

CUSTOM ... TRADITION ... OR TRUTH?

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We talked last week about the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT — THE WORD OF GOD.

We ended in 2 Peter and saw the importance of knowledge. **God's exceedingly great and precious promises to us come through knowledge.**

Not just any old knowledge — but — **the knowledge of The Truth.** **We need to know where to find The Truth ... and how to detect deception.**

In our societies today ... there is unfortunately not a great deal of truth.

If there is a way of living that leads to Life ... and a way that leads to Death — we need accurate knowledge. **We need to recognise Truth from deception.**

John 17:13-19

13 But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 **I have given them Your word**; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

17 **Sanctify** (*set apart ... protect them ... make sure they don't get swallowed up by the world*) **them by Your truth. Your word is truth.** (*Old Testament scriptures*)

18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, **that they also may be sanctified by the truth.** (*There's a few references in these verses to The Truth*)

SANCTIFIED ... SET APART — BY GOD'S WORD — THE TRUTH.

John 8:30-32

30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, **“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.**

32 **And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”**

It's The Truth that you know that makes you free. The better we know the Word ... the more accurate knowledge we have ... the more free we can be!

There are a lot of “sources” offering us knowledge today — media ... politicians ... universities ... Hollywood stars ... religious leaders — but **THE KEY SOURCE IS GOD'S WORD.**

Isaiah 8:19-20

19 And when they say to you, “Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,” *(inaccurate advice)* **should not a people seek their God?** Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? *(It was common in Isaiah's day ... it's popular today)*

20 **To the law (Torah) and to the testimony. (revelation)** **If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.** *(Not to the wisdom of men ... or those who claim “insight”)*

TO THE LAW (INSTRUCTION) ... AND TESTIMONY (REVELATION)!

Not worldly “experts” who pronounce on gender fluidity ... same-sex unions ... trans-surgery for children. Not churches who drape rainbow flags in their sanctuaries ... or churches who ordain practicing homosexuals as ministers.

Especially in religion ... we need to distinguish between CUSTOM ... TRADITION — AND TRUTH!

That takes effort!

Acts 17:10-12

10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to **Berea**. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that **they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.**

12 **Therefore (because they searched the scriptures) many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.**

The Bereans searched the scriptures ... the Old Testament ones ... to find out if these things were true.

They searched DAILY — they were not lazy or casual.

(AMP) ... **“searching and examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so”**. *(It gives you the impression that it certainly wasn't just a “cat-lick and a promise”)*

2 Timothy 2:1-2

1 **You therefore, my son**, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And **the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.** *(Paul was alluding to the message that he taught)*

2 Timothy 2:15-16

15 **Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.** *(Be diligent: be earnest ... do your best ... exert yourself).*

16 But **shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.** *(But ... shun nonsense: empty opinions).*

Timothy was to be **DILIGENT ... EARNEST.**

(AMP) ... **“correctly analysing and accurately dividing”**

(NASB) ... **“accurately handling the word of truth”**

That is good advice for us too. Helpful against deception.

2 Timothy 3:13-17

13 But **evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.** (*How do we combat this? See next verse*)

14 **But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.**

15 **and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures,** (*Old Testament ... rightly divided*) **which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.** (*The antidote*)

16 **All Scripture given by inspiration of God,** and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 **that the man/woman of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

SCRIPTURES/TRUTH. Produces good fruit!

Truth we can live by!

Matthew 4:1-4

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, **“If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”**

4 **But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”**

Jesus’ response to the temptation: LIVE BY EVERY WORD OF GOD (Deuteronomy 8:3) **Jesus says: “IT IS WRITTEN”.**

FIND THE SCRIPTURES — LIVE BY THEM!

But need caution! Live by Words of God ... not necessarily customs or traditions that grow up around them.

We can make the edge of the Sword blunt? We need our Sword of The Spirit to be sharp — pure — accurate — true.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2

1 “Now, O Israel, **listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live,** and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you.

2 **You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.**

Don't add to ... or take away from God's Word!!

It's a big problem! Temptation to “modernise” ... or “clarify” ... or “soften” the Word of God.

Consider the rabbis and Pharisees at the time of Jesus' ministry. They quoted scripture. Kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days.

Yet they taught that the scripture was insufficient. Allegedly they had additional revelation.

They came up with hundreds of specific rules and instructions “to help” God's Word be effective! They wrecked their swords!

Jesus was often in conflict with the religious leaders and ministers of His day.

Mark 7:1-13

1 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.

2 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault.

3 **For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.** *(The so-called “oral law”)*

4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, **“Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, (Rabbis ... Oral Law)** but eat bread with unwashed hands?”

6 He answered and said to them, **“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: (“hypocrites” — pretenders!)**

‘This people honours Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

7 And in vain they worship Me, (worthless/useless) Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

8 **For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men**—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.”

9 He said to them, **“All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. (They rejected the actual Word of God)**

10 For Moses said, “Honour your father and your mother”; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’

11 But you say, “If a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban’—’ (that is, a gift to God),

12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,

13 **making the word of God of no effect (void) through your tradition which you have handed down.** And many such things you do.”

The “ministers” of the day made the Word of no effect! The Sword was rendered blunt and ineffective.

The people should have looked to the Law and to the Testimony.

Even today ... Jewish rabbis teach some very peculiar things:

- **Sabbath Elevators: No need to do “the work” of pushing a button**
- **Sabbath Lights: Don’t switch on or off during the Sabbath. Do that before the Sabbath**
- **Remove the fridge bulb during the Sabbath!**
- **Toilet Paper: Should be pre-torn before the Sabbath**

Matthew 16:5-12

5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

6 Then Jesus said to them, **“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”**

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.”

8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, “O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?”

9 Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?

10 Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?

11 How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—**but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**”

12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, **but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

BEWARE THE DOCTRINE OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS.

They may refer to a scripture — but often take it out of context or twist the meaning.

Many religious teachers today do the same?

- Christmas celebration
- Easter
- Trinity
- Immortal Soul
- Ever-burning Hell fire
- Infant Baptism

There are plenty of additions and subtractions in the Church-world.

We need to be familiar with the PURE WORD OF GOD.

Evaluate what we hear!

BIBLE IGNORANCE! In a USA poll of “religious” people.

- Only half of church people could name a single gospel
- 2/3rds couldn't identify who gave the Sermon on the Mount (quite a few thought it was Billy Graham!)
- Most couldn't name the first book in the Bible
- Six out of ten church-goers couldn't name even 5 of the 10 commandments
- 12% thought Joan of Arc was Noah's wife
- 40% of born-again Christians believe that Christians and Muslims worship the same God

These religious people don't have a very effective sword!

Psalms 1:1-3

1 Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, (*Torah ... instruction/revelation*)

And in His law he meditates day and night. (*Knows God's Word*)

3 He shall be like a tree

Planted by the rivers of water,

That brings forth its fruit in its season,

Whose leaf also shall not wither;

And whatever he does shall prosper.

Delight in The Word. Meditate. Day & Night. KEEP THE SWORD SHARP AND READY!

It is inevitable that customs and traditions will arise in any church organisation or group of believers.

Some will be fine. Just a preferred way of doing things.

But some customs and traditions may be like the Pharisees traditions — they BLUNT THE WORD OF GOD!

Some that I'm familiar with:

- **Only pray 3 times for Healing**
- **Paul's Thorn In The flesh was a disease given by God**
- **Ladies can't wear trousers with a zip at the front**
- **No beards or moustaches**
- **Must have a "Church" Wedding**
- **Ladies can't wear make-up**
- **Can't drink wine at the Passover — only grape juice**

Some are well-intentioned. Sincere. Maybe okay??

But — are they GOD'S TRUTH??

Are our beliefs clearly in scripture? They should be!

Might be very familiar ... comforting — from highly respected elders.

But: **THE TEST IS ALWAYS the same:**

TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY!!

