

“MAKING THE WORD OF GOD OF NONE EFFECT”

Mark 7:1-13 (Cf. Matthew 15:1-9)

Hebrews 4:12 says, *“The word of God is quick and POWERFUL, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* Jeremiah 23:29 says, *“Is not my word like a as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breath the rock in pieces?”* (cf. Jer. 5:14) There can be no question of **the inherent power of the Word of God**. Paul wrote that it *“effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1 Thess. 2:13).

Yet, our text says the Word of God can rendered **“of none effect”** (Mk. 7:13). Our sword can be dulled so it no longer “cuts” to bring conviction. Let’s examine how this can happen.

I. By SCRUTINIZING it with a CRITICAL spirit (v. 2).

➡ *“THEN came together unto him the Pharisees...”* (v. 1). When the Lord Jesus performed miracles, the Pharisees show up to criticize and find fault (6:56–7:2). They would travel nearly 100 miles from Jerusalem to criticize Jesus.

Every church has it’s share of those with critical attitudes. They complain: The sound system is too loud... The furnace is too hot... The air conditioning is too cool... The preacher is too loud... The sermon is too long... The singers are off-key... There are errors in the bulletin... and on and on it goes.

A critical woman once approached John Wesley, "Mr. Wesley, the strings on your tie are too long. It offends me!" Wesley asked if any of the ladies present had a pair of scissors in their purse. When the scissors were handed to him, he gave them to this woman and asked her to trim his tie to her liking. After she clipped them off, he asked, "Are you sure they're all right now?" "Yes, that's much better." Wesley then said, "Good. Now, let me have those scissors for a moment. Madam, your tongue is an offense to me. It is much too long! Please stick it out...I'd like to trim some of it off."

- A. The **PETTINESS** of the complaint.
1. Critics usually major on minor issues—They “*strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*” (Mt. 23:24). The tradition of washing hands before eating may be good hygiene, but it never commanded in the Word of God! Nothing wrong with washing your hands, but it is not essential to a person’s spirituality.
 2. Their criticism was an indirect attack on the Word of God to lessen it’s effectiveness.
- B. The **PLOY** of Satan (Gen. 3:1-6). Cast doubt on what God said.
- To sit in judgment of the Word of God puts your authority over the authority of the Bible. God’s Word is perfect—faultless—Infallible (Ps. 19:7). We don’t find fault / judge with the Bible—It finds fault in us / judges us.

II. **By SPEAKING it with vain LIP-SERVICE** (vs. 6-8).

- ➡ The Pharisees were BIG on non-scriptural rituals and external cleanings. But they neglected the more important internal matters of the heart. Jesus rebuked this hypocrisy in Matthew 23:25-28.

ILLUS: Parents can be very strict about their children washing their hands before dinner. But they allow their children to watch perverse TV shows or movies and play wicked video games that corrupt their child’s heart. **What is more important—Having clean hands before dinner or a clean heart before God?**

- A. To preach God’s Word from the lips instead of from the spirit is **deadly** “letter preaching.” 1 Cor. 3:6— “*Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament NOT OF THE LETTER, but of the spirit: For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*”
- B. Some men preach the Word of God from their head, but not from their heart. It is their profession, not their passion. When men use the Bible merely as a tool of their “employment,” it becomes of none-effect.

C. When you fail to study the Bible for your own personal devotions, and use it only for preparing S.S. lessons and sermons, it becomes of none-effect.

- We should come to God's Word saying, "***Speak Lord, thy servant heareth.***"

III. By **SUPPLANTING it with HUMAN TRADITION** (vs. 8-13).

- Tradition conforms us outwardly—God's Word transforms us inwardly.
 - Tradition deals with rituals—God's Word deals with realities.
 - Tradition put more emphasis on the physical (pots/pans) than the spiritual.
- ➡ Some traditions are OK when they don't go against God's Word
- "**Family traditions**" (Thanksgiving dinners; Christmas gifts; celebrating birthdays/anniversaries, wedding rings).
 - "**National traditions**" (Fireworks; national monuments; President's Day; Mother's Day; Father's Day; Memorial Day).
 - "**Church traditions**" (Wednesday night services; Sunday School; Sunday morning worship from 11:00-noon; the order of service; church buildings; church bulletins; observing the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of the month).
- ➡ "**Non-Biblical traditions**" in opposition to Biblical authority—Baptizing babies? Confessing sins to a priest? Calling a priest "father"? Praying to Mary? The Rosary? Ashes on forehead?
- ➡ The question is: **Do our traditions "fit" what God's Word says?**
- If God's word requires it, then we must observe it.
 - If it fits God's word, but is not required in the Word, then we should not be dogmatic about it.
 - If it is contrary to God's word, then we must oppose it regardless of how long it has been practiced.

A. Notice the **PROCESS that annuls**:

1. **Step one** (v. 8)— LAY ASIDE the Word of God. (cf. Neh 9:26—*“Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs...”*)
2. **Step two** (v. 8)— ELEVATE tradition. Once the individual has “laid aside” the Bible, it is easy to replace it with traditions.
 - *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after **the tradition of men**, after the rudiments of the world, and **not after Christ**”* (Col. 2:8).
 - The greatest damage that can be done to the Bible is not to burn it or outlaw it, but to elevate tradition to equal or superior authority to the authority of Bible. This renders it of none effect.
 - The Roman Catholic Church in it’s decrees at Council of Trent (1546) elevated the Apocrypha and tradition to equal in authority with the Bible. No wonder the Bible has no power in Roman Catholicism.
3. **Step three** (v. 9)—REJECT God’s Word. Once the Bible as been “laid aside” in preference to tradition, it will eventually be rejected altogether.
 - Matthew 15:4-5—*“**For GOD commanded** (Ex. 20:12; 21:17)... **but YE say...**”* That’s the point! When it comes to what God commands, what does it matter what man says? *“Let God be true and every man a liar”* (Rom. 3:4).
4. **Step four** (v. 13)—LOSS OF EFFECTUALNESS. Once the authority of the Word of God has been usurped by tradition it becomes no better than the word of men and loses it’s effectiveness (2 Thess. 2:13).

B. Notice **the PROBLEM of authority.**

1. CONFUSION: Never confuse “tradition” with “authority.” Tradition is not authoritative or binding.
 - When tradition is elevated to the same level as God’s Word you have two conflicting “authorities.” This leads to confusion—God is not the Author of confusion. There can only

be ONE FINAL AUTHORITY. Having more than one authority is why there is confusion America today... In Families... in churches.

- What is our FINAL authority—The word of man or the Word of God? God has placed His Word above His own name (Ps. 138:2).
2. DISOBEDIENCE: *“For God commanded...”* (Mt. 15:4 cf. Mk. 7:10-13). The fifth commandment is clear—*“Honour thy father and thy mother.”* To evade this commandment, “tradition” allowed money to be dedicated as an offering to God—*“Corban”* (“*Corban*”=“an offering, a gift”). This twisted ploy gave a person a pious excuse to disobey the Word of God and avoid requiting his aged parents (1 Tim. 5:4). It completely nullified the fifth commandment. It not only dishonored the parents, but it dishonored the Lord who gave the commandment.

SUMMATION: Are you observing traditions that you know God does not approve of in His Word?

Are you more focused on the externals of your life than keeping your heart clean?

Do you look pretty good on the *outside*, but how do you look on the *inside* before God? [NOTE: There is an over emphasis on the external appearance of the body (plastic surgeries; liposuction; botox; etc.) and not enough on how we appear before God (1 Sam. 16:7— *“man looketh on the OUTWARD appearance, but the Lord looketh on the HEART.”*)

Has the Word of God lost it’s edge in your life? Does it no longer convict you or motivate you like it once did? It could be because you no longer recognize it’s authority in your life.