

What Defiles A Man?

by Wayne Goff

“Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man” (Matt. 15:11).

Peter did not understand this parable of Jesus and so asked about it. Jesus mildly rebuked him for not understanding, but then explained it further: *“Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man”* (Matt. 15:17-20).

Our society is not much different today. We are so extremely health-conscious that we spend hours researching the ingredients of the foods we eat, and even now have the calories of each restaurant meal listed on the menu. Young mothers *barely tolerate* a child dropping food on the floor and picking it up to eat it, citing “the five-second rule.” Of course, with all the food allergies on the increase, one must wonder what artificial ingredients or chemicals are being pumped into foods today! Still, there is something even more damaging to people today and that is *what they put in their heads and hearts!* When people **speak**, they reveal what is in their **hearts**. If they have filled their hearts and minds with evil thoughts, false witnesses, and blasphemies, then they have defiled themselves! When they practice murders, fornications and thefts, then we know they do so with defiled hearts!

As careful as we should be about our food intake, Jesus says that it is nothing compared to what goes into our minds! *Ceremonially clean hands* do nothing to protect what is on the inside of a person, and the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in violating one of the ten commandments by their tradition (Matt. 15:3-6) well illustrated Jesus’ point.

The application for us is simple. While we are very careful to observe “book-chapter-verse” for all that we say and do (Col. 3:17), are we also mindful that we practice *“pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father”* (James 1:27)? If so, then you care for the needy individually, and you keep yourself unspotted from the sins of the world.

That which poisons the heart and mind is far, far worse than that which poisons the body! And we are not advocating the poisoning of either! But do give attention to matters of the heart.

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