

## **Confusing Man's Traditions with God's Commandments, Part 2**

Scripture: Matthew 15:10-20

Code: 2312

Let's again, together, examine Matthew 15 this morning, as we look to the Word of God, to hear from Him who speaks through His Word. I think we are all very conscious today of the term 'pollution.' We see it in the newspapers, and hear it discussed all the time; air pollution, mind pollution, environmental pollution. It has become almost a byword in our society.

The word pollution is also a biblical word. In fact, every time you see the word 'defile' in the Bible, it could be translated 'pollute.' Every time you see the word 'defilement' it could be 'pollution.' In the passage that we will look at this morning, , our Lord speaks to the issue of pollution.

"When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear and understand: not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.' Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?' But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.' So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'"

Five times in that text we see some form of the word 'defile.' The dictionary basically says that the word defile means 'to make impure, unclean, dirty, foul,' or 'to pollute.' In the Greek, koinoois an antonym for 'clean,' and means 'unclean, dirty, defiled, polluted.'

In the New Testament, there are five verbs used for the word defile - three nouns, and one adjective. The combination of these nine different terms is used dozens of times. The New Testament does say much about defilement, but it can't begin to compare to the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the basic Hebrew word chala, which most of the time means 'to defile, to pollute,' appears 225 times, 175 of which it refers to defilement or pollution.

So we can say that hundreds of times, God speaks to the issue of being polluted or defiled. Let me give you some examples. In Psalm 119:1, the Bible says, "Blessed are the undefiled." In James

1:27, he calls for pure religion and undefiled. Paul, writing to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 8:7 wants us to avoid a weak and defiled conscience. In Hebrews 12:15, we are commanded not to be defiled by a root of bitterness springing up in us.

I Corinthians 3:16-17 says, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." In Revelation 3:4, our Lord prays for the few faithful in the church at Sardis, and said, "They have not defiled their garments," so they would walk with Him in white, for they were worthy. In Revelation 14:4, as we listen to the song of praise offered to the Lamb in glory, it is sung by those who were not defiled. In Revelation 21 tells us that in Heaven, there will enter nothing that defiles.

Of course, as believers, the Bible says that we are to be like Jesus Christ, whom the writer of Hebrews describes in Hebrews 7:26 as 'harmless, holy, and undefiled.' If you go into the Old Testament and find the man of great virtue, Daniel, he is a virtuous man because it says in chapter 1, "He would not defile," or pollute, "Himself."

The point of all of this is to give you a very quick perspective on the fact that God calls for an undefiled life. God has called His people to be clean, pure, holy, undefiled, spotless, unpolluted. If that is the case, if we are to be undefiled and unpolluted, then we must understand what pollutes us and how to deal with it. The Apostle Paul says that God wants to present to Himself a chaste virgin, a pure church. He told the Ephesians that the Lord wanted His church to be spotless, without blemish, blameless. So if God calls us to an unpolluted, undefiled, pure, and holy life, then we must know what it is that pollutes so that we can deal with it. We'll see that in this text.

I'll give you three points: the principle stated, the principle violated, and the principle enunciated. Let's look at the principle stated in verses 10-11, and here, our Lord gives us the clear word on true pollution. Verse 10 sets the scene; "He called the multitude to Him, and said, 'Hear and understand.'" This is very likely the multitude described in Matthew 14:34-36, the multitude of people who had come from the area of Gennesaret, which was a plain area, an agricultural area without a city in it, but it had people living in various places, and they were all collected there. It is very near Capernaum. They were there for healing, and Jesus was speaking with them, teaching them, and healing them.

Out of that incident, which may have lasted for a long time, or many days, some Pharisees came to Jesus. In the first nine verses of the chapter, the multitude was there, and the Pharisees had come and attempted to discredit Jesus publicly, to make Him look bad. They had confronted Him in verse 2, and said to Him, "Why do You transgress the tradition of the elders? Why do You violate Jewish tradition by not going through ceremonial washing?" Jesus had countered by saying, "Why do you violate the commandments of God with your tradition?" Then He pointed out one of their traditions which was nothing more than a man-made rule to keep their own money so they wouldn't have to

give it to their needy parents, which was commanded in the Scripture.

So rather than them embarrassing and discrediting Jesus, they had been publicly shamed and discredited by the piercing words of our Lord, who ended up His denunciation in verses 7-9 by calling them hypocrites who are described by the prophet Isaiah and who worship God in an empty manner, substituting the commandments of men for true doctrine.

The multitude, then, has heard all of this. They are standing there, and we don't know how much of the Pharisees' conversation they heard in total, but it was certainly in their proximity. Now, having gone through this dialogue with the Pharisees, He wants the multitude to come a little closer to Him because He is about to give a principle that they must know. So He calls them to Himself.

I think the term 'hear and understand' is a very important phrase because basically, it is like saying, "This is very important; I want you not only to hear it, but to get it in your minds." What He is about to say, and believe me, as we'll go along, you'll see, is an absolutely monumental new thought for them. It will strike a devastating blow at all of the religion that they are used to.

He says, "Listen and understand." It isn't that what He is going to say is difficult to understand; it is actually axiomatic. It is self-evident. But it is going to come to them as such the antithesis of everything they've ever heard in their religion that He wants them to listen carefully and think it through. That brings us to verse 11. It is not so hard to understand as it is hard to accept. He says, "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

That is a very simple statement; it isn't what goes into you that pollutes you, it is what comes out of you that pollutes you. It doesn't take much to understand the statement in terms of its basic sense. He is saying, "Defilement is an inside matter, not an outside matter."

You see, the Pharisees had come along and said, "How dare You eat food without going through ceremonial cleansing! You eat with defiled hands, and therefore defile the food. You take it and defile and pollute Yourself because You haven't washed." They aren't talking about whether they washed their hands from a cleanliness perspective, but whether they went through the ceremonial rinsings that they had to do between each course, as a matter of Jewish tradition. So they are saying, "You have defiled Yourself by eating food that is defiled," and the Lord is saying that it isn't what goes in that defiles, but what comes out.

In the context of the prior conversation, the statement is rather obvious. Jesus is saying that pollution and defilement is not a physical issue, but a spiritual one. It is not a ritual matter, but a moral one. At this juncture, and you must understand this, you have just seen Jesus crystallize in one statement the antithesis between extant, or current, Judaism and the truth that He came to proclaim. He came to proclaim the truth that was inward, and they were completely committed to that which was outward

religion. In fact, Paul says that they had a form of godliness that was impotent. So in that one statement, Jesus set Himself in absolute diametric opposition to the religion of the Pharisees and scribes.

Frankly, they shouldn't have been so shocked that He would preach that the heart was the issue, because even in the Old Testament, had not the Bible told them in I Samuel 16:7 that man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart? Had not the prophets again and again said that God desired the heart to be circumcised? Had not it been said over in the Old Testament that the issues that proceed out of the heart are the matters that concern God? Jesus says that; it's not what goes into your mouth, but what comes out.

Just a note about what He says, in the phrase 'that which comes out of the mouth defiles a man.' The parallel passage is indicated in Mark 7:15, it says the same basic statement, but instead of saying, "That which comes out of the mouth," it says, "That which comes out of the man." In other words, the evil that is in us is not only demonstrated by what we say but also by what we do. Mark gives us the broadest perspective, and that indicates to us that Matthew is using 'mouth' here to make the analogy a little more tight in comparing it with the eating of unclean foods, and also using the mouth as a symbol of the whole man, and the mouth is a good symbol of the depravity of man, because it is nowhere more evident than in what comes out of his mouth. The mouth being the more dominant revealer of internal pollution. Really, here it is a symbol of the whole man. In other words, it isn't what goes in you that defiles, but what comes out of you.

This is absolutely devastating to the Jewish people. Mark adds just a small word at the end of verse 19 of the companion passage, that says, "Thus He declared all foods clean." That is just unbelievable! Jesus is saying, "There are no more unclean foods, no more kosher, no more ceremonies, no more forbidden food. That is over." That would create instant apoplexy; they couldn't handle that. Their whole life, they had been following a prescribed diet based upon clean and unclean, not only that which was defined as such biblically, but that which was defined as such traditionally, and they had this mass of ceremonial stuff that they had to abide by in their diet and activities: eating, drinking, touching, and all these things. They were living by external rituals.

May I say to you that any religion other than Christianity cannot change the heart. If it can't change the heart, then it can't ever really deal with the inside of a person, therefore all religion apart from the truth is left with only externals. So they tend not only to feed on externals, but to sort of pile them up, to have mounting external activities. Any false religion is bound up in all kinds of ceremonies, rituals, and external issues. The heart is wretched, and theirs were particularly wretched and filled with hate, desiring to murder Jesus. Yet they were going through all these external ceremonies.

Let me ask two questions. The first question is: why did they feel so strongly attached to external issues? Where did all this ceremony and ritual and washings and all the rest come from? Let's say

at the beginning, in fairness to them, that basically, it all started in the book of Leviticus; if you read that book, you'll find a long list of ceremonial observances that they were required to follow. There are lists of animals they could and couldn't eat, birds they could and couldn't eat, things they could and couldn't touch, the ways they could and couldn't cook, certain dietary features, and features of clothing, certain things they could drink and not drink. There is a mass of ceremonies in the Old Testament.

For example, they were considered defiled if they had contact with the carcass of an unclean animal (Leviticus 11) or with any carcass (Leviticus 17), by eating a carcass (Leviticus 22), if they came in contact with any kind of abnormal issue coming from any bodily organ (Leviticus 15), they were considered unclean during the process of menstruation, or unclean by contact with anyone who was unclean, so it could be passed to a second level. They were unclean after childbirth, or after touching anyone with leprosy, if they touched the dead or had contact with someone who touched the dead, or by funeral rites (Leviticus 21) or by creeping things (Leviticus 22), and it goes on and on. They had all of these things that made them ceremonially unfit.

I want you to notice something: at no time in the Old Testament does it ever say that these things were sinful. It isn't sinful to have a child, or a bodily function, or to touch a dead body, or to touch an animal that isn't fit for consumption. So the Bible never says these things were sins, but it said that it constituted a person ritually unfit, and that is very important. They couldn't come in to worship God because of this external unfitness until they had followed whatever cleansing was necessary to prepare them physically to come into the presence of God. All this started in the Old Testament.

The question that immediately comes to mind is, "Why?" Here's why. As I said, you have to remember this: it was external, never defined as sin, but only defined as ritual unfitness. Here's why. When God gave the Old Testament, it was in the early, dawning days of God's redemptive plan with His covenant people. The New Testament calls it 'the rudiments,' or the A-B-Cs.

Whenever you want to impart information to a child, if you are like we are as parents, what we gave our children were books. The books they got when they were very little were full of pictures. You don't give your kid volume 22 of Encyclopedia Britannica; you give them pictures. So there were lots of pictures, and the world began to dawn through pictures. Then, when they learn words, words make sense because words describe things they see in the pictures.

The Old Testament is a book full of pictures, and the entire ceremonial system was like a book given to a child that was full of pictures. God was saying, "Do you see how you cannot come into God's presence to worship Him physically when you are ceremonially unclean? So does God want you to come to worship Him spiritually only when your heart is pure." Do you see the picture? The whole ceremonial system is a picture of what God wants on the inside.

Remember last Sunday night, we were studying circumcision. We said that circumcision doesn't save people, or save the Jews; circumcision was a constant sign that what tearing away had occurred in the flesh, God wanted to do in the heart. That's why the prophet said, "Circumcise your heart." The reason that God gave the ceremonial system was as a picture that if God was concerned that we be clean on the outside, how much more was He concerned that we be clean on the inside? So when you come to God's holy hill, you come with cleans hands and a pure heart. The whole point of the clean hands was to demonstrate the need for the pure heart.

Sadly, throughout the history of Israel, they abandoned the reality and just kept the pictures. So by the time you come to Jesus, instead of going on to the fullness of real spirituality, they were just multiplying the pictures, and had added multitudinous ceremonies to the ones which were given in the Bible. They thought that if God wanted pictures, they'd just keep on adding them. They actually rejected the reality. In fact, when the reality came, they killed Him.

By Jesus' day, the Pharisees and scribes had developed such an elaborate external system of ceremonies, it was so complex that it became an absolutely intolerable burden, and cast its shadow over the whole New Testament. In Matthew 23, Jesus says, "You bind burdens on the people that are too grievous to be borne, and you don't even lift a finger to help." The whole thing was so ridiculous that they developed what was called 'the Law of Intention.' In other words, you couldn't even keep all the ceremonies in one day; you would struggle to get it all done. So they developed this law, so that if you got up in the morning and said, "I intend to be pure all day," you could waive all the ceremonies. Convenient, eh?

I suppose you could ask a second question. If God didn't intend for holiness to be an external matter, then why all these ceremonies? I'll say it again - pictures, symbols. That is really the essence of Hebrews 9-10. You will never understand the book of Leviticus until you understand the commentary on Leviticus, which is Hebrews. Listen to some selected statements.

Hebrews 8:5 says that all of that stuff in the Old Testament is an example and a shadow of heavenly things. In Hebrews 9:9-10, it says that they were figures for the time then present, and that foods and drinks and various washings and fleshly ordinances were imposed until the time of reformation. What is the time of reformation? The time of the arrival of the Messiah and the new covenant. That was the picture-book time, but when Jesus came, it was graduation from elementary school. In fact, in Hebrews 10:1, it says, "They were a shadow and not the very image." They were always intended as a shadow, a sketch, a picture.

That's why, in Hebrews 10:22, the lesson is summed up in this: "Let us draw near with a true heart, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." In other words, let's go to the spiritual cleansing that God was after. That's why Hebrews 6:1-2 says, "Leaving

the principles of the doctrines of Messiah." That's not talking about Christianity, but Judaism. "Let us leave the doctrine of," and then it translates in the King James, "Baptism," but is never translated that in any other instance. It is always translated 'washing,' and that's what it means. "Let's leave the washings, move out of those things."

In fact, from Hebrews 5:12-6:8, it's written to Jews who are sitting on the fence and won't abandon their ceremonialism. He's saying, "Let's not lay again the foundation of repentance toward God, dead works, and those basic doctrines. Let's get on to perfection." Every time you see 'perfection' in the book of Hebrews, it refers to salvation. He's saying to leave the washings, since they were pictures, symbols, nothing more. God wanted to deeply and indelibly impress on the hearts of the Israelites the idea of holiness and sacredness. He gave them all the pictures they needed. How tragic it is that they just kept the pictures and rejected the reality.

So what is the Lord saying in verse 11? This principle has to be established while we're taking a little more time on this verse. We will get done with the passage this morning, so you can rest easy. They did need to know that God, all along, had intended that it wasn't the stuff going in from the outside that defiled, but what was coming up from inside. You can go through all the ceremonies you want to, but your heart can be a veritable cesspool, pumping out filth. Jesus, then, sets Himself in diametric opposition to the Pharisees. It's one of the ways in which He fulfilled Matthew 5:17, "I have not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it." In a very real sense, there are many ways He did that, but this was one of the ways - by abolishing the ceremonial system, putting an end to the pictures, and bringing the reality.

Then, as we come to the New Testament, we see this transition. We see that, as Mark 7:19 says, "Thus He called all foods clean," and ended the system of ceremonial foods, because whenever we see things in the New Testament that defile or pollute, they never have anything to do with the outside. For example, it says that things of the heart defile in verse 18. In Titus 1:15, it says unbelief defiles; in I Corinthians 8, idolatry defiles; in Hebrews 12, bitterness defiles; so it is always internal in the New Testament because the external picture has passed away.

An illustration of this can be brought to our attention. Acts 10 is a very important passage. Peter went up onto his roof to pray, and the Lord gave him some kind of divine anesthetic and put him in some kind of a trance. He was hungry, so he was thinking about food, and sometimes when you're thinking about something, you keep thinking about it when you're asleep. He was in a special, divine sleep, but he was still thinking about food. He was hungry, and you would have thought he'd see a big table spread with kosher food, but instead, in his vision, Heaven opened and a big sheet came out, and everything was in it. Four-footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air.

This would be very difficult for a Jew to handle. You couldn't mix those animals, because they had clean and unclean animals and birds and so forth, and a voice tells him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat. Go for it, Peter; it's all for you." His reaction is, "Not so, Lord! I've never eaten anything that is common, or separated, set apart, unclean. I can't do it, Lord!"

I can understand that. All his life long, he'd not eaten that, so he'd probably gag on that stuff. But the voice tells him a second time, "What God has made clean, don't call unclean." He was so thick that it happened three times to get the message across. That was a difficult thing for a good Jewish boy like him, raised all his life to eat only clean things, and now he's told to eat anything, that the ceremonial law is abolished and over with - that was tough.

In fact, it was so tough that it comes up in Romans 14. It was so tough that Jewish Christians couldn't handle it, so when Gentile Christians would invite them for dinner, they'd want to show them their liberty and serve ham. You know, they just couldn't eat it, and it was causing tension in the church. In Romans 14:2, it says, "For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him." The point is, it doesn't matter what you eat. But if someone's conscience bothers him, don't force him to eat something that will bother his conscience.

Dr. Ganat told me last week that he doesn't necessarily fully observe the kosher diet, but many of his friends are very scrupulous about it. He said he was visiting a certain place, and a man invited him to dinner, and asked, "What can you eat?" He replied that he could eat certain things, and also beef. So on his way home from work, he went and bought kosher franks made from beef. He had to go to about five places to find them, and wanted them to be a nice appetizer for the meal for Dr. Ganat and his family. He didn't know it, but his wife prepared them and served them wrapped in bacon. He said, "My kids actually love it, so now we serve them bacon. That's not a problem."

Not everyone is quite so liberated, and maybe that woman, in her misunderstanding of the whole process, did them a service. I don't know. But Paul is saying that eating isn't the issue, but not to force it or offend anyone. Verse 14 says, "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." He's saying not to grieve your brother because of your food. Verse 20 says that certainly, you should not destroy the work of God because of food.

I Timothy 4 tells us the same thing, that this whole issue has been abolished. It says that in the last days, people will come along and talk about abstaining from certain foods. But he says, "God created it to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."



You want to know why you pray at dinner? I Timothy 4:5. There is no more clean and unclean, because Jesus abolished the ceremonial system. Go back to Matthew 15, for here, we are introduced to where that actually happened, the first step. It was a monumental statement by the Lord that totally pulled the rug out from under their entire perspective of religion. We have seen the principle stated, and we'll move rapidly through the remaining verses.

We now see the principle violated in verse 12. Having stated the basic truth in verse 11, we are face-to-face with the hypocrites, the Pharisees and scribes, who have confronted Jesus. They are described for us wonderfully in this passage. Mark tells us that they had now moved to a house, very likely the house the Lord used to stay in in Capernaum. They are inside, away from the crowd, the scribes, and Pharisees, and now it's time to face the issue.

Verse 12. "Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" Bless their hearts, I think they are trying to warn the Lord that He had gotten them angry, saying, "We have to avoid those guys; they were offended." The word is skandalizo, or scandalized. They were totally offended by the fact that He said people could eat anything they wanted; it blew them away. So they said, "Boy, they were offended, Lord," and I think they're trying to help the Lord out here. They're warning Him to be careful about what He says, or He could get them in a lot of trouble.

The whole statement was a fierce blast at their empty worship and hypocrisy, and He knew it. But if the disciples thought that was offensive, just wait until they get to chapter 23, when He calls them whitewashed graves, or Luke 11 where He calls them graves overgrown with grass, so that people walk on them without knowing what they're walking on. Peter will call them wells without water, or empty clouds. In Matthew 23, the Lord called them hypocrites, devouring widows' houses, shutting up the Kingdom of God, blind guides, fools, blind, hypocrites, paying tithes of minuscule herbs and omitting justice, faith, and mercy. They were swallowing camels and straining at gnats, cleaning the outside of the cup, whited sepulchers. So He offended them purposely. The disciples were curious about all of this, but the Lord knew exactly what He was saying.

You see, they were so deep into their system that they had God in their system. For example, they believed that God spent all day studying the law and all night studying the Mishnah, their tradition, so that He could keep up on everything. They also believed that God was the presider over the heavenly Sanhedrin, and that the rabbis sat next to God in order of rank according to their holiness, and that together, they studied the Halacha and made decisions. They also believed that the last three hours of each day, after such hard work in the law and the Mishnah, God spent three hours playing with Leviathan, the dragon.

They taught that the Almighty was so grieved over the destruction of the temple that once in each of the three watches of the night, He roared like a lion, and when tears fell from His eyes, they dropped into the ocean and caused earthquakes. They taught that God wore a prayer shawl and phylacteries. Worse than that, they taught that when God came to Egypt, He got defiled and had to be purged by Aaron, and when He went to the burial of Moses, He touched Moses, and had to be bathed in a fire to purge Himself. They had God right in the middle of their system.

So when Jesus blasted their system, from their perspective, it was a blast at God and everything they considered to be sacred. This is not the only time the Lord did this; He was very confrontive. Look at Luke 11:37. This is a different environment, but they get the same speech.

"A certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner." So Jesus is the guest of the Pharisee, and he is not marveling that Jesus had dirty hands, but that He didn't go through the ceremonies. The Pharisee can't believe it, and he's amazed. But the Lord didn't say, "I'm sorry, I don't want to offend you." But He did say, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them."

You can imagine that by this time, the guy is up against the wall! He's thinking, "This is the last time I'll ever invite Him for dinner." See, He always took a direct blast at hypocritical religion. We learn the first thing here about hypocrites that I want you to note in our passage; they are offended by the truth according to verse 12. Spiritual phonies don't like their masks torn off, and they were scandalized and offended. There is no question about that. That still goes on.

Hypocrites may come into this church and be offended I hope! There are many people who will say, "I'll never go back to that place. I don't like what he said." Hypocrites will be offended when confronted with the truth, because they come up short and are unmasked, and there is no one so ugly in the sight of God as the person who covers his ugliness with the paint of beauty when there is no real change at all. I submit to you that if your heart is offended by the truth, then you ought to look deeply into your heart, because it may be that you're a hypocrite.

The second thing we find about hypocrites in verse 13 is that they are not only offended by the truth, but destined for judgment. The disciples are telling Him that the Pharisees are offended, and He says, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted." That tells us that they are going to be judged. He sees a field with a number of plantings, and the Greek word here is for

planting. His heavenly Father, which was His common name for His relationship with God, had planted them, and there are some that He has not planted.

Remember the parable of the wheat and the tares, where God sowed the wheat, and the enemy, Satan, came and sowed the tares. So He's saying that the ones that God doesn't plant will be rooted up, or judged. His message to them was judgment on the hypocrites. The only person that God in Christ really blasts in the New Testament, where you get the person along with the sin, is the spiritual hypocrite. For the rest, He'll hit the sin; but in the case of the hypocrite, He'll hit the person with his sin. So He says that they're destined for judgment, and it's almost the same as the parable of the wheat and the tares; they are going to get rooted up. Remember that it says they will grow together until the judgment, and then the Father will separate them. If they aren't His, they'll be rooted up.

Notice the beginning of verse 14, a very important statement. "Let them alone." That is a hard statement. What does that mean? It really can be translated, "Stay away from them." Anyone who pretends to represent the true religion, or know God, or to know the truth, but his inside is not true, stay away from him.

What does that mean? One, it's the staying away of judgment. Hosea 4:17 says, "Ephraim has joined idols; let him alone." It's almost as if they are abandoned to judgment. Secondly, it's the staying away in terms of, "Don't you act as the judge." Remember how we saw that in the wheat and the tares? They said, "Should we rip the tares out?" And He said, "That's not your job; the angels will come in due time and do that. Your job is to proclaim the message of the Kingdom. We'll take care of the judgment. Don't try to rip them up."

I confess to you that that is hard, because basically, I would volunteer to be a ripper-upper, and I don't know what it is about me, but one of the great tensions I have in my heart is how God can want His church so pure, and at the same time tolerate such horrible impurity in the midst of it. If given the freedom by God in the Scripture to do that, I'm afraid I would create a sort of spiritual Gestapo and move out. "Let them alone, MacArthur, stay away from them," He says. He'll take care of them in the end, but I confess to you that it is a grave issue for me to understand, that God can tolerate within the framework of so-called Christianity so much absolute hypocrisy. So stay away.

There is a third thought. Not only to stay away in terms of abandoning them to judgment, and in terms of not thinking you can tear them up, because you might know who the tares are. You might rip up the wheat and leave the tares in your acts of judgment. The third thing that I think He's saying is just to stay away from them. Why? Because of verse 14. The third truth about a hypocrite is that they lead others to disaster. "They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a pit."

It's not the word for 'ditch,' it's the word for the hole in a field that they fill up with water to water the animals. "Stay away from them, because they lead people into the pit." The pit can mean nothing other than Hell; they lead people to Hell, so stay away from them. Don't ever expose yourself to these kinds of people, not in the name of anything.

In fact, in Jude, it says that when you come across such a person, you snatch them like a brand from the burning lest your own garments be spotted. You don't want to get near that stuff, or listen to their so-called knowledge. Paul tells Timothy not to listen to their vain babbling or supposed theological insights and truth. Purge yourself, he says, from these influences, and stay away from these people. Don't expose yourself to them because they lead people to disaster.

Of course, this blind leading the blind is a play on their own teaching, because the rabbis called themselves the leaders of the blind. In Romans 2:19, Paul says, "You fancy yourselves to be guides to the blind," and the Lord several times calls them blind guides. The people who are leading them are blind, and they all fall into Hell. Stay away from them, don't go near them. Don't expose yourself to hypocrites, or people pumping out false religion in the name of Christianity. It can do you no good, but eats like a gangrene, according to Paul. Don't even give them the satisfaction of an audience. They have a self-inflicted, self-deluded blindness, and they push people to Hell.

It says in Matthew 23 that they make their converts twice the sons of Hell than they themselves, and at the end of that passage, it says, "You serpents, you generation of vipers. How can you escape the damnation of Hell?" That's why I encourage young people, when they go for their education, to be obedient to the Word of God and not to put themselves in the place where they are going to be interacting with hypocrites. A hypocrite is anyone who pretends religion on the outside but doesn't know God on the inside. Stay away from that person.

Finally, the principle is elucidated. Would you believe that I could cover five verses in five minutes? Just watch; how about six verses? Verse 15. They move into the house, and they're together, and Peter breaks the ice (we're not surprised). Peter said, half-reverently, half-fearfully, "Explain this parable to us." He's talking about the parable in verse 11, about the mouth and stuff going in and coming out. "Explain it to us."

It is a question of honesty; they wanted to know. It wasn't that they couldn't understand what He meant, it was just that they couldn't accept it; Peter especially. That's why he had to have three visions of the same thing in Acts 10, and then go to a Gentile, and have a Gentile convert. He still didn't get it well, because later on, when he went to Antioch, Galatians 2 says that some Judaizers came along who still believed you had to keep all the ceremonies, and as soon as Peter saw the Jews, he separated from the Gentiles. He went over with the Jews and started doing all that stuff. Paul says, "I withstood him to the face." It was very, very hard for Peter to make that adjustment. So he says, "What are we to understand by this?"

Now we come to the principle elucidated; we've seen it stated, violated, and here, it is elucidated. "Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding?'" 'Also still' is a phrase never used in the Greek New Testament anywhere but right here, and it means 'even yet.' He's saying, "With all that you know, and all that's been said, are you also even yet without understanding, like them?" He says, "Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?" And He repeats it clearly. And Mark adds, "Does not enter the heart." You can't be defiled by what goes in your mouth, because it goes through normal body elimination process; it does not pollute you.

The question the Jew was going to be asking at this moment is, "What about all those ceremonies?" That's where they had to hear what you had to hear this morning - those were only pictures of the real pollution, representations. So He says that it just goes in the stomach and out the draft, but those things that proceed out of the mouth, and Mark is the one who said, as I mentioned, "Out of the man, come from the heart. They pollute the man.

You're never polluted, people, because of what you take in; you're polluted because of what you pump out. The cesspool is inside of you, and it is your heart. Verse 19. "For out of the heart proceed." The word 'heart' here is not the physical pump, but the inner self - the mind, the source of thought, attitude, motive, desire. Just like we say, "I love you with all my heart," or, "My heart goes out to you," or, "I feel my heart." We use the term, the physical pump, related to emotion, thought, feeling, primarily the thinking process. He is saying it is the filth pumped out of the inside, such as evil thoughts.

By the way, in the Greek, that has to do with wicked schemes, which the Pharisees were plotting right at that point against Jesus, or murders, adultery (sexual stealing and covenant breaking), fornication (pre-marital sex), theft (violation of others' property), false witness (dishonest testimony), blasphemy (violent, malicious accusation and slander).

He says, "It's this stuff that comes out of the heart." Does that remind you of Matthew 5? The Pharisees had said, "We don't murder," and Jesus says, "If you hate in your heart, you might as well have, because it's the same thing." The Pharisees said they didn't commit adultery, but Jesus said, "If you look on a woman to lust, you've committed adultery in your heart."

You see, it's the heart that gives birth to the garbage on the outside. They washed their hands, but not their hearts. Verse 20. "These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." The unwashed heart is what defiles, so what is man's greatest need? Ceremonial religion? No, the religion of the heart; the heart has to be cleansed.

I want to show you one Scripture in closing - Titus 1:13. Here, it talks about some filthy people, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth." Tell them to lay away themselves from those external, ceremonial activities.

"Put those things away. To the pure," and he means pure of heart, "All things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work." They are reprobate.

In other words, no matter what they say, or profess, or what kind of Jewish fables or commandments of men they go through, they are defiled on the inside, so everything on the outside is defiled. However, in the middle, you have that wonderful statement of light in the midst of darkness, "To the pure, all things are pure." Pure men with pure hearts receive all things as pure.

So what do men need, then? If we're to be sure we avoid the defilement and pollution that God is so against, we need a pure heart. Isn't that Matthew 5:8? Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. So the prayer of every individual should be, "Lord, purify my heart." How does He do that? Only one way can our hearts be purified, and that is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who purifies the heart and washes away the sin. In the terms of Ezekiel, He gives us a new heart. Every man needs that.

At the conclusion of the first service this morning, a man walked up to me, took my hand, and said, "Where do I go to get a new heart?" I took him to the prayer room; and that's where you need to go - to God, to get a pure heart. You can do it between just you and Him, a divine transaction, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving Him as Savior. He promises to wash your heart, make you undefiled, blameless, pure, holy before God. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, I pray that no one will leave this place with an unwashed heart, counting on some external, religious ceremony, but that the heart might be made clean through the blood of Christ.

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