

The Church - Old Tradition & Old Men - Lesson

Tim Day - 2023



Church Traditions are the hard pathways, well worn over the centuries from the religious traveler in their quest for God. Sadly, most seem to travel these paths to **know about**, rather than to know God personally. Christian trekkers eagerly navigate these byways as if laid down by the hand of God himself.

Respected elders point out their familiar lanes for the younger to follow. Centuries of navigation have made the ground along the way hard and unreceptive to truth.

Luke 8:5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. 6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

Millennia of cherished custom have **trampled God's word** under the **tradition of man**. Along these hard pathways, God's seed struggles to germinate. It is an unyielding ground. **Old church-tradition** tramples the seed as soon as it is disbursed. Birds eat it before it can take root. Much needed rain will not penetrate the hardened surface.

The soil must be made fallow. It must be harrowed to receive the seed and rain, and allow the word to take root and grow. **Tradition stands as the venerable guardian**, preventing God's word from being received in full – in Power, and in Truth.

"Signs and wonders will follow believers as opposed to believers who wonder where's the signage. ... While everything in the Kingdom happens from prayer, at some point Christians have to get off their knees and put their boots on. ... While there is a season for **relying upon the blazes of those who have gone before us**, there is also a time for us take up solid food, a paint can and brush, and venture out into the great unknown where the Spirit promises to always meet us. This is such a season." -
Keith Guinta

These **old traditions** are the counterfeit beliefs **robbing** the Church of **God's intended power**. Many emerge like trails to God's fullness, appearing scriptural, until examined

carefully in the light of God's word. Many people are dying a slow spiritual death because their hope lies in the **old traditions** of the church only, and not in Jesus Christ.

The Hellenistic and classical Greeks actually had a word for such a thing: *nomizo*. The term described a **type of faith** held only because it was **passed down by custom and tradition**.

"Beware of bartering the Word of God for a more suitable conception of your own". – *Oswald Chambers*

"There's **something about tradition that makes us feel secure**, connected, and grounded. But, there is a **dark side to our traditions**, even good traditions of our faith, a dark side so powerful that it can destroy the very thing it meant to preserve. **Satan's agenda is to separate truth from the tradition** so deceptively that even sincere people would hold to a **form of godliness and deny its power**."

– *Chip Ingram*

"One of these days somebody is going to come along and pick up a Bible and believe it – and put the rest of us to shame".

– *Rolfe Barnard, 20th Century American Evangelist, 1940-1950s*

I am speaking about **Old Traditions and Old Men**.

This is a companion teaching to the **Midnight Cry** and **Two Methods of Healing** – both online.

The **Midnight Cry** is coming to refill the Lamp with Oil – to bring the Word and Spirit together – wherein Joel prophesied:

Joel 2:29 ... **in those days** will I **pour out my spirit**. ... 31 ... **before** the great and terrible **day of the Lord** come.

Stand Fast



There is a **good tradition** – the tradition passed down by God, and there is a **bad tradition** – an **old tradition of man** watering down Scripture that robs us of God's intended power. The good tradition is that of which **Paul speaks** when he instructs us:

2 Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, **stand fast, and hold the traditions** which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

“A **commitment to preserving the truth and practice** of the church is what separates ... This is my conviction, long held and deeply confirmed by a knowledge of the fact that modern gospel churches, almost without exception, have **decided to modify the truth and practice a little** in order to have more adherents and get along better.” – *AW Tozer*

We are to “*stand fast, and hold*” the good “*traditions*” – the Word of God that we “*have been taught*”. Herein is the crux of the matter. We are to “*prove (test) all thing; hold fast to that which is good*” (I Thes 5:21); “*hold fast the form of sound words*” (II Tim 1:13); “*Take fast hold of instruction*” (Prov 4:13); “*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught*” (Titus 1:9); and so on.

“The **ecclesiastical straightjacket** is the hardest fetter of them all.” – *AB Simpson*

“If we **obey what God says** according to our sincere belief, God will **break** us from those **traditions that misrepresent Him.**” – *Oswald Chambers*

To hold on to the good, the Truth, we must **let go of the bad**, the compromised version of God's Word. It is the false doctrine and the beliefs of man that do not square with God's clear word. Sadly, it permeates all – yes all, myself included – of our thinking. Much of it is subtle and hard to separate from the pure, unadulterated Word.

“The new theologian has **lost the unique infinite-personal God of biblical revelation and of the Reformation.** Liberal theology of the current thinking has **only god words as a substitute** ... [becoming] **semantic mysticism.**” – *Francis Schaeffer*

For **15 centuries** following Christ's atonement, the **Tradition of Man obscured the Truth** of God's plan of salvation. An apostate church stepped in to fill the dark void with Traditions, mostly *self-serving Traditions and false doctrine*. It was not without much **sacrifice and bloodshed** that the stranglehold of Tradition was broken in the 15th and 16th centuries as Reformers sought again "***the old paths***."

Jeremiah 6:16 Thus saith the Lord, **Stand ye in the ways**, and see, and **ask for the old paths**, where is **the good way**, and **walk therein**, and ye shall find rest for your souls ...

Tyndale, Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Saddler, Calvin and others rediscovered the **simplicity of the Gospel** and **personal relationship with God** available to us all. This Truth we **take for granted today**, cost these and others dearly. Sadly, since the reformation and revivals following these reformers, much **false beliefs and traditions have crept back into the church**.

"Our danger is to water down God's word to suit ourselves. God never fits His word to suit me; **He fits me to suit His word.**" – *Oswald Chambers*

We must strive to "*stand fast*" in the good "*traditions*" of the Word of God. We must seek the **Truth** (Word) and the **Power** (Spirit) of God. To turn away from **either** results in a **lifeless church – religion at best**.

The Present Church

Sadly, the **average church today is a show of religion** – a form of religion; the Church is merely playing church – going through the motions. The Church **lacks power**, and in fact, denies the power; yet, we do not "*turn away*," we continue playing church.

"There is today no lack of Bible teachers to set forth correctly the principles of the doctrines of Christ, **but too many of these seem satisfied to teach the fundamentals of the faith year after year**, strangely unaware that there is in their ministry no manifest Presence, nor anything unusual in their personal lives." – *AW Tozer*

There is indeed an **Old Tradition** robbing the Church of power.

The Church has **compromised with the world**, and as a result, has become anemic – powerless. The **younger generations** seem to **see the innate hypocrisy**, though they remain lost. Offering them more *religion* is a fool's errand. *Jesus did not die for our sin that we would merely go to heaven one day; He died that we might have a **personal relationship with the living God** now and forever more.*

As churches **spiral downward** in attendance, far too many offer more entertainment, more programs, and more activities to stem the tide. It is a **Band-Aid solution** at best.

The Church was born in Pentecost. And to Pentecost we must return.

“The Church would be better off if we would call a moratorium on activity for about six weeks and **just wait on God to see what He is waiting to do** for us.” – *AW Tozer*

Our churches are powerless, because its **congregants lack God's power**. Congregates lack power because so many **pastors lack God's power**. We fail to teach true relationship with God – the source of power. More pastors than not, operate their churches like a business, leaving little to no place for the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit showed up at many of these churches, folks would be running for the door.

"If the Holy Ghost came to some churches, there would be a stampede to the door." - *Leonard Ravenhill*

We need God to **shake us from our comfortable pews and onto our knees**. We need to **repent of playing church** and seek God, once again, in earnest. I believe that we are soon going to witness God '*removing many a lamp stand*.'

Those who are seeking to walk with God in **Power**, and in **Truth**, (*Spirit and Word*) in *holiness, in right relationship, in earnest* will be raised up as beacons of light in an ever darkening day. [*See: Midnight Cry*]

“Remember that ‘the **need to receive, recognize, and rely on the Holy Spirit**,’” is **before all else**. - *Oswald Chambers*

I am convinced that **it will be** those willing to **relinquish the reigns of leadership back to the Holy Spirit**. It will be those who **refuse to compromise God's Word**. It will be **both!** ... *Spirit and Word*.

It will be those with the **boldness** to speak *the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth* – so help them God. It will be those who openly share God's plan of salvation and equip the saints to do the same, to “*seek and save the lost*.” It will be those who **seek the Power of God**, not another form of religion, **while adhering to the integrity of God's Word**.

“We have actually seen a **major shift** in the beliefs and practices of the evangelical wing of the church so radical as to amount to a **complete sellout**; and all this *behind the cloak of fervent orthodoxy*.” – *AW Tozer*

The true church that emerges in the tumultuous **Last Days** will be decidedly different than the *traditional, lifeless, powerless, pretend church-incorporated* of our day.

Slumbering Church

Many of our churches have become religious, steeped in **Old Tradition**. We go through the motions of church attendance and activities, but we expect, and therefore experience, so far less than God promised.

“The **horror of the Same Old Thing** is one of the most valuable passions we (devils) have produced in the human heart—an endless source of heresies in religion.” - *The Screwtape Letters*, CS Lewis

“Christianity, if it is not a supernatural miracle, is a sham.” – *Oswald Chambers*

It need not be so. Christ desires to be manifest in power even in our slumbering churches.

“**Christ [desires to be] manifested** in the place where devils are, the place where religious devils are, the place where false religion and unbelief are, the place where formal religion has taken the place of holiness and righteousness.” – *Smith Wigglesworth*

It is time we sought **relief from our unbelief**. It is time we **dared to believe**. It is time our churches sought the **power** of God again **without compromise**.

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word with signs following**. Amen.

Hebrews 2:4 God also bearing them witness, **both with signs and wonders**, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

“Such words as these in the **second chapter of Hebrews** stand as a rebuke to the unbelieving Christians of our day ... A cold Church is forced to ‘*interpret*’ such language. She cannot enter into it, so she explains it away. ... Such **defensive exegesis** is but a refuge for unbelieving orthodoxy, **a hiding place for a Church too weak to stand**.” – *AW Tozer*

The Downgrade

In the Mid-Victorian era **Charles Spurgeon** spoke much about the compromising of doctrine in his later days, which he called “*The Downgrade*”, by the inclusion of worldly liberal thinking – the philosophies of man. It troubled him deeply, even affecting his health.

“There would come a time when man would **remove all content from faith.**” - *TH Huxley, 1890*

Spurgeon knew that it was a slippery slope that would lead compromise throughout God’s word, even to the essentials of the faith. Since his day it has only grown worse.

“Many have **gone back** because they are **afraid of looking at things from God’s stand-point.** The great **crisis** comes spiritually when a man has to **emerge a bit farther on than the creed he has accepted.**” – *Oswald Chambers*

The Church today is ripe for a **revival of Truth** – and the **Power of God** – that has been forfeited for the sake of **Old Tradition** and *watered-down theology.*

“A **discrepancy between Scripture and experience** is an invitation to draw closer to God, not a theological problem to explain. ... If any promises of Scripture are unfulfilled in your life, **don’t explain them away. Go after them with all your heart.**” - *Chris Tiegreen*

The Truth

Does anyone care about the Truth? It would seem not. As within the world, there is a **Mass Formation Psychosis** at work in the Church. People find comfort in the **consensus beliefs of their peers**, those around them. They live in an **echo-chamber of the consent beliefs** of those with whom they associate.

Our small groups and Bible studies become **groups of likeminded people gloating in their like-mindedness.** Few think outside the box.

Few “*test all things.*” Fewer still “*search the scriptures ... to see if these things are so.*” If they did, they would soon learn that **so much of what they believe, simply isn’t so.** It does not stand up to the Word of God. Why does no one seem to care?

Most simply ‘*believe what they want to believe, because they want to believe what they believe,*’ and for no other reason. They accept the consensus beliefs of those with whom they associate. It is easier to ‘**go along to get along,**’ then to challenge the beliefs of the Church, of their peers.

Most people do not want to know the Truth; they want constant reassurance that what they believe is the Truth.

I am Reformed, I am Wesleyan, I am Armenian, I am Covenant, I am Systematic, I am Charismatic, or I am Dispensational. Why? These are all as the result of the **doctrine of men.** None of their founders were **infallible.** Each divided God’s word to suite their preferences, at least to a degree. Each has embraced Biblical error, in some measure.

Yet, we send **wannabe pastors off to seminary** to **indoctrinate** them, not to the Truth, but rather a particular theology - a doctrine of men. It is little afield of **brainwashing**. They form a church to indoctrinate their flock to their particular belief system. As I have written much about, *paradigm drives conclusion*.

It develops into a **Mass Formation Psychosis** that prevents anyone from stepping out of line, as it were. No one is allowed to **challenge status quo**. Those who do are labeled trouble makers, naysayers, divisive; they are ostracized, and even escorted from the church.

Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Why cannot we be Christians in the ilk of the **Berean** church? Why can we not “*come reason together?*” Why are so many Christians so determined to cling to the doctrine of men over the Word of God? Yet, thankfully, many aren't.

“Within the fold of conservative Christianity there are to be found **increasing numbers** of persons whose religious lives are marked by a **growing hunger after God** Himself. They are **eager for spiritual realities** and will not be put off with words, nor will they be content with correct ‘*interpretations*’ of truth. They are **athirst for God**, and they will not be satisfied till they have **drunk deep at the Fountain of Living Water**. This is the only real harbinger of revival ...” – *AW Tozer*

Most are simply too lazy to search the scriptures. Few have ever tested anything they hear in church; fewer still have ever searched the Scriptures, much less daily. Those who do are shouted down to maintain the psychosis status quo. I suggest we seek the *Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth*.

Leaven

The disciples were confused as Jesus spoke of leaven. After two bread and fishes miracles they had missed the point; that **point being faith**. They thought He was speaking of needing more bread.

Matthew 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the **leaven** of the *Pharisees* and of the *Sadducees*. ... 8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, **O ye of little faith**, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? ... 11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the **leaven** of the *Pharisees* and of the *Sadducees*? 12

Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the **doctrine** of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Jesus was warning of doctrine, specifically false doctrine. The doctrine of the *Pharisees* would be that of **endless rules, legalism and works-based righteousness**. It is rooted in self-righteousness.

In Mark's parallel passage it includes a warning of the "*leaven of Herod*." The doctrine here would refer to the Herodians, a Jewish sect associated with the Pharisees in opposition to Jesus, and assumed to be supporters of Herod. Their doctrine was worldly in nature; **bringing worldly watered-down philosophy into the Church**.

In the letter to the Galatians, we are told that "*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*." (Galatians 5:9) In other words, it **spreads and permeates**; it also **puffs up**. It does so rapidly. False doctrine, likewise, spreads rapidly and permeates. It is best rooted out immediately. For, once leaven spreads, as it does quickly in bread, it is impossible to remove. The damage has been done.

Sadly, our churches are filled with centuries of false doctrine and Old Traditions. Few are Berean enough to test these doctrines against God's word. I suggest we zealously "*test all things*" and "*hold fast that which is true*."

Thessalonians 5:21 Prove (test) all things; hold fast that which is good (true).

Few do. In fact, most **do not want to hear that which they believe may not be true**. Most cling to their cherished doctrine, holding it even above the Word of God. It is a form of **Mass Formation Psychosis** in our churches. They find comfort in the consensus beliefs of their peers. **Most would rather be wrong with the crowd than to stand alone** against the crowd of common belief.

Close to Home

We all have a part in the "downgrade" and "form of religion" church decline in power.

It has gotten progressively worse **on our watch**.

"Signs and wonders will follow believers as opposed to believers who wonder where's the signage. ... While there is a season for **relying upon the blazes of those who have gone before us**, there is also a time for us take up solid food, a paint can and brush, and venture out into the great unknown where the Spirit promises to always meet us. This is such a season." - *Keith Quinta*

Wise Guys



Where have all the fathers gone? Not fathers in the sense of the fathers of children, but the wise, older ones – venerable *elders* in the faith. It is interesting that the last prophecy, before the 400 year **intertestamental silence** of God, dealt with **sharing wisdom**.

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: 6 And ***he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers***, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Granted, this seems like an **odd way to end the Old Testament**. Certainly the relationship of fathers to children, and vice versa is important. Much can be said about fathers being proper leaders, the priests and heads of their households, and societal damage of broken fatherless homes, and so forth. **But, really!** Is it that important in the scheme of spiritual things? What a **strange way to begin 400 years** of silence.

But, as is often the case in God's Word there is something way more being said here. "*The heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers*" deals with **heartfelt concern of the older and wiser to share the God's Truth with the younger**, and a desire of the younger to hear and accept the Truth shared by the venerable older Christian leaders.

In fact, "***father***" in scripture is often a **metaphor for wise men** of God, whereas "***children***" are often **those who refuse the Truth and go astray**, especially those who rebel and are disobedient.

Interestingly, Dr. Luke quotes this prophecy in his **announcement of John the Baptist coming in the spirit of Elijah**; however, he renders the second phrase as "*the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*". **Children** are equated to the "*disobedient*"; **fathers** equates to the "*just*;" moreover, "*to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*"

Luke 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, ***to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.***

As is so often the case in God's Word, Malachi's prophecy, I believe, has a both near and far term implications. The near term implication is, the Spirit of Elijah returning through John the Baptist; the long term, with **Elijah himself physically returning before the Day of the Lord.**

The "*Midnight Cry*" is coming. Thus, we are to be busy "to **make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**"

The Spirit of Elijah should be still active – if we would seek it. Elijah walked so closely with God that he was translated into heaven without tasting death. If ever disobedient children need the wisdom of **fathers rightly related to God**, it is now.

Yet we have grown callous to the children – the merely religious, the rebels, the scoffers, the mockers, the disrespectful, and the flagrant disrespect of God's word. It is easier to **live in our religious bubble**, then to share with the disobedient. Moreover, **many of our would-be elders, lack the true wisdom** of Elijah.

Apparently, this was true in Malachi's day. He was warning Israel to repent and turn back to God. It was the "**fathers**" who had **allowed Israel to drift** from God as they failed to seek Him with their whole heart. These were **leaders who were not properly leading**. As a result, they had nothing of spiritual value to share. We see this same scenario in America today.

"Cattle are driven; sheep are led ... It is especially important that Christian ministers know the **law of the leader**—that **he can lead others only as far as he himself has gone**. ... [It is a] vain attempt to persuade them to go on beyond the point to which he himself has attained." – *AW Tozer*

The world defines wisdom as '*the experienced application of knowledge.*' The Bible defines **wisdom** as '**Jesus Christ.**' It is in Jesus and Him alone, that we find wisdom and life. Proverbs 8 makes this abundantly clear as it describes "*wisdom*" in terms of a preincarnate Jesus Christ. Take Ecclesiastes for example, substitute '*Jesus*' for '*wisdom*' and see if it becomes clear:

Ecclesiastes 7:12 For wisdom is a defence ... but the excellency of knowledge is, that **wisdom** [Jesus] *giveth life* to them that have it.

Then, as now, part of the problem is that **we lack wise men**, especially, **wise older men**. What a sad statement. But, it is empirically true. I am astounded with the ignorance of God and absence of wisdom in so many older men in our churches. **Children are rebelling** from silly older men who proclaim false truth or merely promote a form of religion. They are **looking for Power and Truth** – the real thing.

The Biblical model is that the older are to still to "*flourish in the courts of our God,*" "*bring forth fruit in old age,*" and be "*sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith.*"

Psalm 92:14 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still **bring forth fruit in old age** ...

Titus 2:2-3 **Aged men** [should] be sober, grave, temperate, **sound in faith**, in charity, in patience. ...

Psalm 71:9 Cast me not off in the **time of old age**; forsake me not when my strength faileth ...

Sadly, *few of our aged men* can offer this – many have only confused **doctrine**, a form of **religion**, and **thinly veiled excuses for the absence of God and His Power in their lives** to share. Far too many have wasted their lives not seeking God in earnest and failing to test all things to His Word.

Scripturally, the **elders**, the older men, were to be the ones **filled with God's wisdom after a life of walking closely with God**. Where were they then? Where are they now?

Proverbs 19:20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be **wise in thy latter end**.

Psalm 71:17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18 Now also when **I am old** and greyheaded, O God, **forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation**, and **thy power** to every one that is to come.

Sadly, I could **count on one hand** the older men in most of our churches I would seek for spiritual advice and counsel and have three or **four fingers leftover**.

This is not meant to be a blanket indictment. Certainly, there are many older men who have **grown in the Lord into wise, venerable counselors** – true Biblical **elders**. However, far too many of our matured men and women are nothing more than “*clouds and wind without rain*”.

They have **played church** for decades, rather the seeking God in “*Spirit and Truth*”. Now they reach the later days of their lives, a season when they should be filled with Godly wisdom, with only a **vague semblance of God's power** in their lives. How utterly sad! This is clearly more **Old Tradition** robbing the church of power.

“If a continuous stream of oil (spirit) comes not to the lamp (word), though it burn brightly today, it will smoke tomorrow.” – *Charles Spurgeon*

I have said many times, we should be **seeking God for why we lack the Power** He clearly promised. It is time to stop making excuses. We should **be asking God to pull our experience up to His Word**, rather than *pulling the Word down to our level of experience*.

Isaiah 40:31 But they that **wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength**; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

“This has been realized by a few unusual souls, and the **pity is that they are unusual.**” – *AW Tozer*

“Surely **it should not be necessary to do spiritual work in the strength of our natural talents.** God has provided supernatural energies for supernatural tasks.” – *AW Tozer*

If I had a word of advice regarding a **worthy purpose** for our lives, it is this. We should seek to walk with the Lord in such a way that **by the end of our life we have wisdom to share** – true wisdom; that found only in Jesus Christ – by walking in the Spirit and rightly dividing His Word.

If we do, we will have **Jesus to share.** By our later days we should be so close to Jesus that we are a channel of Him and His wisdom – His Word and His Spirit - for others to follow.

Proverbs 9:10 **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:** and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Proverbs 12:8 A **man shall be commended according to his wisdom:** but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

Pursue Wisdom; pursue God! “*To make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*”

The Midnight Cry is coming!

Be a wise guy!