

YAHSHUA TORN DOWN WALL OF RELIGIONS TO CONVEY COMPASSION TOWARD SINNERS

The spirit of religion permeates far and widely everywhere there is man. Self-righteousness is the down fall of their faith, for their critical attitudes. There is no mercy in their ways of judgment when they speak against those of different ways of believing. YAHSHUA condemned such people with a parable He told His disciples about two men who went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee took his stand ostentatiously and began to pray thus before and with himself: "God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men, swindlers, adulteress- or even like this tax collector here... but the tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but kept striking his breast, saying, O God, , be favorable to me, the especially wicked sinner that I am! I tell you, this man went down to his home justified, rather than the other man; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14). Religion is a wall that separates and destroys the faith of many. It is in another word, tradition. It establishes the do's and don'ts not found in the word of God, as if in the time of the Law. Christians go as far as only to consider one translation of the Bible to be right, not knowing the true background history of that version. Tradition is good in some ways, when it comes to family's customs. It connects us to our long-gone forefathers, keeping alive the family tradition, that which made them unique. The spirit of religion is the spirit of self-righteousness. There is great difference between the true religion and that of self-righteousness. The true religion is shown through action of love; it does not judge ones weak in the faith, it does not elevate self, but submit to the authority of YAHSHUA, Who is the source of man's righteousness. *"True religion is that pure and unblemished in the sight of God the Father is this: to visit and help and care for the orphans and widows in their affliction and need, and to keep oneself unspotted and uncontaminated from the world"* (James 1:27). It is nothing to do with the outlook and pretension to be that which we are not.

Paul said, *"As for the man who is a weak believer, welcome him; but not to criticize his opinions or pass judgment on his scruples or perplex him with discussions. Who are you to pass judgment on and censure another's household servant? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he shall stand and be upheld, for the Master is mighty to support him and make him stand. Why do you criticize and pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you look down upon or despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. And so, each of us shall give an account of himself to God."* (Rom. 14:1,4,10). Standing in one's idea to be the only right one, independent from what the Word of God teaches, is certainly a spirit of religion, a man- made belief. YAHSHUA fought the religious Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes of His days on earth. He was strong in His definitions of whom they were- hypocrites, double-minded people, hiding their own identity by their self-righteousness, performing deeds of appearance of good, when their inner was full of foul smells. One certain day when scribes and Pharisees came to YAHSHUA complaining about His disciples for not washing their hands before eating. He then replied to them saying, "And why also do you transgress and violate the commandment of God for the sake of the rules handed down to you by your forefathers?... So, for the sake of your tradition, you have set aside the Word of God... You pretenders! Admirable and truly did Isaiah

prophecy of you when he said, "These people draw near Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts hold off and are far away from Me. Uselessly do they worship Me, for they teach as doctrines the commands of men" (Matt.15:3-30). With these words, YAHSHUA shone the bright light of truth, exposing whom they were. These blind guides were the authorities of the people in those days, leading the people to destruction. YAHSHUA uttered a series of woes to those religious authorities, condemning them to eternity.

In those days, when the Law was practiced, even in the time when our Lord was here on earth, Judaism comprised of those who faithfully followed "**Kabbala**, an esoteric Jewish mysticism that has always been essentially an oral tradition in that initiation into its doctrines and practices conducted by a personal guide to avoid the dangers inherent in mystical experiences. Esoteric Kabbala is also "tradition" inasmuch as it lays claim to secret knowledge of the unwritten Torah (divine revelation) that was communicated by God to Moses and Adam. Though observance of the Law of Moses remained the basic tenet of Judaism, Kabbala provided a means of approaching God directly. It thus gave Judaism a religious dimension whose mystical approaches to God were viewed by some as dangerously pantheistic and heretical." (Wikipedia). It seemed that God's divine revelation (Torah) given to the nation of Israel through Moses, was not enough. They had to apply mysticism to supplement God's laws. A danger path that has branched out, creating other religions contrary to the Word of God. The world is deep into deceit guided by the traditions of these blind guides.

Paul warns the Colossians saying, *"See to it that no one carries you off as spoil or makes you yourselves captive by his so-called philosophy and intellectualism and vain deceit, following human tradition, just crude notions following the rudimentary and elemental teachings of the universe and disregarding Christ, for in Him the whole fullness of Deity continues to dwell in bodily form. (YAHSHUA) having canceled and blotted out and wiped away the handwriting of the note with its legal decrees and demands which was in force and stood against us. This He set aside and cleared completely out of our way by nailing it to [His] cross, disarming the principalities and powers that were ranged against us and made a bold display and public example of them, in triumphing over them in Him and in it"* (Col. 2:8,14-15). The new covenant between YAHSHUA and His bride, is a covenant of blood, free from religious traditions, qualifying those who want to follow His Word. The pure and simple message of the Gospel is based on the love of God toward sinners, and His redemptive sacrifice through the shedding of His blood. It is not a religion, but it is however, a relationship with God as our part of the covenant established by YAHSHUA with all those who embrace His love. *"If then you have died with Christ to material ways of looking at things and have escaped from the world's crude and elemental notions and teachings of externalism, why do you live as if you still belong to the world [why do you submit to rules and regulations? -such as] do not handle, do not taste, do not even touch, referring to things all of which perish with being used, To do this is to follow human precepts and doctrines. Such [practices] have indeed the outward appearance for wisdom in promoting self-imposed rigor of devotion and delight in self-humiliation and severity of discipline of the body, but they are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh"* (Col. 2:21-23).

Religion and tradition carry no weight on faith, the basis for our spiritual success. Several denominations of the Christian faith burden the people with regulations not found in Scripture. They are man-made regulations in order to exercise their control over ignorant people. From outward appearances to interpretation of Scripture, these denominations hold in bondage those whom the Lord has set free, when God's intention was *"the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints, the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body the church until we all attain oneness in the faith and in comprehension of knowledge of the Son of God that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood, the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him"* (Eph. 4:12-13). "Our Lord suffered and died outside the gate in order that He might purify and consecrate the people through His own blood and set them apart as holy; Let us then go forth to Him outside the camp [at Calvary], bearing the contempt and abuse and shame with Him, for here we have no permanent city, but we are looking for the one which is to come" (Heb. 13:12-13). That's what relationship with God is all about. Not religion with man-made traditions: don't do this or that, do not touch that, do not eat. Conviction does not happen in the outward, for it is an inward; a work from the Holy Spirit, it is not from man-made rules and regulations to satisfy their tradition to conform to their religion.

Lord, give us a spirit of revelation into the knowledge of Your love; guide us out of religious practices into the glorious relationship with You. Where there is confusion of belief show us the truth; where there is self-righteousness, show us your scared hands and feet and bathe us with Your precious blood, washing us clean of religion that leads us to tradition, blinding our eyes to see Your ways of love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. Amen!