

True Religion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 April 2012

Preacher: Rev J. Ross Macaskill

[0 : 0 0] we'll turn with me again to the passage of scripture that we read together in mark 7 we're going to look at some of what is in this passage just working our way through what i want to say to you tonight is that it's not about the loops on the outside that's we are about primarily as christians although actions are important actions are very important but it is more what is on the inside it is more what is on the inside that is important and that the outside then reflects what is in the inside organized religion outside of the christian faith is religion that starts with the outside and works in it works to change the inside from the outside the christian religion is different for the christian we say the moral imperatives flow out of the redemptive vindicatives that is simply to say that our christian behavior our christian obedience to god flows out of lives that have been changed by grace through jesus christ we respond to the gospel of grace in our lives as god's people and if it was the other way around we would be keeping god's law as christian faith in god's people and if it was the other way around we would be keeping god's love to us but as it stands god is the one who saves and we are saved from our sin through jesus christ and then our response to god's love to us is to live for him our response is to live in obedience to him and it's then that his law becomes a delight to our souls we should be moved as we consider what christ has done for us moved to obedience for him and in our passage tonight we are seeing uh what we are seeing is that the lord is bringing the pharisees to think about this we are learning the lord's view on the religious people of his day he didn't as you know associate himself so much with the religious leaders of his day he oftentimes came into conflict uh with them indeed he was criticized by them for uh spending time with the wrong people with the tax collectors with the sinners with the irreligious if you like and so in this scripture that we read together the lord here he opposes religious leaders and there's three areas that i want to bring to your attention concerning that i want you to see that the lord confronts the pharisees and the scribes in two areas he addresses their practice as something that is keeping them from god and then we are going to think about this account near the end of the greek woman and to see it is god's grace that we need and it is god's grace that we need above all else the first verse here brings some context to the situation the pharisees and scribes had come around to see this jesus of nazareth to see what he was about these men were highly respected men they were devout men

they lived strident lives adding their own rules to god's own law just to make sure that they went that extra mile to keep things right and they took exception then to the lord jesus because he didn't keep their rules and regulations he seemed to be an independent thinker he didn't uh told their religious line and they became offended by that he didn't give them we might say the same respect that they got uh from others uh he was teaching things that were oftentimes in contradiction to their own teaching in fact back in chapter three we see just how much these people disliked the lord he is there in in chapter three healing on the sabbath and they conspire they flock together to kill him so here they are they're trying to hear what he had to say uh perhaps trying to trip him up perhaps trying to catch him out perhaps again plotting ways to bring charges against him to kill him and so they come along and they see the lord's disciples and they are sitting eating with unwashed hands what kind of men are these and more what kind of teaching are they receiving from this man jesus of nazareth to be doing such a thing as this and so they take their complaint to jesus they complain about it they're not worried about the hygiene they're worried about uh being ceremonially unclean religiously unclean it was against their religious laws and this is where the lord confronts them first of all verse six he brings the prophecy of isaiah to bear upon them isaiah he lived some 700 plus years before this time and he preached in his time against the hypocrisy of those in his day and here's the lord jesus christ and he takes uh he takes uh these words and he applies them to the phariseum well did esaias prophesy of you hypocrites as it is written this people honoureth me with their lips but their heart is far from me how be it in vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men do we see what their problem was here it was that they honored god with their lips and not with their hearts and they are here being described as hypocrites they wanted to look like they honored god and to many people they looked the part they looked like they were honoring god they went through all the motions they lived the life that spoke of devotion complete devotion their life spoke of performance but what was missing was heartfelt faith and that may be something of a challenge to us maybe a challenge to us as the lord's people are we just going through the motions as we come before god and worship or are we truly engaged in worship with our with our hearts so it's very easy for us to come and go and just to go through the motions the routine of the lord's day as it comes and goes the format and our churches remains the same and here we are again as another communion season the routine of the services has begun and it's easy for things to become a routine to us

whereby we become we become disengaged from the very act of worship before god so easy for us in our own lives to become like hypocrites it's easy for those people in such cases on the outside to look at the church to look at the church and cast aspersions and particularly in the days that we are in just going through the motions there shouldn't be such hypocrisy in the church but there is and as long as man is man there will continue to be in the church hypocrisy the point is this christ does not want hypocrisy the lord jesus christ does not want hypocrisy to be seen in his people and that is what he is telling these pharisees and what we see is that he confronts them with another aspect of their practice that he is unhappy about and here he is getting to the very root of their problem verse 8 for laying aside the commandment of god ye hold the tradition of men as the washing of pots and cups and many other such that like things ye do here the lord is saying that he is opposed to organized religion when it's concerned with man's rules and not god and god's rule or god's word the problem that the pharisees had was that they had clouded what was true and what was right by introducing their own ideas and their own agendas they had so many rules and regulations to keep often clouding true understanding of what god required the true understanding of god's word his law and we have a clear example of that here the lord brings them an example in verses 10 through to 13 for moises said honor thy father and thy mother and who shall curse father or mother let him die the death but ye say if a man shall say to his father or mother it is corban that is to say a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me he shall be free and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother making the word of god of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered and many such like things do ye the pharisees the pharisees they wanted to wriggle out of some of the more difficult laws and requirements that they were to keep maybe because they weren't happy with it maybe because it didn't suit their own situation uh they created a law so that they could opt out of something that they were not comfortable with and the issues here in these verses is that they could opt out of looking after or honoring their parents if they wanted to and we may say well what's the problem with that well only as jesus points out that god's law forbade it the fifth commandment being to honor your father and mother the pharisees had made a mother the pharisees had made a law that said if you do for god instead of your parents then you don't need to worry about your parents as if doing service to god cancelled out doing service uh for parents as if obedience to the fifth commandment was not obedience to god himself

they effectively rendered god's law this fifth commandment null and void indeed that's what is indicated to us here in verse 13 they had rationalized the law of god away as they brought something else into place perhaps when they first did this they had the best of intentions they may have thought that serving god more directly was more important that it was more worthy than serving and honoring parents when the service of god as i'm sure you're aware it's often families that are sidelined i've been warned myself by ministers of an older generation that this was one of their regrets and perhaps you can think of missionaries particularly who have served tirelessly serving god all their lives tirelessly but to the detriment of family relationships for such folk never understood these things in a legal way they would never have made laws concerning it but it amounts to the same thing there's best intentions best intentions there the pharisees may well have had best intentions but their biggest problem the biggest problem that they had was that they thought purity and observance to god started from the outside and worked in what the lord teaches them is that it is possible to be totally devoted to your religion and to religious observance devoted to religious ideas whilst at the same time being totally wrong wrong to look the genuine article and still be wrong when our religion is not based on the word of god then our devotion can easily become misguided it's possible to be totally devoted in a sense and yet be totally wrong you may have all the faith in the world you may have all the faith in the world but unless the object of your faith is right then you will be utterly lost i heard an illustration about this uh in fact i heard one minister thanking another minister for this illustration uh went something like this we have to ask what our faith is in if we were asked to choose between two bridges that were crossing a ravine only one of these bridges will take us to the other side and we spend time we we study them we take time to consider all the implications to look at how they are built and uh what they have to offer and we go forward onto the onto the bridge that we choose with faith this one on the left this one is going to take me all the way across this one i've studied i've looked at it is going to take me to the other side but as i cross it begins to break and i fall as it falls to my peril it lets me down now now note what lets me down my faith no it wasn't my faith it was the object of my faith it was the bridge that let me down i should have taken the other one the one and only one that would take me to the other side

you see we can have we can take any religious system and see that if it's not based on the word of god but on man's tradition on man's word people can be devoted holy to it in their lives but if it is of man then it will fall if it is of man it is wrong that is what the lord is saying in this section being devout is not enough why is it that being devout is not enough well we see in verses 14 through to 23 and this takes us to the very heart of what the lord is saying here the pharisees thought that they would become impure in god's eyes if they ate the wrong thing and the lord is showing them through a simple lesson there is nothing that a person can eat that can cause him to become unclean that can cause him to become a bad person he says food it just goes through you it does not have the capability to make you sinful before god and that must have sounded extraordinary to all those who have gathered round to hear what he had to say the lord jesus christ is saying the problem of defilement is not to do with what we put into ourselves the problem of defilement is already in ourselves it is in verses 15 and 20 that he tells us what the problem is the things that come out of him those are they that defile a man and continuing from verse 21 for from within out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts adulteries fornications murders thefts covetousness wickedness deceit lasciviousness an evil eye blasphemy pride foolishness all these evil things come from within and defile the man the lord he gives us quite a list here quite a list the things that come out of a man the things that come out of the heart of man the things that defile a man the things that make a man unclean inside this is the problem says jesus it's within you it's in your heart and this is why the man made rules this is why the religion won't help you all that does is confirm to you that there is a problem inside you see the continual search and religious attempts to find the answer to find that satisfaction to find the peace of soul that man struggles to get it all speaks to the problem that is within us the problem inside us and it speaks of a problem that needs to be dealt with the problem is of course set against our god against who he is and against what he has created us for

[20 : 35] the problem is of course set against our god and christ here in this passage he explains the issue we are defiled inside inside and we may try and we may try and we may try and we may try to reconcile the inside from the outside that we are powerless to change our hearts in and of ourselves absolutely powerless well i want to ask how is it with you how is it with you are you trying to reconcile the inside from the outside that will never do the lord tells us here that will never do and if we are truly examining our hearts this evening then we must know that we need the grace of god that we need in our defilements to turn to him to look to him to trust in him to seek the cleansing that only he can give through the blood of his own son jesus christ it's a very real temptation for the lord's people to work things in to appeal to religious actions to live out our christian lives and performance and with cold hearts it's very easy for us to do that the lord says don't try and work things in don't try and get things right in your own strength will be said of us as we think upon our own hearts will be said of us verse 6 this people honoureth me with their lips but their heart is far from me we are powerless absolutely powerless it is only god and it is only god who can see right into the depths of our being to who we are to see what we have done before him it is only he then who can change things and so we need to look to him we need to trust in him we need to turn to him in repentance and the next account serves to illustrate that it is so that we need the grace of god above all things in the verses 24 to 30 it is a very unusual account many people do not know what to do with it here is the lord and he is calling a gentile woman a dog and many people try and they sweep try to sweep that offense away the word dog here it means little dog it conveys the the idea of a domestic dog a pet dog and that fits the illustration that the lord gives here some people say that means that the lord is showing some affection cure and saying that this is a pet animal but that is not what is being conveyed the jews of course called gentiles dogs and they call them dogs in a derogatory way and so the lord is is drawing on that fear it's an unusual account as i say and we have to think about as we approach it and think about this we have to think about some context

what we have seen is that the lord is in a time in his ministry where the demand on him is absolutely immense we see that at the end of the last chapter in chapter six just at the end there we see people rushing to him from all over bringing sick to be healed trying to touch his garment many people flocking to see him and we read there at the end of chapter seven we see he's telling the people that they should keep quiet about this healing of a man who is uh of the death man the death man with the speech impediment there's no doubt that the lord jesus christ he feels the pressure that is upon him and so when he finishes speaking to his disciples here about the defilement that is within us what we see him do is that he heads off to gentile lands and we can understand some of us thinking the lord he came first of all for the jew god's people and nation that as we have just been seeing and thinking about they're not getting this message they're not getting the message of the defilement is a matter of the heart they are concerned still concerned with ceremony they're still concerned with the outside they're still concerned with the traditions of men they're just not understanding and so the lord under the immense pressure of the immense strain of this ministry he is looking to have some time apart he wants some time away from the pressure of this ministry where does he go well he goes to tyre and sidon he goes to a gentile region he goes to an area jews would skirt around for fear of becoming defiled and here it is here that he would get some peace and so he tries to be as discreet as possible he finds himself a place to stay a place that we're told where he could be hid a place where he could be hidden but we see that he could not be hidden a gentile woman a zyro phoenician a descendant of the canaanites she comes to him and she begs for him to cast a spirit an unclean spirit out of her daughter and he points out to her in this unusual way that we should say and we should understand that she herself is understanding what he is saying he points out to her that he has come first of all to minister to the jews god's children first you see she comes for her child and the lord says god's children first the bread comes to them before it reaches the dogs and she replies she replies with such humility verse 28 she says yes lord yes lord she says yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's cross and she comes in faith and she comes in faith this is a statement of faith yes lord she says yes lord yet even though i am a gentile dog she says even though i am the most defiled of dogs of my canaanite heritage what i know is that god's grace is greater for it has fallen to me like a crumb from his table to a dog like me she says

and because i know that it can fall to one like me surely it can fall to my own child like a crumb from the table to my child defile this i am she says it's as if she is saying to the lord you know what defilement is lord you know where defilement is lord it's not found in man's is it not found in man's roles and his regulations and his religion she says i may be a gentile dog but surely it is not what puts what you put into your mouth it is what comes out she says she says hear what is coming up to you hear what is coming up to you it is the words of a heart that has been changed by grace lord she says yes lord god's grace can change even one like me and what we see is that the lord he heals he heals her daughter for this saying for the statement verse 29 for her confession yes lord you remember peter's confession of the lord and who do you say that i am you are the christ the son of god you see that account just to weave it on in matthew's gospel it says blessed are you you simon bar jonah for flesh and blood it's not revealed this to you but my father in heaven what a wonderful truth that is see god's grace it abounds to sinners and it abounds to sinners like us it's only god's grace that can change us it's only god's grace that can deal with the defilement that is in our lives only god's grace can bring us to our knees seeking him in repentance turning from what we knew to his ways it's only god's grace that can bring us to confess him as lord the lord romans 10 verse 9 and following says that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the lord jesus and shalt believe in my heart that god hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation for the scriptures say whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed what is it that comes out of our mouths what is it that comes out of our mouths what do our actions say about us are the actions that are trying to put something into us or are our actions the outworking of a wonderful marvelous work of grace that god has given to us marvelous work of grace in our lives in our hearts lives that are given over to him lives that are given over to him in worship and in worship and obedience and service we are all unworthy but by god's grace and jesus christ to us and in us by his spirit i don't know

i know some of the folk here but i don't know many of you i don't know where you are what your standing is with the lord but i wonder if god is doing such a work in your life even tonight i wonder if the lord is bringing you perhaps forward for the first time to his table to confess him lord and savior to bring you forward to take that bread and wine because the body broke and it was for you because of your unworthiness the blood that cleansed it cleansed you and so and so do this do this in remembrance of me to remember what has been done for you to remember what the lord has done for his people or you may think that you do not qualify perhaps you think you are the worst of sinners perhaps you never knew the things of god never came into the house of god never understood how corrupt your life was until that crumb of god's grace fell to you from his table from his table and revealed to you your utter need of saving grace indeed the need of a savior a savior who would give himself to die on the cross to pay the price of your corruption the sin that burdened your life for so long he liberated you from the things that bound you and what he did was he brought you life life to your weary soul is that your experience

God's grace in Jesus Christ that is the experience of God's people is it not unworthy though we are because of the defilement there is no liberty in the traditions of men there is no liberty in graceless performance there is only liberty in Jesus Christ and in what he has done for sinners like us and so how is it with you?

[35 : 15] how is it with you? are you drawing on the grace of God? drawing on the grace of God? or is it all just performance?

we need to draw on God's grace we all need to draw on God's grace we need to seek his face we need to turn to him to look to him to come before him in faith and in repentance we need to particularly in these times as we come into another communion season we need to meditate on what he has done the savior of sinners we are all sinners the savior of sinners and when you come to the Lord's day this Lord's day come then with thanksgiving in your hearts as you come to remember the crucified Lord come and remember together with God's people and honor God together from your hearts may God bless you and help you in that may he give you strength and may you know his grace in this weekend and in all the services may God bless you as a congregation of his people let's pray together let's pray together our gracious God we praise and thank you for this time we'll come before you in worship and we do praise you our Father for the gospel of grace of his Father in Jesus Christ we pray oh Lord that that would be our meditation that we would think upon these things that we would remember what he has done and we ask the Lord a blessing on this people as they come to this weekend

Lord I pray that they would be strengthened that they would be encouraged that they would be enriched that they would have a greater love and understanding of their savior we pray it all in Jesus name amen amen