



# The Voice of Truth



September 9, 2012

## You're A Legalist! By Jimmy Pettigrew

I have often been branded as a legalist. I have often heard my brethren being called by such an expression. Why are we recognized by some by this term? What do they mean when they call us by such a name? What precisely does it mean when they taint you as being legalistic?

They ridicule and condemn us because we stand for truth, that in the matters of faith we have a "Thus saith the Lord" for the things we do and practice. "Jimmy, you are just too concerned about obedience; you're what we call a Bible thumper; you're just determined to keep God's commandments; you're just a Pharisee!" How presumptuous for some to denounce one who exhibits loyalty and faithfulness to God's words, as if we are doing a bad thing!

Look at the Pharisees: yes, they were guilty of hypocrisy (**Matthew 23:1ff**); yes, they pretended to be righteous, "but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (**Matthew 23:27**). Yes, their righteousness was only an outward appearance of righteousness (**Matthew 23:28**); yes, they went about to establish "their own righteousness" (**Romans 10:3**) by authorizing and observing man-made traditions. Yes, they gave attention to some Biblical truths but also neglected others of greater importance (**Matthew 23:23-24**). But, I do want you to notice that the Pharisees were not condemned because they were too zealous about strict obedience to God's will. They were condemned because "they say, and do not" (**Matthew 23:2**).

People need to wake up! God has always been pleased with the person who maintains absolute loyalty to the specifics of His commands (**John 14:15; 15:14; Hebrews 5:9**). Shame on a person who calls one a legalist, fundamentalist, a Bible thumper or a Pharisee for the purpose of denouncing him because he exhibits loyalty, faithfulness, and obedience to God's word. "To obey is better than sacrifice" (**1 Samuel 15:22**). Samuel made it clear that no amount of sacrifice can take the place of obedience to

God's Word. Nothing is acceptable to God unless it is done according to His will (**Leviticus 10:1ff**).

If man is to be victorious in living life acceptably before God His Creator, then He must have a proper regard for God's authority. That which God expects of man and that upon which salvation is conditioned may be summed up in one word: **OBEDIENCE (Hebrews 5:8-9)**. And that salvation is available to such as obey Him, "but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (**John 3:36**). Obedience to the will of God is expected if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 7:21-23**). Obedience to the will of God is required if we are to abide for ever (**1 John 2:17**). Obedience is required of all, and if we refuse then we have no right to call Jesus our Lord (**Luke 6:46**). "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (**Mark 3:35**).

Everything we read in scripture compels us toward grateful submissions and obedience to His will. Many who have this attitude toward rigid obedience are actually demonstrating they are weak and unfaithful to God; calling one a legalist, fundamentalist, Pharisee or Bible thumper is just a cover up to give good reason for their departure from the faith and their own weakness in the faith. The religious thinking is "we want a faith without restraints or responsibilities" - no "Thou shalt nots," no laws or commandments to keep - just love and grace and freedom. These false teachers freely label emphasis on keeping the commands of God as "legalism." Truly, one is a legalist if a claim is made that obeying God's commands obligates God and, therefore, a person deserves salvation. Never have I heard any such teaching among us, nor have I known of any member boasting of obeying God. To the contrary! "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded of you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (**Luke 17:10**). Jehovah has always required His

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children to carefully obey His commandments without addition, subtraction or substitution (**Deuteronomy 4:2; Leviticus 10:1-2; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John. 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19**). We must do things exactly right to be pleasing to God, "Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven" (**Ezra 7:23**).

So, if you are calling me a legalist, fundamentalist, a Bible thumper or Pharisee because I show evidence of

loyalty, faithfulness and obedience to God's word, **THANK YOU** for the comments! The disobedient will perish (**Romans 6:16-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**). "The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord will laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming" (**Psa 37:12-13**). Only those who obey Jesus as Lord are saved by the Savior (**Hebrews 5:8-9**). "(This is) the end of the matter; *all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole (duty) of a man*" (**Eccl. 12:13**). ♦

## "Tradition Or Tradition?"

By Jarrod Jacobs

The word "tradition" has become somewhat of a by-word or buzz-word for many in the Lord's church. For some Christians, anything they associate with being "traditional," or with things that "we" do often, is rejected. When speaking of "traditional" things, a look and air of disdain comes upon them. They belittle those things they consider "traditional." Sometimes we find folks who wish to do things differently for no other reason than for the sake of being different. This is unfortunate.

Today, it seems that if there is anything which someone could say has been done for 'x' amount of time, then these ones are ready to throw it out, and try something "new" and "exciting." (That is, until that thing becomes a "tradition"! ) Their attitude reminds me of the attitude of those Paul found at Athens (**Acts 17:21**). In contrast, we need to be reminded that Solomon said there is nothing for which it can be said, "See this is new" (**Ecc. 1:10**).

### The Word "Tradition" Needs A Context.

The reason I titled this article the way I did is because "tradition" does not always mean "tradition". In other words, just because something is a "tradition" doesn't mean we must do it. At the same time, some things called "traditions" must be accepted and obeyed because they are commanded of God! So, how can we determine when a tradition is simply something men have done for a long time and when the tradition is something that God has commanded? Put simply, this is determined by the context! We find the English word "tradition" used seven times in the New Testament, but it is used in two very different ways. Thus, we must define "tradition" according to its Bible context. Read the passages below and contrast the way this word is used in context:

- ♦ "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?" (**Matt. 15:2; Mk. 7:3, 5**).

- ♦ "Why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (**Matt. 15:3, 6; Mk. 7:9, 13**).
- ♦ "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men" (**Mk. 7:8; Col. 2:8**).
- ♦ "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers" (**Gal. 1:14**).
- ♦ "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter" (**II Thess. 2:15**).
- ♦ "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (**II Thess. 3:6**).
- ♦ "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers" (**I Pet. 1:18**).

Notice that on two occasions the word "tradition" was used with the understanding that one is expected to continue in certain things or be considered a sinner and condemned in the sight of God (**II Thess. 2:15, 3:6**). These "traditions" were words passed down by God through Christ, to the apostles, and then to the Christians (**II Thess. 2:15; II Tim. 2:2**). These are the things which must continue, regardless of whether or not men belittle them as "traditional"!

### Contrasting "Traditions"

There may be an attitude among some which says that if certain things have "always" been done, then this can never change. Such an attitude can be detrimental to a group of God's people if it is allowed to go unrestrained.

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Just because someone doesn't like a change does not mean that the change is sinful. (Read: **Heb. 7:12-14**, God changed His law) Therefore, we can have certain traditions which have been an expedient practice of men at some point in time, and then change them or omit them altogether, and there be no sin involved. Examples of this include:

- ◆ Whether or not we have a chalkboard/whiteboard or an overhead/powerpoint projector in our preaching and teaching. Though these are commonly seen in church buildings, to have or not have such tools does not constitute sin.
- ◆ The "traditional" order of services can be changed and not constitute sin so long as we do not omit what God commanded (**Jn. 4:24; Acts 2:42**).
- ◆ Some congregations schedule their Sunday worship service and then have the Bible class afterward. Others schedule their Sunday Bible class first. Still other congregations have a Sunday AM and PM Bible class. To change, or rearrange our "traditional" order does not constitute sin.

Yet, the Bible speaks of some traditions which, if

changed, would result in sin. Therefore, such things need to be left alone. For example:

- ◆ If we said that a man doing the preaching in a congregation is "traditional," and we asked a sister to preach one day, this is sin (**I Tim. 2:12**).
- ◆ To add instruments to our singing, or to stop singing altogether would definitely be a change in "tradition", but that would also constitute sin (**Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15**).
- ◆ To declare that it is a sin to have Bible classes on Sunday, or to say that there is only one "authorized" time for such classes becomes sin as we have no right to bind where God has not bound (**I Pet. 4:11**). Other examples could be added to this list, we know.

### Conclusion

Before we get too "trigger-happy" putting down and changing "our traditions", let us make sure that the traditions we are discussing are ones that we have the right to change! As we have seen, there are some traditions that we have no right or authority to change! (**I Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17**) *Credit: The Old Paths - 8/5/12 ♦*

## Are You Heaven Bound?

By David J. Riggs

It matters not what else you do in life, if you miss heaven you have been a complete failure. You might gather about you great riches and fame and leave thousands of friends to mourn your departing, but if you are not ready for heaven you have been a miserable failure. On the other hand, you may die in a charity home for the poor and be buried in a potter's field without a single friend to mourn, but if you receive heaven, your life has been a marvelous success.

You can't afford to miss heaven for if you miss it, you miss all. It is the place of eternal rest (**Heb. 4:9-11**) where pain, sickness, and death will not be known (**Rev. 21:4**). It is an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that does not fade away (**1 Pet. 1:4**). It is that city built by the living God (**Heb. 11:10**).

You don't have to miss heaven. Humbly submit yourself

to the will of God (**Matt. 7:21**). Let His Word guide you (**2 Tim. 3:15**) and let no one beguile you or your reward (**Col. 2:18**). Overcome temptations (**James 1:12**) and suffer for His cause with rejoicing (**Matt. 5:11-12**). If you do these things, heaven will be yours someday for the God of heaven who cannot lie has promised it.

I quote a few words from some of our songs: "I am going to a city where the streets with gold are laid, where the tree of life is blooming, and the roses never fade. Here they bloom but for a season, soon their beauty is decayed; I am going to a city where the roses never fade." "I am bound for the promised land, promised land, I am bound for the promised land; O who will come and go with me? I am bound for the promised land." "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun; we've now less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun."

*Credit: oakridgechurch.com/riggs*

**A faith that will not take us to  
Every services of the Lord's church  
Will not take us to heaven!**

# In What Have You Placed Your Faith?

By Jonathan L. Perz

In spite of thinking to the contrary, everyone has faith in something. To reject the concept of faith is to reject something that is obviously intrinsic and inherent in all. The question in today's society is not whether or not one has faith. The question is, "In what are you placing your faith?"

Faith differs subtly in meaning and varies greatly in degrees for different people, but it is frequently manifest in the lives of all. Some believe in God, a god or gods. Some believe in science. Some believe in another person. Some believe in a cause, an idea, a mantra, a platform, a philosophy. Some believe in themselves. To say you believe in nothing is, in and of itself, a belief. Therefore, to deny faith is folly.

Some mistake losing faith in something for losing faith period. Hindsight will reveal that, in such cases, someone was simply transferring his faith from one thing to another. While there might be a searching phase, it is not uncom-

mon to go through these transitions. Yet, faith will prevail.

For a Christian, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen" (Heb. 11:1). Christians walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). This faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). This faith is completely and totally in God. Without faith in God, we know that it is impossible to please Him, because those who come to God "must believe that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). This has been undeniably demonstrated throughout history.

In Christians and non-Christians alike faith manifests itself in works (cf. Jas. 2:18). Your works will inevitably and ultimately reveal the truth about your faith. In the end, all that you have is the record of your life and that very record reveals your faith. The question you should ask yourself now is, "Where have I put my faith?"

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

- BETWEEN** the atheist who would not dream of financially supporting the church and the Christian who will not financially support the Lord's church?
- BETWEEN** the skeptic who does not believe the Bible and the negligent Christian who never reads it?
- BETWEEN** those who do not believe in Bible classes and those who choose never to attend a class?
- BETWEEN** the atheist who does nothing to build up the Lord's church and the Christian who finds fault with others, but does nothing himself?
- BETWEEN** a man of the world, and a person in the church who lives like a man in the world?
- BETWEEN** a man of the world who lives for self and a person in the church who lives for self, not God?

These are tough questions for Christians who live in a tough world. The fact is, Christians make no difference until they are different. Again, **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?** ♦

**When an archer misses the mark, he turns and looks for the fault within himself.  
Failure to hit the bull's-eye is never the fault of the target. To improve your aim –  
Improve yourself.**

## About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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### Our Address

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### Schedule of Assembly

**Bible Study:** Sunday, 9:00am  
**Worship Service:** Sunday, 10:00am  
**Bible Study:** Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

**www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com**