

# Learn to Steer Clear of Religious Traps!

The Bible warns believers to be careful that the light in them does not become darkness (Luke 11:35). Darkness descends when the light of the gospel is overshadowed by traditions handed down by men. In such cases, the Word of God is set aside, deprived of its authority and power.

How can we avoid letting our light become darkness? By steering clear of religious traps! The Greek word for “darkness” is *skotos*, which means shadiness or obscurity. The bondage of tradition is part of the shadiness that shuts out the light of the gospel within us.

Understand, tradition in itself is not a bad thing. The problem arises when church people attempt to make their generational rules and regulations equal to the Word of God. When they pass down their religious traditions, social customs, and belief systems by mouth or by practice, without validating their origin or explaining their purpose, they breed shadiness and darkness.

Their doctrines and traditions become like cement that has settled. The church is bound, with no room for any person, place or thing that doesn't fit with what's already there.

The Pharisees were bound by their customs and traditions. Jesus called them hypocrites! In Matthew 23:13, He told them, “You shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in” (NKJV).

Two verses later He said, “You travel land and sea to win one proselyte [or convert], and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves” (v. 15, NKJV).

Apparently, there is a demonic double portion that operates through this religious, anti-evangelistic spirit!

As the return of Jesus draws closer, you would think that the hearts of God's people would grow closer to Him. The apostle Paul knew differently. In 2 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul spoke about the apostasy, or the falling away from the truth. He listed numerous spirits that would be operating in church people in the last days.

These people, Paul said, would have a "form of godliness" (v. 5, NKJ). The Greek word for "form" is *morphosis*, which means "an appearance." There are fashions in the church world today that put pressure on Christians to present a certain appearance, to be religiously "in vogue." In many churches, if a ministry gift isn't wrapped in the right package, it's not considered religiously correct.

But Romans 12:1 shows us how we must present ourselves as believers. We must not have a "form of godliness" that is worldly in nature. We must not be conformed to the world but transformed!

The Greek word for "transformed" is related to our English word *metamorphosis*, which means "to change appearance." Only as we are changed in appearance will people see the light of the gospel in us and "come in."

Religious spirits of tradition work to keep a church from being transformed. They block the light necessary to draw in new converts. When we finally deal with the frivolous church customs and traditions, great evangelism will begin to take place!

Thankfully, there is hope. First Peter 1:18 tells us that we have been " [the] aimless conduct received by "tradition" (NKJV) from our forefathers." We have been redeemed! Through the power of God's Spirit we can reject dark, aimless, and harmful traditions that are based on man-made doctrines and

not on the Word of God.

Will it be easy? No, but the reward will be great. It was for me!

My prayer is that God will anoint and empower you to see the religious spirits of tradition standing in the doorway of your calling. Don't let your light become darkness! Reject these religious spirits, and make a path for the next generation to see the light and come in.

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