

Stop Kinking The Hose

Mark 7:1-13 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. ² Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. ³ For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. ⁴ *When they come* from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, *like* the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. ⁵ Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" ⁶ He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁷ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.' ⁸ "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men-- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." ⁹ He said to them, "*All too* well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. ¹⁰ "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' ¹¹ "But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* Corban "-- '(that is, a gift *to* God), ¹² ⁸ "then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, ¹³ "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

Water fights would always end the same way when I was kid. They would start with water balloons or water guns, and they would end with one person holding the hose and everyone else trying to get it away from them. Often we would try to get behind the person with the hose and kink it, cutting off their water, cutting off their power. If the hose was kinked it didn't matter that they had the nozzle.

God's word is powerful. We hear that often. Why then does that power so often seem to be missing from our life? The answer is simple because we are so good at kinking the hose of God's word. We like to get behind God and kink his word robbing it of its power over our lives

This is what Jesus addresses in our text. "You have made the word of God of no effect." I gave you the word to transform your life, but you strip it of any power.

Our text gives us two examples of ways in which the Pharisees kink up the word of God. First this tradition of the washing of hands.

Notice that our text indicates multiple times that this is a tradition of men. It is not God's word. It is something that the Rabbi's added later. Mark says it in his gospel. Jesus says. Even the Pharisees admit it, calling it the tradition of the elders. We are not talking about something that God's word teaches but something that is 100% made up by men.

God's word says that the priests should wash before offering certain sacrifices. Somewhere along the way the Rabbi's figured we will be even more holy if we wash before every meal.

This might at first seem like a harmless tradition. We also wash our hands before every meal. Why shouldn't the Jews. But the problem isn't that they are washing their hands. The problem is that this is apparently what the Pharisees care about. They are spending their time tracking down and confronting people who don't wash their hands.

When I was younger and worked at Hardees, my boss once told me to mop the floor. The problem was one of the wheels on the mop bucket was stuck. It was rather annoying, so I sat down to try and fix the wheel. One thing led to another and before long I had to leave and the floor wasn't mopped. What is the point of fixing the mop bucket wheel if you never get around to mopping the floor?

The Pharisees are so obsessed with making sure everyone is washing their hands they never get around to being concerned with the word of God.

We often kink up the power of God's word by simply filling our lives with irrelevant and unimportant things so that we never have time for God's word. There are pastors who spend all their time and energy on politics, social causes, fighting injustices, and helping the under privileged. These are all good things but not if they crowd out the time in our lives we ought to be giving to God's word. Fighting social injustice is like washing hands. It is a good thing to do sometimes but it isn't the one thing needful.

As parents we often kink up the power of God's word in our lives and in our kids lives. We dedicate huge amounts of time to trying to make our children, tidy, and hard workers and helping them get good grades or be great athletes, but no time to training them in prayer and in bible study and in God's word. Cleaning your room is good, it is not as important as pray and bible study.

The Pharisees like us were very good at spending all manner of time fixing the mop bucket but never actually mopping the floor. They were great at wasting time and energy on things that didn't really matter. When Jesus came, he unkinked the hose. He doesn't care whether his disciples wash their hands or not. But what did he do:

Matthew 4:23 ²³ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom

Jesus knew that the power of word is not in a multitude of laws and customs. Neither his disciples nor we need more busy work, making sure we wash our hands in this exact manner before every meal.

What they needed and what we needed was the power of Gospel in our lives. The proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through his death and resurrection.

You don't need to learn the right way to wash your hands to be holy. You are washed. You are cleansed in Christ Jesus who died for you.

The second example of hose kinking God's word that Jesus points to is this tradition of Corban. The word Corban refers to the ritual of personal vows. Here Jesus is taking an example directly from the Mishnah. The Mishnah is a book of the traditions of the elders. This exact situation is discussed in the Mishnah. There the Jewish Rabbis teach that a personal vow is so important that if you even begin to say the vow you are bound to it. If you even say this one word of the vow than that thing is dedicated to the Lord and nothing can reverse that vow. Not even the rights of the parents under the fourth commandment is higher than that vow.

This is worse than simply taking the focus off the gospel. Here it is thought that the traditions of the elders are more important than the Word of God.

When your parents tell you to clean your room or do your homework, is it ok to instead draw a picture and then say, "Mom I didn't do what you asked but here I drew you a picture?" Of course not. Yet what know to be wrong to our parents we try to attempt with God.

God gives us his commandments and when we fail them or don't want to do them. We attempt to make up new rules as if following human made rules is an excuse for ignoring God's rules.

When we fail to fulfill God's law, God does not accept lesser work in its place. Rather Jesus knows that what we need is for someone to do it perfectly in our place. He takes our place and fulfills God's law as it stands for us.

We cannot replace God's laws with our own customs, but God replaced our feeble attempts at keeping the Law with the perfect righteousness of his only son.

If we try to deny God's law or replace his commands with our version, the power of God's word is kinked in our lives. Rather we accept the full force of God's law and the full force of his gospel. Knowing that if the Law has condemned us, the Gospel even more so has saved us.

Stop kinking God's word in your life, instead let the full force of the Gospel fill your hearts and minds with the glory and power of Christ's redemption.

Romans 1:16-17 ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."