



"Tradition becomes our security, and when the mind is secure, it is in decay."

—Krishnamurti

**10-Apr-26**

## **Traditions of Men (Part One)**

I live in south Louisiana, about forty miles north of New Orleans. This area has a rich history and a unique culture that sets it apart from the rest of the country. Since the late 1600s, this region has been influenced by France, Spain, and England, with each leaving a significant mark on the local culture. New Orleans, a major port of trade that attracts people from around [the world](#), has become a cultural melting pot.

Living here exposes people to diverse cultures and beliefs from places like Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe, as well as Cajun communities and, of course, southern culture. This blending makes it hard to trace the origins of certain practices, as they are woven into the local culture.

Religion also plays a major role in the area's diversity. Catholic influence from Spain and France, mixed with various Protestant groups, voodoo from the Caribbean, and some African beliefs, has created a unique cultural gumbo stretching from the Gulf Coast of Mississippi to the bayous of South Louisiana.

Most people know the area's reputation for a great diversity of cuisine. Herbert Armstrong once said that humans behave like toddlers, shoving anything they see into their mouths, and this is certainly true of the Gulf Coast. There seems to be an unspoken rule down here that if it crawls, walks, swims, or flies, someone has a recipe for it.

As God's people, determined to live His way of life, we might find it strange to see such indiscriminate consumption. It can make us wonder if people ever consider what is right and good from God's perspective regarding human health and longevity. The clear answer is a flat, "No. No, they don't." Most people believe they have a God-given authority and freedom to choose these things for themselves.

In [Romans 1:25](#), Paul describes this position as "they exchanged the truth of [God](#) for the lie." This lie dates back to the Garden when the serpent told Eve, "You will not surely die" ([Genesis 3:4](#)).

But the second part of the original lie has captivated men's minds and hearts from the very beginning. The serpent continues in [Genesis 3:5](#), saying, "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

[Satan](#) subtly plants the idea that by eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, humans gain the freedom to determine for themselves what is good and evil, without having to rely on God for guidance. The truth is, all of mankind has accepted and incorporated this lie into every culture on earth.

This attitude was evident among the Israelites when they settled in Canaan, as stated in the final verse of the book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" ([Judges 21:25](#)). Although God was their true King, the Israelites forgot the One who brought them into the land. Instead, they chose to follow the example of Adam and Eve and reject God's instruction.

Due to several factors out of a young person's control, this Satan-influenced attitude develops in every individual from early childhood, resulting in an attitude of defiance of authority, lusting for the power to do as they please,

while ignoring and pushing God aside. They might still claim to [love](#) and [worship God](#), but they insist on choosing their own way, rejecting the method of worship God desires and commands them to use.

The history of Christianity reveals that many of the apostle Paul's teachings, in particular, have been twisted to fit these traditional ideas, making them seem to contradict the [teachings of Jesus](#). Peter acknowledges that Paul's writings can be hard to understand, noting that "untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" ([II Peter 3:16](#)).

But why are so many led down such a dangerous path of misunderstanding, developing such distorted views of Paul's teaching? Scripture reveals that their difficulty in developing a clear understanding stems from mankind's rejection of God's true knowledge. Without such knowledge, they cannot see God's complete plan for humanity, so they, in their ignorance, fill in the gaps from their imaginations. So, unable to see reality from God's perspective, people develop their own viewpoints, saying things like, "Well, the way *I* see it, . . ." or "*I think* what God is saying is . . ." The apostle describes God's response in [Romans 1:17-32](#): He has generally not corrected them, letting them reap the consequences of their erroneous and destructive ideas.

We can see clear examples of such errors within modern Christianity in the great diversity of gospels created by the minds of men apart from what Scripture reveals. Over the centuries, these distorted gospels have continued to evolve, incorporating modern ideas and claiming God's inspiration. Today, they are taught as biblical truth, but they can be easily proven to be nothing more than the traditions of men.

While studying the book of Romans, a major concept caught my attention: To understand Paul's teachings, one must view them through the lens of the truth. The one true gospel of the [Kingdom of God](#), which Christ delivered ([Mark 1:14-15](#)), contains the whole truth of God's plan. This truth—what He taught—must be the standard. The world's errors derive from using the "hard to understand" portions of Paul's writings as the standard, forcing the Savior's gospel message to conform to them, resulting in a twisted view of truth.

We see it play out in Scripture. The New Testament writers warned the church that [false teachers](#) were appearing, just as Christ predicted. In [Galatians 1:6](#), Paul expresses his amazement at how quickly that congregation accepted a different gospel, describing those teaching it as "pervert[ing] [the gospel](#) of Christ." These false gospels deviated from the truth of the gospel of the Kingdom of God given to the apostles.

A few examples include the teachings of legalism, [Gnosticism](#), and a gospel centered on the person of [Jesus Christ](#), or, as some call it, the gospel of grace.

What modern theologians refer to as *legalism* resulted from the teachings that had developed into Judaism by Christ's day. The Jews mixed their oral traditions with the teachings of [Moses](#), resulting in a corrupted way of life. This perspective taught that Abraham was justified by his works, so the teaching became that, if they sacrificed enough and conducted themselves according to a strict regimen of rules, God would accept them. They created some 600 physical dos and don'ts regulating their actions. But these rules were incapable of controlling thoughts and motives, failing to capture the true spiritual intent of God's way of life.

*Gnosticism* syncretized aspects of Greek philosophy with principles from Scripture, resulting in a blend of truth and pagan thought. This [false gospel](#) emerged early on and eventually prevailed after the death of the original apostles. The men now revered as the "Church Fathers" adopted many ideas from Greek culture, bringing this false gospel's destructive perspective into the dominant Roman church in the second and third centuries. Constantine, a pagan emperor, adopted elements of the Gnostic gospel as the foundation of his universal, or Catholic, church.

Finally, *the gospel of grace* has become the dominant message among many Christian denominations since the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Their selective, reverse engineering of Paul's theology suggests that Christ's teaching frees mankind from [God's law](#), allowing Christians to live as they choose once they come under the blood of Christ. Essentially, its theologians argue that God set aside the law in favor of grace. Thus, they wrongly conclude that Christ has removed the penalty for [sin](#), which is death, so one no longer needs to worry about living contrary to the law.

All these gospels, and many others, coming from the imaginations of man, incorporate Satan's lie to one degree or another as major components of their foundational doctrines.

Next time, we will consider how human traditions shape people's understanding of God's food laws.

- Craig Sablich

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## **New Transcripts**

### **[1852s: The Taking Season](#)**

Given by Joseph B. Baity on 27-Dec-25

### **[1866-AM: Faithful Travelers on a Spiritual Journey](#)**

Given by Martin G. Collins on 02-Apr-26

### **[1866-PM: Peace, Peace \(Part One\): Peace with God](#)**

Given by Richard T. Ritenbaugh on 02-Apr-26

### **[1867: Remaining Free](#)**

Given by David C. Grabbe on 04-Apr-26

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Paul: Grace, Law, and Obedience](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Paul had impressive credentials and pedigree, which he considered rubbish compared to his conversion and God's dramatic intervention in his life. Paul's writings, because of their complexity, have become the target of unscrupulous, antinomian twisting and equivocating by the carnal mind with its natural anti-law bias. By denigrating God's law, the unconverted presumptuously set their own standards. God's holy and righteous law was never designed to justify but only to identify sin and align one with the right

standards—guiding one along the path to God's righteous purpose. Everyone who is saved will be a keeper of God's law. Paul used his life to illustrate our indebtedness to God and to caution about the law's limitation (or misapplied function) to justify, a function met only by Christ's sacrifice.

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## From the Archives: Featured Article

### [Whatever Happened to Gnosticism? Part One: False Knowledge](#)

by David C. Grabbe

"Gnosticism" sounds like an old and very dry Greek philosophy, the subject of a somnolent college lecture. Not so, says David Grabbe. Gnosticism is very much in vogue today in books and movies—and in the belief systems of a great many people who profess to be Christian.

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## Featured Audio Schedule

### Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study (Friday 10-Apr-26) will be **Abraham (Part Eleven)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday (EST)** and all day Saturday.

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