

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 7:7-16

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again; we will continue to read Mark chapter 7, verses 7 to 16.

A group of scribes and Pharisees came from Jerusalem to Galilee to find fault with Jesus, seeking to undermine Him. Jesus' flourishing work in the region of Galilee posed a threat to their religious authority. Upon seeing Jesus' disciples eating with unwashed hands, which violated their tradition, they confronted Jesus directly. Jesus responded by quoting the prophet Isaiah, exposing their hypocrisy. Furthermore, Jesus pointed out their errors and misconceptions.

Verses 7-8: "And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men."

A true worshiper of God will always honor His word and never teach the commandments of men as doctrine. God's commandments far surpass human traditions, so we must never disregard God's commandments in favor of human traditions. The word "commandment" in Greek implies action, aiming to achieve God's ultimate purpose. God is a God of life and order; His commandments are intended to bring about His desired outcome in an orderly manner through the course of life.

As individuals walk in step with God's guidance, gradually developing the character of Christ and living lives that reflect God's glory, this process of life is slow and progressive, which is incredibly challenging for humans. If there are some rules that can be outwardly observed, it seems much easier; and initially, these rules may indeed assist people. However, over time, adherence to these rules can create a misconception that mere compliance with them leads to holiness, while

overlooking true holiness, which resides within, in the life and character organized within individuals, evidenced in their everyday lives.

Verse 9: "He said to them, 'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.'" Jesus once again warns them that by adhering to the traditions, they are forsaking the commandments of God. Jewish traditions, mostly rooted in the Law of Moses, became mixed with human ideas over time, to the point where God's commandments were overshadowed by human tradition. If even Jewish traditions were susceptible to such dangers, let alone those of other nations, then even in the New Testament church, over the past 2000 years, many human traditions have accumulated.

If Jesus were to attend our Sunday worship services, would He rebuke us as He did the scribes and Pharisees of old? Is our worship heartfelt praise, or just outward rituals? Is our preaching truly God's message for the church today, or merely human opinions? When we come to the communion table, do we come with a spirit of repentance, seeking the Lord's forgiveness for our sins, or is it merely a ceremonial gesture? May the Lord search our hearts and help us engage in genuine worship, rather than mere outward rituals. Jesus then illustrates to these scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem how they prioritize their traditions over God's commandments with a practical example.

Verse 10: "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'"

The example Jesus uses here is honoring parents, which comes from the Fifth Commandment of the Ten Commandments, recorded in Exodus 20:12. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." Honoring parents is the first commandment with a promise, as parents are the source of our lives, and honoring them is respecting the source of your life. A person who respects his source of life is a grateful person, one

who can receive blessings and joy. Therefore, their days on earth will surely be long, as promised by God. On the positive side, honoring parents leads to longevity. On the negative side, Exodus 21:15-17 also states, "He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death." Thus, God's commandments are very clear, with no room for ambiguity. There are blessings for obedience and punishments for disobedience, so everyone should honor their parents. When we were young, our parents took care of us and raised us, and when they become elderly, it is only right for children to care for and honor them.

Verses 11-12: "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), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

Children are inherently responsible for honoring their parents, yet some disobedient children seek to evade this responsibility. In Jewish tradition, there's a loophole where individuals could declare their possessions as "Corban," or a gift to God, thus exempting themselves from the obligation to support their parents. "Corban" is a term derived from Hebrew and translates to "offering" in English, signifying a sacrifice or offering to God. Initially, this term referred to offerings for sacrifice, but over time, it evolved into gifts dedicated to God or vows made to Him. By declaring their possessions as "Corban," individuals essentially dedicate them to God, making them irretrievable and exempting themselves from their obligation to support their parents.

In reality, honoring God with sacrifices and supporting parents are not contradictory actions; one can give offerings to God while also fulfilling their duty to their parents. If a man's resources are limited, should he support his parents or should he offer it to God? Jesus clarifies this clearly in the New Testament, in Matthew 5:23-24, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there

remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Even though it's "brothers" in the verse, it can be extended to the parental relationship. Emphasizing reconciliation with others before offering gifts to God. The sequence is clear: first, reconcile with those you owe, then offer your gifts to God. If one neglects their duty to their parents and then seeks to offer gifts to God, their offerings will not be pleasing to God. Jesus's teaching is clear, especially regarding those seeking to evade their responsibility to support their parents by declaring their possessions as "Corban" in Jewish tradition.

Verse 13: "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

Jesus directly points out that their actions amount to adhering to tradition while neglecting the word of God. He highlights just one example, but they engage in many such practices. Jewish rabbis developed a theoretical framework for the practice of Corban, citing scriptural references to justify it as a vow made to God, which they deemed irrevocable. They cited Numbers 30:2, which states that if a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said. They interpreted this to mean that one could neglect honoring or caring for their parents if they vowed their possessions to God. Essentially, they used one biblical teaching to nullify another.

Dear brothers and sisters, do we also sometimes cherry-pick verses we like to avoid those we dislike? We must seek God's wisdom to truly understand His word, for His word is consistent throughout. Any apparent contradictions likely arise from reading Scripture through the lens of human tradition. Let us ask God to help us set aside human tradition and approach His word simply and sincerely, seeking His guidance to grasp its true meaning and application in our lives today.

Verse 14: "And when He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear Me, everyone, and understand.'"

For those fault-finding individuals, Jesus directly pointed out their error and then moved on from them after saying what needed to be said. However, considering that the onlookers might also be influenced by them, Jesus once again emphasized to these people that they should listen to His words and understand them. Initially, these scribes and Pharisees questioned why Jesus' disciples ate with unwashed hands, so Jesus wanted to explain again specifically to these individuals.

Verse 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."

Jesus' explanation is very clear with no room for ambiguity: nothing that enters from the outside can defile a person. All food goes into our bodies from the outside, meaning none of it can defile us; it cannot make us unclean. With Jesus' declaration, it becomes evident that the ceremonial act of washing hands before eating is fundamentally irrelevant because whatever you eat, whether clean or unclean, cannot defile you; here, defilement pertains to spiritual impurity.

Today, from a hygiene standpoint, we wash our hands before meals to prevent illness from bacteria that might be on our hands, aiming for physical health rather than spiritual cleanliness. Jesus' declaration challenges Jewish dietary laws, which have been strictly observed for thousands of years; for example, they abstained from pork because it was considered unclean. This bold proclamation by Jesus contradicts such laws, stating that nothing from the outside can defile a person.

Paul likely derived confidence from Jesus' declaration when he boldly stated in Romans 14:14, "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is uncleaned." Paul emphasizes that nothing is inherently unclean, including all types of food, so all food is clean and permissible to eat. However, if someone regards

something as unclean, then for that person, it is unclean; because when they regard it as unclean, this consideration comes from within, defiling them.

Jesus clearly tells people that what enters from outside cannot defile them; it is what comes out from within that defiles them. Therefore, the source of uncleanness is within a person, not outside; meaning, the real issue lies in a person's heart, not their hands. Our actions are merely an expression of what is in our hearts, so a clean heart must precede clean hands. To have clean hands, one must first have a clean heart first; external rituals cannot cleanse the heart if it is impure. So, how can we purify our hearts? We must repent, acknowledge our sins, and be washed clean by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Verse 16: "(Some manuscripts add: If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!)"

Jesus spoke this not only to the crowds who were present at that time but also to all those who read the Bible today; whoever has ears to hear, should listen.

Let us pray: Lord, help my church to break free from various traditions and human practices. As we gather in Your house, may we all respect Your Word and follow the teachings You have given us in the Bible. Together, we come to worship and serve You. Grant us a pure heart, solely focused on You, solely devoted to worshiping You. Help me understand the different practices within the church, all designed to bring me closer to Your presence, so that in every gathering, I may see and hear Your voice! Bless my church, where Jesus Christ is the head, and no tradition or regulation can replace His position. Lord, bless us; pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.