

Matthew 15:1-9 The Traditions of Men Versus the Word of God  
(Note verses 3, 6, 9)

Introduction: As Jesus became more and more popular with the common people, the scribes and Pharisees became more and more critical of Him. They criticized Him because His disciples did not fast, because He claimed to be able to forgive sin, because His disciples plucked and ate a few grains on the sabbath, and because Jesus healed on the sabbath. Thus we must be suspicious when some came all the way from Jerusalem to hear Him. We must suspect that those from Capernaum had sent to Jerusalem for help.

I. The criticism from the scribes and Pharisees.

- A. Their question was, “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?” verse 2.
  - 1. These were the “big guns”, the most powerful and influential men of Israel and they were in Galilee to swing the tide of public opinion against Jesus.
  - 2. Their question revealed the basis of their own religion. (It was not based on the word of God but on the word of men.)
  - 3. God had given them His written word, but they had disregarded His word for the word of men.
- B. Their specific charge was that the disciples of Jesus did not wash their hands before they ate, verse 2.
  - 1. We would say, “Big deal; so what?”
  - 2. But to these Jews it was a serious matter. (To them it was necessary to keep the traditions of the elders in order to get into heaven.)
  - 3. To them it was heretical practice to neglect the traditions of the forefathers.

II. The criticism of Jesus in response.

- A. Jesus responded question for question and charge for charge.
  - 1. He asked, “Why do ye transgress the commandment of God?” verse 3.
  - 2. Note the contrast between tradition of men and the commandment of God.
- B. Then He got specific; they had transgressed God's law commanding the child to honor father and mother.
  - 1. God had commanded that every son and daughter honor father and mother, verse 4.
  - 2. This meant not only to obey parents in childhood, but also to provide for parents and care for them in their old age.
  - 3. This was God's command.
- C. But the Jewish forefathers had made that law optional.
  - 1. They said, “You can provide for them if you wish.”
  - 2. But if you do not wish, then you can dedicate those funds to the Jewish temple and not use them for your parents, verses 5 – 6a.
- D. Thus the tradition of the elders was in direct opposition to the word of God, verse 6b.
- E. Jesus charged them with teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, verses 7-9.

III. The lesson for us today.

- A. What really counts before God is not what men have said, but what God has said in His word.
- B. When it comes to the plan of salvation, it is what God has said that counts.
  - 1. It is not what father and mother have said that counts.
  - 2. It is not what your particular preacher, or your particular church, or your particular denomination says that counts.

3. You are not going to be able to depend on these people to get you into heaven.
  4. It is what God has said in the Bible that counts and God has said repent and trust in Jesus Christ, Acts 20:21.
- C. When it comes to moral issues, it is not what the traditions of men have said that counts, but what God has said in His word.
1. Traditions change.
  2. Once all society agreed that adultery is sin, but now many say that it is not a sin.
  3. The word of God has not changed and adultery is still a sin. (Homosexuality is still a sin.)
  4. Keep in mind that men will not be your judge but God will be.
- D. When it comes to faith and practice of a church, the traditions of men is not what counts, but what God has said in His word.
1. As a church, we have no man-made creed to tell us what to believe or what to practice.
  2. We have no earthly headquarters to tell us what to do.
  3. We have the word of God as our only rule of faith and practice.

Conclusion:

1. If you want to be saved you will have to be saved God's way or not at all.
2. If you are saved you need to be a member of a church that places all authority in God and His word and not in the traditions of men.
3. If you do not understand Bible teachings you should at least be willing to learn.
4. You should be willing to yield your life to the teachings of God as set forth in the Bible.

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