

2018-12-16 - Nothing Is To Be Added - 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:107-108

Scripture Reading: 1 Chronicles 13:1-14; 15:1-15

Sermon: "Nothing Is to Be Added" 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Benediction: Psalm 119:114

INTRODUCTION

Jesus of Nazareth lived a loving, righteous life, then died nailed to a cross not for His own sins, because He had none, but for the sins of us sinners, whom He came here to save from the wrath of God. He was buried, but He rose again to life on the first day of the week. So we meet with the church on this first day of the week, as the bible says that the apostle Paul did, and we call it the Lord's Day, as the bible says that the apostle John did. This is our God-ordained, primitive, apostolic religious observance.

But of course there is another major religious observance going on around us right now, with its high point not on the first day of the week, but on December 25th.

In the assembly of this church for worship, we do not join in that religious observance, but instead try to maintain the purity and simplicity of scriptural New Testament worship.

That is not how I was raised, however, and not how I ministered for years, up until about twelve years ago. I used to be all in for that religious observance; I used to be a zealous leader of it. I thought zeal for December 25th was an important aspect of being a good Christian and good pastor. I have since learned better from the Puritans, and ultimately from our Lord Jesus through the bible. Some of you have learned the same, either with me, or on your own path.

Some of you are new to this church, and might not know our mind on this. Others of you know something about this, but still have a number of questions, and are not settled in your own conscience about this. And now it is upon us again. So today I address this topic from the scriptures, from essentially only one angle, which I summarize in the text of our confession, chapter one:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is...in the Holy Scripture: ...nothing...is to be added...by...traditions of men.

TEXT

2 Timothy 3:14-17 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, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (16) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

BODY

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is...in the Holy Scripture: ...nothing...is to be added...by...traditions of men.

- I. Continue in the Things You Know You Have Learned from Our Lord's Apostles
 - A. There are things you know you have learned from our Lord's apostles
 1. They are things such as these:
 - a) the Word of God became flesh and dwelt here among us---the Lord Jesus Christ
 - b) all who repent of sins, believing in Him, are forgiven their sins, and will have eternal life with Him instead of eternal damnation with the devil
 - c) we who so repent and believe have become His disciples, and are to be baptized
 - d) we are to look forward with a sure hope to the day when He will come back here and change us to be like Him
 - e) we who are His disciples are to shine like lights in this world by submitting to authority, working to provide for ourselves and our families, loving the other disciples of Christ, and in all other ways doing the good works that God has ordained for us to do
 - f) we assemble with the church on the first day of the week
 - g) we speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, making music in your hearts to the Lord
 - h) we pray with all kinds of prayers and thanksgiving for all men
 - (1) men, not with wrath and disputing, but lifting up holy hands
 - (2) women, adorned not with an external display of elaborate hairdos or gaudy jewelry or expensive clothes, but with the inner beauty of a quiet and gentle spirit
 - i) we read the scriptures; listen to them read; preach and teach the scriptures; listen to the preaching and teaching; we preach Jesus Christ crucified, buried, and risen again---the gospel of forgiveness

of sins and eternal life for all who repent and believe in Jesus; we teach the disciples of Jesus Christ to observe all things He has commanded us; we encourage one another with our hope in resurrection when the Lord comes back; we take care that what is preached and taught is according to the pattern of sound words laid down by the Lord's apostles, that we neither distort the gospel, nor listen to those who do

- j) we set aside and gather up the offering, the money that is used to pay whatever expenses are necessary in the work of the Lord's church
- k) we take the Lord's Supper, remembering the Lord's body, proclaiming His death until He comes
- l) we baptize any new disciples there may be, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- m) we eat our food together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God
- n) we keep firm control of our tongues, so that we will say what good things are for building up others

These are things we know we have learned from our Lord's apostles

- 2. always there is pressure on us not to continue in these things
 - 3. but we learned them from our Lord's apostles, in the bible; and His apostles tell us, in the bible, to continue in these things; so we continue in them, knowing from whom we have learned them
 - 4. APPLICATION: Continue in these things, praying in faith that by continuing in these things the Lord will work powerfully in you for your sanctification and through you to bless other people.
- B. There are other things you have learned, but not from our Lord's apostles
- 1. they are things such as these
 - a) we refrain from singing about the Lord Jesus' birth until after Thanksgiving, or the first week of December; then sing only songs about His birth until January
 - b) we refrain from reading the bible passages about Jesus' birth until December; then we read such passages exclusively until January
 - c) we put up a tree in the church's meeting house, and decorate it with crosses, doves, stars, and lights
 - d) we set up a small set of statues, of shepherds, wise men, animals, angels, Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus
 - e) we cancel the preaching of the word at least once in favor of a musical drama performance; we cancel the meeting of the church altogether if it falls on December 25
 - f) we wear green and red clothes
 - g) we give candy and other presents to children at church

- h) we distribute candles, turn off the lights, and light the candles while singing
- i) we tell everyone that Jesus was born on December 25th, when it was cold and snowing

That is a sample of things we have learned

- 2. always there is pressure on you to do these things in the assembly of the church every December
- 3. but although we learned these things as we were growing up, we did not learn them from our Lord Jesus through His apostles; and our Lord's apostles did not tell us to continue in these things
- 4. APPLICATION: Do not, therefore, feel obligated to continue in any such things
 - a) for the sake of devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ
 - b) thinking that in the doing of them you will be sanctified or other blessed through you

Continue in the Things You Know You Have Learned from Our Lord's Apostles

- II. Recognize that Of the Things You Have Known from Childhood, Only the Scriptures Are Able to Do What Is Really Needed
 - A. From childhood you have been taught things
 - 1. your parents and others taught you things when you were a child
 - 2. some of those things are from the bible
 - 3. other of those things are not from the bible
 - B. The things you have been taught that are in the bible, the Holy Scriptures, are different from everything else you have learned in that they are given by inspiration of God; they are breathed out by God
 - C. As such, they have certain properties
 - 1. they are able to make sinners wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (3:15)
 - 2. they are profitable for building up the saints in the faith (3:16)
 - D. The things you have been taught that are not in the bible lack those qualities
 - 1. certainly nothing known to be untrue has those qualities
 - a) that the wise men appeared at the stable the night Jesus was born
 - b) that the wise men were three kings
 - 2. not anything unknown to be true, either
 - a) that Jesus was born December 25
 - b) that it was cold and snowy when Jesus was born
 - c) that the wise men were three in number; that they came on camels
 - d) that Mary rode to Bethlehem on a donkey
 - e) that there were animals present when Jesus was born, and that they were lowing, but He did not cry
 - f) that the angels were over the stable

3. not anything that involves looking at images has those qualities
 - a) that in worship you should set up a tree, decorate it, and look at it
 - b) that you should put up a nativity scene and look at it
 - c) that you should make banners with images on them and look at them
 - d) that you should dim the lights, light candles, and look at them
 4. these things you have been taught, that are not in the bible, cannot do what we need done; they are impotent for doing what is needed
 - a) they cannot contribute the least help to sinners being saved
 - b) they cannot do the least little bit of building up the church in the faith
- E. APPLICATION: Saving sinners and building up the church in the faith are always needed. This church is experiencing a difficult time because of conflict surrounding the case of church discipline. Every disciple wants to do what he can to help. Recognize that doing what you have learned from the bible is sure to help, while doing what you have learned elsewhere may not.
- F. APPLICATION: Consider at what cost we add things to the church's worship assembly that are not from the scriptures
1. we lose power in apologetics
 2. we lose precious time
 - a) in preparation before worship
 - b) in the worship service
 - c) afterward
 3. we lose focus
 4. we lose confidence in the bible
- G. APPLICATION: Consider what things we do, that we do not mean to do, when we add things to the church's worship assembly that are not from the scriptures
1. we tempt the Lord
 2. we confuse our children about the Lord Jesus

Continue in the Things You Know You Have Learned from Our Lord's Apostles

Recognize that Of the Things You Have Known from Childhood, Only the Scriptures Are Able to Do What Is Really Needed

- III. Understand that As the Church's Pastors Minister, We Are Perfect for that Ministry As Equipped By the Scriptures
- A. Please do not stumble over my saying that the church's pastors are perfect
 - 1. I certainly do not mean that in any general sense, but in a very limited sense
 - 2. the various translations say that by the scriptures the man of God may be
 - a) absolute or perfect or complete or competent; and
 - b) fully furnished or thoroughly equipped or made perfect unto all or every good work
 - B. It is easy enough to understand and accept that the church's pastors are equipped for our work by the scriptures
 - C. But the bible teaches us that by the scriptures we are perfect, complete, absolute, competent, for our work; that we are fully furnished, thoroughly or perfectly equipped
 - D. That means if something you have learned makes you think that the church's pastors should do something in the month of December each year, but it is not something the Holy Scriptures tell us to do, whatever that is must not actually be part of the good work the man of God is supposed to do
 - E. Examples
 - 1. if we do not say the name of the day observed on December 25, it might occur to someone that we are lacking something, that we are remiss in our duties somehow; but of course the Holy Scriptures do not use that term; it is not in the bible; and by the scriptures we are competent, complete, absolute, perfect for every good work in the ministry
 - 2. if we do not tell the church to assemble for a special worship service on December 24 or 25, it might occur to someone that we are lacking something, that we are remiss in our duties somehow; but of course the Holy Scriptures do not say anything about the church having such a special worship service, and by the scriptures we are competent, complete, absolute, perfect for every good work in the ministry
 - 3. if we do not tell the church to put up a tree and decorate it, to light candles, to exchange gifts, to give children candy, to put on a musical, or whatever else it might be, and if it occurs to you that the church's pastors are not doing what we should to lead the church in worshipping the Lord Jesus, consider that the bible does not tell us to do any of those things, yet by the scriptures we are made perfect for our ministry

CONCLUSION

Continue in the Things You Know You Have Learned from Our Lord's Apostles

Recognize that Of the Things You Have Known from Childhood, Only the Scriptures Are Able to Do What Is Really Needed

Understand that As the Church's Pastors Minister, We Are Perfect for that Ministry As Equipped By the Scriptures

Trinity Hymnal Baptist Edition p. 671

1689.1.6 The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

Calvin:

I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word. The opposite persuasion which cleaves to them, being seated, as it were, in their very bones and marrow, is, that whatever they do has in itself a sufficient sanction, provided it exhibits some kind of zeal for the honor of God. But since God not only regards as frivolous, but also plainly abominates, whatever we undertake from zeal to His worship, if at variance with His command, what do we gain by a contrary course? The words of God are clear and distinct, "Obedience is better than sacrifice." "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," 1 Sam. 15:22; Matt. 15:9. Every addition of His word, especially in this matter, is a lie. Mere "will worship" (*ethelothreeskia*) is vanity [Col. 2:23]. This is the decision, and when once the judge has decided, it is no longer time to debate
Calvin, Tracts (1844; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), Vol. 1, pp. 128-29.

Good article with many references:

http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLs/Xmas_ch2.htm#FN13

24 December 1871

We have no superstitious regard for times and seasons. Certainly we do not believe in the present ecclesiastical arrangement called Christmas: first, because we do not believe in the mass at all, but abhor it, whether it be said or sung in Latin or in English; and, secondly, because we find no scriptural warrant whatever for observing any day as the birthday of the Savior; and, consequently, its observance is a superstition, because not of divine authority.

C. H. Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit (1871; rpt. Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications), p. 697.

WE have no superstitious regard for times and seasons. Certainly we do not believe in the present ecclesiastical arrangement called Christmas. First, because we do not believe in the mass at all, but abhor it, whether it is said or sung in Latin or in English. And secondly, because we find no Scriptural warrant whatever for observing any day as the birthday of the Savior. And consequently, its observance is a superstition, because not of divine authority. Superstition has fixed most positively the day of our Savior's birth although there is no possibility of discovering when it occurred. Fabricius gives a catalog of one hundred and thirty-six different learned opinions upon the matter. And various divines invent weighty arguments for advocating a date in every month in the year. It was not till the middle of the third century that any part of the church celebrated the nativity of our Lord. And it was not till very long after the Western church had set the example, that the Eastern adopted it. Because the day is not known, superstition has fixed it. While since the day of the death of our Savior might be determined with much certainty, therefore superstition shifts the date of its observance every year. What is the method in the madness of the superstitious? Probably the fact is that the holy days were arranged to fit in with

heathen festivals. We venture to assert that if there is any day in the year of which we may be pretty sure that it was not the day on which the Savior was born, it is the twenty-fifth of December. Nevertheless, since the current of men's thoughts is led this way just now, and I see no evil in the current itself, I shall launch the boat of our discourse upon that stream, and make use of the fact, which I shall neither justify nor condemn, by endeavoring to lead your thoughts in the same direction. Since it is lawful, and even laudable, to meditate upon the incarnation of the Lord upon any day in the year, it cannot be in the power of other men's superstitions to render such a meditation improper for today. Regarding not the day, let us, nevertheless, give God thanks for the gift of His dear Son.

1689.1.1 The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience

1689.1.6 The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

Prelude: Psalm 101 Of Mercy and Justice
Grace 23 Blessed Assurance
Trinity 761 Psalm 88
Trinity 551 Of Safe to the Rock (Hiding in Thee)
Grace 18 Before the Throne of God Above