

It's been 3.5 months since we were last together in Matthew.

Human Tradition and Followers of Jesus (15:1-2)

15:1 *Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,* 15:2 *“Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”*

- “The principles of the Pharisees are principles that never die” (J.C. Ryle).
- The importance attached to outward things.
- The Pharisees accuse the followers of Jesus not of any immorality or violation of God’s Word. The accusation is solely that they violate a manmade tradition.
- Whenever we add our preferences to the Word of God, we will end up valuing our preferences over the Word of God.
- Handwashing was required by the law for the priests in the exercising of specific priestly duties (Exodus 30:18-21; 40:30-32; Leviticus 22:4-7).
- People think that worship is something left to our will and imaginations.

Illustrating Hypocrisy (15:3-9)

Accusation (15:3)

15:3 *And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”*

- Jesus momentarily bypasses the discussion about handwashing to focus on the word “tradition.”
- Colossians 2:8.

God’s Law (15:4)

15:4 *“For God said [in Exodus 20:12//Deuteronomy 5:16], ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and [in Exodus 21:17], ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.’”*

- “Honor” is more than just verbal respect; in the context it is obviously financial support in the parents’ advanced age.
- That the scribes were unmoved by the curse of death in their subverting the Law of God shows the unbelief that was in their hearts. They saw themselves as true religious authority and didn’t believe God to be judge of all those who negate His Law.

Breaking God’s Law (15:5-6a)

15:5 *“But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,’* 15:6a *he is not to honor his father or his mother.’”*

- When people take to themselves the right to add to or subtract from Scripture, when they place their will, imaginations, priorities, and traditions over the Word of God, they are just as guilty as Eve was in the Garden when she chose her desires over God’s clear command.
- “... whenever holiness is made to consist in anything else than in observing the Law of God, men are led to believe that the law may be violated without danger” (John Calvin).

Judgment (15:6b-9)

15:6b *“And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.* 15:7 *You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you [in Isaiah 29:13]:*

15:8 *“This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.*

15:9 *But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.”*

- **The outside looks religious, pious, spiritual, holy.** There is a problem in the heart, though.
- Lifting up the “precepts of men” above Scripture reveals a heart problem.
- Will worship in Colossians 2:20-23.

- The roots of this are in Genesis 3:1-6. God had given His Word, but Eve prioritized her evaluation above God’s Word.

Correcting Tradition (15:10-20)

Defilement Starts Within (15:10-11)

15:10 *After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, “Hear and understand. 15:11 It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”*

- Jesus commands that they “hear and understand.” It’s not that what He’s teaching is difficult. It’s that they won’t naturally accept it. Why? It puts the root of the problem in ourselves. We don’t like that.
- What does “defile” mean? It is to take something which should be holy to God, totally dedicated to God, and treating it as if it is not, treating the holy as if it is common.

Blind Guides Offended (15:12-14)

15:12 *Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” 15:13 But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. 15:14 Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”*

- There is no room of compromise with human tradition that eclipses God’s Word.

Unclean Heart (15:15-20)

15:15 *Peter said to Him, “Explain the parable to us.” 15:16 Jesus said, “Are you still lacking in understanding also? 15:17 Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? 15:18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 15:20 These are the*

things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

- The problem starts within.
 - “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool” (Proverbs 28:26a).
 - “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).
- Four of these six defiling sins are from the Ten Commandments (following their order in the Ten Commandments): murder, adultery, theft, false witness.
- God’s work on the heart: Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 11:17-21; 36:22-27; Romans 2:28-29.
- God’s dwelling in the heart: “I bow my knees before the Father, from Whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:14-17).¹
- The wisdom of Proverbs sets us in opposition to the wisdom of the world:
 - “Listen, my son, and be wise, And direct your heart in the way” (Proverbs 23:19).
 - “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But he who walks wisely will be delivered” (Proverbs 28:26).
- Psalm 139:23-24.

¹ See also John 6:56; 14:23; 15:4; 17:23; Romans 8:10; Galatians 2:20; 4:19; Colossians 1:27.