

Spoken with Blood: Identity and Salvation

November 27, 2016

Mark 7:1-23

Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, 2 they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, 4 and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) 5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” 6 And he 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;

7 in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

9 And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! 10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ 11 But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)— 12 then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” 17 And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” [f] (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Jesus is gathering a new flock of the children of God.

When hearts grow stagnant, tradition is lifted up to give a false sense of spirituality.

Missing the Point- Mark 7:1-5

The Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem had no doubt that they were the religious experts and came to teach Jesus the fallacy of his disciples' religious worship. It turns out they were asking all of the wrong questions.

The fence around the law. This was done with good intentions: preserve Israel and keep away from dishonoring God. But the fence soon became a substitute for true obedience. Examples: Drinking, dancing, card playing. If you never engage in those behaviors, the thinking once went, then you can never engage in the clear sins of drunkenness, fornication, or gambling money that you don't have. Problem: When we adhere to a system of rules that is our system and not a clear commandment of God, the pride of the human heart naturally wants to believe that my system is better than your system, so if you do not conform to my system then you are obviously less of a child of God than I am and you need to get right!

biblical principle: If there are things that you should avoid so as to keep a pure mind and avoid breaking the law of God, this is a wise and admirable way of life before God. The danger comes when you substitute all of the things that you do to avoid coming close to breaking the law of God with an inward righteous love for God.

II. Hypocrisy- Mark 7:6-13

Jesus hits the religious experts back with the prophecy of Scripture and his own observation of how they conduct their lives.

When we have substituted tradition for spiritual vitality, this is the very definition of religious hypocrisy.

What is corban? The religious experts were actually committing gross sin before God, but they were blinded to it because they had constructed the language of religious tradition to make themselves believe that God had given his stamp of approval to their own greed.

Pride is ultimately the damning sin that blinds religious hearts to their own hypocrisy.

Has there been a time in your life when you have been genuinely confronted and convicted of your own hypocrisy? I have often struggled with pride in my own life, saying "They must deserve whatever they got." But where is the compassion? Jesus had to show me how far my heart had become away from his own. He did that through giving me role models and mentors who were genuinely Godly people, but were always gracious and gentle toward people in sin.

III. the Shocking Truth

Study Notes

Alan Culpepper: The central question of vv. 14-23 is: What counts as holiness and righteousness before God? What separates a person from God?

John MacArthur: The emphasis of Hebrews is present in Mark 7:15- "Old Testament rituals are only symbols" of a new covenant.

The Gospel of Mark was written down by a close associate of Peter. Remember that Peter had the vision in Acts 10 of the unclean foods. The Old Covenant had come to be understood to build walls between Jews and Gentiles. The new Covenant will unite people from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

Depravity of the human heart.

The heart is the seat of the will, the affections, and moral purity. Jesus is drawing a sharp distinction between the strong effects on morality that come from the inward man and the the morally neutral functions of the digestive system.

Rules and expectations were never able to transform the heart.

Westminster Confession 6.4- (Speaking of the original sin of Adam and Eve) "From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual corruption."

When we speak of salvation one of the great debates in the church has been who saves: does God save, do we make a decision to save ourselves, or is our salvation a joint effort between us and God? the chief question should be "how badly has sin affected our ability to seek after God?" If you understand the Bible, the whole point is that we are hopeless to even know that we need to be saved, let alone to do anything about it. It is God who reaches into our cold dead hearts and breathes life into us so that we can even begin to seek him and be made into new creatures.

If a person followed the old covenant in the manner of the Pharisees and scribes, it would have resulted in that person never being able to eat or closely associate with non-Jews. We are seeing in Hebrews that this was never the intention of the covenant. The focus of God's old covenant was to demonstrate that all men are sinful and that the earth is under the curse of sin and that we are doomed apart from the alien righteousness of God invading our lives. Read Leviticus 11 later. Why would God prevent people from eating things that swarm on the ground, that do not chew the cud, that eat dead animals, or do not have hoofs that keep them off the ground? Answer the ground is cursed, and you will die because of the sin that has cursed the earth.

The new covenant is quite different. It allows Jesus and his followers to associate with the outcast, the non-Jew, the sinner. Because righteousness is not found in traditions and rituals, and national or religious identity. It is found in being part of the new kingdom of God

inaugurated by Christ.

Are you using grace as a license to sin? Is your focus on religious works or a covenant relationship with God. What is your “organ.”

Conclusion:

Your identity as a child of God is found in an inward regeneration that results in a true righteousness.

Hebrews 8-10. Cleansing the conscience of dead works.