

Transforming Daily
“... *according to the tradition of men* ...”
Colossians 2:8

In context, “the tradition of men” is contrary to the Spirit of God. The “tradition of men” here refers to the natural thoughts reasoned by man and his actions accordingly. Because of the fall, such thoughts and actions are not only selfish and destructive, but also unacceptable to God. Paul was encouraging the Colossians to rely on the apostles’ doctrines (given by the Spirit of God) for insight and direction rather than on their own understanding (conjured up within their own hearts and minds from their own personal experiences) especially in regard to what the false teachers were sharing.

“Tradition of men” and being “traditional” are not necessarily mutually inclusive. For instance, the Lord’s Supper and Baptism, in addition to being ordinances of the New Testament church, are also traditions of the church. Just because something is of tradition does not mean that it is not from God. That very misunderstanding has fostered or at least fueled a whole generation of those attending the church to be embroiled in what has been called “Worship Wars.” Worse, the concept has done irreparable damage to the reputation of the church in the eyes of some believers on the inside of the church as well as in the eyes of some unbelievers on the outside of the church.

In the latter part of the 20th century and thus far in the 21st century, worship wars have been sustained by the practice of pitting what is called contemporary church services against what has been identified as traditional church services. One of the ironies in this misguided and misgiven set of circumstances is that when something can be reduplicated by some example or formula, it by definition and practice becomes a tradition. So in fact, a contemporary church service has now become traditional. However, this is definitely not what Paul had in mind when he referred to the “tradition of men.”

The “tradition of men,” as Paul refers to it, has to do with the pagan culture by which the believers were surrounded and in which they lived. Included in such an environment would have been diverse religions, occult practices (as they are now referred to), and multiple expressions of superstitions and secular humanism. Pretty much every form of thought, intellectual reasoning devoid of faith, and human rationale influenced by the depravity of man would be considered the “tradition of men.”

If you’re thinking that some things never change, you’re on the right track. That’s why the Word of God *is* relevant it doesn’t have to be *made* so. The same message Paul intended for the believers at Colossi he intends for the 21st century Christian today. Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no hope, and man is left to his own ways; which in the end only brings death, hell, and the grave. Thank God for His grace and mercy that brought the Savior down to man! Hence the need of every believer for the word of encouragement from Paul to the Colossians regarding the “tradition of men.”