

## WEEK 36



**Jesus on the Offensive  
True Defilement | 7:14-23  
Ministering to Gentiles | 7:24-37**

## True Defilement | 7:14-23

- *Jesus' more direct reply of the contradiction between the scribes' and Pharisees' tradition is designed to shame and silence his adversaries.*
- *The solemn call to hearing recalls the summons of 4:3 and replicates the prophetic call.*
- *With this call, Jesus sets in radical opposition material purity and moral purity. Essential to a biblical understanding of defilement is understanding the source of defilement.*
- *7:15 – the first half of the riddle is intelligible. But the second half is enigmatic because it appears to have no context.*
- *That uncleanness comes from within and not from without is the biblical teaching of the heart as the source of all spiritual and moral conduct. But this was not apparent to the crowd or to the disciples.*

## True Defilement | 7:14-23

- Hence, Jesus' explanation in 17-19 to the disciples in private as he often did. Public speech, private interpretation. Why? Because their hearts were still hard (6:52, 7:18, 8:14-21).
- **What is the "heart"? The heart is the center of man's personality which determines his entire actions (thoughts, words, deeds) and inaction.**
- Hence, Jesus' reference to Isaiah in 6-7. Food and the heart have nothing to do with one another (7:5). Fulfilling man's law does not alter the heart of man full of warring impulses.
- Colossians 2:16-23 – Normal to Paul's assertion that all things are lawful for the Christian (1 Cor 6:12, 10:23) as outside-in things do not defile, but all things do not edify (not done in love) as inside-out things do defile or do edify.

## "Cleansing all meats" | 7:19b

- 19b regarding "cleansing all meats" is another interpretive comment by the evangelist.
- Jesus was not taking a position against the purity laws of the Mosaic code (Lev 11:1-47, Duet 14:1-20).
- This comment was again for Roman Christians expressing the implication of Christ's statements following the triple vision of Peter in Acts 10:9-16. This language and in Acts 11:2-18, 15:7-29) is closest to that of Luke 7 and taught the early church the purity laws had been abolished. Mark reinforces this point for the Roman reader.

## “From within, out of the heart” | 7:21-22

- *Evil thoughts = the thoughts that stand behind the evil actions of men (Hebrews 4:12)*
- *Fornication = broad term covering all acts of immorality*
- *Theft, Murder, Adultery (breaching the marriage bond) are listed in same order as Hos 4:2 and God indicts his prodigal people*
- *Greed (coveting) = lustful wanting as well as wanting of goods*
- *Malice (wickedness) = general term for deliberate malice*
- *Deceit = cunning and treachery*
- *Lewdness (licentiousness) = open immorality*
- *Envy (an evil eye) = Hebrew concept of stinginess or jealousy*
- *Slander (railing) = could be towards man but OT always directs this towards God, so more likely = blasphemy*
- *Arrogance (pride) = expressions of self-approval*
- *Folly = morally and spiritually insensitive, does not know God and does not wish to know him*

## True Defilement | 7:14-23

- *Human defilement in men is the human heart. The tragedy of man's having to sin reaches demonic fulfillment in man's wanting to sin. There is no heart where this has not taken place.*
- *Jesus' list places defilement and purity on a fundamentally different plane than supposed by the scribes and Pharisees.*
- *The purity laws point to the requirement to be internally pure. The capacity for fellowship with God is not destroyed by material uncleanness, it is destroyed by personal sin.*
- *This transcends the old law. Every human attempt to manipulate the law and make it manageable and complimentary to human complacency is useless and false piety.*
- *This focus on the desperate need for the cleansing of the heart, unable to be cleansed any other way, leads to the entire discussion on the character of a Messianic sign.*

## ... of a Greek woman's daughter | 7:24-30

- *Mark's places this miracle right after Jesus' discussion of defilement as an example of Jesus' disregard of the scribe's concept of defilement. The oral law prohibited a Jew from visiting a Gentile (Peter in Acts 10 again). But Jesus acts out his own teaching.*
- *Like the Good Samaritan, here the faith of the Gentile woman is in direct contrast to the unbelief and aggression of the Pharisees. And her witty reply indicates a level of understanding that puts the disciples to shame.*
- *Tyre and Sidon were north of Gennesaret and a Greek region. People had already traveled to experience Jesus from this region (3:8). Jesus was again seeking rest, a necessity in ministry, but not finding it.*

## ... of a Greek woman's daughter | 7:24-30

- *This is apparently Jesus only excursion beyond the regions of Israel (he mostly avoided contact with Gentiles).*
- *The woman's non-Jewish character is stressed – citizen of Greek area around Tyre, a Syrophenician, and a Gentile by birth and culture.*
- *The woman has heard of Jesus healing powers. Her daughter's possession is likely similar to that of the boy in 9:17-26. Her desperation is understandable. Her falling at Jesus' feet is a mark of deep respect and profound grief.*
- *Jesus rejects her several times confirming that the time has not yet come for blessing to be extended to the Gentiles (Romans 1:16, Acts 3:26, 13:46).*

## ... of a Greek woman's daughter | 7:24-30

- *Reference to Gentiles as dogs is of pet (little) dogs. This nuance is picked up by the woman and repeated back to Jesus "that the dogs eat the food that fall from the children's table".*
- *She likely did not possess theological understanding of the place of Israel in the economy of God. Her acceptance of the comparison, her clever reply turning an apparent insult to advantage, and her profound respect for Jesus shows her faith was not to be shaken.*
- *The woman's irresistible confidence in Jesus delighted him. It bore witness to both her humility and faith. She placed herself unconditionally under Jesus lordship and received his acknowledgement and promise. She returned home to find her daughter calm and in bed.*
- *While the Pharisees forget the realities of life through their formulations of religion and the disciples are dull and hard-hearted, this Greek woman reveals her faith and is not disappointed.*

## ... of a Sidonian man's deafness | 7:31-37

- *Recorded only by Mark. This narrative ends almost with a doxology (7:37). As Mark builds to the first of the two great confessions that Jesus is the Christ (Peter in 8:29), the Son of God (Centurion in 15:39).*
- *A deaf-mute is brought before Jesus. Mark uses an extremely rare Greek word "μογιλάλος mogilálos = hardly talking, i.e. dumb (tongue-tied):—having an impediment in his speech."*
- *This likely indicates the man could speak some but not clearly. And that his problem occurred after birth through accident or disease.*
- *The word is only once in the NT and an allusion to Isaiah 35:5-6 the fulfillment of which was expected in the Days of Messiah according to the rabbis. Mark is telling us the divine intervention of God into the history of Israel and into the history of the Gentiles took place in the ministry of Jesus.*

## ... of a Sidonian man's deafness | 7:31-37

- *The request for the laying on of hands (5:25, 6:5) indicates the presence of Jews or Gentiles familiar with Jewish customs. The great surprise after the healing suggests that they did not expect healing, but the blessing of Jesus.*
- *Jesus took the man aside, away from the crowd, to minister to him. He regarded his personal relationship between himself and the sick to be of extreme importance.*
- *Spittle was regarded as an important force for curing for both Jews and Greeks. Jesus' action here was not one of dishonoring his patient but of honoring him.*
- *The act of healing was accomplished with the word "Be opened" not addressed to the organs themselves but to the whole person.*

## ... of a Sidonian man's deafness | 7:31-37

- *The simple healing statement that "the tongue was loosened" may indicate the man was demon possessed. The healing was not in that the man spoke, but he spoke without defect.*
- *Jesus' commands to be silent were immediately disregarded as in the man with leprosy in 1:43-45.*
- *Again Jesus purpose with the injunction was to avoid the presence of crowds seeking healing and hindering his preaching mission. As in Israel, he did not want to be regarded as a Greek wonder-worker.*
- *The people praised Christ but the wording Mark chooses is intended to recall Isaiah 35:5. The response of faith recognizes the works of Jesus as the promised intervention of God.*
- *This is Mark's purpose – to convince us that Jesus is the Messiah!*