

From the Heart Mark 7:1-23

I. Opening Thoughts/Questions and Background Unprecedented personal conviction

Sober subjects; Foundational subjects

God's glory and God's grace shine brightest on the dark background of this passage
It's what's inside that matters...every time (1 Sam 16:7; 1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chron 28:9; Luke 16:15)

Key words: Tradition, Purity; What are your traditions? How pure is your heart?

Regarding Purity...

"The ceremonial cleansings called for by the Law had meaning and influence. They were interpretative of something spiritual--were a parable way of illustrating the necessity of purity of heart in order to gain acceptance with God. If in after-days the thing symbolized was forgotten in the symbol, that was owing to 'blindness of mind.' The darkness was not necessary."

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Regarding Tradition...

"...the oral teachings of the elders (distinguished ancestors from Moses on) which were revered by the late Jews equally with the written teachings of the Old Testament, and were regarded by them as equally authoritative on matters of belief and conduct....[but which] fruited into mere ceremonialism and externalism...[and were] essentially false, since the heart, the seat of the soul, is the source of thought, character and conduct."

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Background=Development of Pharisees/Scribes; Visited in Galilee by Pharisees/Scribes from Jerusalem; Continued revelation; Significant confrontation [Read passage]

II. The Traditions of Man: Actions (vv1-6a) Oral tradition/"traditions of the elders"=man-made; Mishnah, Gemara, Talmud

Traditions=παράδοσις(*paradosis*) – giving up, giving over, surrendering; handed down by word of mouth or by writing

Washing had nothing to do with sanitary measures; rather, ritual cleansing; fist-shaped position with measured amount of water

Jesus' response=forceful and direct; rooted in Scripture

Hypocrites=ὑποκριτής(*hypokritēs*) – actor, stage player

- III. The Traditions of Man and the Heart of God: Contrasted (vv6b-13)
Traditions of man in and of themselves can be positive or at minimum neutral;
However, when set against the true heart of God (and His word), they are destructive

Two types of hypocrisy:

- (1) right words/actions, wrong heart;
- (2) right words/actions, wrong foundation (Jesus quoted Isaiah 29:13)

Three stages of hypocrisy:

- (1) Departing from God's word;
- (2) Substituting man's alternative(s);
- (3) Harm others and God's reputation (explain *Corban* vis-à-vis 5th Commandment)

Isaiah 29:14-16 tells of how God deals with hypocrisy

- IV. The Heart of Man: Consequences (vv14-23)
Turns the religious order on its head (first to crowd, then to disciples)

Firmly establishes that it is what is within that matters; see vv 19, 21

Overtaken provisions of the Law, since He is the perfect fulfillment of them (in practice and in Spirit; see Matt 5:17)

Heart is the source of evil actions and evil thoughts – vv 21-23

- V. Closing Thoughts/Reflections and the Heart of God
First step is a new heart (Heb 2:14-18)

Recognition of presence of sin (Rom 7:14ff)

Consider possible "traditions of man" and defilements (give examples)

Turn them over to the great High Priest (Heb 4:14-16)

Life Response

- a) *Consider* whether you may have developed any “traditions of man” in your own life. If so, take some time to list those that exist along with their possible consequences. Then, prayerfully consider what God’s Word has to say about the truth of those matters. Do you need to reshape (or perhaps crush) your paradigm(s)?

- b) *Read and meditate* on Jeremiah 17:9-10 and Hebrews 4:12-13, specifically with regard to your own life. Then, using Psalm 139:23-24 and Hebrews 4:14-16 as your templates, ask the Lord to begin to work in your heart first to reveal and then to purge those things that are defiling you.

- c) *Memorize* one of the following passages: Psalm 119:9-11 or Romans 12:1-2