

ADULT STS LESSON 86

CHRIST'S EXPLANATION OF UNFAITHEULNESS AND DEFILEMENT

MEMORY VERSE: *“There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man (Mark 7:15).*

TEXT: Mark 7:1-37

The Chapter opens with the dubious and unscrupulous attitude of the Pharisees and certain of the scribes who came to put to check the progress of the gospel ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in the entire Jewry. This study also points out the dispute Christ had with them concerning the allegation about eating bread with **“unwashed hands”**, the needful instructions He gave to the people on that occasion and further explanations about faithfulness and unfaithfulness to God and His sacred word. Mention was made of the demonstration of faith and healing of the woman of Canaan's daughter and finally, the cure of the man that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech.

1. FAULT-FINDING OF THE UNFAITHFUL PHARISEES AND SCRIBES

Mark 7:1-5; Matthew 15:1,2; Luke 6:7

“Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed, hands, they found fault” (Mark 7:1,2). The Pharisees and scribes travelled from a far distance in order to come and pick up a quarrel against Christ in Galilee where they felt He was held in high reputation. They came from Jerusalem on an official assignment to evaluate His ministry. Previously, such delegation was made where they pronounced a harsh condemnation against Jesus (Mark 3:22). These official delegates had already made up their minds about Jesus, looking for an occasion to confirm their curiosity. Apart from having a predetermined conclusion about Him, they failed to evaluate Him against the measure of God's word. They brought a complaint against the disciples to their Master, expecting that He would have them conform to their inventions and impositions. They sought to make themselves the standard for others to adhere to. One of the purposes of Christ's coming was to set aside the ceremonial laws which God made and to abrogate them in order to make way for the new. **“Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second” (Hebrews 10:9).** Had the scribes and Pharisees come to be taught by Jesus, their zeal and quest for knowledge would have been commendable; but to have come to oppose the Lord and check the progress of His gospel was tantamount to wickedness. They were unlike certain Greeks who came to worship at the feast and desired to see Jesus (John 12:20,21). Believers in Christ should avoid the insincere motives of these religious bigots. It is unfortunate that their mission was to find fault. **“And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed, hands, they found fault” (Mark 7:2).** This they often do so **“...that they might take him” (John 11:57).** Their problem was upholding the tradition of the elders. By this tradition, all the people were enjoined to wash their hands before eating. There was no harm in the practice itself except the much emphasis placed on it as an integral part of their religion. **“For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders”.** The religious leaders meant elaborate ceremonial washing, not Washing for the sake of cleanliness. The observant Jews of that time would strictly observe a rigid and extensive ritual for washing before meals. Their washings were commanded by tradition, not the Scripture. The Pharisees and the Jews knew this, yet they still went ahead and criticized the disciples for non-adherence. Contemporary Christians must be diligent to be able to search, compare and contrast between the revealed word of God and the opinions of men so as not to fall into error (John 5:39; Psalm 119:97,137,9,11).

2. JESUS' EXPLANATION OF DEFILEMENT AMONG THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES

Mark 7:6-23; Isaiah 29:13; Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 20:20).

“He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Mark 7:6).

Jesus referred to them as hypocrites because they were too concerned with trivial matters such as the washing of hands. A hypocrite is **“an actor or someone who wears a mask. The picture they portrayed is more important to them than who they actually are. They “honoureth [God] with their lips”**, but in the real sense, **“their heart is far from [Him]”**. It is possible for a so-called believer to appear spiritual when actually, he is far from God. Hypocrisy is tantamount to unfaithfulness before God. Although many are regular in church attendance, reading of the Bible, eloquent in prayers, involved in in evangelism, their hearts are still far away from their Maker. All these are nothing but vain worship. The Pharisees, in their blind zeal, were **“teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”**. Truly, there were many washings imposed by the Mosaic laws (Hebrews 9:10, which were mere symbols of inward purity of the heart, they presumptuously added to the ceremony and were very apt in washing of pots and cups and **“many other such like things...”** Christ reproved them also for laying aside the commandment of God and making His word of no effect by their traditions. He cited an example of the commandment of God for children to honour their parents which they had flagrantly underestimated. Once a man conformed himself in all areas to the tradition of the elders, they would find a means of exonerating him from the consequences of consequence of disobeying the commandment of God. But, believers must avoid this tragic error of replacing true righteousness with mere human traditions and ceremonies. Parents should instil the fear the whole counsel of God. They should spare no effort to train them in love (Proverbs 22:6). Jesus emphasized the things that defile a man, He stressed that: **“There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him: those are they that defile the man”** (Mark 7:15). Specifically, Jesus spoke about ceremonial cleanliness with respect to food. Eating with unclean hands or any other such thing does not in any way defile: it is what comes out of man that defiles. He thus expanded their understanding of what constitutes real defilement. He said, **“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man”** (Mark 7:21-23). Believers need to examine their hearts and see whether any of these is present with them (2 Corinthians 13:5), and ask God for complete purging of their hearts.

3. FAITH OF THE ALIEN AND UNIQUE HEALING OF THE MUTE

Mark 7:24-37; Matthew 15:21-28; Acts 10:38

“And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter” (Mark 7:24-26). Jesus had travelled about 50 miles north to the coast of the Gentiles. A poor woman who was in distress, a Gentile and a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, approached and desired Him to help her young daughter who was who was possessed of the devil. Although Christ’s response was, **“...it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs”**, she was not discouraged. With faith and perseverance, she got the needed miracle. From this woman, the following lessons stand out: **One**, she was humble in her request. Believers should also be humble before the Lord at times (1 Peter 5:6). **Two**, she was importunate. She defied all the apparent insults thrown at her to get her desired miracle. **Three**, she was direct and focused in her request (Mark 10:51). Present-day believers should not be discouraged but tarry for their miracles (Luke 18:1-8). **Four**, Jesus commended her faith which was the basis for her miracle (Matthew 15:28). The last part of the chapter shows the healing of a man that was both deaf and mute. **“And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him”** (Mark 7:31,32). The Lord Jesus hardly stayed long in a place because of the nature of His ministry (Acts 10:38). He never rejected anyone who needed His help. On seeing the man **“that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech”**, He took him aside from the multitude to show that He sought not the glory of men but of God. Christ’s humble disposition in ministry should serve as a lesson to contemporary believers. Throughout His ministry, He used different methods of healing. He healed in response to the faith of those that approached Him. His power is unlimited. Christ took the

man aside, **“And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.”** That He sighed showed His compassionate response to the pain and sorrow sin brought to the world. As soon as He gave a word of command, **“straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.”** This was a clear fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah that **“..the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped... and the tongue of the dumb sing...” (Isaiah 35:5,6).** In a rare of humility, Christ charged the people not to publish the miracle but in their zeal, they did. In fact. **“...the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it”.** The miracles of Christ are always astonishing: anyone who comes to Him today with faith, will also have good testimonies to tell others about their encounter with the Lord. We should not be ashamed to tell others about the love of the Saviour.

Questions For Review:

1. Why did the scribes and Pharisees come to Jesus from Jerusalem?
2. What should be a believer’s motive for coming to the house of God?
3. How can a believer differentiate the word of God from the opinions of men?
4. In what ways do churchgoers demonstrate hypocrisy to God today?
5. What role are parents to play in effective upbringing of their children in the way of the Lord?
6. What can believers learn from the comportment of the Greek woman?
7. What can believers learn from Christ’s humble disposition in ministry as He healed the man that was both deaf and mute?