



Paul & Peter on Traditions

Hebrews 10:25

Introduction

- **Historical & literary context**
- **Issues at stake—Galatians 2:14, note use of word “customs”**
- **Church customs, habits, and traditions many times become the source of extreme conflict within the body of Christ.**

Introduction

- **Where Paul finally came down**
- **Where Peter finally came down**
- **Conflict in Acts 15 with Jerusalem conference. Note issues and the solution.**
- **What can we learn?**

Peter and traditions

- **Peter is not the foundational tradition of the church**
- **1 Peter 1:18—possible for an “empty way of life” to be handed down even when connected to salvation!**
- **1 Peter 2:4—Jesus brought new tradition as a “living stone,” but was rejected by men.**

Peter and traditions

- **1 Peter 3:1-6—cultural traditions of dress and distinction among women being challenged with the core Gospel**
- **1 Peter 5:14—greet one another with a holy kiss**

Consider the “circumcised church” in Jerusalem

- **Perhaps past priests became church leaders, etc. This meant that there was probably a still high priority of emphasis on ritual.**
- **Certainly a reluctance to dispense with circumcision as a religious practice.**
- **Holy days and festival days most likely still practiced.**

Consider the “circumcised church” in Jerusalem

- **Emphasis on lectionary reading from Old Testament passages, chanting of hymns and psalms, responsive praises, perhaps even insistence on meeting on Sabbath evening so that it kept them faithful regarding keeping the Sabbath!**

Paul and traditions

- **1 Corinthians 11:2--I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you.**
- **Galatians 1:14--I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.**

Paul and traditions

- **Colossians 2:8--See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.**
- **Galatians 2:1-3, refuses to participate in a tradition to make a point**

Consider the “Gentile church” in Rome

- **Dress customs and ethnic food would have been different**
- **Perhaps language would have been in Latin instead of Greek.**
- **No problem of eating meat offered to idols.**
- **Difficulty in turning loose of their favorite deity. Syncretism (blending of their earlier pagan practices with Christian faith) would have been easily pursued.**

Consider the “Gentile church” in Rome

- **Would have had difficulty in accepting “Jewish” people into their churches.**
- **Holidays and other cultural days of the Greco-Roman empire would have been important.**
- **In Corinth, especially, glossolalia (tongue-speaking)-perceived as “super spiritual” because of its prevalence in the pagan temple rituals.**
- **Sexual immorality a problem. This explains why in Jude and 1 Peter, agape feasts become orgies.**

Greek/Roman assembly in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

- **Cultural head covering in chapter 11 and what it symbolized when they assembled, both men and women.**
- **Fellowship meal with Lord's supper should be experiential symbol of unity, not one of displays of wealth and omitting the needs of others.**
- **Fascinating that most of what we have regarding the assembly is by indirection, Paul is writing to correct abuses!**

Greek/Roman assembly in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

- **Hymn, word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation, word of thanksgiving,**
- **Notice women are to be silent in this context. It seems that some of the chaos was predicated on this.**
- **Jewish practice of cultural submission, along with Greco-Roman mores in society guided Paul's missiological thinking here. Notice that for Paul the issue is regarding what is either "graceful/appropriate" and "disgraceful." These categories are not salvific, rather cultural.**

Foundational lessons for us regarding traditions

- **Christians coming from two totally different backgrounds can have strong opinions of what ought to be done.**
- **The way different people, depending on their background, form and practice “church,” will have strong cultural, historical, and traditional perspectives.**

Foundational lessons for us regarding traditions

- **“Traditions of our fathers” cannot save, and can become an idol to be worshiped or preserved.**
- **Traditions associated with salvation can be practiced as an empty way of life. This is painful to admit because we hold our salvific traditions tenaciously**

Foundational lessons for us regarding traditions

- **Traditions are to be “withstood to the face” when they negate the grace of God and the power of the cross with the crucified Christ.**