

Friday

The Heart of Man

Today's Scripture Mark 7:14–23

To Jesus, purity is not a matter of diet, but heart (Mark 7:14–23). Jesus realized that since food never enters the heart, it is irrelevant to the heart's purity. "Thus he declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19). This was a revolutionary idea.

To many Jews, food laws were literally a matter of life or death. Daniel was determined to die rather than defile himself with the king's food (Daniel 1:8). 1 Maccabees tells of the persecutions Jews faced for resisting Greek influences: "Many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die" (1 Maccabees 1:62–63). These martyrs became heroes to Jesus contemporaries. To say that food regulations were unnecessary was radical and offensive.

This may be why His disciples didn't understand His parable (Mark 7:17–18): "There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him" (Mark 7:15). The early church struggled with this teaching also. Peter refused it for years! (Acts 10:9–16).

Jesus' words were difficult, but vital. To miss them is to miss the kingdom (Romans 14:17). He had just rebuked the Pharisees, quoting, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mark 7:6; Isaiah 29:13). You can have clean hands, reverent words, a perfect diet, but a distant heart. Jesus needed that to change. His kingdom needs sincerity over ceremony.

This makes things hard. It's easier to avoid certain foods than to live a pure life. But Jesus demands complete purity, from the inside out. He requires purity in everything you think, say, or do (Mark 7:20–23). And the heart determines your response to Jesus (Mark 2:6–8; 3:5; 6:52; 7:6; 8:17; 11:23; 12:30). The heart determines your actions. The heart determines your purity.

Today, I will...meditate on the spiritual condition of my heart and make whatever changes are necessary.