

# V. Purifying the Heart Within

by John Sung

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*The sermon calls believers to prioritize inner purity and the work of the Holy Spirit over outward religious practices and hypocrisy.*

**Scripture:** Mark 7:1

**Topics:** "Inner Purity", "Hypocrisy in Faith"

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## Description

John Sung emphasizes the necessity of purifying the heart rather than focusing on outward appearances, as demonstrated in Mark 7. He critiques the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, highlighting that true defilement comes from within, not from external actions. Sung urges believers to seek inner transformation through repentance and the filling of the Holy Spirit, rather than adhering to mere traditions and rituals. He illustrates that many who appear righteous may be spiritually dead inside, and true light comes from a heart cleansed by God. Ultimately, he calls for a genuine relationship with Christ that leads to authentic witness and transformation.

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## Transcript

(Mark Ch. 7)

Vs. 1. "There came unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem." When the Lord Jesus was on earth, there was this class of Pharisees and scribes who loved to put on an outward show, but within was concealed the very opposite. But Jesus stressed rather the inside and not the outside. So, the Pharisees were his adversaries. Now, they came with the purpose of finding Jesus' fault, and to accuse Him. Perhaps there are some who have come today for the same purpose and not to listen to the Word!

Vs. 2. "And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed hands, they found fault." As these stood outside the window to observe they remarked, "How is it they are eating with unwashed hands? For the Pharisees who stress the outside require washing of hands before meals. Now that Jesus hasn't performed this, they found an opportunity to criticise Him.

Vs. 3 and 4. We can see how these Pharisees are more hygiene-conscious than modern doctors. Making much of such tradition, they would never eat without washing hands, cups and saucers, after returning from the market. While they put such importance on the outward, there was no corresponding cleansing inside. Those who stress the outside neglect the inside, and vice versa those who stress the inside neglect

the outside. For myself, I won't care what your outside is, for if I stress the outside I would neglect the inside. The Pharisees are hypocrites! Stressing the outside breeds conceit. When they say Jesus is unclean, they are judging Him with pride. There are many who boast of their outside and not a few of these are found in our churches. They require women to cover their heads, they demand immersion and unleavened bread for the Lord's Supper. But who do the Scriptures say these people are who stress the outside? Pharisees! Now these same people today would also say, "You are soulful, you are emotional." Raising themselves above others they become hypocrites. They deserve Jesus' rebuke.

Vs. 5 and 6. Jesus rebuked them severely for their outward show. I don't care whether you are immersed or not immersed, head-covered or uncovered. I care rather whether you have repented, and whether you are saved. These people ask Jesus why He doesn't keep to tradition? They make themselves greater than Jesus and anybody else. They can only find fault. They look down even on Jesus but dare not question Him openly. Though they know what miracles Jesus has done, they say these came by the Evil Spirit. Hypocrites! Jesus can never convert them. These people say, "Once saved, always saved. Being saved, you can afford to do anything you like." These people become hypocrites and hypocrites are deaf to Jesus' words. These who pride in their spirituality and condemn others! These are like a torchlight that looks shining bright on the casing but gives no light while its bulb is covered up. These who can steal sheep but have never led a soul into the new birth. These who say, "You cannot be saved except you be immersed!" What light comes from them? Hypocrites. These who require unleavened bread as a qualification for the Rapture! Jesus says, "This people draweth nigh with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." A torchlight that gives no light. How pitiful.

The church is troubled by many a Pharisaical gossiper. Not only are they deaf, they are also dumb, though they like to gossip behind your back. But I speak to you in the open. What preachers are they who indulge in backbiting?

Jesus says, "Woe to these people. The Pharisees are good at repeating Scriptures too. They fast twice a week. They kneel by the roadside to pray. They have an outward show but in their hearts they are hypocrites. Pharisees are numbered among university students who are beyond the reach of the country folk. With their knowledge they have become Pharisees.

Vs. 7. Moreover, these Pharisees, being full of sins, are not born again. They preach without experiencing what they preach. They preach the doctrines of men and many are the followers of their style of preaching. Before this, I was also like them. I preached from notes gathered here and there, and what I spoke about I had never experienced, though men applauded my learning. While I prepared my sermons, I still had doubts about the Bible. I only repeated what I had learnt from teachers. The Pharisees had their genealogies, repeating after the words of men for their sermons. Were they not dumb? Not born again, how could they bring others to the new birth? Many would not believe in heaven and hell because they had not seen them. One year's stay in the United States could change one to discard God's Word for man's word.

Vs. 8. For laying aside the commandment of God they interpret Scripture according to man's ideas, making man's words the Word of God. Some say, "Heaven and hell are figures of speech which Jesus used to scare people. Substituting God's Word with man's words, they not only lay aside God's command but also make it void. They mess up God's Word with patches of human words. When a man is deaf, he also becomes dumb. Not able to preach, they can only speak what others have first spoken.

A sermon appeared in a Shanghai newspaper which was reputed to be the joint labour of a number of doctors. When I was in America I had heard the same sermon. How then did this sermon come to be the joint effort of these doctors? Well, I heard in Shanghai a certain leader say, "Christ is standing outside the Laodicean Church. So as Jesus discards the Church, we should leave the Church." This became the slogan of men of his clique. I felt perplexed.

I said, "if the Laodicean Church would open the door, then the Lord would enter in." Now, this latter portion of the Word was left out. But these are those who like to parrot others, and there are many parrots around these days. You see this in the way they copy one another in the interpretation of Revelation. And these doctrines originating from Shanghai are parroted everywhere. Jesus says, "For laying aside the commandment of God ye hold the tradition of men ..." Yea, even to making it void. Dumbbells!

Vs. 10. Moreover, they twist the Scriptures. The Bible says, "Honour thy father and thy mother; and whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death." But they say, "If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, it is a gift ... he shall be free." Now there are the same Scripture-twisters today. When I learnt essay writing in my young days, my teacher taught me to gather ideas here and there. But when I presented to him my essay, he said "No good" after one glance. Because the ideas were not expressed in logical sequence. At that time I could not understand. There are many who take a verse of Scripture here, and another there, all out of context and inject into them their own ideas. This is Scripture-twisting.

Vs. 12 and 13. The first step, they lay aside. The second step, they make the Word of God of no effect by putting in their own ideas. Why could not they speak from experience? Because they are not born again. Dumb-bells. I had to deliver a sermon for examination during my seminary days. Now, in U.S. a sermon was worth \$25. It wasn't easy preparing the sermon. So, I thought of a way out. I went to the Library. I copied here and there others' ideas to fit the topic assigned me. Rewriting these as my own sermon, I gave my teacher two days to correct for me. After this I preached it once to test out. Trembling I prepared a whole two weeks to earn the \$25. What did I say? I merely stole words here and there. These were not the Word of God, but men's words. I laid aside God's Word by the words of men. Although I spoke on the new birth and holiness, I did not understand these truths myself. A dumbbell, I merely followed others because I had nothing to say. Not able directly to hear God's Word, I became deaf. I was a hypocrite.

Vs. 14-23. After admonishing the Pharisees, Jesus called all His disciples together. He said, "Hearken unto me, everyone of you, and understand. There is nothing from without a man that, entering him, can defile him; but the things which come out of him, these are they that defile the man." Not understanding this, His disciples asked Him in the house. Jesus said, "Do ye not perceive that whatever thing from outside entereth into the man, it cannot defile him. Because, it entereth into his stomach and goeth out into the draught. That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, etc." These are dreadful things which proceed from within and not from without. A man who gives forth light also gives it from inside. But these who have no light are dumb, because inside them is the Devil. Beloved brothers and sisters, many there are who can't listen to God's Word because they have no light inside. They give out poison instead. The outside is of no great importance.

Once a pastor in Shantung was taken by bandits. Before killing him they gave him three choices: "First, eat horse dung. Second, he beheaded. Third, worship Buddha." He chose to eat horse dung because he could never worship Buddha, and to be beheaded was too great a tragedy. So he knelt down to eat in one

breadth, as one eating ricenoodles. The outside cannot defile. What is dreadfully defiling is from inside. Beloved, fear not the ridicule and assault of men. Fear rather that within you is the Devil, and darkness, and dirt.

When no light shines from our inside, there must be trouble. These people might have been immersed, been communicants at the Lord's Table. Yet they have no light. The reason is the Devil is inside them. Yea, full of devils --- No.1, Adultery devil. Some say, We have not committed adultery. But know that to lust after a woman with your eyes is committing adultery in your heart. No wonder it is said the inside is more important. Cleansing should be from the inside.

No. 2, Thievery devil. Some might say, "We have never stolen." But if you indulge in improper business, you are stealing others' living. I have seen those who are immersed and those whose heads are covered who sell tobacco and wine. This is thievery, and there are many kinds, big and small. To pick up things someone has dropped is theft. Charging high interest is theft. "To steal sheep" is theft. And Jesus doubly condemns the Pharisees who swallow widows' houses and yet outwardly cover up themselves with long prayers.

No. 3, Murder devil. To hate and to scold is murder. Two persons were good friends. When one of them left the Church, they fell out so they would not greet one another on the streets like sworn enemies. To hate is a terrible sin. In Hangchow there was a university student. Having been born again he wrote his testimony. But soon he turned into a Pharisee, one who "spoke in the Name of the Lord." He forbade others to come to my meetings accusing me of being possessed by an evil spirit, that I was working on the emotions of others. But he dropped out in two weeks!

No. 4, Jealousy devil. Hypocrites, these cannot shine. These forbid women to speak but to keep silence at meetings. These are jealous at the goodness of others. They hurl such remarks, "These are evil spirits. Those are emotional." Hypocrites. The outside cannot defile, but the inside.

No. 5, Slandering devils. These condemn others as not spiritual but soulful, but they have no light. Hypocrites.

No. 6, Lying devils. These are inventors, and defamers of character, lying without the least evidence. They say, "It you are saved, then cover your head." Hypocrites.

No. 7, Conceited devils. I, I, I, they brag. "Only we can be raptured." Outside they look decent. Inside, full of devils. Elders, deacons, old-timer believers --- but giving forth no light. Both deaf and dumb. Let us cast out all these devils.

Vs. 34-30. Deaf and dumb these Pharisees, but here is a Canaanite woman who is not sick like them. Jesus left for the borders of Tyre and Sidon for a retreat. Far from being deaf, this woman made inquiry everywhere for Jesus and found Him at last. Far from being dumb, she called to Jesus, "My daughter is possessed with a demon. Lord, please heal her." Jesus did not heed her. Though the Lord disregarded her for being a Gentile, she did not get angry. Rather she continued pleading (she was not dumb) that Jesus might heal her daughter. Jesus said, "You are dogs. To give the children's bread to feed dogs is not right." This woman said, "Lord, no doubt I am less than a dog. I am a puppy, Lord. Dogs cannot eat the children's bread, but surely the crumbs thrown down!" Jesus said, "Go home. The devil is cast out!" This woman was not the least roused to anger. So, she found healing. If we don't cast out the devils within us, we will be undone. Let us call on the Lord to cast out the demons within us that light might shine from our

faces.

A girl student in Nanchang was bitten by a mad dog and asked me to pray for her. According to the doctor, she would die the next year. I replied, "The body is of little importance. Is there sin in your heart? Are you born again?" She said, "I don't know. All I care for is this dog-bite." A person with a sinful heart cannot shine forth with light. Rather, poison is emitted. Let us ask the Lord to heal us.

Vs. 31-37. After the demons are cast out, will there be light? Not yet. Why? Without the filling of the Holy Spirit the inside is a vacuum. So, we must ask for the Spirit's filling. Though born again you still cannot shine forth the light. Why? Not enough. There was a deaf and dumb man whom the Lord led out of the village. There the Lord put his finger into his ears. Why? Because his ears could not hear. Then the Lord spat and touched his tongue. What is spittle? The Word of the Lord. Jesus said, "Eat it" and he swallow it. The Word of the Lord entered from three directions: 1) through the ear-gate; 2) through the eye-gate; 3) through the mouth-gate. John 6:63 says, "The Lord's Word is spirit. The Lord's Word enters through the ear, the mouth and the eyes. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the devil is cast out. The deaf can praise the Lord. There is power in His Word. Such a person is now filled with the Holy Spirit. He needs no head-covering. He needs no immersion. But the Lord says, "Open!" Immediately, light comes. He can speak. The deaf can speak. He goes everywhere witnessing.

A person without any inside light is either empty or has a devil. Let us not over-stress the outside. Rather ask the Lord to cast out devils inside and be filled with the Spirit. Then we can go round witnessing.

Before the Lord left the world, He told the disciples to wait for the descent of the Holy Spirit to receive power for witnessing. The Lord did not stress the outside, so He did not baptise but let His disciples do it. Neither did Paul baptise much. When we begin to stress the outside we become hypocrites. May the Holy Spirit fill you all that you be enabled to witness. When you are filled with the Spirit you can't help but witness.

In Nanking there was a four-year-old girl. She never heard the Gospel. Someone brought her to the meetings. The Spirit filled her and she could preach. She spoke at a Secondary School for girls. She sang, "Coming home!" and spoke on "the lost sheep come home." She sang another verse of "Coming home." The meeting closed. Beloved, God used her as He uses me. This girl's surname is Lee. Her name is "Stone."

There was another little girl of three. Before she died, she led many children to Christ. Ah! How old are you?

May the Holy Spirit fill us, cause us to shine and to witness.

#### THEME SONG

Saviour, Saviour,

Hear my humble cry;

While on others Thou art calling,

Do not pass me by.

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