

Mark 7

Teaching Notes

Chapter 7

Verses 1-5: The Question

(Mark 7:1 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.

Mark 7:2 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault.

Mark 7:3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.

Mark 7:4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.

Mark 7:5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”)

The Pharisees were supposed to be the teachers of the Bible, the shepherds to lead people to God. Instead, they abused that authority: for sinful gain, for financial gain, for personal gain. False teachers for God in public who privately hated God.

The Hostility of the Pharisees:

By this point, the Pharisees were hostile towards Jesus, Jesus’ teachings, and Jesus’ ministry.

- In Mark 3, the Pharisees already accused Jesus of 3 things:
 - Jesus was not from God, rather Satan.
 - Jesus received his power from Satan.
 - Jesus had an unclean spirit.
- They hated God and rejected the redemption in Jesus Christ. And they did everything they could to destroy Jesus’ ministry and Jesus himself.

“The Tradition of the Elders”:

The key word is in verse 3. “The Tradition of the Elders.” There were various practices that the Pharisees and other religious Jews implemented.

At the time, there was a renewal for the Bible; and a strong passion for religious, pure living. There was a high regard for God’s word.

But here’s what was wrong: The traditions of men became “equal to” and in many cases “superior” to the Bible.

One of those traditions is explained here: “the washing of hands” before you eat.

Now, for you and I, we wash our hands before we eat, (*at least some of you do 😊), for sanitary purposes. But for the Pharisees, the washing of hands was not a matter of hygiene, it was a matter of holiness or unholiness.

More Insight with the Pharisees:

For those unfamiliar, the Pharisees were a religious group who gained prominence decades before Christ and especially during the time of Christ. Saul, later the Apostle Paul, came from this hyper-religious group.

One of the primary agendas of the Pharisaical movement was **PURITY**. As you continue through the gospels, you can attach a twisted form of *purity* to everything the Pharisees taught and did.

- Example: The Apostle Paul. To purify the Jewish race from the disease of Jesus Christ and His followers, Saul, before his conversion, made it his objective to exterminate Christianity to maintain the purity of Judaism. But, on his way to do more damage to the early church in Damascus, Saul meets Jesus Christ, repents and believes in Christ.

Skewed Purity:

You shall see here and throughout the scriptures, their purity was not true biblical purity. It was a superimposed, unbiblical view of purity that deceived many. Jesus will now address this skewed purity in the following verses:

Verses 6-7: Jesus' Response, Isaiah

(Mark 7:6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

Mark 7:7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.')

Prophecy from Isaiah:

First, Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13. He opens His statement by quoting His prophet, Isaiah. This was an actual prophecy fulfilled in this moment, which is mind blowing. He called the Pharisees *hypocrites*.

Hypocrite:

ὑποκριτής **hupōkritēs**, hoop-ok-ree-tace; an actor under an assumed character (stage-player), i.e. (fig.) a dissembler ("hypocrite"):— hypocrite.

Strong, James. [The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words](#), Thomas Nelson, 1996.

Use this Def: This word hypocrite in Greek is an actor, one who acts a role without sincerity, a pretender."

As It Is Written:

"It stands written." - PERMANENT RECORD¹

The Rebuke:

Are there really people who profess great devotion to the Lord but who are inwardly corrupt?²

Their religion was correct. Their ability to reason about religion and explain religion was profound. Their praise and oratory concerning God was like any other. But their hearts were wicked, alienated from God, unholy, and sinful to the core.

Isaiah 29:13, The Rebuke from the Old Testament

- (1). Lip-Service
- (2). Unredeemed hearts
- (3). Vain Worship

¹ Taken from Precept Austin on the Verse.

² William MacDonald

(4). Teaching man's commands like God's commands

To develop this some more from what we read in scripture:

- (1). If a heart is not redeemed, there will not be a true relationship with God or true worship.
- (2). The unredeemed heart may speak of God, but they do not know God (no matter how religious they may appear).
- (3). Because of ultimate rejection of the Lord, the unredeemed heart will develop religion as a smokescreen, so that they will continue to live a sinful life alienated from God.
- (4). And strangely, the religious, unredeemed heart is demonically motivated to seduce others into their false doctrine.
 - On this fourth one, To give you a visual, consider what the Lord Jesus said concerning the Pharisees in Matthew 23:
 - (**Matthew 23:15** *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”*)

The issue in these passages is the fourth issue in Isaiah 29,

“Teaching man's commands like God's commands.”

A common question that all of us have is, “Why?” Ultimately, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel discovered in their generation, these false teachers, false prophets, and false spiritual leaders, and false believers pretended to be holy in public but lived wickedly in private. They loved their sin, never repenting and never believing:

Look at what Jesus Christ says about these types of people:

(**John 3:19** *And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

John 3:20 *For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*)

Now, the Lord is referring to all people who reject Jesus Christ. This includes those who will never step foot into the church; and people like false teachers and false believers, people like the Pharisees.

Verses 8-9: Jesus' Response, The Distinction

(Mark 7:8 *For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.*)

Mark 7:9 *He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.”)*

Jesus differentiated the commands of God from the traditions of men. The rabbis had built a fence around the Mosaic Law—by erecting their dos and don'ts—in order to prevent the Israelites from breaking the Law. However, rather than protecting it, their legalistic requirements distorted and even contradicted their God-given Law. This is always the problem that accompanies attempting to legislate obedience to God's Word. Legalism involves making laws that God has not made and treating them as equally authoritative as God's Word. The Pharisees had even abandoned God's commandments in favor of their oral traditions, which came from men. Jesus rejected the authority of the oral law

Constable, Tom. [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#). Galaxie Software, 2003, p. Mk 7:8.

Some of you might be thinking, “An example might help with this.” And that's what Jesus gives in the following verses:

Verses 10-13: Man's Commandments Over God's Commandments

(Mark 7:9 *He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.*

Mark 7:10 *For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’*

Mark 7:11 *But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban”—’ (that is, a gift to God),*

Mark 7:12 *then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,*

Mark 7:13 *making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”)*

The word of God commands that a believer honors his father and mother. In this time, in many cases, adult children had a duty to support their parents in their older age. This “corban-deed” was a practice of individuals who legally claimed and established that everything they owned was legally given and ultimately the possession of the temple in Jerusalem.

So here's the reasoning: even if they “would” offer help to their parents, they “could not help” because God now owned everything that they possessed. But here's the loophole: the release of their financial assets would not be given to the temple until after death. So until death, they had control over the assets and enjoyed the income and benefits from those assets.

This was a sneaky loophole to disobey God's word of honoring one's parents.

Sadly, this oral tradition, “the corban-syndrome” of the Pharisees, something that the Pharisees practiced and promulgated, was exposed by Jesus Christ at this very moment. **What a momentous moment - their deeds were exposed!** Imagine being there. Imagine being a bystander listening to this. Imagine seeing this Rabbi, Jesus challenge and biblically denounce the Pharisees oral tradition. If I were there, I’d look straight to the Pharisees. I’d be so curious to see the response of those who were just exposed. Interestingly, Mark does not highlight that, but Matthew does. The disciples looked to see how the Pharisees responded and later told Jesus, “did you see how the Pharisees responded to that?”

(**Matthew 15:12** *Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?”*)

- **THEY WERE OFFENDED.**

Contemporary Application:

(1). Are You Listening to Pharisees?

All of us attend a theologically-sound, bible-teaching church. Which many of you, that includes me, are very appreciative of. Thank God for churches like ours and many others like ours, particularly Calvary Chapel churches. With that said, I’m not concerned with what you are taught on Sundays or Wednesdays.

This is where I’m concerned:

- Who are you listening to throughout the week on YouTube or your media platform? Some of you don’t listen to sermons or bible teachings much, apart from our church or other trusted Bible teachers. And that’s a very good thing. I think we should all learn from you.

But then, there are some of us, you are like me, where you are inquisitive, you are intrigued, you are drawn to a good sermon “title” or someone else’s teaching on a passage.

Why is that possibly dangerous?

Simply this: Are you listening to Pharisees? Evil, wicked men with an agenda to twist scripture, reinterpret scripture, and create their own false doctrine that

ultimately lead you away from the simplicity of the gospel, the simplicity of the faith, the simplicity of the word of God?

Teachers, with great charisma, who find loopholes in the Bible to, verse 13, “make the word of God of no effect because of these traditions.”

(2). Exposing the Pharisaical Attitudes in Our Lives

In the New Testament, a recurring issue was that Christians were entertaining the views of the Pharisees, entertaining unbiblical traditions, commandments of men, human thoughts rather than God’s word. And the apostles continued to bring people back to the word of God. Every division and dispute needed to be discussed with this overriding question, “What does the Bible say?”

So understand, that even in the Church, there will be those with Pharisaical attitudes. No doubt we are children of God, but there are some of God’s children who are still entertaining the Pharisaical attitudes. We must be careful about this too, to protect the true purity of the church.

Over the years, the church leadership will hear from someone,

- “To be a pure church, we must have church on Saturdays.”
- “To be a pure church, we must not play drums.”
- “To be a pure church, the women must dress a particular way and the men must dress a particular way. To be more specific, to be a pure church, no one is allowed to wear jeans.”
- “To be a pure church, we must not engage in the pagan holiday, Christmas!”
- “To be a pure church, we must only read from the 1611 King James Version of the Bible.”
- And many more! Remember, the Pharisaical attitude is that attitude of “purity.” “to be pure you must do this, do that, and this, and that, and then ...”

Let me first say,

None of these things are biblically true.

We want to be careful that we don't treat our opinions as if they are Bible doctrine. We want to be careful that we don't start putting fences around the truths of God, holding people back from the simplicity of the word of God because of our opinions.

To use one of the examples: As a musician and worship leader, I want to talk about music. The first thing to ask is, "When it comes to songs and worship in God's church, what does God desire?"

(Psalm 68:4 Sing to God, sing praises to His name; Extol Him who rides on the clouds, By His name Yah, And rejoice before Him.)

(Ephesians 5:19 ...in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,)

Those with the Pharisaical attitude in the church or those listening to "the Pharisees," will then give opinions like,

- I think drums are sinful so drums can't be used to worship God.
- I think modern sounds and melodies are sinful, so modern sounds and melodies can't be used to worship God.
- I think we should sing only hymns because only hymns are pleasing to God.
- A song that pleases God must meet these theological criterias; otherwise, God will not be pleased.
- I think worship should only be 10 minutes at a church service because the teaching of the bible is supremely important."

Who made up those rules, God or man? Men make these unbiblical rules. Jesus told the Pharisees, "you honor the Lord with your lips but your hearts are from me."

True worship is not a method, not a style, not a format, etc.

What is true worship? True worship is a matter of the heart.

Now, Jesus will expand the matter of the heart in the following verses:

Verses 14-16: True Defilement

(Mark 7:14 When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand:

Mark 7:15 There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.

Mark 7:16 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”)

Again, remember Jesus’s method of teaching? He’d share parables which were hidden to the rejecting; but revealed to those who received in faith. He would not explain the parable to those who rejected him. He would explain the parable to those who received him, for those who received him would ask.

Ultimately, what He told the crowds here is, “the real issue is not rules and regulations, the real issue is the matter of the heart.”

So now, to develop this, his disciples will ask him to expound the truth:

Verses 17-19: The Explanation

(Mark 7:17 When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable.

Mark 7:18 So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him,

Mark 7:19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?”)

What one eats does not interfere with the person’s inner being, the heart. Sin or holiness cannot be determined by natural things like food consumption.

“Purifying all Foods”:

Jesus made it very clear that food itself does not change the purity or impurity of a man’s heart.

Then the following question is, “What makes a man pure or impure?”

Verses 20-23: What Defiles A Man?

(Mark 7:20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man.

Mark 7:21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

Mark 7:22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

Mark 7:23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man.")

A person is not defiled by food, rather he is defiled by sins that come forth from his heart: Jesus lists for us the sins: evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murders, adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, self-indulgence, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.

Jesus first mentions, "evil thoughts." Why do I find this noteworthy? It establishes the widest radius possible. If you skipped this one, someone might say, while I'm not a thief, adulterer, or murderer, so therefore, this does not apply to me. No one can say that. All humans are included together here.

Why? Because all humanity without Christ is depraved, full evil. Someone may not commit physical adultery with another person, but they can surely commit adultery in their heart, in the mind.

- Because you and I are sons of Adam, a part of the human race, our nature is sinful, bent, controlled, enslaved to sin and evil. The various true sins are listed here in verses 21-22. And only Jesus Christ can forgive us from our sins and set us free from our sins.

And since you came to Christ, you and I can attest to what God did in our minds and our hearts. Our whole mind and heart has changed since we were born-again. Many have told me this over the years, including some of you: Family, friends, and acquaintances have told me, "You are no longer the same person since you converted. You don't think the same, you don't talk the same, you don't want to do the same things you used to, etc." And each of us can give our personal testimonies. He's liberated you from your addictions, from your vices of choice. He's changed your heart. Once, you rejected God, now you love Him and want to please Him, want to serve Him, want to obey Him. You are willing to sacrifice your time and life for Him. You can't wait to see Him one day in heaven."

Why? Because you were born-again. You were given a new heart. You are a new person!

(2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.)

The old you is gone, controlled and enslaved by sin.

The new man or woman is here, filled and alive in Jesus Christ.

And because the Holy Spirit came to live inside of you:

CSB: (Romans 8:8 *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Romans 8:9 *You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.*

Romans 8:10 *Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.*

Romans 8:11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you.)*

The Spirit of God is now leading your life. This new heart of yours is possessed by God and led by God.

Jesus was teaching His disciples that God came to rescue sinners, to redeem sinners, to liberate them from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ spilled on the Cross.

The people were familiar with the Pharisees' false doctrine, a wicked religion, a religion filled with rules and regulations. The people knew this twisted doctrine, knew the twisted version of the Bible, the same Bible you and I read.

And so, when Jesus Christ came with the simple gospel, not only did it expose the false doctrine of the Pharisees, but it gave sinners like you and I the truth that we can be redeemed to God, the one who created us and loved us. Jesus Christ came to declare the true gospel and redeem sinners to Himself 😊!

With everything we studied, do you now see how comforting Jesus' words are in Matthew 11:28-30?

(Matthew 11:28 *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Matthew 11:29 *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

Matthew 11:30 *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”)*
