

Chapter Thirty-One

Concluding thoughts

I retired from the counseling profession as a clinical director of counseling programs for criminal offenders with over 30 years of experience in individual and group counseling and teaching. I am quite skilled at reading people. When certain subjects are brought up, no matter how gracefully, I can watch the body language and see the wall come up. People get defensive and, sometimes, they don't even know why. I believe it all goes back to their “settled theology” and “comfortable traditions”. We tend to like things the way they are and we don't like change. I think the only people who actually like “change” are wet babies. The rest of us, not so much.

The power of traditions to hold us captive to rigid thinking, legalistic requirements, and intense preoccupation with minutiae was clearly seen in the example we began with in Mark 7 with the Pharisees and their obsessions with ritual hand washing “according to the traditions of the elders”. Believers study this and other similar passages and often remark on the erroneous

thinking and practices of these Pharisees. How often, however, do they themselves go down similar paths with their own set of man-made traditions and impose them on others with the same level of rigid and inflexible thinking? How often are they themselves in bondage to false ideas about God and His Word that come from the mouths of false teachers “within the church”? I could go down and catalog the various errors of all the false teachers and false prophets just in our current generation alone. That task is way outside the scope of this book, and it would take years to compile. That fact alone makes me sad.

It is important to remember that traditions may be useful if we keep things in proper perspective. If the tradition does not violate the Word of God, it may be appropriate and give us an opportunity to demonstrate our unity in practice. If, however, it does violate the Word of God, it is definitely not appropriate. Just like the “fences around the Torah” created by the rabbis, it is not a sin for not adhering to a tradition. It's just a tradition. The only authoritative, eternal, inspired body of Truth for us to embrace for our faith and practice is the Word of God. The whole Word of God, from Genesis through Revelation. It is all from our Heavenly Father and it is all for our good!