

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Mark 7:6-13.**
- B. In this section of the book of Mark, Jesus gets to the “heart of the matter.”
- C. The confrontation with the Pharisees shows the emptiness of ritual based religion, and where the real problem is, in serving God correctly--the heart.
- D. The Jews were becoming increasingly hostile to Jesus and this episode didn't help!

I. THE ACCUSATION.

- A. See **Mk. 7:1-5.**
- B. The Jewish religious leaders were now openly hostile toward the Lord and His ministry. It was not unusual for them to follow Him from place to place simply to watch for something to criticize.
- C. The Jews ceremoniously washed their hands before eating. These washings had nothing to do with personal hygiene, nor were they commanded in the Law. They were part of the tradition that the scribes and Pharisees had given to the people to add to their burdens (Mt. 23:4).
- D. This tradition had begun centuries before to remind the Jews that they were God's elect people and therefore had to keep themselves separated. However, this good reminder had gradually degenerated into an empty ritual, and the result was pride and religious isolation.
- E. These washings not only indicated a wrong attitude toward people, but they also conveyed a wrong idea of the nature of sin and personal holiness. Jesus made it clear in the Sermon on the Mount that true holiness is a matter of inward affection and attitude and not just outward actions and associations.
- F. Jesus taught that a person who obeys the Law externally can still break the Law *in his heart*, and that external “defilement” has little connection w/the condition of the inner person.
- G. So the conflict was not only between God's truth and man's tradition, but also between two divergent views of sin and holiness. This confrontation was no incidental skirmish; it got to the very heart of true religious faith.

II. THE CONDEMNATION.

- A. See **Mk. 7:6-13.**
- B. The word *tradition* in 2Thess. 2:15 refers to the body of doctrinal truth “handed down” from the apostles or leaders in the church (see 2Tim. 2:2).
- C. What a tragedy that religious people would ignorantly practice their religion and become the worse for doing it!
- D. But they were not only destroying their character; they were also destroying the influence and authority of the very Word of God that they claimed to be defending. Note the tragic sequence:
 - 1. Teaching their doctrines as God's word (7:7).
 - 2. Laying aside God's word (7:8).
 - 3. Rejecting God's word (7:9).
 - 4. Robbing God's word of its power (7:13).
- E. Once Jesus had exposed their hypocrisy, He turned to the Law of Moses and indicted them for breaking the 5th commandment. (This was a classic example of where tradition kept one from obeying the Law.) The Pharisees had an ingenious way of breaking of the Law and not feeling guilty. Instead of using their wealth to support their parents, the Pharisees dedicated that wealth to God and claimed that the money could only be used for “spiritual purposes.”
- F. These men claimed to love God, but they had no love for their parents.

III. THE DECLARATION.

- A. See **Mk. 7:14-16.**

- B. Jesus announced to the whole crowd that the source of holy living is from w/in, not from without. Actually, He was declaring null and void the entire Mosaic system of “clean and unclean” food; but at that time, He did not explain this radical truth to the crowd. Notice the note that Mark inserts as he is telling this story in his gospel.
- C. But this declaration was surely understood by His enemies. They realized that he was breaking down one of the “walls” that separated the Jews from the Gentiles. Of course, the Law itself was not set aside until Jesus died on the cross (Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14), but the principle Jesus announced had been true throughout the ages. That is, in every period of history, true holiness has always been a matter of the heart, a right relationship with God by faith (see Deut. 6:4,5; 10:12; 30:6,20).
- D. Notice the people mentioned in Heb. 11. All (in both Patriarchy, and the Mosaic systems) were justified by their faith. The righteous will live by faith (Hab. 2:14).

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

- A. See **Mk. 7:17-23**.
- B. His disciples asked Jesus about the parable. His explanation seems obvious to us, but we must remember that these twelve men had been brought up under the strict Jewish dietary code.
- C. To disobey these laws was a matter of ceremonial defilement, and that was an external matter. Food *ends up* in the stomach, but sin *begins* in the heart. The food we eat is digested and the waste evacuated, but sin remains and it produces defilement and death.
- D. A contrast of man’s traditions and God’s truth:

<u>Man’s Traditions</u>	<u>God’s Truth</u>
Outward forms--bondage	Inward faith--liberty
Trifling rules	Fundamental principles
Outward piety	True inward holiness
Neglect, replace the Word	Exalts the Word of God
- E. Paul said that the entire Law of Moses could be wrapped up in one verse, “To love you neighbor as yourself” (Rom. 13:9-10). The Pharisees had no real love for God or others.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. The heart must be right.
- B. Externals are of no consequence, if we do not love God.
- C. Tradition tries to keep men holy from the outside-in, but it doesn’t work.
- D. Allow Jesus to work on you from the inside-out.
- E. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.