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Everybody put a little bit diffing the twists of what he or she would like to be with God. Why? Peter writes, . . . knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct [conduct going nowhere] received by tradition from your fathers. . . . (1 Peter 1:18) Tradition is that cultural way, method, or outlook that is imposed on us from birth. The influences of our culture are layered on us like an onion. What layers of culture and therefore, traditions, heaped on us? The initial layer is impressed on us by the home, the family—or the lack thereof. It begins to set our minds about what is important in life. Then there is a slightly larger segment—the neighborhood. At first, the neighborhood does not have a great deal of influence, but once we begin to expand our lives outside of the home, mother's and dad's influence slowly begin to wane. Our peers in our neighborhood begin to impress upon us a little bit broader cultural layer because we have escaped, as it were, from the home and have now gone out into the neighborhood. We keep layering it out: The city has an impact on us, the state, the region, and then the nation. Peter said that we have been redeemed from tradition. In the United States, this thing about tradition has become crazy. One of the buzzwords of our time is multiculturalism. We have people in the United States who want to make sure that English is not the official language of the nation because they want to hang on to another culture. It used to be that, when people immigrated to our nation, they strove to conform to the American culture and tradition. They wanted to become full-fledged Americans. So what did they have to do in order to do that? They had to submit to the customs and traditions of their new homeland. But today there is a powerful drive to get people to do just the opposite, to hold on to the customs and traditions of their former homelands. This process is helping to tear the nation apart! We are slowly being driven toward an absolute confusion of ideas because these cultures cannot agree. We have an environment ready-made for conflict—unless someone submits. The world is the way it is because Adam and Eve took of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which indicates knowledge from many sources. This was sort of a preview of multiculturalism—knowledge from many sources without the spiritual guidance of God. We have to get God into the picture. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. (1f Thessalonians 2:15) God has His traditions too! On the one hand, we have the traditions that God is teaching us through His Word, through His ministers; He has traditions to which He wants His Family to conform. But we have brought traditions with us out of the world. It sets the stage for conflict! The traditions of God and the traditions that we have from the world will not mesh! When we work to this our desire to be free, it makes an interesting mess! But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. (1f Thessalonians 3:6) The major difference is that His traditions are right and true, and they work! However, because conversion is a process, and because we do not instantly and magically know all of God's traditions, we all bring our former traditions into the church with us. Thus, the church is set up for conflict, which is a major reason why Paul wrote the book of Ephesians. It shows that for there to be unity, both Israelite and Gentile have to submit to Christ because both of their cultures and traditions are wrong! Again, we have been mis-educated by the traditions of family, society, region, state, and nation. We carry those characteristics with us. Not every one of them is wrong, but they do set us up for conflict with God and with each other. Only the traditions of God are completely right and true and will produce the right things. When there is conflict between the traditions that we have brought in to the church and God's traditions, we have to submit to God because we are not free to do as we please. If we do as we please because we put our own particular spin on what we think liberty is, it will bring us into conflict with God—and that is not nice! It is detrimental to one's spiritual health and one's relationship with God! The second reason we have trouble is because our attitudes are perverted. And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh [notice what drives human beings: the lusts of our flesh], fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:1-3) There is a spirit characterized by desire—just—to have it our way. Mis-education combined with negative attitudes equals conflict. Human nature is a package of attitudes dominated by the desire to gratify the self. That is why there is so much conflict (see James 4:1-3). Our desires—whether it is husband and wife in marriage, or in business, or in politics among nations—keep crashing into one another. Conflict will never end until everyone is keeping the traditions of God. That is why we are in the process of conversion. It is our responsibility to convert over to God's traditions so that we stop crashing into one another. We have to overcome this mis-education and this attitude to gratify the self. Satan is ultimately the source of both of these. We have to recognize that we are still influenced and that we pick up on his broadcasts. It makes submitting so difficult. The adversary is still working and bringing about conflict. Anywhere Satan goes, conflict erupts. He is a master at producing it. Liberty without guidelines (like laws, principles, doctrines, policies, or even the example of another person) to which one submits (meaning we as individuals submit through self-control or self-governing) will turn into chaos because of the desire for the power to control. The desire to control is what we would call freedom—liberty. That is why there are so many horrible divorces and re-marriages. Submission, whether accepted willingly or grudgingly, is a necessity. It is better to accept it and do it grudgingly than not to do it at all. We have to understand, then, that there is authority. It may be God, another human being, a law, a precedent, etc., but there will be an authority. It is an unavoidable fact of life. We face it all the time. Everybody lives under authority, and everybody must submit, even if it is only to the laws of nature—there is hardly a person who will not submit to the law of gravity while standing on the edge of a thousand-foot drop. It is that simple. Thus, because we step away from the cliff and not over it, we have submitted to a law. Why? Because we want to preserve our liberty, our desire to live. We know if we break that law—if we do not submit to it—it will break us to bits at the bottom of the cliff. Notice that this subject has a broad application. Submission does not involve only relationships with God or relationships with other people. Submission occurs in almost every area of life, even in submitting to things we would call common sense or the laws of nature. Anybody who has the mind of God will be looking for every opportunity to submit because that is paradoxically, where man need freedom lies. Recall John 8:32, where Jesus says, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Is not His implication that one shall be free only if he submits to the truth? Knowing the truth is not enough; liberty comes to those who submit to the truth. If one is standing on the edge of a thousand-foot drop, common sense and the truth of God say that one should obey the law of gravity—unless one desires to give up his freedom to live. True liberty consists of submitting to truth. It is the liberty God wants us to have. John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023) Submitting (Part 1) Page 25 Genesis 1:26-27 The word "image" is translated from the Hebrew tselem, and it means "shape, resemblance, figure, shadow." 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