

Commentary on Mark Chapter 7, by Chuck Smith 1.23.22

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January memory verse, Jeremiah 32:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

²⁷ "Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?

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Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem ([Mar 7:1](#)).

They came on up from Jerusalem to the area of Galilee.

And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables ([Mar 7:2-4](#)).

I mean, all of the rules concerning ceremonial washing for cleanliness. Now, this is not hygienic; this is ceremonial. And according to the ceremonial washing, and, of course, sometime after this the Mishna was compiled in which all of these rules and regulations were put concerning the washing; it's interesting that all of the rules that they had concerning the washing of hands, this particular type of washing, it wasn't that you just go over and wash your hands off. You had to wash your hands a particular way in order to be ceremonial clean. Because you see, if your hands were ceremonial dirty by touching something that someone else had touched who wasn't clean...say, if I was a Gentile and I had touched a coin and you touched that coin, I was a Gentile unclean, therefore, if you touched the coin that I touched, you would be unclean too, because I'm an unclean Gentile. So, you go to the marketplace and you get your change, and who knows who's been touching those coins. And so, when you get home and you want to eat, you can't just go wash your hands hygienically and eat. You've got to wash them ceremonially. And to do that, you had to, first of all, get someone to help you out because you had to have what they called a half a log of water, which is about two eggshells full in the first washing. And what you'd do is, you'd, with your fingers extended upward, you would take your fist and rub it in the one hand as the water was poured over. Rub your fingers together, and then your fist within the hand, and then the other side. And you would hold your hands out this way, because anything that touches you would be unclean. So, the water that you're washing with becomes unclean because it has touched you. And your hands were unclean, you see, ceremonially. So, you hold them out like this so that the water drips off the wrist, because you don't want that water to drip on you. Because any part it would hit, that would be unclean too and

you'd have to go through another bath. So, you hold it out like this and let the water drip on down. Then, because the water that was used is now unclean, and that which is dripping off is unclean, then you would have to hold your hands downward and out from you, and they would pour another half log of water over your hands as you're holding them down and let it run off the fingers. And this is the way that if you didn't wash that way, and you would eat without going through this, they would do it several times during a meal. You know, go through this whole ceremonial bit of washing their hands.

Now, they also had these pots that you don't know what may have touched the pots. Some little fly may have landed on the pot that had landed on a Gentile's shoulder or something. And so, they would also go through the process of washing the pot on the outside. However, if when the pot was open, a fly would happen to land on the inside, that was it. You had to break the thing in pieces and not leave a piece large enough to take oil to anoint your little toe. In other words, it had to really be shattered, because it was unclean. And there were a lot of rules like this. If it was brass or metal, then there was a ceremonial washing for that, and you could use that over. Or dishes, if they were just flat, then they would be all right. But if there were any rim on the dish and it became unclean, then you had to break it completely. You couldn't use it again. And all of these rules were codified in the Mishna of these washings, the traditions of the elders.

Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? [they're eating bread without washing their hands] He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men ([Mar 7:5-7](#)).

It is interesting how easily the traditions of man can become the dogmas and the doctrines of the church. Things that are just traditions. I think that traditions are probably the hardest thing a person has to deal with as far as being free. We are bound by traditions. Traditions have a greater hold on a person than almost anything else. These traditions are deeply ingrained in us. But if you really go back to study the background of the traditions, you'll find that many times they have no biblical base at all. But oftentimes, traditions are based in paganism. And yet, because they have been practiced so long in church, they become the dogma of the church, and finally the doctrines of the church.

Now within the church so many traditions have developed. And unfortunately, in the church the same things are being done which Jesus accused the Pharisees of doing. And that is, teaching for doctrines the traditions of man. There are many doctrines of the church that have not a scriptural base, but have only a traditional base. The doctrine of infant baptism for salvation: you will not find one scriptural base for that doctrine. It's the traditions of men. And yet, it is held too tightly by many, many churches as solid church doctrine. But, it's doctrine based upon tradition, not the foundation of the word. And, that's just one of many. For He said,

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For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject [you actually are rejecting] the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition ([Mar 7:8-9](#)).

You're putting your traditions above the commandments of God.

For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth [his] father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer [allow] him no more to do ought for his father or his mother [or, he can do what he wants] ([Mar 7:10-12](#));

Now, if you would curse your father and mother under the Jewish law, you'd be stoned. You're to honor your father and mother. "And whosoever should curse his father and mother should be put to death." But, they developed this tradition. You say, "Now, Dad, this is Corban. I'm going to give you a gift. You are a dirty rotten louse, and I hate you and I've always hated you. Now, this is for your good, Dad. This is a gift for you." As long as you preface it, "This is a gift; this is corban, that you might be benefited by this," then you can go ahead and say whatever you wanted. That was their tradition by which they circumvented the law of God. You were actually to provide for your parents. But you say, "Well, it's Corban. I've given that to God; you can't have that." And you could actually wipe out any obligation you had to a person by saying, "Anything I owe you is Corban. That is, it's dedicated to God, and therefore you can't have it." And by these traditions, they were actually negating the law of God.

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye ([Mar 7:13](#)).

You hypocrites, He said.

And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me ([Mar 7:14](#))

And now He says probably one of the most radical things He has said up to this point. Now, Jesus said an awful lot of radical things in His life. But up to this point, this is probably the most radical thing that He said. And you have to understand the background in which it was said, that is, of the people. Under the Mosaic law, there were certain meats that they were forbidden to eat, one of those being swine, or pig. Under the law it was forbidden. It was considered unclean; it was forbidden. Now, during the time of Antiochus Zepiphanes, that Syrian king who had conquered Israel and sought to just profane and blaspheme these people, he ordered that they, all of them, eat pork. It was a commandment of Antiochus Zepiphanes, and if they would not eat pork, they would be put to death. And hundreds of Jews died rather than to eat pork, thousands of them, during the time of the Macabeans. Thousands of them died rather

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than to violate the law and eat pork. Now Jesus is going to say something extremely radical with this kind of a background.

Hearken unto me ([Mar 7:14](#))

He's talking to the crowd now. He's been talking to the Pharisees, telling them about how they've disannulled the law of God by their traditions and now he's calling the crowd to hearken to Him. And this radical statement,

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. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear ([Mar 7:15-16](#)).

It's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him; pork, whatever. Now, this was a radical departure from their traditions. In fact, when He came into the house away from the people, His disciples said, "Lord, explain that one to us."

And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but [only] into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? ([Mar 7:18-19](#))

Now, the meats are all purged out of your body; they don't defile you in a spiritual sense. And of course, we're talking about ceremonial washing. The meat that you eat doesn't defile you. Now, it can make you sick or it can do things, but spiritually it doesn't defile you. There's no spiritual defilement in it, because it passes through your body.

And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that [is what] defileth the man. 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, and foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man ([Mar 7:20-23](#)).

So, it's not what goes in, but what comes out. And that reveals what is in the man's heart. And there's where the true spiritual defilement or purity exists in the heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God." That's where real spiritual defilement is; not in what you are eating, but what you are, the inward part of your life, what's in your heart. Not what's in your belly that counts.

And from thence he arose ([Mar 7:24](#)),

Now He's at the area around Genesarret, there at the Sea of Galilee.

and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon ([Mar 7:24](#)),

Tyre and Sidon, of course, are over on the coast. You've been reading about them quite a bit of late. Tyre is about thirty-five miles from Capernaum in the northeasterly direction. And of course, about twenty-five miles further up the road is Sidon. And Jesus left the area of the Galilee now and is going over actually into the Gentile territory.

and [he] entered into a house, and would have no one know it [he wanted to do it secretly]: but he could not be hid. For [there was] 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 Syro-Phoenician by nation; and she besought [begged] him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet [right] to take the children's bread, and cast it unto the dogs ([Mar 7:24-27](#)).

Now, at this point, many people are offended with Jesus. Here is a woman, a mother, who is in real trouble. She's got a daughter that's got big problems; her daughter is possessed by an unclean spirit. And this mother, out of desperation, is coming to Jesus for help. But because she is a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician, Jesus makes reference to her as a dog. Now, there were there wild scavenger dogs that were hated by everybody. They would run in packs; they would attack sheep, they would attack children. And they were ferocious, vicious, hated animals. And it was very common for the Jews to call the Gentile *Gentile dogs*. And the word is equivalent to our English word *bitch* where it is a derogatory term. And so, they would use it, the word *dog* like a person would use the other word today, in a very derisive, derogatory way. And to think that Jesus would make reference to this woman like that is very unsettling, if He did. But He didn't. There is another Greek word for dog, which is the word that Jesus used. It is that little household pet that's always under the table, that little pet of the family. And most of the Jewish homes had their little pet dogs, which were domesticated and lovable little animals under the table. And when Jesus said, "It isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs," He used this Greek word that could be translated, "It isn't right to take the children's bread and to throw it to the little puppies, these cute little dogs under that table."

And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs [those little puppies] under the table eat of the children's crumbs ([Mar 7:28](#)).

Now, in those days they did not have knives and forks and spoons. They did not have eating utensils. They didn't even use chopsticks. They used the utensils that God first created for man to eat with. They used their hands. And the eating was an interesting process. Always bread. And usually you would break your bread, pull it off and then dip it in the soup or in the sauces or in whatever. And you'd use your bread oftentimes as sort of a spoon. And when we're over there, we usually go out for what they call an oriental meal, but it's more of an Arabic type of a meal, where they serve you the pita bread and all of these sauces. And you break the thing and you do your dipping and all, and you have all these exotic kind of salsas and everything else to eat with your pita bread. But they use their hands; they use their fingers. Now, of course, by the time

you're through eating, you've got the grease and everything else all over your hands. So, the final piece of bread, you would take it and use it to wipe off as a napkin. You'd use it to wipe off your hands. And then, you'd toss it under the table to the little dog down there waiting, standing up and "woof, woof." You stand up and you drop him this final piece of bread that had all these delicious juices on it. And the dogs would eat these crumbs or these pieces of bread that would be used to wipe off the hands from the master's table.

So, to understand it from its cultural background, it's not nearly as severe as it would just appear on the surface to us. Here's this woman, she's a Greek, and she's outside of the covenant. Jesus said, "I'm not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But here's this woman from outside of the covenant race, and she's coming to Jesus and she's saying, "Lord, help me! My daughter is at home and she's vexed with an unclean spirit." Jesus said, "It's not right to take the children's bread and to cast it to the little puppies." That is, the bread that they're supposed to be eating. "No, that's true, Lord. But those little puppies, they get the crumbs at the end, those that fall from the master's table." And Jesus said, "Ah, for this saying..." and another gospel said, "Oh, woman, great is thy faith."

For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil [was] gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed. 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 ([Mar 7:29-31](#)).

So actually, He made a round about journey going north before coming south.

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. And he took him aside from the multitude, and he put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; And [they] were beyond measure and astonished, saying, He hath done all [of these] things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak ([Mar 7:32-37](#)).

Now, here we find again an interesting method that Jesus is using: spitting, putting His fingers in the guy's ears because he's deaf and then spitting and putting it on his tongue. The interesting thing about Jesus is that He did not follow a pattern.

We seem to be so organized; we want everything to work by patterns. We're always looking for the secret formula. We're always trying to find that method. And we're seeking to develop within the church methodologies, "This is the method by which the work of God is wrought." No, there is no method by which the work of God is wrought. God works in many different ways and refuses to be confined to any pattern, because

God doesn't want us to develop methodology. So, the Lord has chosen to work as He pleases to work, and often times in different ways. Now, we are told in Corinthians, "Now there are diversities of gifts that is of the Holy Spirit, and there are also diversities of operations." So that God may give to ten people a gift of the word of knowledge, but it works in a different way in all ten. Because there are diversities of operations, even of the diversities of gifts. God refuses to be patterned or pigeonholed. God always allows Himself that freedom of working in a unique way, however He sees fit. And so, it is wrong for us to try to find some method, some secret formula whereby we might see the power of God working in a particular way.

There was a time in my own ministry when I was seeking the Lord, as He said, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." And I was seeking the Lord for the gifts of healing. We were living in Tucson, and I was diligently seeking the Lord. I wanted all that God had for me. There were so many sick people in Tucson; it's one of those places where people from the East who have asthma or arthritis or whatever, they go to Tucson because of the climate and the low humidity and so forth...a lot of sick people. And we had to minister to a lot of sick people. And so, I was just thinking, "Lord, it would just be so great if I just had the gift of healing." And, so oftentimes, in our services we would pray for the sick. And one evening we had a lady who was...we had set up a tent and we were having a tent meeting out in the area of Twenty-second and Craycroft, under Davis Motham. And this one lady came to the tent, and she was blind in her left eye. And so her friends brought her that she might be prayed for to be healed. And so I laid hands on her to pray that God would heal the blindness in her left eye. And as I prayed, when I said, "In the name of Jesus," I felt a sensation. And that's the best I can say, just a sensation in my left hand. And when I took my hand off and the lady looked, to my surprise, she said, "I can see! I can see! Praise the Lord, I can see!" And, you know, it was exciting. She went around and told the whole neighborhood that she could see. And of course, they all knew she was blind and she proved it; she'd cover her right eye and read things with her left eye. And her eye was healed. I can't explain it; I was surprised. And pleasantly so, but nonetheless, surprised. She started bringing a lot of people with different ailments to be prayed for. And I was trying to remember, "Now, just how did I do it? And what did I say?" I was looking for the magic formula. And I'd put my hand on and I'd say, "In the name of Jesus," and wouldn't feel anything. "IN THE NAME OF JESUS!" It's got to be somewhere in there. But it's interesting how we're always trying to find that formula. God doesn't work by formulas; He works by His sovereign grace. You can't pattern God. And so, Jesus didn't follow the same methods; He used different methods.

Now, one further thing: He would tell people, "Now, don't tell anybody." But they'd go out and blow it anyhow. Why was Jesus saying, "Don't tell anyone"? Jesus was seeking to forestall any premature attempt by the people excited over the miracles seeking to acclaim Him and set Him up as the Messiah. There was a special day God had before ordained that the Messiah should be revealed to the people. When Jesus was in Cana of Galilee at the beginning of His ministry, and they were at this wedding feast and they had run out of wine, His mother came to Him and said, "Son, they've run out of wine."

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He said, "What's that to Me? It's not My problem." He said, "My hour has not yet come. Don't rush things, Mom. My hour is not yet come." Jesus was constantly looking forward to that hour in which He was to be presented as the Messiah. And over and over again we hear Him saying, "My hour is not yet come." So, He would say, "Look, keep it quiet; don't tell anybody." Because there was an attempt, prematurely, to acclaim Him as the Messiah.

After the feeding of the multitudes, they said, "Wow! It's got to be Him. Who else can feed them like that? The Messiah, the Kingdom Age is here. Look, He can take a few loaves of bread and feed everybody." And they were going to, by force, push Him into the position of the Messiah. And He passed through their midst; He disappeared from them. God had promised a day. In the Psalms He declared, "This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." The day that the Messiah would be revealed. And so, Jesus was seeking to stop any movement by the people to prematurely go ahead of God's plan, to seek to establish Him as the Messiah. So, that is why He would say, "Go thy way; don't tell anybody." But, you know, when God has done something like that, how can you be quiet about it? And so the more He seemed to try and stop them, the more they published it. And people were amazed because He was able to open up the ears of the deaf and to loosen the tongues of the dumb. The marvelous work of our Lord.

May the Lord be with you and bless you through the week. May the word of Christ dwell in your heart richly through faith. And may God help you to take the time to pray, more time in prayer this week. Make it a covenant in your heart before the Lord just to spend more valuable time with Him. Even if it means turning off the TV, as horrible as that may sound. And may God just draw you close to Himself, fill you with His love, with His Spirit, strengthen you by His Spirit in your inner man. And out of your heart may there proceed praises, blessings unto the Lord our God. Oh, may God richly bless you this week as you walk with Him in close communion. In Jesus' name.