

Thesis: The New Testament is not concerned with preserving cultural traditions. The only positive verses about tradition are 1 Cor 11:2, 2 Thess 2:15 and 2 Thess 3:6. In context, these things refer to such practices as observing the God-given headship order and being a disciplined, self-supporting worker—to doctrinal principals and ethical values that can be expressed in many different ways in many different cultures. However, a topic that *is* emphasized in the NT is...

Cultural Incarnation: Giving Up Our Own Culture for the Gospel's Sake

- Christ's incarnation:
 - (Phil 2) “Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”
 - (Rom 15:8) “Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God.”
 - (John 4) – Christ crossing cultural barriers to reach Samaritan woman; worship is in spirit and truth, not dependent on location or cultural traditions. (Cf. Luke 4:14-30, inclusion of Gentiles in sermon at Nazareth.)
 - (Luke 6:1-11, etc.) Christ violating Sabbath traditions in order to “do good... save a life.”
- Christ's teaching:
 - (Matt 15:1-20; [Mk 7:1-23]; Matt 23:16-24) - Warning the Pharisees: “you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”
- Experience of early church:
 - (Acts 8; 11:19-26) – God drove them out of their own cultural comfort zone through persecution, leading to spread of gospel to other cultures (Samaria, Ethiopia, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch, etc.)
 - (Acts 15) – Decision, guided by Holy Spirit, “to lay upon [Gentile converts] no greater burden than these essentials”—no other traditional/cultural guidelines were given.
- Peter's vision (Acts 10-11): “What God has cleansed, no longer call unholy.... Who was I that I could stand in God's way?”
- Paul's example:
 - (Gal 1:11-16) “I was... more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when God...” (Compare to Is 29:13)
 - (Phil 3) “Count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”
 - (1 Cor 9:19-23) “To the Jew I became as a Jew...”
- Paul's teaching:
 - (Col 2:6-23) “ See to it that no one takes you captive... according to the tradition of men... rather than according to Christ.”
 - (Gal 2-3) “I opposed [Cephas] to his face... They were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel... Having begun by the Spirit, are you now perfected by the flesh?... Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor [the Law]... There is neither Jew nor Greek.” (All of Galatians!)
 - (Rom 14-15) “Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions... Why do you judge your brother?... Rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way... Accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us.”

Other Related Sermon Topics With Broad Scriptural Support

- Not thinking/living like the world.
- Passing the faith on to others, including the next generation.
- Warning against personal apostasy.
- The unity-in-diversity that the church finds in Christ.
- The centrality and sufficiency of Christ—not adding to the gospel.
- The regenerative power of the Holy Spirit as the only power for righteous living.