

## **In Vain Do They Worship Me; Mark 7:1-13**

0425-0428

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Now when the Pharisees gathered to him with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders.

And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches. And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?

And he 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. In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men. And he said to them, you have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition.

For Moses said, honor your father and your mother, and whoever reviles father and mother must surely die. But you say, If a man tells his father or mother whatever you would have gained from me as corban, that is, given to God, then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.

And many such things you do. One of the crazy things that came out of that period of time that we all unfortunately remember so well that we'd probably like to forget, known as the COVID pandemic. One of the crazy things that came out of that, one of the many things that, probably along with you, I said to myself, I never thought I'd see this happen, was this entire social movement.

To teach ourselves how to wash our hands. Remember that when they do it was just decided somehow the powers that be Decided that we didn't know how to wash our hands And so there was the all these videos and all this talk about the proper way to wash your hands well in the passage in which we turn to now Jesus is also faced with a similar sort of situation in which apparently he's told his disciples don't know how to wash his hands.

This is the well-known incident in which they, the Pharisees and the scribes, come to Jesus having a bone to pick with him about the lack of washing of hands of his disciples. So as they come to him, we see here in verse 1, Now the Pharisees gathered to him, this is of course right on the heels, like we said, of that Time there in Gennesaret

In fact, they're probably still here in Gennesaret, or probably perhaps they've made their way to Capernaum. But in, they're in the region. They're in the area, and the Pharisees now come to him again. The Pharisees and the scribes gathered to him with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem. So were told again, that this is now the second time that we're told that they come from Jerusalem in order to confront Jesus.

So in this area, if Jesus is still in Gennesaret, this is more than 90 miles. It's at least 90 miles if they're, if they've made their way down to Capernaum, then it's 90 miles plus from Jerusalem to where they are. These Pharisees and scribes have taken the time to take this 90-mile multi day journey in order to confront Jesus once again.

This time over the issue, this bone that they have to pick with them about the lack of washing of hands on the on the part of his disciples. So we have encountered this group of Pharisees and scribes before. We've encountered them a couple times before. We have had the pleasure, though, of now having a couple of chapters without having to deal with them.

And we've just enjoyed Jesus's healing and his miracles and walking on water and calming storms and everything. And we have. We've been able to maybe put out of our minds just a little bit the unpleasantness of the Pharisees and the scribes, but here they come once again. Now, the last time that we encountered them, we were told that they are conspiring to have Jesus put to death.

And so, as they are conspiring to have Jesus put to death, we know that they have had confrontations with Jesus over his observance of the Sabbath, or how he doesn't observe the Sabbath, in their opinion. They have had... Uh, dealings with him over how his disciples apparently do not fast properly. They especially took exception to Jesus going to Levi, the former tax collector's house, and having a party at Levi's house.

They've taken exception to a number of things, and all of this has led them in their hatred. Remember, as they saw Jesus, Heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath in the synagogue. All this has led them to such a degree of hatred that we're told that they have been conspiring with the Herodians to put him to death.

Now, if the Pharisees and the scribes are anything, it is that they are diligent, and they are not a group of people that are going to forget about something. As time has gone by, maybe the months intervening since that time has gone by, we shouldn't count on them to have forgotten about Jesus and sort of let all this pass.

And now they moved on to bigger things. They've been stewing over this and they've been watching and they've been listening and they've been taking careful notes because they are looking for reasons to legally or perhaps not so legally. So now they come back from Jerusalem. Once again, they make the journey.

They have heard some things going on. Perhaps they've heard about the washing or the lack of washing. But in any case, they come, verse 2, and they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. So as they come and they confront Jesus over this, these eating without washing the hands, most of us, I'm sure, we recognize the fact that this is, this has nothing to do.

With germs or physical cleanliness. This of course is taking place. Hundreds of years before anything had to do with germ theory before there was any understanding of how diseases might be passed through germs. So this has nothing to do with actual germs or physical cleanliness. This is not something that we could have looked back and said only if they had had some good.

Hand sanitizer, this all could have been alleviated. You know, they, if they had the hand sanitizer that killed 99.9 percent of all the germs that it comes in contact with, then this whole situation could have been alleviated. Has nothing to do with actual cleanliness, because there was no popular understanding of the transmission of germs by way of physical contact in this day and the transmission of diseases.

Now there was an understanding of physical cleanliness. It wasn't like just because they were ancient people that didn't know about germs, that they didn't take baths, and they didn't clean themselves. They understood, they understood the reality of exterior cleanliness. And they understood the reality of taking the dirt and washing the dirt off one's hands in order to have clean hands.

But this is not what at all what the issue is revolving around. The issue is revolving instead around their exception that they take over the lack of ritual washing. So this is nothing to do with physical dirt on the hands or on the body, but it has everything to do with the fact that Jesus and his disciples have been observed Not, or failing to ritually, ceremonially wash their hands before taking a food.

And that is what they take exception to. They saw that some of the disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. Verse 3. So now we have these two verses of parenthetical explanation. The two verses are, verse 3, For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders.

So there's the explanation there. Mark, of course, offers these parenthetical explanations because his audience is a Roman audience that would have been largely ignorant of Jewish customs, the custom of ritually washing the hands. So he offers an explanation to his Roman readers. For the Pharisees and all the Jews, So all the Jews means all the Jews, usually in the New Testament, the Jews or all the Jews means the religious leadership.

But in this case, it means all the Jews because the leaders have just been named for the Pharisees and all the Jews, meaning not just the leaders, but all of the people. So this is a widespread custom that all the people observed. This custom, this tradition of not eating unless they wash their hands properly.

Holding to the tradition of the elders and verse four, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. For there are many other traditions that they observe, such as washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches. So there's his little aside, his explanation there.

And in reading that, we see the connection and we see what has sparked this latest controversy. We see that in the word marketplace, because we're told that the tradition is that not only do they wash their hands. Before they partake of food, but they also have traditions of washing when they come from the marketplace.

So that connects us back previously to the episode that we read about in Gennesaret when all the people were bringing the people to the marketplaces. And we said then that the marketplaces, that was a generic word. It doesn't necessarily mean the place where things are bought and sold, but it means a public place of gathering.

So the public places of gathering was where they were bringing the sick to, and Jesus was healing. Now we're told that the Pharisees have this tradition, and all the Jews have this tradition, of ritually washing their hands before they eat, but also of washing. And that word there, washing, the second time we see washing is a different word.

It's the word 'baptizo.' And we know that word because we're good. Our, our theology is baptistic, right? So we know what 'baptizo' means. It means to submerge, to immerse in water. And so what we're told there is that there were two types of ritual, clean cleansing, or two stages, so to speak, of ritual cleansing.

There was the ritual cleansing that in which you ritually or ceremonially cleanse the hands before partaking of food. But if you were for. You have found yourself in a public gathering type of place, like a marketplace. Then you had to go much further. You had to ritually bathe your whole body because you had come in contact with the common folk, with perhaps even Gentiles.

And so here Jesus and his disciples have been coming in contact, in fact, close contact. With all sorts of people. Remember, this is a predominantly Gentile area. The Jewish influence here is minimal. And so many Gentiles have been present. They've been near Jesus. Jesus has certainly been touching sick people.

He has been cleansing lepers. He's been touching lepers. And so He is From a ritual or from a, from a ceremonial standpoint, he is very much defiled, ceremonially, which would've necessitated according to the tradition, this baptizing, this ritualistic bath, which we're told the disciples, uh, have been observed not doing.

So these traditions that these disciple or that these pharisees have established, these traditions of the elders that we're told. It's going to be five times in the passage that we're going to read. The tradition of the elders, the tradition of the elders. So let's begin just unpacking this by understanding what the tradition of the elders was.

Most of this or some of this probably most of us have heard or frequently probably heard these traditions that have grown up around the law of God, traditions that were intended to provide sort of a buffer or a buffer Fence, if you will, a hedge, if you will, between the law of God and the people of God in such a way that the law of God was given in the Old Testament Scriptures.

But then as time went on, there were these traditions that were added to it, these customs that were added to it that the Jews were expected to observe. And the idea was that if you observe these customs and these traditions, then as long as you made sure that you kept those, you were insured of keeping the law because it was like this buffer zone between you and the law.

For example, God says, uh, of course, uh, the commandment that keep the Sabbath holy and do no ordinary work on the Sabbath. And so around that grew all these traditions or these regulations which specified exactly what you could not do on the Sabbath in order to keep it holy. And the idea behind that was...

Keep these traditions and these customs and you'll be sure to keep the law behind it. Now, as we approach the passage here, as we begin to just unpack it, one of the things that I need to confess to all of us is that I've taught and preached this passage and similar passages that direct themselves toward the same topic, the same idea.

I've done this on a number of occasions before. But I don't think I've ever really understood what Jesus was getting at before because here's how I have presented this in the past and here's how it's been presented to me probably to you as well when we begin to think about these Traditions that the Pharisees and the scribes had put into place.

We see that as sort of a noble endeavor Something that started out as a good idea with good intentions, but it has come off the rails. And all these years since these traditions began to be put into place, it sort of come off, has come off the rails since then. And a thing that started good has now ended up in a very bad place.

And so by example, we can look at that and say, even things that have a good beginning with good intentions, when God's not in them, they can go bad and they can go very sour. And that's very true. But as I have reflected and Quite frankly, struggled with this passage for the last two weeks. This has been one of the most difficult passages.

I think this is the most difficult passage to prepare in Mark's gospel yet. But as I've struggled with this passage for the last two weeks, I've become convinced that that is not the way to see what Jesus is saying. Instead, what Jesus is saying to these... Pharisees and scribes is something much, much harsher, much more severe.

The warning that he is giving to them is much more pointed and his declaration of their wicked, wickedness. This is something much more straightforward than I have given credit to in the past. I have basically, in the past, seen this as, as we said, just something, maybe there's a good intention behind it, but yet it went too far.

Instead, Jesus is declaring there was no good intention in any of this. from the start that this has been wickedness and unrighteousness from the beginning. So the way that we want to see this is let's just begin by recognizing something that's very true about the scribes in the Pharisees. That perhaps we haven't recognized before the scribes.

Of course, we won't go to take the time to go through a Definition and explanation of what those two groups of people were I think we're familiar with scribes and Pharisees by now, but these scribes and the Pharisees we tend to think of those two groups of people as the groups of people in Israel that had the highest view of the scriptures The Jewish people, in general, were people that had a high view of Scripture.

They were supposed to have a high view of Scripture. They were the ones to whom God has given the Scriptures. But even among the Jews, we have tended to think of the scribes, they are the professional class of people, that it is their job as... So, to speak lawyers that they deal in the law of God. It's their occupation.

It's their profession And so they naturally have a very high view of the scriptures or of the law Pharisees on the other hand, that's not a professional group. But instead that's a sect and we've often thought of the Pharisees as a group or a sect of Jews that themselves had a particularly high and honorable view of the law.

And so, therefore, together, these groups of people, the sayings of the rabbis and the scribes and the Pharisees they have put into place, this hedge around the law that they love so much. But what

Jesus is going to say in this passage, what he is going to show us, and I'll show us clearly as we walk through the passage, that what Jesus is teaching is that these people who profess to have such a love for Scripture actually hate it, and they actually disdain it more than the other groups of Jews in Jesus's day.

The first place that we can recognize this is just by thinking in terms of generalities. Of what we know about the scribes and the Pharisees and how they approached the people, how they approached the law. So there was a common misconception among the rabbis, among the scribes, the leaders of Jesus day.

There was a common, I guess, perception we could say, that the ordinary Jewish person was incapable of understanding the Word of God. That there was just an incapacity on the part of most people. to comprehend the matters of God's law. And so, therefore, what was needed was these teachers, these scribes and these Pharisees, to teach the common rabble How to understand properly God's law.

Now, we often talk of the fact that God, His people, we never, in the church age, we will never outgrow the need for preachers and teachers of the Word. We've talked about this many times. It's a reality in the church that God is pleased So God is pleased to have His kingdom be sustained and move forward based on the preaching of His Word.

To have a man that God has raised up to stand before God's people, open His Word and say, this is what God's Word says. So God is pleased to have His people edified in that way. But that's not the same thing as saying that God's people are incapable of understanding His Word. Because we're not the scriptures make the assumption from beginning to end that they are Understandable by God's people that's called the doctrine of the perpeuscuity of scripture it's a hard word to say but it's easy word to understand because what that means is just basically a long word that says Scripture is understandable by God's people scripture is clear.

That's how scripture sees itself Scripture doesn't see itself as a book of mysteries in which special people and special teachers are needed to unlock the mysteries of what nobody else can understand. Again, this is different than saying God is pleased that His people, on a regular basis, are edified and challenged and instructed by an anointed preacher of God's Word.

That's different from saying that. What we're saying is that Scripture, that the Scripture that God has given us is understandable by His people. Now, there's not a chapter in a verse that we can turn to to say, let's look at this doctrine and see how Scripture says, see, Scripture's clear and understandable by God's people.

I can't say to turn to 2nd Hezekiah for... Verse 12 and there we'll see the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture because there's not a verse and chapter and verse that says that in a clear, succinct fashion. However, Scripture makes the assumption from the beginning that that is what the nature of the Scripture is understandable.

It's clear. It assumes that of itself from the beginning. And so to see this, you just need to just look at your Scriptures through the eyes. of understanding how the Scriptures understand themselves. The Scriptures see themselves, I should say that in the singular, the Scripture sees itself as something the people of God can understand.

For example, think of Deuteronomy 6, verses 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. We all know that passage. Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one. You shall love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and strength. And you shall, what does it say then? Teach these things diligently to your children. And then it goes on to explain how as you sit at the table, as you walk by the way, you should talk of these things, and you should teach these things diligently to your children.

So do you see the assumption there? In order to teach these things diligently to your children, Scripture assumes that it could be understood. And we see this assumption all over the place as we talk about the letter to the Ephesians and how the Ephesians, the letter to the Ephesians clearly is written not just to the elite leaders of the Ephesian church, but instead to mothers and fathers and bondservants and children.

The assumption is You can understand this. Or, for example, we see it. Psalm 19 verse seven. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. So we see this assumption all throughout scripture that at the scripture that is given to God's people assumes itself to be clear and understandable by God's people.

So when the scribes and Pharisees Take the stance, well, the people can't understand the scriptures. They need us to explain them to them. Do you see the low view of scripture? Do you see the denial that God's words are understandable by His people? Do you see the disdain that they have for scripture?

Denying the nature and the character of scripture that God has given to His people with the assumption that you can understand this. But beyond that, they not only deny the clarity of Scripture, but they also deny the sufficiency of Scripture. And that's where these traditions really come into play.

Because these traditions, as we said earlier, are designed and built and put into place in order to say, God's law is so important that you keep. Let's make a buffer. Let's add something to it just to make sure that you are able to keep these commandments So to put that another way not only do the Scribes and Pharisees denied the clarity of Scripture They also denied the sufficiency of Scripture because in essence what they have said is God's law is not quite enough.

We need these extra traditions to help us and so there is a Therefore, a twofold denial of the nature of Scripture, denying the fact that God's people can understand it, and denying the fact that the Scriptures that God has given, the law that God has given, is in and of itself sufficient for God's people.

Second Timothy chapter 3 and verses 16 and 17. All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. And other places that we could point to that say to us that our Scriptures teach us that in the Scriptures we are given everything that we need for salvation and godliness.

There is nothing that's needed by term, by way of information. that we need for salvation or a life of godliness that's not found in the scriptures. That's what we call the doctrine of the sufficiency of scriptures. And the scribes deny both of those. And so what I want us to begin by seeing is seeing what a low view of scripture one holds.

When they think that scripture just somehow cannot be understood by common people and, furthermore, scripture is not quite enough, the law of God is not quite enough, we need to modify it, we need to add some things to it in order to make it sufficient for the people's needs. Do you see what a low, do you see what an insulting view of scripture that is?

What a, uh, patronistic view of scripture that is? What a demeaning view of scripture it is? To say God's word needs us. The explainers, the clarifiers, and the ones who can add what's needed to it in order for you people to be able to live by God's law. So that's the starting point. And that's the point at which we begin approaching the passage and seeing Just what, what sort of a group of people Jesus is dealing with.

Jesus will not deal with these people on the terms of saying to them or taking the position with them. You know, these traditions that you have really kind of started out good, but we need to, we need to back up a little bit. We need to modify these. Jesus instead is taking the approach. These things have been wicked from the start.

So we've seen that in generalities, but let's now see this in actuality in the Scripture, in the passage before us. And I want to just show us how clearly Jesus is saying to these scribes and Pharisees His point is, this is not a good thing gone awry. Instead, you have had a wholly and completely deficient view of the Scriptures from the start.

And we see this primarily in Jesus use of words, the force of the words that He's going to use. So verse 5, And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands? Now, of course, as they ask that question, they're not asking it because they want to know the answer.

They're not asking for their own information. They're not curious as to why they haven't done this. Instead, the question itself is an accusation. Why don't you disciples do what we all know that they're supposed to do? What's expected of them to do? And verse six, and he said to them, well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites as it is written?

So let's pause right there. So we now are given a clear and definitive contrast in the passage. And the contrast is between what Jesus just said. It is written, and what we've read now twice, the tradition of the elders. When we come to the Gospels, and we begin to see this picture of Jesus, one of the misconceptions, that's a very popular misconception of Jesus, that is, quite frankly, an easy misconception to fall into, if you read the Gospels in a lazy sort of manner, one of the misperceptions of Jesus is that Jesus went about In opposition to the law, that Jesus, Jesus was just always in confrontation with these people who wanted to be sticklers about the law, especially like the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus repeatedly is saying, you know, this is what they're telling you to do, but I say, don't do that.

And that has led to a very widespread spread misconception of Jesus in such a way that Jesus has been painted as this. Person is this Messiah, is this savior that all he wanted to do was just love people. He just came to love people and he was so tired of people that were so wrapped up in keeping the law, and he was all about just, let's just get rid of the law and just let's just love people.

That's a misperception of Jesus and it's a misperception that springs from failing to. We recognize two very, very key phrases and what those two key phrases mean. And the first of those key



phrases is, it is written. So when we read the words, it is written in the New Testament or anywhere in the Bible, really.

But when we read the word specifically in the Gospels, it is written. We should understand that that's saying to us, not that somebody is recalling something they read from somewhere. Like sometimes we'll say something of that, you know, I read somewhere that...or I read this or whatever That's not what's being said when we read the words.

It is written. It is saying this is what Scripture says So it is written and then Jesus follows that up with what Isaiah wrote now the other phrase that we come across is it is said or you have heard it said So we right now we recognize the fact that we've read those phrases many times in the Gospels.

So when we read the words, it is said, or you have heard it said, then what that is referring to is this body of teaching that came down from the rabbis. There was this collective body of teachings about Traditions and customs, all of which were designed to, as we said, surround the law and give a buffer around it and be binding upon the people in such a way that when you do what the rabbis say, you are therefore assured of keeping the law that these teachings have been built around.

Right? And so whenever we see that phrase, and so if you read back to the Sermon on the Mount, you'll see that phrase over and over. You have heard it said, but I say so what Jesus is not doing is he's not setting himself up in opposition to the law Jesus is setting himself up in opposition to the traditions and that is the key thing to see Jesus never, never, there is not a single instance in which Jesus was ever critical of the law.

There's not a single instance in which Jesus ever abrogated the law or did not keep the law. In fact, He said, My purpose, the reason I have come is not to do away with the law, but to fulfill the law. Jesus criticisms were always, always directed toward the tradition. In fact, if you wanted to summarize all the conflicts of Jesus' life, all of the conflicts of his ministry really could be boiled down into two or even one category.

The bulk of the conflicts that Jesus experienced were conflicts over the traditions. That was the conflicts we saw earlier in the gospel over Jesus's keeping of the Sabbath, or what they thought was the lack of His keeping of the Sabbath, or the fact that they plucked some heads of grain, or the fact that He was eating with, uh, Levi, or the fact that they, they weren't fasting.

None of those things were the law of God. All of those things were the spoken verbal traditions of the rabbis. This is why Matthew 23, Jesus will say, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, for you burden the people with loads that they can't bear. And you yourselves can't bear them. And you give them no help in bearing them.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, for burdening the people with such a burden. That was what Jesus was so critical of. So that was the one conflict. The other conflict... What's the fact that Jesus claimed the authority to do away with such traditions? So really you could think of those as the same conflict or two conflicts, but the bulk of Jesus's interactions, negative interactions with the leaders of Israel had to do with his insistence that these traditions need to stop.

Um, Jesus, Jesus stance was, I'm not following them. I follow the let the law of God to the letter, but I don't follow those. And I have the authority to not follow those and to do away with those,

okay? So, these traditions, as we see here, the, what is said, what is spoken, the traditions of the elders This is set in contrast against what is written.

So, well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites as it is written. So now Jesus goes to the scriptures and he quotes Isaiah. This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You see it there. It's quite plain.

Teaching as doctrines. In other words, teaching as something that you, as the people of God, must believe, must affirm. Teaching as something you must affirm the commandments, not of God, but the commandments of men. So that quotation there from Isaiah, we said earlier, Back in chapter three, if you recall the passage of the sin that is unforgivable or sometimes called the unpardonable sin, which we said was the sin of enlightened blasphemy, the sin of having the truth of God revealed to you and understanding this is the true words of God.

This is what should be believed, yet refusing to submit that enlightened blasphemy, which leads to eventually, as we said, a withdrawal of the Holy Spirit. Which then produces a state in which confession and repentance is not possible. And so that's why that sin is unforgivable So we said there that that that is perhaps the most frightening passage in Mark's gospel I think it probably is this certainly Comes in a close second because if we consider carefully what Jesus just said this people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me and therefore their worship is vain, is useless, is worthless.

That should strike a note within all of our hearts and cause all of the people of God to say in your soul, to yourself, to ask yourself, Am I one of these people? Do I honor God with my lips while my heart is far from Him? And is my worship of Him true? Or is it vain? That that should be a phrase. That should be a statement that that wakes up the people of God and causes us to ask in the depths of our soul.

Does this describe me? Do I honor God outwardly with my lips and my words, but deep in the recesses of my heart is my heart far from him? So frightening warning. This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me teaching us doctrines, the commandments of men.

This Now let's begin to notice the language that Jesus is going to use and I just we're just going to walk through this and I'll just Show you how the language is perfectly crystal clear and Jesus leaves no Second option he leaves no other way to understand what he's saying. He says first of all verse 8 you leave The commandment of God, you leave the commandment of God.

So what the scribes and the Pharisees would have said if they were here today is they would have said something to us to the effect we honor the word of God. In fact, we love and honor the word of God so much that we desire to protect it and to ensure its obedience. And so we have established this dual system of authority.

The scriptures. But also the traditions of the rabbis and these two authorities together Ensure that we have a high view of scripture That's what the Scribes and Pharisees probably would have said to us if they were here this morning Jesus is uh huh. Notice Jesus doesn't say you honor the Word of God less than you honor your traditions Jesus doesn't say you honor your traditions alongside the Word of God.

He says very plainly you leave The word of God. You leave the commandments. Now that word leave is very clear. It's very plain. It means abandon. It means reject. It means to make void. It means to nullify. It means to cancel. Look with me at some other instances in which Mark uses the same word. Chapter 1 verse 31.

And he came and took her by the hand. This is Peter's mother in law. And lifted her up and the fever left her. Remember that passage? We said that the fever didn't just subside. We said very clearly in that passage that Mark is saying to us that the fever abandoned her. The fever vacated. The fever was gone.

Same word, you abandon the commandment of God. Chapter 10 and verse 28, Peter began to say to him, See, we have left everything. And followed you. Peter's point is, is not to say Jesus, you know, we've still got our fishing boats and our nets, and we thought we could fish on the weekends and follow you on the weekdays, you know, or maybe we could follow you Monday through Thursday and then we could go and fish for a few days.

No, Peter said, we abandoned our life to follow you. We forsook our life in order to follow you. Same word you have forsaken, you have abandoned the commandments. In order to, we're told, hold to the tradition of men. Now, that word, hold, It simply means to grasp, to grip firmly, to secure, to seize hold of, to, to, to grab and hold and raise up.

Once again, that same verse from chapter one, verse 31, Mark uses the word this way, and he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. That's Peter's mother in law. Again, Jesus came, grabbed her and Jesus. Chapter five, verse 40, 41, taking her by the hand. He said to her, Talitha Kumai, which means little girl, I say to you, arise.

Chapter three in verse 21. It can often mean something much more stern, much more harsh, not just to grab, but to seize. Same word. When his family heard it, they went out to seize him. Chapter 6 verse 17, For it was Herod who had sent and seized John. Same word. So there it carries a sense of not just grabbing, but grabbing in a violent sort of way.

So this is what Jesus says. You have abandoned the commandment of God in order to seize upon, grip firmly, hold on to,

Jesus is not painting a picture here of some people who have a high regard for the scriptures and in their high regard for the scriptures, they've added to that a regard for the tradition of the scribes because all these things just sort of come together to mean the same thing. That's not what Jesus is describing.

What Jesus is describing is a group of people who disdain the word of God so much that they have abandoned it. In order to cling to something entirely different in their life, which is to say, the tradition of the scribes and the elders. You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.

Am I importing anything in there, you think? Is that just plainly what Jesus is saying to us? Is Jesus allowing us the option of thinking, well, these Pharisees, they really did think a lot of the Scriptures, and they really did have this good intention that sort of went awry after a while. Jesus isn't leaving us that option.

We are not adding or importing anything into what Jesus is saying. We're simply saying this is what He said. He said to the scribes and Pharisees, You have abandoned the Word of God in order to instead cling to your traditions. Verse 9, And He said to them, you have a fine way, or you have a good way, or you are very successful.

You are good at, Jesus says, Rejecting. Now, that word rejecting means to invalidate, to negate, to nullify, to reject outright. You are good. You are skilled. You are effective. Now, Jesus isn't giving them a compliment. He's giving them a sideways insult. You know, kind of like when you say, well, you're really good at doing something that's

Setting aside the law of God. Not, not giving the law of God second place to the traditions of men. Not giving the law of God a lesser influence in your life. You're really good, Jesus says, at rejecting the law, rejecting the commandment of God. Look at how this word is used elsewhere. Mark, I'm sorry, Luke chapter 7, verse 30.

The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves. Galatians 2 and verse 21, Paul says, I do not nullify the grace of God. Or Hebrews 10 and verse 28, anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy. Okay, so Jesus very plainly. He's not giving the option to say, you know, you've got a certain respect for the Commandments and a certain respect for the tradition of the elders, and they just sort of come together and they compliment one another.

Jesus isn't allowing that at all. He's saying, you've done one of the two. You either cling to the Commandments of God, the Word of God, or you reject it outrightly to me and cling to the tradition of men. It matters not what their outward appearances are. It matters not what they say with their mouth, that they say with their mouth, we love the commandments, we love the law, we love the word of God.

That matters for nothing because Jesus is looking at their heart and saying, in your heart, you have abandoned, rejected, nullified, forsaken the word of God in order to, there's a causation word there, there's the word of cause, it's 'hina,' is the word, in order to, Here's the purpose. Here's the cause.

Here's the goal that you have in mind in order to establish your tradition. That word establish just means to observe, to keep, to guard something. Look at how it's used in Matthew 7, I'm sorry, 27 and verse 54 when the centurion and those who were with him keeping watch. Watch over Jesus, same word there.

So keeping watch, they're guarding Jesus. Jesus says you've abandoned the commandments in order to guard or keep watch over your traditions. Matthew 28, verse 4, just a few verses later, it's used in the noun form. In the noun form, it means a guard. And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men.

So, keeping, holding, guarding. Look at John 8, verse 51. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word. verse 16. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not... Keep the Sabbath, or many times throughout this section, we will read something similar to this, John 14, verse 15. If you love me, you will keep my command.

So you see the polarity, you see the contrast that Jesus has plainly put forth. And the contrast is you have rejected, abandoned, left, forsaken, nullified. The law of God, the commandments of God, in order to cling to, hold to, establish, grip firmly, seize upon your own traditions. Now, Jesus is going to go on to give a case study or an example.

And we'll come back to it. We'll read this or we'll come back to it. So verse 10, For Moses said, Honor your father and your mother and whoever reviles father and mother must surely die. But you say, If a man tells his father or his mother, Whatever you would have gained from me is korban, that is given to God.

Then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the Word of God by your tradition. So we'll come back to Jesus case study, to His example, but we'll skip down to see, to see His conclusion. His conclusion is, I give you this example of something that you're doing, and the example shows you that what you are doing is Making void, nullifying, invalidating, neutering the Word of God.

What you are, what you are doing is rendering powerless, rendering ineffectual, causing to be without effect. Defanging

the Word of God. You know what that means? To defang something. Think of like a tiger. It has its fangs and the tiger's fangs. What do the tiger's fangs do? They don't just make him look mean and nasty, they enable him to catch his food. Because he takes those fangs and puts them into his prey, and those fangs hold his prey.

Now, you take that tiger's fangs and you pull him out and that tiger will die because you have defanged him. You have taken from him his ability to continue existing. This word means that you have defanged the Word of God. You have dehorned the Word of God. I think back to when I was a kid and we would cut the horns off of my granddad's cattle.

The horns that were their means of protection. That would end up making them dangerous to be around. We'd cut the horns off thereby rendering them not dangerous or Declawed you've declawed the word you cat owners, you know, first of all, you know, you're crazy But second of all, you know that if you take a cat and you declaw the cat then what can that cat not do?

They can't live outside Because it can't protect itself You have declawed the Word of God. You have neutered the Word of God. You have voided, you have made ineffectual the Word of God. Galatians 3 and verse 17. This is what I mean. The law which came 430 years afterwards does not Does not annul, avoid, make void, neuter, render powerless a covenant previously ratified by God.

Now you have made void the Word of God. How? By your tradition. I don't think Jesus could have been any plainer in what He's saying. Jesus is not, again, leaving us the option of thinking, all these Pharisees and scribes were good hearted, they had good intentions, they loved the law, they loved the Word, and in their zeal to protect the Word, they overdid it.

Jesus is saying, each person can have one and only one authority. And your authority is either the Word of God, completely and totally, or it's not at all. Jesus is saying that the Word of God will not, cannot, share any authority in your life. You cannot take the Word and say, Well, the Word of God is my main authority, but I couple that together with this other authority.

I couple that together with this other body of teaching or this, this other... I don't know. Experiences of life that I've collected over my years. I take the Word of God and I put it together with my experiences and that's my authority. God says, no, if that's the case, your authority is your experiences, not the Word.

Because the Word of God must be the exclusive soul authority or it's no authority at all. Those aren't my words. That's plainly what Jesus is saying to us. You may have pretended. To have this dual authority that regulates your beliefs and your religious practices and you call this dual authority The commandments of God along with the tradition of the elders, but Jesus says no quite plainly You've you have done away with completely the word the commands of God and you've replaced them with your own command Jesus 6 Man cannot serve two masters because what will happen is you'll hate the one and love the other Jesus said that in the context of a saying that man cannot serve God and Money, but is it not true?

And is it not a valid application to say if Jesus said you can't serve God and money then that reality also applies Equally when he says you cannot have the authority of the word and the authority of anything else Anything else will negate Or void out the Word of God in your life, which really is true of authority anyway.

You know, it's really in a way of thinking, all of us really only have one authority anyway. You don't have multiple authorities. This idea that you have one supreme authority and you have other authorities in your life and you follow these other authorities unless they conflict with the supreme authority.

In reality, you still only have one authority. Because if you say, well, I've got these other authorities in my life and I'll listen to them as long as they don't conflict to the main one, you may as well say, well, the main one is my authority. Because whatever conflicts with that one, that's what I don't listen to.

Jesus is saying the same thing about the Word. The commands of God, the written Word of God, thus it is written, he says, the written Word of God can only be the exclusive sole source of authority in your beliefs and practices. Or it's no authority whatsoever. So his indictment to them is that you have created this false reality, this false perception.

You're hypocrites, he says. On the outside, you're putting on this veneer, this show on the outside. And the show on the outside is saying to other people, We love the Word of God. We love the commandments of God. But Jesus says on the inside, you're something totally different. You're something completely different.

On the inside, you love and worship your tradition, your customs, these man-made regulations. Why? Because man made regulations are something you're in control of. God's commandments are something completely different. So that's what you're, that's your real authority, says Jesus. So these traditions that they have put into place, again, the dichotomy is that they appear, or they want to appear, as though they Love God's word and have a high regard for God's word.

Yet the reality is they actually disdain God's word and have a very low view of God's word. So let's now put that on pause and then. We'll go back. Well, actually we won't put it on pause. Let's just let's just go back to verse 10 and let's now look at Jesus's case study and so see how Jesus's example Even furthers his argument.

So back up to verse 10. Here's his example. Well verse 9. You have a fine way You're really good. You're skilled at rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish or cling to or seize upon your tradition or For, for Moses said, now when Jesus says Moses said, that also, that's a, that's a phrase that means God said.

Because in Matthew's account of this, in Matthew 17, in Matthew's account of this, Matthew says, for God said, so when Jesus says, Moses said, he's not, he's not putting the opinion of Moses against the opinion of the Pharisees, what he's saying, God said this, for God said, or Moses said, honor your father and your mother and whoever reviles father or mother must surely die, but you say, you see how Jesus, again, this is the contrast he always comes to, it is written, but you say, it is written, but you say, but you say, whatever you would have gained from me as Corban, that is, And here's his explanation to the Romans, that is, given to God.

Then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the Word of God. So, let's follow his example. There was this practice that the scribes, another one of their traditions, that they put into place, this practice of korban. Now this practice is the practice of, of declaring that one's possessions or one's wealth or one's profit

And by so doing, it then necessitated that those possessions, that wealth, was then off limits for the temple to take, or for taxes to take, or for the parents to require. And so then, thus declaring it so, the person who then declared his wealth or his possessions to be korban didn't necessarily then give it all to the temple.

Thank you. He then retained ownership of it, but then was prevented from using it for these other purposes. So his example is you've got this tradition called Korban. And when something is declared, when someone's possessions are declared Korban, Jesus says you then prevent him or not allow him to use those possessions to keep the commandment of God, which is honor your father and mother.

Now, the way that I have understood that previously, I don't think it's correct. What I've understood that previously is, is in this way, that Jesus is describing someone who wants to get out of the duty of honoring his father and mother. And so he declares his possessions to be Corban and therefore says, Well, I don't have to support your mom and dad because I've declared all my goods to be Corban.

I don't think that's Jesus's meaning. And the reason I don't think that's his meaning is because look at his words right here. Verse 12, Then you no longer permit. What Jesus is drawing attention to, what Jesus issue is in this theoretical situation, what his issue is, his issue is not the relationship between the Son and the parents.

His issue is the relationship between the Pharisees and the Son. That's what he's causing, calling attention to. He's saying the problem is not that there's this person who doesn't want to honor his father and mother. He's saying that the problem is... That there is an improper relationship between the Pharisees and the son in such a way that the scribes Have taken this tradition and this tradition is being used to prevent the son from honoring the parents So I see it this way.

I see that Jesus in his mind has this Occasion this situation in which there's a son and the son is a man of means he's been successful And his parents are successful and they're well off and they're

comfortable And the son has reached adulthood. He's got a family of his own and his parents are doing fine.

They're comfortable too. And so the son declares, you know, my, my parents in their old age, they'll be taken care of. They won't need me. I will declare Korban. I will declare my possessions are for the Lord. Well, then things take a turn. Maybe the parents have an unexpected illness. Maybe there's some sort of disaster with the crops or with the property and somehow the parents who thought that they were secure Financially find themselves in a bad way.

And then the son now says well things have changed Now I want to use my resources to care for my parents to honor my parents The Pharisees then come along say, uh, there's this Corban thing. You took the vow of Corban. You cannot do that I think that fits perfectly with what Jesus is saying. You do not permit him to honor his father and mother because you've taken this tradition of yours and used that tradition to, in Jesus's words, make void the Word of God.

You see how it fits perfectly with what Jesus is saying. His illustration is an illustration in which you claim to honor the Word of God, but your traditions have actually done The polar opposite and they have negated or nullified or voided out completely the commandment. Honor your father and your mother.

And so Jesus point is well made. Here's an example, Jesus says, of just how your traditions aren't a, uh, accomplice authority along with the Word. Your traditions aren't a complementary authority. Your traditions have ousted The authority of the word entirely altogether. That's Jesus's point. He makes his point well with his illustration.

So now seeing that and seeing how Jesus is very pointedly pointing a finger at hypocrites who pretend to have a high view of the scriptures, yet in fact, disdain the scriptures by way of their traditions. What does this mean for us? Because we don't practice the ritualistic washing. I don't think anybody, you might have washed your hands this morning, but I don't think anybody ceremonially washed your hands.

What does this sort of thing mean for us? Well, I think that the most obvious, the plain as day application for our modern world, it's hard to miss this one, is obviously the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church is the exact, exact copy of the scribes and the Pharisees in this scenario. Because the Roman Catholic Church, just like the scribes and Pharisees, claims to be the protector of Scripture.

Claims to be the one, true, and only valid manifestation of the Church of Christ on Earth. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church has the most comprehensive and complicated system of manmade laws that do exactly what Jesus describes in this passage. Let me read to us. Let me read a statement that's taken from, well, first of all, let me read a statement from something called the Talmud.

We all probably are familiar with the Talmud. The Talmud, uh, well, first came the Mishnah. So in Jesus day, all these traditions of the scribes and Pharisees were verbal. But then maybe about, uh, by the second century, all these, all these commands, these verbal commands of the scribes and Pharisees, they had begun to be written down in something called the Mishnah.

Well, then the Mishnah eventually was compiled with some other documents into a document called the Talmud. The Talmud was a collection of the Mishnah and another document called the



Ghemera. So listen to what the Talmud says about itself. It says this, sacred scriptures are like water. The Mishnah is like wine.

The Ghemera is like Aramaic wine. You hear that? You hear that clear hierarchy? There's the scripture. There's the Ghemera, which are more sayings, but then there is, or there's the Mishnah, then there's the Ghemera So they have created the system in which the Word of God, in their own view, now takes the backseat.

Now, having that in mind, let's now compare this to what we see in our day, specifically in the Roman Catholic Church. Let me read just this statement written by a man by the name of John Hardin. John Hardin was a Jesuit priest. And he wrote in some other writings this following statement, which has been given the status of nihil obstat.

Now, nihil obstat is a phrase, you know, the Catholic Church loves Latin phrases. They call everything by Latin phrases because it makes them sound smarter and holier than you. But this phrase, nihil obstat, basically means that the Church, the Catholic Church, has officially sanctioned the following statement to be a right and true reflection.

of official Catholic doctrine. So listen to what the statement says. Sacred Tradition is the unwritten Word of God that the Apostles and Prophets received through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and under His guidance, the Church has handed on to the Christian world. Both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are the inspired Word of God.

And both are forms of divine revelation. Sacred Scripture is divinely inspired, whereas sacred tradition is the unwritten Word of God. You hear what they've done? They have unashamedly done exactly what the scribes and Pharisees have done. Exactly, to the letter, without reservation, without any shame, they have declared there are two authorities.

There's the authority of Scripture, and there's the authority of the sayings of the Church. And so one who would subscribe to the Roman Catholic doctrine would say that when we want to decide what's right and what's wrong, what we should rightly believe and what we shouldn't believe, what we should rightly do and what we should refrain from doing, there are two sources of right and wrong that we go to.

One is the Scriptures, another is the sayings of the Church, the traditions of the Church. That is precisely what Jesus is condemning, that the scribes and Pharisees have done, is precisely what Jesus is condemning here. And this, they profess to believe in the scriptures. They profess to be the guardians of scripture.

They profess to believe in the sacred authority of scripture. Yet at the same time, they have instituted a companion authority and by Jesus's own words, The existence of a companion authority negates the authority of the scriptures all together in such a way that it is plain as day for anyone with half of a brain and even a little bit of impartiality.

It's it's plain as day for anyone to observe the Roman Catholic Church and observe a group of people who blatantly do what the scriptures has specifically said not to do. The second commandment says to us very plainly, you shall have no graven images before me. In your religious worship, you are not to bow down to any image.

And we all know that's exactly what happens at every Roman Catholic gathering. The bowing down to images. The Word of God says that there is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ. And the Roman Catholic Church regularly affirms That sinners need the help of Mary and other saints. The scriptures tell, say to us that there is only one, we are only to pray to God and to God alone.

And the most, the most, uh, common, the most popular, well known Roman Catholic prayer is the Rosary, which is a prayer to Mary. In fact, you'll see the bumper stickers around. You will probably see that bumper sticker this week. If you look for it, pray the Rosary. What Pray the Rosary means, in other words, is blaspheme God.

What Pray the Rosary means is reject the authority of Scripture outright because there's no such thing as Scripture sharing authority with anything else. Yet the Roman Catholic Church and there's so many other... We could be here for the next 20 minutes just talking about all the ways that anyone with an impartial view can look to the Roman Catholic Church and see a church that blatantly does what the Scriptures have said not to do.

The reason is they have tried to assert that there is a dual authority. And you can't do that. Once you claim a dual authority, you have jettisoned the authority of the Scriptures, which will then cause you to go down the same path as the Scribes and the Pharisees, which is to, as Jesus says in His words, completely reject the authority of Scripture.

Now, having said all that, come in. Having said all that, I don't think any of us in the room, as far as I know, I don't think any of us have a Roman Catholic background. I don't think any of us come from that Roman Catholic context or that Roman Catholic background, I might be wrong, but I don't think any of us come out of that context.

So one thing that's not particularly helpful is to hear a sermon preached against people, or to people that aren't here. Don't, don't you hate that? To listen to a sermon that's preached for people that aren't here? I don't want to preach to people who aren't here. So what does this mean for us in our context?

So let's follow the train. Let's follow the connections. The connection, first of all, Pharisees and scribes. And their relationship to the word, which is to reject it outright, to pretend they love it, but instead reject it outright in place of their own authority. The connection then is to the Roman Catholic Church, which in the same way pretends to love the scriptures, yet rejects it outright in their claiming of a secondary authority.

Now let's make the connection over to our context, our world, our traditions, our customs, because we all have them. Everyone has traditions. Every church has traditions. We have traditions. Every church, you have to have them. You have to have some traditions because without them, you can't function. It's our tradition to start at 930.

Everybody hear that? It's our tradition to start at 9. 30. But, I mean, you have to have, if you don't have at least that, then who knows what time, you just start at some random time, you just pick a random day of the week. No, you have to at least have the tradition, well, we start on this time, at this day. We have a certain order that we generally follow.

We'd like to read the scriptures in connection with music and prayers and then we open the Word. And so all those things are part of traditions. Jesus was never opposed to tradition. Never. What Jesus is opposed to is tradition holding any authority. Make that clear distinction in your mind. Jesus was never opposed to tradition.

Jesus was opposed to tradition holding any sway or any authority. Jesus was affirming the full and complete authority of Scripture, and He Himself would follow the traditions of worship in His worship. But He was clear that they never possessed any authority or any directive ability whatsoever. That's what Jesus is opposed to.

So, let's think of those in the context of our traditions. And this won't take us long to begin to think of traditions within the context of the evangelical church. Traditions that aren't bad traditions, but traditions that have nonetheless begun to have authority or have held some sort of authority or some sort of power, some sort of ability to allow those who profess to be Christians to look to those traditions and to say, based on that tradition, this church is right or this church is wrong, this person is right or this person is in the wrong.

That's what we're pointing to. So let's think of those traditions. Won't take long. What about the altar call? The altar call. We don't practice the altar call here. Anything wrong with altar calls? Not necessarily. But they're not biblical. You won't find an example of them in the Bible. And don't try to equate the Old Testament altar To the altar call because they're completely different things.

The Old Testament altar was a sac, a place of sacrifice. Jesus is our sacrifice. If you come to an altar call, you're not coming to the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus is our sacrifice. So there's nothing at all wrong with a public showing of repentance or that sort of thing, but it's a tradition. Nothing wrong with it.

Nothing necessarily right with it. It's just a theme until it becomes. To have a place of authority,

we don't practice the altar call. And there have been those who have pointed to our church and said, that church doesn't do altar calls. There's something wrong. I've heard that. You probably have heard that, too. Do you see how that's taking a tradition and vesting it with authority? Let's name a few others.

What about acquire? I've even heard the choir that doesn't wear robes, you know, I mean we're going back to my earlier childhood, you know I mean there was I remember Specifically remember the church down the street that decided that their choir was going to stop wearing robes And I remember all the talk that such and such church, you know, their choir stopped wearing robes as though That held some sort of authority now, is it right for the choir to wear robes?

Maybe is it wrong? Is it right to have a choir or not have a it's a thing? Nothing necessarily right with it. Nothing necessarily wrong with it until you vest it with authority. And that's Jesus's point. Or going back to my early days, way, way back when I was a little kid, 12 years ago, way, way back in the 70s.

What was the, what were the traditions then that were the big stirrers, the big shakers and the movers? What were those traditions? Women wearing pants. Remember that one? When I was little, that was a thing. I would hear people talk about so and so claims to be a Christian and you know his wife wears pants or lipstick, even going back further than that.

Or when I was like in my teenage years, it was the thing of, well, what sort of, what kind of music do you listen to and that sort of thing. Or a big thing when I was in my teenage years was the instruments that are played in the church or not played in the church. That was a biggie for a lot of years.

And I remember specifically just having this, I don't know, this context in which everybody just sort of thought that the church that has drums, they've gone liberal. The church that has guitars, they've gone liberal. Anything wrong with guitars and drums? Not necessarily. Not necessarily anything right with them either.

Same thing with organs. Until you vest them with authority and give to them the power to declare right from wrong, that's Jesus's, that's Jesus's beef. His beef is there is one authority. That authority is the scripture. Once you vest anything else with authority, you have transgressed the scriptures and you have discarded them entirely.

Now those were years ago. Those were examples from years ago. Let's think about the modern day and the traditions that sort of get us sideways today. So the way that I see church life today in most churches is this, is there's this dichotomy. There's a split, like, like the Red Sea split. There's churches on two sides.

There are churches on one side that want to cling to the older traditions, continuing to vest them with some type of authority to declare, well, we're in the right. And other churches are not. There's those churches. Then there's churches on the other side of the divide. Their tradition is jettisoning all the old traditions.

That's their new tradition. Don't, don't be mistaken by that. There's churches, and you know the churches that I'm talking about. Those churches that say, we won't follow any of those old traditions. We "ain't" going to have organs, we "ain't" going to have choirs, we "ain't" going to have robes, we "ain't" going to have none of those things.

Well, guess what? That's your tradition now, and you vested that tradition with the same authority that the ones on the other side of the divide are vesting their traditions with. And so either way, it's the same thing. All kinds of things like this crop up. There's the whole, well, you know, what edition, what translation of the Bible do you use?

Talk about vesting that tradition with authority that doesn't belong to it, and we could go on. This is the whole point. This is Jesus's point. Traditions are a fact of life. You cannot function as a church without them, and you should have them. But what you must absolutely never do is vest them with any authority whatsoever, because they have none.

And furthermore, once you do that, you haven't lessened the authority of the scriptures, you've negated it. Now, that's... One third of the message. There's two other. We're not going to get there. But let's just sort of end on this note. And we'll have to either leave this for next time, or maybe we'll come back to this on Wednesday.

But let's just leave it on this note. The point of opening God's Word is never for us as a group of believers to say, Oh, look at all those sinners out there. How they're getting all of this wrong.

That's never the point. If you ever leave thinking that's what God's Word was saying to you, then come back in because you've misunderstood it.

The point is to assess your own heart. Because all of us, you cannot be a human being, you cannot be a child of God that's worshipping in a body of believers without having traditions that you hold dear and traditions you don't care for. So number one, face that reality that life here in this earth, on this world, in this age, we worship God and we must do it by way of some kind of tradition.

But guard your heart diligently to remind yourself there is one authority that determines whether this church is believing the right things or not believing the right things, teaching the right things or not teaching the right things, doing the right things or not doing the right things. The only authority that, that determines that is the authority of the Word and the Word alone.

And the Word will share that authority with nothing.