

Mt. 15:10-20 (WCF 6) “Out of the Heart”

For the Children: Just because we are doing the right thing, that doesn't mean we have the right attitude. You can outwardly do what dad and mum tell you, while inwardly feeling very angry and resentful. Sometimes people obey His Word outwardly, though they don't really agree with it inwardly. That does not please the Lord. He wants us to be right in our hearts. That means that we do the right thing for the right reason – because we love Him, are thankful that He has saved us through His Son, and want to do the things that please Him. **Questions:** What was so bad about the Pharisees complaint that Jesus' disciples failed to wash before eating? How can you get a right “heart”? Once you have a right heart, does that mean all your actions will be right from then on?

Introduction:

First Point: The Pharisaical View of Sin

- 1) The Practice of Washings: The OT did have laws about ceremonial washings, for priests and people – but not for all people whenever they ate food. That was a tradition of the elders, a “precept of men.” Ceremonial laws about food and washing were designed to teach Israel's separation from sin, how easily sin could contaminate a person and what stringent measures were needed to combat it
- 2) Outside-In: However, the Pharisees wrongly concluded that if one simply paid attention to the outward ritual of washing and other such ceremonies, the sin could be avoided. They were guilty of externalism, ritualism and traditionalism
- 3) The Road to Hell: Attention to externals more than to the weightier things of God's Law (and Gospel) can lead to Hell. Both our text and vss. 1-9 bring strong accusation against the Pharisees for this, indicating that they are outside God's Kingdom and headed toward judgement – an “uprooting,” a “falling into the pit,” “destruction “. For while they think they are fine because of external rituals, they remain blind to the sin within – and to their need of Christ. He tells the disciples to “let them go” rather than follow their blind lead

Second Point: The Internal Problem of Sin

- 1) Inside-Out: The Lord points out that sin begins with the attitudes, desires and thoughts of the heart, which are then expressed outwardly by words and deeds. The words and deeds of men show that their hearts are defiled by sin. Mk. 7:21-22 gives an even longer list of sinful attitudes that come from the heart. Even with breaking of the ceremonial law, the issue is the attitude that leads one to transgress against God's law, not that certain foods or a failure to wash is sinful in itself
- 2) The Totality of Man's Depravity: The list of sinful attitudes, desires, words and deeds, show that all men have a defiled heart – for who is free of this evidence of what lives within us? All men (WCF 6:3) are defiled at every level of their being (WCF 6:2) and unable to change that (WCF 6:4). Even believers have the old, defiled nature clinging to us (WCF 6:5). That is a very great problem indeed!

Third Point: The Solution to the Problem of Sin

- 1) The Lord's Planting: The solution to this deep problem of sin is implied by the warning of v. 13 that everyone not “planted” by the Father will be uprooted. This implies that He does plant some who will be saved – the elect, planted by His initiative and grace, since no man can plant himself
- 2) The Tools of This Planting: God accomplishes this planting by means of the work of His Son, through whom sin and defilement are forgiven and cleansed; and by the work of His Spirit, who gives the new birth – a new heart. Word and Spirit together then work sanctification, mortify the old nature, on the basis of Christ's saving work
- 3) The Effect of This Planting: The Lord's planting has effect on us both internally and externally – we gain new attitudes, desires, thoughts e.g. on doctrine; and express that outwardly in new words and deeds – though mixed with evidence of our old nature as well

Conclusion: