

Rom. 4:5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Sacrificial offerings -

Heb/ 9:25-26

25) nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own.

26) Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

These were all common traditions in the Jewish age. When Christ came, these things and others were done away with.

What is a tradition?

It is an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (such as a religious practice or a social custom) a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are commonly accepted as historical, though not necessarily verifiable or even true.

Types of traditions?

Traditions may be verbal or nonverbal.

Verbal traditions can be something a person has been told about the past and the hearer accepts this as truth. This happens in families and religious settings.

Nonverbal traditions include traditional artifacts (icons, monuments, symbolic objects that have been passed down by others and used for religious practices)

These can also include sites, designs, gestures, postures, customs and institutions.

There are **two main methods** that these traditions are passed down.

Religious tradition and family tradition.

Believers should learn the Bible from a qualified Pastor-Teacher who teaches from the original languages of Hebrew and Greek. Then the possibility

of confusion or misinterpretations, which are misleading, are not a problem. We should also look at the context of the text. We apply these truths, **even when they are contrary to what others think. Why? Because it is God's inspired word. It's the truth we need to hear, not because of a tradition we've adopted, but because it's God's message to us.**

Traditions have a purpose of maintaining what is good, but they can also make us cling to something that is no longer relevant.

This was the case with the Jews. The messiah, Jesus Christ had come and went to the cross to pay the penalty for mankind's sin, but the Jews ignored Christ and continued following their traditions.

Examples of positive and negative traditions:

Positive Traditions

2 Thess. 2:15, 3:6, 1 Cor. 11:22

Negative Traditions

Matt. 15:6, Mark 7:1-13, Col. 2:8

The Fiddler on the roof movie from 1971 captures this well. As Rev-Teyve, a Jewish milkman struggles to hang on to Jewish traditions, he is faced with several events including his 5 daughters being married by other than Jewish, traditional arranged

marriages and a culture that was shifting and leaving behind the old customs of the Jews.

There are many today who cling to the traditions of religion without reason. Traditions are fine unless they take the place of truth. The Jewish traditions had a purpose, for a specific time. **The Jews had been handed down traditions by God to prepare them for the upcoming messiah.** They were told to sacrifice only flawless animals; this was an example of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, who would bring atonement for mankind's sins. There was a process that had to be followed as well, in the washing of hands and how to prepare the animals. The Jews were God's chosen people and they needed to learn about God but without a written New Testament Canon. They were taught how to worship God and to live a life according to the word of God, but there was no way they could understand the things of God apart from the teaching of the prophets and priests through their daily lives. The traditions/rituals had perfect purpose in pointing to Christ's coming, but once He had come, they continued in their traditions/rituals which were no longer relevant.

Why? Because the Church Age had begun.

The Apostle Paul was pointing this out to the Jewish people as well as the other Disciples. But let's look back to who he was before things changed for the Jews and how God changed his understanding.

Saul was a Pharisee of Pharisees....he knew the Mosaic law like few others. He believed he was within God's will by protecting the law from outsiders.

Turn to [Acts 6:8-14](#)

Stephen, one of the first 7 disciples, is spreading the gospel of Christ. The message of Christ he is now teaching is bringing attention to himself and the other disciples. **Why?** Because the Jews had held onto the traditions of the Mosaic Law and didn't see their Messiah, Jesus Christ.

8) And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. 9) But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

10) But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

11) Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

12) And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. 13) They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; 14) for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs (traditions/rituals) which Moses handed down to us."

Stephen says this:

Acts 7:51-53

51) "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are *always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.* (Tradition)

52) "Which one of the prophets (Abraham, Joseph, Moses) did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One (Jesus), whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; (Truth) 53) you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it."

Stephen is arrested, put on trial and after his truthful rant about the history of the Israelites, he is carried off and stoned to death by an irrate mob. This was due to a lynch mob and not the courts themselves, as no verdict had been made against him. This was not an executable offense anyway and would not have warranted a death sentence.

A man was there and witnessed it all and was in agreeance with the stoning. He will eventually become an Apostle of Christ; "Saul of Tarsus." (Paul)

Acts 7:58-59

58) When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59) They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

Saul persecutes the church

Acts 8:1-3

1) Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. (Saul agreed with the Jewish traditions that had persecuted the prophets of God and was willing to put to death anyone who disagreed.) *And, on that day, a great persecution*

began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2) Some devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him.

3) But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Saul was a Jew by race, but a Roman by birth and citizenship. He knew the Mosaic law inside and out. He actually believed he was fulfilling this law perfectly. He was following the traditions he had been taught and no Christian was going to change his mind. He was a pharisee and knew the Jewish ways intimately.

Saul's Conversion

Acts 9:1-18

1) Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2) and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any, belonging to the way (followers of Christ,

especially Greek speaking), both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3) As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him, 4) and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5) And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6) but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." 7) The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8) Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

9) And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10) Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11) And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house

of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying,

12) and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."

13) But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to your saints at Jerusalem;

14) and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

15) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16) for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

17) So, Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18) And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight,

and he got up and was baptized (Holy Spirit baptism)

Saul's eyes had been opened, literally and spiritually. A man must come to a humble state in order to accept truth over traditions.

God had given these traditions/rituals to the Jews, but they were to point to Christ coming. Christ (the Messiah) has now arrived, but the Jewish leaders rejected Him!

When our eyes are opened and we see that we are on the wrong path, we have to choose the truth over our traditions/customs.

Some might double down and take on an arrogant, defiant attitude, and continue in these ways, but not Saul...

God had brought him to his knees.

As a man going in the wrong direction Saul changed his direction (repentance) and humbly started obeying the Lord. **He was changed!**

Saul begins to teach about Christ

Acts 9:20-22

20) Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." 21) All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" 22) But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

People around us recognize when we are changed! They remember the old person we were and wonder what made that change. It's Jesus Christ!

(2 Cor. 5:17, Philippians 3:13-21)

2 Cor. 5:17

17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Philippians 3:13-21

13) Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, (Heaven, Eternity with Christ)

14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

15) Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, (humble) God will reveal that also to you; 16) however, let us keep living by that same standard (Christ's example) to which we have attained (by Faith alone in Jesus).

17) Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (Holy Spirit)

18) For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,

19) whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (unclean foods, circumcision, false Gods) They cut themselves off from their only means of redemption by rejecting Jesus Christ.

20) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21) who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory (Resurrection body), by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

We have been changed by our faith in Christ.

We are a new creature. Others see our change.

We are to live according to the standards Jesus Christ set for us. Put aside the past. God has a plan for each of us.

We are to look to our eternal future. We are citizens of Heaven.