

"Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."

Mark 7

¹ The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, ² and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. ³ (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, *thus* observing the traditions of the elders; ⁴ and *when they come* from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) ⁵ The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?" ⁶ And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: `THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁷ `BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.' ⁸ "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."

⁹ He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. ¹⁰ "For Moses said, `HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, `HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH'; ¹¹ but you say, `If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),' ¹² you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother; ¹³ *thus* invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."

I remember growing up in church and being taught that the Pharisees were hypocrites: saying one thing and doing something completely opposite. I was also taught that they were legalists: keeping the Law and their many traditions out of a sense of works-righteousness.

In this dialog in the Gospel of Mark we see the Pharisees and scribes criticizing Yeshua's disciples for not ritualistically washing their hands before eating bread. "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?" They asked.

In Judaism, the Oral Law (traditions) was (and still is) as equally binding as the written Law found in the Scriptures. Yeshua was being criticized for not insuring His Disciples were following the Oral Law of the elders.

His response to them was "Why do neglect the commandment of God by your traditions?"

In Judaism, there were (and are) traditions that neglected the commandment of God, as in the example Yeshua brings to them regarding the korbán (voluntary offerings) and its place with regard to the honoring of one's father and mother. Both were commandments

of God found in Torah, but the tradition of the elders allowed a person to bring the korban offering and yet neglect his parents' needs.

According to their tradition, a person could say to his parents, "Anything I might have given to you to help meet your needs, I am giving to the Lord as an offering."

Yeshua says that by doing that, they are violating God's commandment of honoring his father and mother.

This brings us to the question of traditions in our faith, both in Judaism and Christianity.

Is all tradition wrong? Absolutely not. Yeshua observed many traditions in His practice of faith. He came up to read from the Scripture (Luke 4:16-22), He observed Channukah (John 10:22), He called His disciples as did other rabbis at the time: "Follow me." He expounded upon Scripture as did the rabbis of the day.

Yeshua is not against tradition, per se. However, He *is* against tradition that invalidates God's commandments.

As in Judaism, Christianity also has traditions that violate God's commandments. In Leviticus 23, all of God's appointed times are given. The Church violates the Seventh-day Sabbath by their own traditional sabbath (Sunday). The Sunday sabbath is *not* commanded; the seventh-day Sabbath is. Instead of Passover/Unleavened Bread, the Church observes Easter, a tradition – *not* a commandment. The Church does not observe the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, or the Feast of Tabernacles – all Biblically commanded holy days. Instead, they observed Lent, All Saints Day, and Christmas – none of these days are Biblical – *all* traditional, man-made "holy" days.

What is worse, the Church's "holy" days are violating the Biblical injunction against worshipping as the pagans do – they are based on pagan "holy" days. God does not want us to worship Him as the nations worship their gods. He set up His holy days, His priesthood, His ways of acceptable worship, and His commandments.

How can we, in the Body of Christ, criticize the Jewish people for their hypocrisy and traditions violating the commandments of God, when we have just as much guilt in our own observance of faith? How can we point back to the Jewish people's unfaithfulness and falling into paganism in the "Old" Testament, when we have the same faults today in the Church?

We fail to see the "beam" in our own eyes when we look at the speck in the Jewish people's eye. The difference between a "beam" of wood and a "speck" of wood is its size. When we look for hypocrisy in other people, we should best be careful to examine our own before pointing our fingers. When we point a finger at someone, we have three pointing back to ourselves.

We, in the Body of Christ are guilty. The Jewish people are guilty, too. All people in the world are guilty! We all need to turn our eyes to our Lord, repent, and seek His will in our lives. We all need His salvation!

We all need to leave the traditions behind that cause us to disobey God and His commandments. If we don't, we're just as culpable as the Pharisees and scribes of whom Yeshua says, **THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁷ BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.**