

## Mark 7:6-23 Legalism pt 2

Years ago, I had a rude awakening when I read an explanation of the reality that “No One Can Make you angry.”

That idea disrupted my all too frequent statement that “He/she/they make me so mad.”

That was my way of blaming MY ANGER on someone else.

I wasn't my fault. He/she/they MADE ME ANGRY.

When that narrative began to unravel, I had to do some serious soul searching.

If he/she/they don't make me mad, then where does my anger come from? CERTAINLY NOT ME.

Au contraire

I had to deal with a very challenging passage from Mark 7

5 The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?”

6 And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips,

But their heart is far away from Me.

7 But in vain do they worship Me,

Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’

8 Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”

9 He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. 10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death’; 11 but you say, ‘If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),’

12 you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother; 13 thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”

### The Heart of Man

14 After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. 16 [If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.]

17 When he had left the crowd *and* entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable.

18 And He *said* to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?” (*Thus He declared all foods clean.*)


20 And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

### REVIEW

#### The CONTEXT

A religious posse has come from Jerusalem to check out Jesus. They were highly motivated to make this 90 mile trip from Jerusalem to Capernaum.

#### v. 5 THE CORE OF THE ISSUE

They are not following the ‘tradition of the elders’. (Cue TEVYE – T-R-A-D-I-T-I-O-N) 

It is important to define WHAT LEGALISM IS NOT...

Advocating for Biblical morals is NOT Legalism or Moralism.

What we saw last week is that we're all selective legalist and are prone to act like a Pharisee in some way.

We are not to take away from this text a contempt for the Pharisees. We should take away a sober mind and a willingness to examine our own hearts and lives for ways in which we are like them.

**There's a great big "I" in the middle of PharIsee, and the "I" in the middle is ME.**

Scott Brewer, Prof of Philosophy Harvard Law... "Where moralism goes, hypocrisy will surely follow."

We can't live up to the standards we impose on others.

How often do we find that those who speak out the loudest about an issue end up being exposed for their hypocrisy – this happens to those on the left and on the Right. .

Now the REST OF THE STORY...

This passage is about more than a dispute over manmade laws related to ritual cleansing. While we may have disputes about the manner or degree of cleansing, the reality is that we all have some concept of the need to be cleansed.

**For various reasons and at different times, we all have a sense of being spiritually or morally unclean (unless you are a total sociopath).**

It may just be a little sense of unease or guilt over something we did or said, even if it was not a big thing.. It may be a lingering sense of guilt or shame that sticks to us like our shadow. We've not been able to shake it or if we have, someone else brings it back up.

Either way, Jesus and the Pharisees ARE BOTH AWARE of our need to be cleansed.

It's not simply about a dispute over two approaches to the law. It is about that, but there's more to it. But note: Jesus and the Pharisees both have a high view of the Law of God. The problem is that the Pharisees have added to it and try to use it to create a righteous standing before God.

**Ultimately, this passage is about two different religions:**

**The Pharisees' religion of works righteousness**

**vs**

**Jesus' religion of salvation by grace through faith**

**V. 9-13- Jesus exposes their Hypocrisy**

sideroad They criticize Jesus and his disciples and to refute them he plays the "What about? Card" i.e. What about YOUR practice and hypocrisy.

They say they want to "honor their father and mother" yet they put their tradition above the command of God. So, in the name of piety, a person could escape his obligation of caring for his parents in times of infirmity or in their old age, when they may have been too fragile to support themselves: "I'm sorry Mom; I'm sorry Dad—I'd like to help you out, but my finances are Corban. They are all committed to the Lord, and I can't take the Lord's money and give it to you."

**WHAT DOESN'T MAKE US UNCLEAR?– (Kevin DeYoung was helpful in understanding this passage)...**

Note that it is Jesus who takes the initial point about washing and pushes it to its theological end point in v. **15 there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.**

Mic drop and Jesus leaves. He dropped a huge theological truth bomb and walks off.

Clean and unclean laws abound in the OT. They relate to food, behavior, bodily functions, death, etc AND contact with things that make one ritually unclean. The focus is on something from the outside that touches you or is taken in by you that makes you unclean.

Here, Jesus turns it all upside down and explains that it is what is on the inside that makes us unclean, i.e. it is from the HEART. I.e. EX: My anger that I wanted to blame on "him/her" was from my heart.

v. 18-20 Again, Jesus needs to explain the parable to the disciples.

What comes from outside doesn't go into the heart, but the stomach, and is expelled.

\*\*Jesus is using hyperbole. He's not saying that some actually believed that food goes into the heart.\*\*

This passage relates to the old adage, "Don't judge a book by its cover." i.e. don't judge by someone's outer appearance, accent, skin color, etc.

AS MLK Jr. said, "Don't judge by the color of the skin but by the content of the character." He was pointing out that character reflects what comes from the heart.

Jesus is making the point that it is what comes from the heart that defiles the man or reveals one's character. The point that Jesus made was radical, and Mark adds to it in v. 19 (Thus he declared all foods clean).

That was a huge truth bomb dropped by Mark as he was laying out the implication of what Jesus was saying. This was shocking because the food restrictions were a central part of the Jewish tradition and practice. The food laws were a main thing that distinguished the Jews from the gentiles, and in the NT letters we see the issue come up numerous times. It may seem irrelevant or perhaps quaint to us, but for the original audience, this was a big deal.

We still have some modern food laws that rise to the level of idolatry in some circles.

I'm not saying that we should live on junk food, but there are segments of our society where the healthy food police are active and vocal. The voices don't always agree, and trends will come and go.

EX: 1977 CCC staff training and "sugar sin" was a topic of discussion. Does one DARE go to the soft serve ice cream machine and get the vile dessert???

The danger of idolatry comes when our inner thought is *"Would you look at her/him/ them. Can you believe they eat that or let their kids eat that. Are they really Christians at all?"*

In the context of disputable things, when a personal preference rises to a level of a mandate for all, then one is likely on the path toward idolatry. This carries over into other areas of disputable things – choices in worship style, clothing style, educational choices, entertainment, alcohol, personal spending, ministry engagement, etc.

It is all too easy and common for us to focus on the externals. They are easy to quantify, and we don't have to do a real assessment of the condition of our hearts. A list of do's and don'ts is easier to manage than our hearts.

For most people in our culture, Christianity is about doing two things: Going to church (when it's convenient) and trying to be a 'good' person (and we get to define good; we all have our selective list of goodness).

Even non-believers have their definition of what is 'good', and they want to impose it.

EX: I have a book entitled "Good without God: What a Billion Non religious People Do Believe"

The author offers a secular version of the Golden Rule. To support his secular argument, he shows how every major religion has some version of this teaching. He then offers 10 secular humanist commandments. That in itself tells us that there is something about humans that he doesn't want to admit – we are prone to sin, to doing bad things and we need a list of commandments to guide us.

(BUT what if someone or some group simply says, "Not playing. We don't even want your non-religious commandments? My guess is that they'll be forced to obey in some way. In modern 'democracies' remember that the BALLOT IS A BULLET.)

The Humanist 10 commandments are a secular version of what Jesus is talking about – external observance of "being good" while the heart is far from God.

Christ is showing the priority of the heart over mere external obedience. In a real sense, Jesus isn't teaching anything new because a key idea in OT piety was the Circumcision of the heart Deut 30; Jer 9 Ezek 36- i.e. a heartfelt passion and hunger for God and His righteousness. This was a radically shocking idea to the Pharisees who heard it, even if they didn't immediately spell out Mark's application - "all foods are clean". If we were among the crowd, I dare say that we would have been shocked as well.

Who can do this with the LAW? Only God can make such pronouncements. In a different way, Jesus is making the claim of divinity that was demonstrated by his miracles. The man who fed the multitude, calmed the sea and walked on water IS THE ONE WHO CAN give a deeper interpretation of the Law. Scripture itself shows that the person and work of Christ must guide our interpretation and application of the Word. We are to read the OT laws related to food and ritual cleansing in light of the work of Christ and the blessings and promises of the new covenant. (Kevin DeYoung)

#### WHAT MAKES US UNCLEAN v.20 repeats the key point of v 15

It is what proceeds out of the heart that defile the man/woman/ child. (make no mistake, your children are sinners).

Don't cut the connection between faith and observance, but make sure that it flows in the right direction. It's is not outside - in, but from the inside - out.

The Pharisees studied the scripture, they prayed, they were faithful in corporate worship, they were zealous for the moral and spiritual purity prescribed by the Law, they tithed.

The danger for us is to think that if we do those things then it is legalism or those who do them are legalists.

Jesus did not rebuke them for doing those things. He rebuked them for doing them for the WRONG REASONS - to be seen by others or gain favor with God and not from the HEART.

We can also slip into self-righteous spiritual laziness or apathy with a heart attitude of "O God I thank you that I'm not like those legalists who are trying so hard to obey you."

We may slouch toward prayerlessness, ignoring the Word, worship, giving, service, and fellowship while deluding ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism. We slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated. - Don Carson

v. 21-22 give a sample list of evil thoughts and acts and attitudes

Our culture is awash in these things. There is so much around us that we don't recognize it when it comes from within, from our hearts.

K. DeYoung Notes the language - Jesus uses moral words to describe sinful behavior, not therapeutic words - insecurity, baggage, dysfunction

Strong active words - not passive words like 'frustrated, ticked off, triggered' "falling into trouble; allowed myself to be tempted, this is not the real me.

Jesus roots our bad behavior and attitudes at the center of who we are, i.e. the HEART. Our sin is an INSIDE out problem, not an OUTSIDE - In problem.

This is not "the devil made me do it, or something came over me, this is not the real me; it's my parents' fault."

The world says, "we are what we do, Jesus says, "We do what we are."

The antidote is a NEW ID in Christ - new heart, new desires, and a new power.

This wasn't an issue of minor differences, but it touched on the core of salvation.

Appropriate for REFORMATION SUNDAY - the heart of the gospel and Justification. Are we saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone or by our obedience to the Laws of God and man?

**HOW WE GET CLEAN COL 1:12**

12 .giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light....  
21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

Get clean in Christ so we can live clean by His grace. The order is crucial. We must be Made new before we can live in newness of life.

This was at the heart of the Reformation – a rediscovery of Grace in the Heart

That grace is represented for us in the TABLE.

COME TO THE TABLE where we see God’s provision for our sin.

Jesus was made sin so that we might be made the righteousness of God. 2 Cor 5:21

Jesus was forsaken so that we might be brought to God.

Discussion Questions:

From Oct 20<sup>th</sup> Legalism pt 1

Have you ever wondered what would things look like if Satan actually took over a city?

How do you distinguish legalism from simple Biblical practice?

Can you think of some examples???

Why is “God ALONE is lord of the conscience” so important?

How are religion and irreligion thieves of the gospel?

How do you stop those thieves? (with the gospel)

Where do you find yourself drifting toward legalism?

Why is Ps 115:1 a good antidote to legalism? (because the verse puts the focus of glory on God alone and legalism is our way of putting the focus of glory on ME.)

Oct 27<sup>th</sup>

How does this passage reflect two different religions?

Agree-Disagree: “No one can make you mad.”

What areas of disputable things come to mind as you consider this passage?

How do the doctrines of the Reformation relate to these issues?

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