

**Religious Tradition, Defilement, and Hypocrisy: Part 2**  
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**Original: 1-21-24**

**Text:** Mark 7:14-23 (see also Matt. 15:1-20)

**Gospel of Mark:** [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

**UBS 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Paragraph Topic:** The Tradition of the Elders

**Central Idea of Message:** Hypocrisy occurs when our internal does not match our external. Authentic Christianity demands inward and outward purity.

**Introduction:** Mark's gospel narrative on the subject of religious hypocrisy is rather lengthy. So lengthy, in fact, that Mark records another entire paragraph of Jesus' continued discussion about the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, especially regarding what really defiles a person; and Jesus did this quite openly after summoning the crowd to listen and learn, which must have been a rather humiliating experience for the scribes and Pharisees who were present! Here is what Jesus had to say about what really defiles.

**I. What Really Defiles (vv. 14-16)?**

- A. Jesus summons the multitude (v. 14)
  - 1. Perhaps much of the conversation between Jesus, the scribes, and the Pharisees about tradition had been somewhat private
  - 2. This was about to change as Jesus seizes the crowd's attention in an effort to teach them this important lesson on religious tradition, defilement, and hypocrisy
- B. Nothing going into a mouth defiles a person spiritually (v. 15)
  - 1. Jesus spoke in a moral, not a medical, sense (cf. Grassmick 2:134)
  - 2. All the emphasis from the scribes and Pharisees about ritually washing the hands before eating is spiritually meaningless and unnecessary
  - 3. The things which spiritually defile a person are not what goes in but what comes out
    - a) Because these reveal what is in the heart
    - b) Because these show one's true character

- c) Because these demonstrate authenticity or hypocrisy
  - C. Those with ears to hear had better listen (v. 16)
- II. **What Comes Out of a Person Defiles (vv. 17-23)**
  - A. The disciples question Jesus about the parable (v. 17)
    - 1. After leaving the multitude, including the scribes and Pharisees
    - 2. The Twelve and Jesus had entered a house [the home of Peter and Andrew in Capernaum where Jesus was living?]
  - B. Slow to understand (v. 18)
    - 1. The disciples lacked spiritual insight
    - 2. They had been steeped in the Levitical code and the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees for most of their lives
    - 3. Like many today, they focused too much on the outward and too little on the inward
    - 4. **Jesus made it clear to them that what goes in the mouth does not spiritually defile, meaning ritual washing of the hands, even religiously, did not keep filth out of hearts and minds, it only kept out some germs**
  - C. All foods are clean (v. 19)
    - 1. Germs might make us sick but they do not render us spiritually or morally unclean
    - 2. Our digestive system takes care of all foods
    - 3. **In his scrutiny of our lives, God is examining hearts, not diets or stomachs, in his search for purity and obedience**
    - 4. Eating fish without scales or even eating a coyote does not make anyone spiritually or morally unclean
    - 5. Jesus hereby declared all foods to be clean, a lesson Peter would have reviewed for him in Acts 10:1-22 (cf. Col. 2:16)
      - a) This is likely Mark's inspired commentary on the fuller extent of what Jesus was communicating (cf. Grassmick 2:134; Wiersbe, *Outlines*, 120)
      - b) **Jesus effectively canceled some of the food laws in the Old Testament**
  - D. What comes out of a person is what defiles (v. 20)
  - E. Defilement emerges from within the heart (vv. 21-22)

1. **Evil reasoning: "Every outward act of sin is preceded by an inward act of choice" (Barclay 200)**
2. Heart: the very core of each person out of which arise evil acts, six of which Jesus identified with plural nouns (cf. Grassmick 2:134)
  - a) Fornications
    - (1) **Πορνεία**
    - (2) Usually references sexual sins of the unmarried but can include "every kind of sexual vice" (Turlington 326)
  - b) Thefts: stealing
  - c) Murders
  - d) Adulteries
    - (1) **Μουχεία**
    - (2) Commonly references sexual sins of the married
  - e) Deeds of coveting (v. 22)
    - (1) Greediness
    - (2) Wanting more and more and more
    - (3) Seeing happiness in things rather than in God (cf. Barclay 201)
  - f) Deeds of wickedness
    - (1) Entrenched evil
    - (2) Maliciousness, intending harm
    - (3) Not just thoughts but acts
3. Six singular nouns depicting evil *dispositions* (cf. Grassmick 2:134)
  - a) Deceit: trickery, clever treachery, used for a mousetrap (cf. Barclay 201)
  - b) Sensuality
    - (1) Lasciviousness
    - (2) Unrestrained sexual activity
    - (3) No sense of decency or shame
    - (4) "Something shocking to public decency" (Turlington 326)
  - c) Envy
    - (1) Literally in Greek an evil eye
    - (2) Intends to haunt people with its wicked stare
  - d) Slander
    - (1) Blasphemy, slanderous speech
    - (2) "Malicious misrepresentation" (Wuest 1:150)
  - e) Pride
    - (1) Arrogance

- (2) "Holding oneself above others, stuck up" (Robertson 1:325)
- (3) "It is the sin of an uplifted heart against God and man" (Vincent 1:203)
- (4) **"Pride is stiff-kneed. It can never kneel in true prayer. It seals up the gate to all growth - humility" (Luccock 754)**
- f) Foolishness
  - (1) Lack of sense, moral folly
  - (2) "Criminal senselessness" (Brown 2:47)
  - (3) **Foolishness can be described as, "Reckless unconcern for the spiritual" (Luccock 754)**
- F. All of these evil things proceed from within (v. 23)
  - 1. These are things which really tarnish and where the defilement really is - inside
  - 2. Not one of these is ingested into the stomach by means of unwashed hands
  - 3. We only wish we could wash these off with soap and water!
  - 4. All of these arise from within
    - a) Already being present in each person from conception
    - b) **We are cursed with having a sin nature and having to battle it every waking moment of our lives!**
  - 5. **Outside sources [media, friends, fads, music, pornography, clothing, etc.] fan our sin-nature-fire, urging us to pursue fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life (cf. 1 John 2:15-16)**

**Conclusion:** Principles.

(1) Since we are all born with a sin nature, we are quite rotten on the inside to begin with.

(2) God's catalogue of sins includes both acts and attitudes.

(3) Genuine holiness results from a love for God embedded deep within our inner core, not from outward keeping of rules.

(4) While observing external rules cannot purify the sin nature with which we are born, observing rules can help us control the destructive effects of our sin nature.

(5) Our inward corruption of mind must be dealt with internally by confessing our sinful condition, being willing to turn from it, and by placing faith in the crucified and risen Christ to wash us by his blood and pour out upon us his grace [undeserved love].

(6) Only the blood of Christ applied to our lives by grace through faith coupled with repentance can start the process of sanctifying our sin nature and declare war on it, but know that this war with our sin nature will continue until we die.

(7) There are many powerful reasons to give our life to Christ [forgiveness, grace, mercy, heaven], but one of the greatest is the acquisition of a new nature which reflects our Heavenly Father to replace the old nature which reflected the "Adam" in all of us, and this new nature brings a new attitude!