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“From the Pastor’s Desk”

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TRADITIONALISM, IS IT GOOD OR BAD

The longer I live, the more I see a trend in our society, government, and even the church against any or most traditional methods in this secularized world. Where it concerns me the most is in the local church. It is taking place in regards to how church services, weddings, and even are funerals conducted.

Multi-site Churches. We are also seeing changes in church construction in that churches are moving away from one site to multi-sites congregations all under one form of leadership. This possibly is happening due to extravagant costs of building larger buildings and the city requirements for excess parking to accommodate such large attendance; as well as to provide more opportunities for people to be engaged in some form of interpersonal relationship and involvement.

Churches Identity. Many churches are breaking away from denominational oversight and growing more independent from "headquarter rules and regulations" as well as to avoid emphasis on particular doctrines of the faith which identifies the local congregation to a particular group such as being known as being an Pentecostal, Baptist, or Methodist particular kind of church. I believe more and more church's names will not be identified by any particular group or doctrine. It will much like one church that I recently saw with the name, "**Church on the Hill.**"

Church Weddings: More Weddings, for instance, are taking place in other places than the local church. There seems to be a trend by many couples who no longer attend the local church to choose such places as a community hall, hotel, beach, park, or secure the services of a business, which provides food, banquet services that does such things as a business. Even the Clergy is being replaced these days by a justice of the peace, or nonprofessional, or friends who they prefer to do the pastor's part in the ceremony.

Church Funerals: How funerals are conducted these days is also quickly changing with members of the family or friends of the deceased taking a more active part in the service with more and more time on personal eulogies, rather than a message from the clergy. In fact more often than ever the Clergy is being left out of the service and preparation altogether.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCE OF SUCH CHANGES

What are the consequences of such changes in methods of doing things as I have mentioned? One thing that concerns me which is bound to happen with such changes where there will be less emphasis on godliness, spiritual obligations, eternal consequences as well as moral obligations. Now maybe some clergy have been guilty of going too long with exhortation in the past and thus have created a reaction from some who prefer less emphasis on spiritual matters. What concerns this writer is such reaction is capable of creating more problems than it actually solves.

When people get married they need to take their vows seriously and those vows should meet the mandate of the Holy Scriptures and should state till "*death us do part*" and not "as long as our love lasts for each other." The vows are not just to each other, but should be a pledge to include "God" as well. That is if they want God's blessing to insure His help in sustaining and supporting the marriage.

When people pass away, while eulogies are nice and proper, I believe that the traditions of the past have served to give comfort and solace to those who attend such services for the deceased. I realize the Lord did once say, "*Let the dead bury the dead.*" Thus maybe the Clergy is not always necessary for such a service. Someone needs to remind the living of eternal issues at such a time as this, and who better can do that than the Clergy can?

The movie and play, "**Fiddler on the Roof**," which I have enjoyed over the years with its music and superb acting has been very entertaining. I am sure those who have seen this piece of art remember the main theme was about poking fun at "*tradition*." It seems like each of his children, as they came into adulthood, kept challenging his "*tradition*" on who and what a good mate should be for each of his daughters. Each daughter kept choosing one that became a challenge for him to accept...because of tradition.

While I found the play entertaining for the evening, I find the seriousness of the experience in real life not so entertaining. I find that what Hollywood exploits through its movies, has far greater consequences in real life. Throwing out tradition is not always a good thing. While it is true that some things from the past can be improved upon, it nevertheless should not give us a license to throw out the "baby" with the bath water. After all, there was a reason why some methods in the past were chosen and we need to, once again, consider this before we cast some forms of these traditions completely off.

Now I will not attempt in this article to make a defense on every tradition from the past in regards to weddings, funerals, and whether churches should be one or multi-congregations in different parts of the city. However, I do want to give counsel on the danger that comes when a people become "***anti-traditional***." The Scripture warns us to be aware of Satan devices.

Satan loves nothing better than to steer people away from godly counsel. If there is ever a time, when godly counsel from the Clergy should have the permission to give counsel, it should be when there is a marriage or a funeral. If that opportunity from the Clergy is removed who then is better qualified to give such proper counsel? That is the real question.

As a Clergyman, there are some people who probably will feel that I am rather biased with my opinion. Nevertheless, there is a reason why Clergy has been chosen over the years and I do believe that those reasons need to be defended and considered when vital decisions are being made on who is involved where these things take place.

What is the consequence of a secular type of wedding in place of a sacred one with a Godly ordained official? What real comfort can be given when the Holy Scriptures and proper instructions are left out of a funeral service? Are we that desperate to ignore the consequence of "the Judgement" that we do not want it ever brought up at such a time as this? Or have we bought into the idea that everybody "*good*" goes to heaven without a spiritual "*new birth*" taking place?

When I talk about "*tradition*", I do not want to imply that everything in the past has been perfect, because I know it hasn't. Music in churches has always changed with the times as far as style is concerned. There is nothing wrong with that. It is only when the songs fail to meet the criteria of good doctrine, in the wording of such songs, that they need to be examined. I know for some of us old timers, the new melodies are a challenge...but at least we can mouth the words, share with the young their joy in singing to their beat, and tune.

Whether a church meets in one location or ten is not the question. The question is whether the oversight is according to the Scriptural pattern as to its godliness in character, disciplined maintained, and purity of doctrine taught. If a Church meeting in several locations can fulfill those requirements in its leadership and oversight, more power should be given to them to fulfill Christ's great commission.

Any change that takes place whether it takes place in our community whether it be in government, the local church, or in the home, we will have those who are resistant to such change. On the other hand, there will be those who will welcome it. Whether we are for or against such changes, we need to always bring God and His Kingdom into the picture when considering such changes. We all want church growth but such growth should never be sought at the expense of godliness and Christian values. We cannot compromise on that...regardless.

Just think, if we are given the opportunity to live long...maybe in time we will adjust to the needed changes to accomplish the work which God has given us to do. Just think of the radical change that our Lord had to endure when he left heaven and joined the human race. Talk about a radical change...it was radical. But He was also able to bring a greater change in each life as a result. So adjust when you can for the greater good without compromising your faith and conscience. Amen