

MARK 7 TRADITIONS, DEFILEMENTS, AND MORE MIRACLES

The Jews were the chosen people of God, and they were favored by Him above all the rest of the world. And yet they had benefited so little from their high spiritual privileges, that they cast off God's commandments and set up their own man-made traditions. They still pretended to worship God; and they imagined that they were pleasing Him by a strict attention to all the external ceremonies which they themselves had invented, in addition to those which had been commanded in the Scriptures. They prided themselves on their outward observances, and thought themselves to be very religious. But in response to the objections which were raised by the scribes and Pharisees in the opening verses of this chapter, our blessed Lord here tells them that all their pretended worship of God was in vain; for it would not be accepted by Him. Human ordinances may be useful and proper, when they are in their right place; but they can never be binding in the same way as the laws of God. Let us take warning by the history of the Jews; and let us beware lest we substitute anything of man's contrivance in the place of that sincere heart-worship which is required of us by that Almighty Being Who has said, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth!"

The subject upon which our Lord was about to speak in verses 14-23 was evidently one of peculiar importance; for we find that He called the people to Him, and said to them, "Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand" (verse 14). We must not only hearken, but we must also endeavor to understand, whenever we hear the Word of God read or preached. We must not only listen, but we must also reflect.

The subject upon which our Lord was about to speak, when He called upon all the people to hearken to His words, was the all-importance of heart-work in religion. The Jews were very particular about outward observances; and they had been finding fault with our Lord's disciples for eating bread with unwashed hands, which they considered to be a great sin. So He called upon all who had ears to hear, and He taught them that to observe merely outward cleansing is not enough. The cleansing that we need is that of the heart, and whether or not this has taken place in us is a question that we must answer by considering what proceeds out of the heart. From the heart of man, all sorts of evil naturally proceed; and a most fearful list is here given by our Lord. Let us not rest, then, until – by the grace of God – we are enabled to bring forth fruit of a very different kind! Let us pray for grace to bring forth fruit that springs from devoted love to

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Jesus reproves the Pharisees for valuing traditions over God's Word – verses 1-13
- ❖ He speaks to the people about the things that truly defile a person – verses 14-23
- ❖ He heals the demon-possessed daughter of the Greek woman – verses 24-30
- ❖ He restores a man to the gifts of hearing and speech – verses 31-37

God, and tender love toward all mankind; for if the heart is not changed by the Spirit of God, it is certain that such evil will come out of it as will be sufficient to prove our condemnation in the Day of Judgment.

From the answer which our Lord first returned to the Greek woman who besought Him to cast the demon out of her daughter (verses 24-30), we may learn a very important lesson. He said, "Let the children first be filled" – by which, He meant to say that the Jews (as God's chosen people) had a claim upon Him which she, as a Greek, did not have. And from this, we should learn how necessary it is to consider the relative proportions of our duty. There are many people who labor very hard to supply the needs of those at a distance, and yet they seem to quite overlook the stronger claims of those who are nearer to home. Many, in fact, absolutely neglect their own families while busying themselves with the concerns of others. How completely do they forget these words: "Let the children first be filled." Let us, then, look at home; and let us be sure that we carefully perform our duty there before we look abroad and see what more can be done.

Above all, parents will have to answer to God for the way in which they bring up their children; and any neglect of them can never be atoned for by other exertions outside their homes – no matter how great those exertions may have been. Parents certainly have an anxious – and often painful – duty to perform as they bring up their sons and daughters; for despite all the efforts that can be bestowed upon training the minds of their children, the enemy will be sure to sow tares so that he may get a foothold in their hearts if he can. But this passage of Scripture contains a most encouraging and comforting lesson for parents, as well as for all who feel troubled about the spiritual state of those who are dear to them. When it is painfully evident that anyone whom we love is under the power of evil, what can we do better than to follow the example of this Greek woman – who fell down at the feet of Jesus, and besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter?



The miracle recorded in verses 31-37 is described only by Mark; but it demands particular attention because it is a striking fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, who foretold that when the Savior came, the ears of the deaf would be opened and the tongue of the mute would sing (Isa. 35:5-6). And it ought to convey to our minds the solemn truth that until the Savior comes with power to our hearts, we – in a spiritual sense – can neither hear nor speak. But when Christ is truly acknowledged as the Savior of the soul, then the ears are immediately opened, and the tongue is instantly unloosed – for what a change takes place in the use which is then made of every member of the body, but especially of the tongue!

Lord, we repent of times when we have been content with a literal observance of rituals or ceremonies, instead of rendering true heart-worship to You! Amen.