

Theme: Christians are called to uphold the living apostolic tradition—not as empty ritual, but as the unchanging truth received with a faith that is alive, growing, and joyfully obedient to God's Word.

I. Intro - Tradition! Tradition!

- A. Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, an iconic character
- B. He is struggling to maintain tradition in a changing world
- C. What does Scripture say about tradition?
- D. How are tradition and traditionalism different?
- E. We Believe - In the Living Tradition

II. What Does Scripture Say About Tradition?

- A. Paul teaches that tradition is good and important
Now **I commend you because you** remember me in everything and **maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you**. 1 Corinthians 11:2

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. 2 Thessalonians 2:15
 - 1. Paul commends churches for remembering, maintaining, and holding on to the traditions.
 - 2. The NIV translates this as “teachings,” but the Greek word is really about traditions, not just verbal instruction but also practices.
 - 3. Paul says something similar about the practice of the Lord's Supper
For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 1 Corinthians 11:23

- a. Paul received and passed on the Lord's Supper
 - b. We use these words as we do the tradition of the Lord's Supper every Sunday we gather!
- 4. It is clear Paul thought tradition was important for the life and health of local churches and believers!
- B. Jesus warns that tradition can become a problem!
So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. Matthew 15:6
 - 1. Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees.
 - 2. He says their tradition made the word of God void, empty, utterly nullified!
 - 3. If you read the Gospels, you can see this over and over!
 - 4. If you read church history, you can see where the church followed in the way of the Pharisees!
 - 5. How do we account for both of these ideas?

III. Tradition Versus Traditionalism

- A. Good tradition vs. bad traditionalism
Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. And, I suppose I should add, it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name. - Jaroslav Pelikan
 - 1. This is a helpful way to think about this important idea and question!
 - 2. Good tradition is when we who are alive actively embrace the truths and practices handed down to us - the apostolic tradition - with a faith that is alive, growing, and joyfully obedient to God's Word.
 - 3. Traditionalism is an empty adherence to rituals, without a living, vibrant faith.

B. The dead tree of traditionalism

1. The bad soil of traditionalism is human ideas rather than Scripture

So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. ⁷ You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸ “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” Matt 15:6-9

- a. Notice that the tradition is opposed to the Word of God and actually makes the Scripture void!
- b. Also notice that Jesus says their teaching is nothing more than the commandments of men.
- c. Any “tradition” that is not rooted in the rich soil of Scripture will become dead traditionalism that eventually undermines the effects of the Word of God in the life to the church.
- d. Life does not come from ancient beliefs, words, or rituals of human origin, but only from those that are firmly rooted in the rich soil of Scripture.
- e. We believe and confess the Nicene Creed, not because it is a separate source of revelation, but because Christians across the ages, cultures, and denominations have agreed that it is an accurate summary of what the Scripture teaches!

2. Traditionalism is dead because it does not have the living root of faith

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- a. Notice that Jesus quotes Isaiah to say that their lips confess ‘traditions’ with their lips, but their hearts are far from God.
- b. Jesus says that when we confess one thing with our lips but our heart is not in it, this makes our worship vain, empty, and lifeless.
- c. Even if I participate in a tradition that is planted in the rich soil of Scripture, if I do not have the root of a vibrant, growing, obedient faith, my worship and walk will be lifeless, unable to produce fruit!
- d. As Hebrews 11:6 says, it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God apart from faith!

C. The living tree of tradition

1. Some see the danger of dead traditionalism and decide they will live without traditions, which is impossible!

- a. “No creed but Christ” - which is a creed!
- b. All humans create traditions over time - it is an essential part of our nature and communities, from the most rudimentary primitive tribes to the most advanced organizations and civilizations.
- c. No Creed but Christ - but Arius said he was teaching about Christ! But his teaching denied the Scripture!
- d. The question is not IF we will have traditions, but whether we will have dead traditionalism or living tradition!

2. The opposite of dead traditionalism is not a life without tradition (which is impossible!), but rather living tradition!

3. The living tradition is rich, vibrant, and fruitful precisely because it is the opposite of the dead tree of traditionalism!

IV. Applying the Word - The Living Tradition

A. At BRCC, We Believe - In the Living Tradition!

1. The faith did not begin with us, and we are not making it up as we move along!
2. Our life and vibrancy is not found in constantly changing to mirror the culture, but in being firmly rooted in the living apostolic tradition!
3. Americans in particular are often fascinated and drawn to that which is new and are suspicious of things which are old, but this is a deadly error when it comes to the unchanging truths of God!
4. But in our rootless, confused age that has lost almost all anchor points, we need deep roots more than ever - any young people are hungry for this!
5. Always look for a local church that is consciously aware that it is part of the one, holy, universal, apostolic church and that it is rooted in the living tradition!

B. The Living Tradition - Rooted in the soil of Scripture

1. Scripture is the only soil that will allow us to flourish, the only solid foundation on which we can build!
2. Satan has worked to undermine the authority, truth, and goodness of God's Word from the Garden, and he continues to do this today!
3. But our life and vitality depend, not on either the latest fad or ideas, nor on lifeless rituals, but rather on being planted deeply in the Word of God!
4. Our elders promise we will always make sure that BRCC is biblically based!

5. But each person must personally plant deep roots in the rich soil of Scripture!

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11

- a. They are commended for examining the Scriptures personally!
 - b. They did this to even verify what Paul said!
 - c. This is a pattern for us!
6. Am I personally planting deep roots in Scripture?
 - a. Certainly listen to the teachings deeply and eagerly!
 - b. Read or listen to the Scriptures broadly!
 - c. Read and study with a connect group!
 - d. Use study resources to dig in personally!

C. The Living Tradition - Received with faith!

1. Anything that is not received by a faith that is alive, growing, and joyfully obedient to God's Word is dead traditionalism, not the living tradition!
2. Apart from faith, those who hear even the very word of God will only be hardened!
So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. Hebrews 3:19
 - a. These people saw the miracles in Egypt, went through the Red Sea, ate manna, heard God's Voice on the mountain, and received the Word written with God's hand - but it meant nothing because it was not received with faith!
 - b. This is not about conjuring up a feeling but rather about a heart that is looking to God in active trust, despite whatever difficulties or doubts may arise!

- c. Traditionalism involves a lifeless going through the motions with no response in heart or mind; living tradition is received with active engagement of heart and mind!

3. Am I engaging in Word and worship in active faith?

- a. Each Sunday, ask the Spirit to make you receptive to His work as we gather!
- b. Don't just mouth words as we sing or recite a Creed - engage with mind and heart to worship!
- c. As we pray, engage in crying out to God!
- d. As we open the Scripture, receive it with an active faith - and then go home and study to verify!
- e. As we come to the Table, actively seek and expect the Spirit's work to strengthen you in the faith!

D. The Table of the Living God

1. This Table is not dead traditionalism - it is living tradition for God has promised to meet us here!
2. We approach not out of habit or ritual, but in expectant faith that the Spirit will work here to convict us of sin, to confirm the truth to us, and to strengthen us by grace.
3. Come and be strengthened!
4. The Nicene Creed and the Table

We Believe - In the Living Tradition

Matthew 15:6-9; 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15 (ESV)

November 23, 2025

Communion

Numbers 6:24-26

Teaching keywords: Tradition and traditionalism; Word of God; faith

The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26

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