

**Mark 7:1 ¶** Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

**Mark 7:2** And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

**Mark 7:3** For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

**Mark 7:4** And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, *as* the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

**Mark 7:5** Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

This chapter opens with another snapshot of a confrontation between Jesus and some Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem. These religious leaders were ever on the lookout to find fault with Jesus. They noticed that some of His disciples ate without first washing their hands. The reference here is to yet another of their rituals; the issue wasn't getting rid of germs.

The Pharisees, as well as all other Jews, always went through the ritual of washing their hands before they ate in accordance with the tradition of the elders. In fact, this was just one of many traditions; they were also traditions related to the use of cups, pots, brass vessels and tables. Referencing these "traditions," the Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus why He and His disciples did not follow these traditions and ate with unwashed hands.

Guzik listed a couple of interesting quotes from different people that reflected the view of the rabbis toward these traditions.

From Wiersbe: "Rabbi Eleazer said, 'He who expounds the Scriptures in opposition to the tradition has no share in the world to come' . . . The *Mishna*, a collection of Jewish traditions in the *Talmud*, records, 'It is a greater offense to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis than to contradict Scripture itself.'"

From Trapp: "The Jews have several ordinary sayings, that show in what esteem they had these traditions, as *If the scribes say our right hand is our left, and our left hand is our right, we are to believe them.* And, *There is more in the words of the scribes than the words of the law . . .* The Jewish Rabbi Jose saith, *He sinneth as much as who eateth with unwashen hands, as he that lieth with an harlot.*"

**Mark 7:6** He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me.

**Mark 7:7** Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

**Mark 7:8** For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

Jesus responded using scripture, as He so often did. He also didn't bother with being politically correct or worrying about whether He would hurt their feelings; He called them hypocrites—men that professed moral standards that their actions did not support. The verse He used from Isaiah:

*Isaiah 29:13 "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:"*

Jesus was declaring that when the Pharisees and scribes performed their religious routines before God, it was only lip service. These men didn't understand what it meant to worship God from their heart. They had so corrupted God's law, that they were actually following the law according to man and not the law according to God and teaching the people to do the same. They had no awe and wonder of who God is and His love and provision for them. They were focused on taking pride in their rituals.

I think there is a great comparison to be made in the "church" today, at least in America. Many go to church out of duty and because it makes them feel like they are doing the right thing. They go through the routine of the service without getting personally involved in true praise and worship of God or making personal application of the teaching of the word of God. In fact, our "church" leaders are becoming more and more like the religious leaders of Judah in Isaiah's day. They teach their version of what they think God means instead of teaching the truth of God's word. They claim that human error in the translation of the scripture through the years has corrupted God's original meaning, so they are free to interpret according to God's love and mercy while ignoring the hard truths and the fact that He is a righteous God that will judge sin. They preach so as to please the masses.

**Mark 7:9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.**

**Mark 7:10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:**

**Mark 7:11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free.***

**Mark 7:12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;**

**Mark 7:13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.**

Jesus rebuked these so-called religious leaders for rejecting God's commandments in favor of their own traditions. He then gives an example.

God's law states that one is to honor his/her father and mother; one who curses father or mother is to be put to death.

*Exodus 20:12 "Honour thy father and thy mother...."*

*Leviticus 20:9 "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death...."*

He identified their practice of designating money or other things that could help provide for their aging parents as "Corban." By such a pronouncement, they designated such potential support for their parents as a gift to God (to the temple). They believed that released them from any responsibility toward helping their parents. This is not according to God's law; it is actually usurping God's law under cover of keeping man's tradition.

Jesus then noted that this was just one of many examples He could give.

Stedman makes an astute observation about the dangers of tradition: "That is what tradition does to us. It externalizes religion, makes it outward instead of inward. As long as we are fulfilling the prescribed outward form, we think we are acceptable before God. That is the terrible danger of tradition. This particular form which Isaiah mentions here -- right words and wrong attitudes -- is widespread among Christians. We all suffer from it, and we ought to recognize it and admit it. It is a struggle we all have, without exception. And it has resulted in what is probably the most deadly danger to the evangelistic message of the church -- the self-righteousness of Christians -- thinking that because we do things in the 'right' way, and say the 'right' words, and believe the 'right' doctrines, we are thus pleasing to God."

**Mark 7:14 And when he had called all the people *unto him*, he said unto them, *Hearken unto me every one of you*, and understand:**

**Mark 7:15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.**

**Mark 7:16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.**

Jesus then called for the people to gather around so that He could teach them. He urged them to listen carefully and understand. His message (my paraphrase): No food or drink that a man puts into his mouth can make him unclean. Only the things that come out of him can make him unclean.

Then Jesus makes a statement that is repeated often in scripture calling for those who are willing to hear the truth to pay attention.

Many translations leave out verse 16, though it is in most of the Greek manuscripts. It in no way affects the truth that Jesus is stating and in every way is in keeping with His character.

**Mark 7:17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.**

**Mark 7:18 And he saith unto them, *Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;***

**Mark 7:19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth**

out into the draught, purging all meats?

**Mark 7:20** And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the 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, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

**Mark 7:23** All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

When Jesus left the people and went back into the house (I'm assuming they are back at Peter's home, but it doesn't matter), the disciples asked Him to explain the parable. From His question to them, I think He was hoping that they had grown enough spiritually to be able to understand what He meant by this time; however, He proceeded to explain the teaching.

Things that men take in by mouth bypass the heart and go to their belly, to be processed and eliminated. This essentially declared all food to be clean. The things that come out of a man, as shown by sinful words and actions, testify to the motives of one's heart—evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness (overt and offensive sexual acts), an evil eye (jealousy), blasphemy (evil speaking against God), pride and foolishness (moral recklessness).

The Greek for evil "thoughts" is a reference to reasoning and, I think, applies directly to the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees.

**Mark 7:24** ¶ And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it*: but he could not be hid.

**Mark 7:25** For a *certain* woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

**Mark 7:26** The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

**Mark 7:27** But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs.

**Mark 7:28** And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

**Mark 7:29** And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

**Mark 7:30** And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

In Mark's next snapshot Jesus heads out and goes to the area bordering Tyre (about 30 miles from Capernaum) and Sidon. He tried to go into His host's house without being seen, but was unsuccessful. There was a woman there that had heard of Him who was of Greek Syrophenician heritage (a Gentile) whose daughter suffered from an unclean spirit. She came and fell at His feet, begging Him to cast the devil out of her daughter. This is the only time I can think of that Jesus did not respond immediately to someone's request for help. He was,

however, taking the opportunity to teach a lesson.

Jesus answered the woman by telling her that He had to take care of His children first; it wouldn't be right to take what belonged to them and give it to the dogs (referencing a puppy or pet). Instead of being offended, the woman immediately said that she agreed; however, she pointed out that the dogs under the table were allowed to eat of the children's crumbs. Jesus (tenderly I think) sent the woman home, telling her that the devil was gone out of her daughter. When she got home, she saw her daughter peacefully lying upon the bed and the devil gone.

Matthew provides a bit more information.

*Matthew 15:21–25 “Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.”*

This extra insight affirms that the children Jesus referenced were the people of Israel.

Interesting to note is that she addressed Jesus as “Lord, thou Son of David.” I believe she purposely addressed Him so as to show that she recognized Him as the Messiah in direct contrast to so many in Israel who did not. She pleaded with Him to show her mercy/compassion. Though He did not answer her at first, Jesus eventually declared that He had only been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Greek for the word “worshipped” in vs. 25 indicates that the woman fell down at His feet in an act of reverence and adoration for Him as she once again pleaded for His help.

Notice that Jesus said that the children (the Jews) were to be fed first, implying that the Gentiles were eventually to be included in His provision. That statement provided the basis for her to continue to plead her case.

**Mark 7:31 ¶ And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.**

**Mark 7:32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.**

**Mark 7:33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;**

**Mark 7:34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.**

**Mark 7:35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.**

**Mark 7:36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;**

**Mark 7:37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.**

Jesus left the area of Tyre and Sidon and traveled back to the Sea of Galilee via the area bordering the coasts of the Decapolis. This time they brought a man to Him that was deaf and had a speech impediment, asking Him to lay hands upon him (for healing is implied). He took the man aside from the multitude. He put His fingers into the man's ears, then He spit and touched his tongue. Looking up to heaven (toward His Father), He groaned and said "Be opened." Immediately, the man's ears were opened and he could speak plainly without an impediment.

This miracle brings to mind the words of Isaiah as He talked about the coming of the Messiah.

*Isaiah 35:5 "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped."*

I liked the way the New Bible Commentary explained it: "The actions used by Jesus were intended to make the man understand that this was not healing by magic but healing by God in answer to prayer. Jesus wanted to create faith in the man before he would heal. So, deafness was imitated by stopping the man's ears, and healing of dumbness imitated by touching his tongue and spitting out. Looking up to heaven and sighing were visible pictures of prayer that a deaf and dumb man could understand."

Jesus then commanded the people that had witnessed the miracle not to talk about it. In spite of His command, the people talked about it everywhere they went. They couldn't say enough good things about the man that could make both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.