

Lesson 21 Matthew 15.1-11(2) Jesus teaches "purity of heart"

External purity guarded by Pharisees

A delegation of Pharisees travelled about 90 miles to question Jesus. We may be sure that this was not a friendly delegation. It was deeply critical of His teaching. "Why do your disciples transgress the law of the Elders by failing to wash their hands before eating?"

Divine Law broken by the tradition of the Pharisees

Jesus put the issue into a wider context with a further question. "Why do you transgress God's command by your tradition that a son is free of parental obligation through serving the temple?" The duty of sons to their parents is well attested in the law (Exodus 20.12; 21.17; Leviticus 20.9 and Deuteronomy 5.16)

Hypocrites as to matters of the heart

Our LORD called them "play-actors" and applied to the Pharisees the prophecy of Isaiah who said, "the people draw near to Me (God) in words but their hearts are far from me (the LORD)." This passage also emphasises that it is vain to worship if the heart is not right.

Is thine heart right with God?
Cleansed and made holy
Instant and lowly
Is thine heart right with God?

Message for the multitude

The LORD Jesus was not content to allow the generality of men to be persuaded that "hand washing" was of any religious value. He stood fearlessly and taught in face of the high powered delegation, "Not that which goes into the mouth makes a man common or profane but rather what comes out of his mouth, this pollutes or defiles him.

This act of the LORD was a huge public rebuke for their playacting. Probably never again would they open this matter-but the goalposts of debate would move to greater issues because of the enmity the Pharisees entertained towards Christ.

Purity of heart (Modern developments)

Soren Kierkegaard wrote a book on "Purity of Heart" where he exercised himself deeply in the area of motive and the affections. Wesley favoured the teaching of Peter "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren love one another fervently with a pure heart"-for Wesley Agape love can effect pure living. One of our modern choruses runs, "Purify my heart, make me as gold, pure gold" This but repeats the desire and experience of David of whom it says in 1 Kings 11.4 "Solomon's heart was not perfect (Hebrew ml V meaning "a finished building""devoted to ")with God as was the heart of David his father" David also says that only the "pure in heart" (Hebrew yrb so those with nothing that clouds the relationship with their LORD)meaning "a serene cloudless sky"shall "ascend into the hill of the LORD and reflects the truth taught in Acts where the LORD purified hearts by faith (Acts 15.9)

Paul teaching to Timothy on the "pure heart"

(a)1Timothy 1.5 "The purpose of the commandment(to godly edifying) is love from a pure heart and good conscience and faith without hypocrisy.

(b) Pursue righteousness faith love peace with those who call on the LORD as their ally or quarrel with him out of a pure heart.



From Paper to Practice

Describe the "Perfect" and "Pure" heart in David's language

What is the purpose of Christian doctrine?

Can a man be in pursuit of righteousness and have a pure heart and argue with God?