

## The Gospel According to Mark A Warning for the Religious

Mark 7:1-13

Sunday, October 4, 2020

### Introduction

Throughout the ministry of Jesus we see examples of His mercy and grace toward the lost and wandering. He is full of compassion and is quick to help those who are weak. But we also see, time and time again, that there are those who Jesus strongly and vehemently rebukes. The ones who are most often on the receiving end of Jesus's reproofs are those who confess God with their mouths but who trust in themselves and in their own good works.

As those who are faithful in our habits and practices of faith Mark 7:1-13 should serve as a source of warning. In this passage we are reminded that it is possible to have lives that are characterized by outward forms of godliness but to have hearts that are far from God. We can very easily find ourselves in the trap of maintaining a commitment to religious tradition and yet neglecting any true love for God or His commands.

### An Accusation from the Religious Leaders (7:1-5)

- **The opposition of the religious (vs. 1)** – In Mark chapters 2 and 3 we read of how the growing popularity of Jesus drew concern from the religious leaders of His day. The Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus accusing Him of eating with those who were unclean (2:15-17), neglecting fasting (2:18-22) and dishonoring the Sabbath (2:23-38). Now, as the crowds continue to flock to Jesus we see the religious leaders coming again, ready to accuse and discredit Jesus.
- **The accusation (vv. 2, 5)** – The charge of the scribes and Pharisees had to do with rituals of purification that were based, not on the Law of God (the Torah) but on the traditions of the elders. This was a man-made system that sought to inform and regulate the keeping of God's Law. It is on the basis of these traditions that they accuse Jesus and His disciples.
- **Understanding the accusation (vv. 3-4)** – Throughout the Gospel we have hints that Mark is writing to a Gentile audience. That is especially clear here as Mark offers a parenthesis in which he describes the intricate system of purification that the Jews developed and required.

### The Charge from Jesus against the Religious Leaders (7:6-8)

- Jesus responds to the accusation with a quote from the prophet Isaiah. God sent Isaiah to a people who were living in rebellion against Him. He went and proclaimed God's coming judgment against their wickedness. Jesus now draws from Isaiah and even says that these words were written prophetically of the religious leaders of His day (Isaiah 1:2-4; 29:13-14).

- **They are outwardly religious but inwardly callous (vs. 6)**
  - **Hypocrites** - Jesus refers to the religious leaders as hypocrites, a word taken from the theater. They are like a person who puts on a mask and pretends to be something or someone they are not. While they say and do things in the name of God, their hearts are far from Him.
  - **A repeated warning** – This is by no means the only time that Jesus exposes and warns the religious leaders. Over and over Jesus makes it clear that they are hypocrites with callous and empty hearts (Matthew 23:27-28; Luke 11:37-54).
- **They hold to the commandments of men over the commandments of God (vs. 7-8)**
  - The system of the scribes and Pharisees was a complex system of rules and standards that were added to the Law of God. Under the guise of piety and Law-keeping they bound the consciences and hearts of the people of God.
  - This practice of establishing man-made standards created a people who were outwardly religious and spiritually bankrupt.

### An Example of the Religious Leader's Hypocrisy (7:9-13)

- In an effort to illustrate how the people had used their own commands to circumvent the commands of God Jesus appealed to their disregard for the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12).
- **Corban** – A common tradition during this time was to devote one's money or property to God through a vow. While this appeared to be a sign of one's love and devotion to God, many were promising to God that which they needed to care for their aging parents. They forsook the command of God in an effort to make themselves appear righteous before men.

### Two Warnings for the Church

- **A warning against hypocrisy: We must guard against being outwardly religious and inwardly callous** – This is a temptation that is common to man. Many fall into the trap of keeping up religious habits all the while allowing their heart to wander. We must always be vigilant to keep our hearts set on God allow our worship and obedience to flow from our gratitude and love for Him.
- **A warning against tradition: We must guard against elevating man-made religious traditions over the commandments of God** – We are often tempted to rely on our own attempts at attaining righteousness. We use religious tradition in an attempt to earn God's favor. We must remember that our righteousness is in Christ alone. We can rest in Him and know that we are saved by grace through faith in His finished work (Galatians 3:1-6).