

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



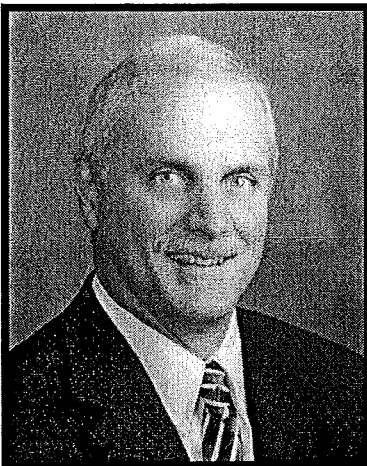
Volume XXVIII

June 2008

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Brian R. Kenyon

Chosen As Next Director of the Florida School of Preaching



In the May Board meeting of the Florida School of Preaching, Brian R. Kenyon was chosen to replace Jackie M. Stearsman as the director of the school. Brian will assume his full duties as director in May 2009. Brian has served as associate director of the school since 2003.

Brian is a 1991 graduate of the Florida School of Preaching. His other educational background includes an AS in Underwater Technology from Florida Institute and Technology (1984), a BA in Bible and in Philosophy from Freed-Hardeman University (1993), and a MA in New Testament from Freed-Hardeman University (1995).

Before enrolling at the Florida School of Preaching, Brian worked with churches in Louisiana. While in school here, he worked with the North Jackson Avenue church of Christ, Bartow, Florida. After graduating from the school, he preached for the Enville church of Christ, Enville, Tennessee, and the Friendship church of Christ, Friendship, Tennessee. He now works with the Eagle Lake church of Christ, Eagle Lake, Florida. Brian has also been on mission trips to Scotland, Jamaica, Ghana, and Bermuda.

Brian's devotion to the Florida School of Preaching, and that for which it stands, is beyond question. As stated, he completed the courses required here to receive a certificate in 1991. His son, Rick, finished his studies here in May 2006 and is now in school at Freed-Hardeman University, expecting to graduate in December 2008. His daughter, Autumn, will be married in June to Will Vann, who this past May completed the two year program at the Florida School of Preaching to prepare himself to preach the Gospel of Christ.

Amber, Brian's wife, is known by all who are familiar with the school as a great asset to Brian. The school is indebted to her for the sacrificial services she has rendered the school for a number of years. Amber has met with the female friends and wives of students to encourage them in the role of being a servant of the Lord, especially in helping each one's husband as he serves the Lord's church as a Gospel preacher. Each year at lectureship time, Amber is busily engaged in book and literature distribution from the school. For a number of years she has traveled with Brian to Henderson, Tennessee, during Freed-Hardeman's annual lectureship in order to assist him in promoting the school there.

Having worked with Brian for a number of years, it is my honored privilege to recommend him to the Board as the next director. I present him to you, our supporters and friends, as a faithful brother worthy of our respect and support as director of the Florida School of Preaching. —Jackie M. Stearsman, Director

Make Plans Now To Attend Our 34th Annual Lectureship

“Do You Understand Restoring The Erring?”

Monday through Thursday, January 19-22, 2009

Binding Tradition

By Gene Burgett

The Pharisees are often misunderstood. This is not to defend them, but if accusations are to be made they ought to be accurate. The Pharisees are often accused of being overly dedicated to keeping even the smallest details of God's law. However, Jesus, who was certainly no admirer of the Pharisees, never made such an accusation. The Lord's problems with this Jewish sect fall into two categories. First, they were hypocrites because they used religion to cloak their wickedness (Mt. 23:14). Second, they were meticulous to bind the traditions of men.

Christians always have three paths before them when it comes to understanding and applying the word of God. (1) There is the path of advocating what God prohibits. (2) There is the path of forbidding what God allows. (3) There is the path of not veering into either of the above named extremes by refusing to go beyond what God has had written in the Bible.

Jesus accused the Pharisees of forbidding what God allows when he charged them with "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down." (Mk. 7:13). It is the ever beckoning danger of this second

path, as set forth in Mark 7:1-13, that is the focus of the remainder of this article.

Historical Context

Mark relates that at the bottom of the controversy under consideration was that the Pharisees and Scribes saw Jesus' followers "eat bread with defiled, that is, unwashed hands" (Mk. 7:2). In verses 3-4 Mark assumes his audience may not be familiar with the accusation so he offers a brief explanation, which he summarizes by saying the Pharisees and the Jews "do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders." It is sometimes noted that truth can be stranger than fiction, and when one understands the "special way" of washing to which Mark refers it might be tempting for readers to think I am making all this up. For that reason you are invited to read Edersheim's explanation of this practice.

If the hands were "defiled," two affusions were required: the first, or "first waters" to remove the defilement, and the "second," or "after waters" to wash away the waters that had contracted the defilement of the hands. Accordingly, on the affusion of the first waters the hands were elevated, and the water made to run down at the wrist, while at the second waters the hands were depressed, so that the water might run off by the finger points and tips. (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1:618)

Let us make this simple. Per tradition, one's hands had to be washed

twice with the hands being held in a prescribed way each time. The first washing was to remove defilement and the second washing was to remove the defiled water of the first washing. It is easy to see how this could be carried on to infinity, for since the waters of the first washing were ceremonially defiled and therefore a second washing was required to remove them, then why not a third washing to remove the second water defiled by the first waters? Had the situation not been so pathetic it might have actually been rather humorous.

With this slice of tradition before us, a very important question needs to be asked if we are to avoid going down the path followed by the Pharisees: How does tradition get elevated to the status of Scripture?

How Traditions Become Regarded As Scripture

Areas that are key when considering how traditions come to be

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Training Preachers Since 1969

Glenn Burgess recently resigned from the Florida School of Preaching board of directors due to his relocating to Texas. He served on the board since 1995, and he taught one of our extension classes in Clearwater. He served as the preacher for the Booth Street church of Christ in Safety Harbor, Florida, since 1990. We appreciate his dedicated service to the Lord and to the school. We wish Glenn well as he serves Jesus in this new location.

regarded as Scripture are origin and repetition.

The origin of many traditions is the opinions of highly regarded people. It is an innocent situation. An individual rightly respected for his wisdom is asked his view of a certain situation or question. In giving an answer the highly respected one never intended to pontificate on the matter, but, over time, the judgment he renders can easily come to be regarded as Scripture. Note Edersheim's statement regarding how the hand washing tradition came into being.

It was reserved for Hillel and Shammai, the two great rival teachers and heroes of Jewish traditionalism, immediately before Christ, to fix the Rabbinic ordinance about the washing of hands, as previously described. This was one of the few points on which they were agreed, and hence emphatically "a tradition of the Elders," since these two teachers bear, in Rabbinic writings, each the designation of "the Elder."

While the wisdom of men and women of experience and stature ought to be given great weight (Pr. 24:6), perspective must be kept lest these opinions come to be regarded as matters of obligation rather than matters of opinion. This problem has sometimes been termed *preacheritis*, when the judgment has originated with a highly regarded preacher.

Repetition often leads to binding matters of tradition as if they were Scripture. It is not unusual to hear people regard a baptism as unscriptural if the specific phrase, "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" is not pronounced over the event. While baptism is to be done in the name

of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19), that phrase is never set forth in Scripture as a mantra to be droned at every immersion. So why do some wish to make those words a requirement in order for a baptism to be valid? I highly suspect it is because through the years those words have been pronounced at baptisms with such regularity so as to become regarded as a Biblical requirement. Take most any Scriptural practice authorized to be done in several ways and begin doing it one way, and pretty soon some will regard it as the only way it can be done.

The Result Of Binding Tradition

Mark 7:1-13 reveals three tragic results when traditions come to be regarded as Scripture. The first result is that Scripture is nullified. Jesus said the hand-washing tradition of the Jews led to "laying aside the commandment of God" (v.7), rejecting the commandment of God (v.9), and "making the word of God of no effect" (v.13). It seems that binding the traditions of men and keeping the word of God are mutually exclusive concepts—you cannot do both. If the traditions of men are being bound, something Scriptural is being rejected. Make a certain verbal phrase mandatory at baptism and perfectly Biblical baptisms are regarded unscriptural.

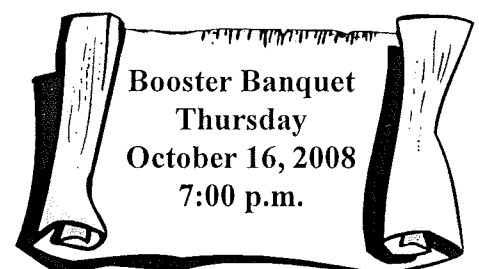
Another result of binding tradition is that important things are often left undone as we find ourselves majoring in minors. The example Jesus offers is the Jewish practice called "Corban" (Mk. 7:10-12). By designating one's funds a "gift to God" one was not obligated to use them to provide care for aged and needy parents. The obligation to care for one's parents is set forth in the fifth commandment, "Honor your father and your mother" (Ex.

20:12). The Corban tradition voided the fifth commandment, leaving needy parents destitute as a human tradition trumped a divine obligation.

The final result when traditions are elevated to the status of Scripture is that people are falsely accused of sin. The accusation of the Pharisees is put in the form of a question: "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders?" The Pharisees are careful in the way the charge is worded. It is the tradition of the elders that has been violated, not the word of God, but the end result is the same—fellowship has been broken. In the minds of the Scribes and Pharisees there can be no fellowship with those who refuse to bow to the hand-washing tradition. Such may not be explicitly called transgression of God's will, but the culprit is ostracized like those who do violate the commands of God, and thus many good names are tainted.

Conclusion

It is sometimes tempting to regard forbidding what God allows as somehow less insidious than advocating what God forbids. Perhaps this is because forbidding what God allows seems passive, while advocating what God forbids appears to be active in nature. Forbidding what God allows is often called "the safe thing to do." Jesus' controversy with the scribes and Pharisees over hand-washing reveals that both practices net the same result, and that is a nullification of God's word. 🌿



Thanks to our generous supporters who made our 39th school years one of the best! As we enter the summer months, some think that we no longer need financial support. While it is true that there are no students at this time, there are still expenses (copying machine lease, social security taxes, office expenses, staff, etc.). There may be some who cannot support the school on a monthly basis but who would still like to help. Summer support may be the perfect opportunity for such individuals and congregations. Why not determine to send a contribution for the three summer months and be a fellow worker with us (3 Jn. 8)? We look forward to our 40th school year beginning August 11. Thanks, again, to our supporters!

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*Our final deposit for the month is made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.

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