



The Country Preacher's Newsletter

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Who's Sowing to the Good Soil?

In the parable of the sower (Luke 8) four classes of soil are described. The "wayside" soil represents the largest area, occupying the fringes of the field and beyond, the well-trodden walkways, but is least prepared for planting. It has a closeness to the Devil that allows him to snatch away the word so quickly that it is hardly missed. Involvement in the affairs of the world is so deep that the gospel of Christ is rejected as foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18). No time is found or given for Christ and His teaching. Next, decreasing in size, but slightly less inhospitable, is the "rocky" soil. This group is predictably unstable, easily tempted and easily led astray. The Word could not be snatched from them, but enough lust is found in their hearts (James 1:14-16) to leave them undefended from the Tempter. Then, closer yet to the fertile heart of the field, cleared of rocks, shrinking further in size, is the soil that cannot be distinguished from

the good except that seeds of thorns and weeds lie ready to spring up and choke out the good seed. The "cares, riches, and pleasures of life" have enough appeal to distract all but the most faithful. The antidote to this challenge is: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with

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such things as you have. For He himself has said, I will never leave you or forsake you (Heb. 13:5)." Only then can we enjoy the true joy of Christianity. It sometimes seems that the first three soils are given an unfair amount of attention in the desire to have the largest church, the richest treasury, the finest building and the most renown. This has spurred the creation of denominations where behaviors which once kept people out of churches are now common, and unopposed, within them. "Mega-churches" have arisen where what is believed is de-emphasized and truth long ago gave way to "atmosphere,

comfort and entertainment." It is no surprise that as worldly methods are used to attract and keep worldly people more reports of adultery, fornication, homosexuality, child molestation and other sins come now from the community that was once seen as a safe haven from the wickedness of the world.

In all of this, who is ministering the good seed to the smallest, but most receptive and fertile section of the field, good and honest hearts longing for God's truth (Jn. 17:17)? Where do people go who hunger for truth and righteousness? Which church is wholly given searching out truth, preaching it in love, living it faithfully, worshipping God in spirit and in truth, giving man what he needs rather than what he wants? Without a doubt, this is the smaller group (Mat. 7:13-14), but it is also the most abundantly faithful (Lk. 8:15). The seed is to be broadcast, but let us remember that when good soil is found, Christ will bring them in (Psm. 19:7; Jn. 12:32). Those who truly come to Christ must come on His

terms. There is no shame in striving to be the church that Jesus built (Mat. 16:18).

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Hand-Me-Downs

When I was growing up “hand-me-downs” were a fact of life. Traditions handed down from generation to generation are also a fact of life. “*Paradosis*” is the Greek word translated “tradition” in the New Testament. It means to “hand down, give over; what has been transmitted by way of precept, doctrine.” Biblically, there are two classes of tradition to be considered. First is tradition handed down by man. Whenever this class of tradition came into conflict with the will of God, Jesus and His apostles rebuked it and those who held to it (Mat. 15:1-13; Mk. 7:1-13; Co. 2:8; 1 Pet.

and Pharisees to bind the ceremonial washing of hands be fore eating, thus supplanting the will of God with their

addition of manmade instruments of music to the vocal singing tradition handed down to the church via the New

Testament (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Such additions corrupt Christ’s revealed word and become

unacceptable.

Those who cry against tradition in favor of change must prove that the changes they espouse are biblical and that their suggested traditions are superior to those in place. They must also respect what has been held dear by previous generations. To do otherwise divides between generations and robs the younger of a vital link to the older. Not all tradition is bad, but neither is all change good.

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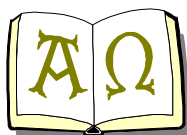
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own law.

The other class of tradition is that which has been handed down by God though Jesus and His apostles. “therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle (2 Thes. 2:15; also 3:6).” These traditions, delivered to us by inspired men of God and written in the Bible, are obligatory and must be accepted and obeyed as doctrine. It is concluded that human tradition which does not come into conflict with the will of God may be kept and enjoyed. This “neutral” tradition forms a bridge between generations, welds communities together and generates security and well-being among its adherents. Also, traditions which aid in carrying out Bible instruction, but which do not alter it, may be kept and practiced freely. These may be changed, but carefully, so as not to tear asunder that which they help to bond. Human traditions which alter, contradict, or otherwise violate God’s recorded word must be changed or abandoned. An example of such would be the



1:17-19). In each of case human tradition had come into conflict with God’s will. The two cannot coexist in conflict, so one will invariably neutralize the other. Does this mean that all human traditions are bad? No, only those which are incompatible with the word of God, or which are bound upon others as obligatory such as the effort made by the Scribes

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