

Mark 7:1-13 — “Setting Aside Scripture to Uphold Tradition”

Is it any wonder the love of tradition is an enemy to revival? Revival and new life go hand in hand... Let every church realize that the inordinate love of tradition is a great opponent to revival... When a church slays the love of tradition, a major obstacle to revival will be slain with it. (Richard Owen Roberts)

The hallmark of an authentic evangelicalism is not the uncritical repetition of old traditions, but the willingness to submit every tradition, however ancient, to fresh Biblical scrutiny and, if necessary, reform. (John Stott)

Men think God’s laws too many and too strict, and yet make more of their own, and are precise for keeping them. (Richard Baxter).

Whenever a man takes upon him to make additions to the Scriptures, he is likely to end with valuing his own additions above Scripture itself. (JC Ryle).

Sola Scriptura — only Scripture, because it is God’s inspired Word, is our inerrant, sufficient, and final authority for the church & for godliness (Matthew Barrett).

“We must constantly beware lest tradition take the place of truth. It does us good to examine our church traditions in the light of God’s Word and to be courageous enough to make changes” (Warren Wiersbe)

- But in this account here (7:1-13 & next week, 7:14-23) — **We will see:**
 - The primacy of the heart (v.6)
 - > ***tucked in the middle is the VANITY of heartless religion! (v6b-13)***
 - The primacy of the heart (v.19, 21, 23)

THESIS — This is a hugely important section & no doubt Mark places it where he does to show us how heightened/intensified the conflict between Jesus & the Jewish leaders has become. We’ll *feel the emotional tension* of this event as we walk thru it in 3 ways:

1. Confrontation! — Tradition of man (1-5)
2. Condemnation! — Truth of God (6-8)
3. Correction! — Tragedy of Error (9-13)

I. CONFRONTATION! Tradition of Man (1-5)

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The problem starts when we demand others to do the same as us and declare it is a **“command from God.”** This is when we turn our *personal* conviction into a *public* conviction. This is when the ritual and tradition is more important than a relationship with God. That’s exactly what the devil wants you to focus on.

II. CONDEMNATION! *Truth of God* (6-8)

The Reformation hymn puts it: ***Our traditions shift like sand while his Truth forever stands!***

III. CORRECTION! *Tragedy of Error* (9-13)

- A. The evil (9)
- B. The example (10-12)
- C. The explanation (13)

★ How does someone get this point where they hold to tradition over God’s Word?

1. Step one, they **teach** religious tradition as God’s Word [opinion/preference] (v.7)
2. Step two, they **Ignore** God’s Word for religious tradition [don’t preach the Word] (v.8)
3. Step three, they **sidestep** God’s word for religious tradition [explain it away](v.9)
4. Step four, they **cancel** the Word of God for religious tradition (v.13)

★ The dangerous downward pattern from God’s Word if religious tradition becomes *too* important.

1. It starts by giving tradition an authority equal with God’s Word
2. It continues by preferring tradition over God’s Word
3. It progresses to rejecting God’s Word in order to keep the tradition
4. It results in making God’s Word invalid to our lives and church

It is as much our duty to reject the traditions of men — as to observe the ordinances of the Lord. (Spurgeon)

THE REFORMATION HYMN

We will trust **God's Word alone**,
Where his perfect will is known;
Our traditions shift like sand
While his Truth forever stands.

We will live by **faith alone**,
Clothed in merit not our own;
All we claim is Jesus Christ
And his finished sacrifice.

*Glory be, glory be to God alone,
Through the church he redeemed and made his own.
He has freed us, he will keep us till we're safely home
Glory be, glory be to God alone!*

We are saved by **grace alone**—
Undeserved, yet freely shown;
No accomplishment on earth
Can achieve the second birth.

We will stand on **Christ alone**,
The unyielding Cornerstone;
Nations rage and devils roar,
Still he reigns forevermore!

PRAYER MEETING OUTLINE:

Praise! — Praise God for the written Word of God, the Bible, our only authority.

Pray! — Pray that God would protect His Church (CFBC & other faithful churches) to cling to Scripture alone.

Plead! — Plead for courage in a world that hates divine Truth. Plead for revival! Plead for His Truth to spread!

TRADITIONS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Over the years many traditions have crept into the Roman Catholic Church, nullifying the Word of God and His saving grace. The following list shows a steady departure over the years from the pure Gospel of salvation. Each tradition goes directly against the truth of Scripture. Roman Catholics are required to believe all the doctrines of their church.

Year Unbiblical Tradition

- 431** Proclamation that infant baptism regenerates the soul.
- 500** The Mass instituted as re-sacrifice of Jesus for the remission of sin
- 593** Declaration that sin need to be purged, established by Pope Gregory I
- 600** Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints, and angels.
- 786** Worship of cross, images, and relics authorized.
- 995** Canonization of dead people as saints initiated by Pope John XV.
- 1000** Attendance at Mass made mandatory under the penalty of mortal sin.
- 1079** Celibacy of priesthood, decreed by Pope Gregory VII.
- 1090** Rosary, repetitious praying with beads, invented by Peter the Hermit.
- 1184** The Inquisitions, instituted by the Council of Verona.
- 1190** The sale of Indulgences established to reduce time in Purgatory.
- 1215** Transubstantiation, proclaimed by Pope Innocent III.
- 1215** Confession of sin to priests, instituted by Pope Innocent III.
- 1229** Bible placed on Index of Forbidden Books in Toulouse.
- 1438** Purgatory elevated from doctrine to dogma by Council of Florence.
- 1545** Tradition claimed equal in authority with the Bible by the Council of Trent.
- 1546** Apocryphal Books declared canon by Council of Trent.
- 1854** Immaculate Conception of Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius IX.
- 1870** Infallibility of the Pope, proclaimed by Vatican Council.
- 1922** Virgin Mary proclaimed co-redeemer with Jesus by Pope Benedict XV.
- 1950** Assumption of Virgin Mary into heaven, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII.

THE 5 SOLAS (MATT SLICK, CARM.org)

The Five Solas are five Latin phrases that represent the core positions held by those who adhere to the Protestant Reformation that happened in the 16th century. They are more commonly recognized within the Reformed (Calvinist) perspective. *The Five Solas are: Sola Scriptura, Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, and Soli Deo Gloria.*

1. **Sola Scriptura – Scripture alone**

1. This does not mean that tradition or councils are not considered. It means that the Scriptures alone are the final and the highest authority. Everything that the Scriptures address are to be used as the final word on that topic. All things that we learn from other sources must be compared to Scripture, and if they do not match Scripture or if they contradict Scripture, then we are not to affirm them. The Bible says not to exceed what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6).

2. **Solus Christus – Christ alone**

1. This position means that Christ Jesus is the only means of salvation (John 14:6), the only mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) and that Jesus is the only human revelation of God. In other words, God has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus, and no other person who has ever lived is God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14).

3. **Sola Gratia – Grace alone**

1. This means that we are saved from our sins and damnation by the unmerited grace of God alone without any of our works. Grace is the completely unmerited, undeserved favor of God that he bestows upon us. The grace of God is completely motivated out of his own character and is his kind intention and merciful action upon various individuals. Thus, we are saved from his righteous judgment by his unmerited and unearned favor, and there is nothing that we can do or have done that can move God to be gracious to us.

4. **Sola Fide – Faith alone**

1. This means that we are saved from our sins by faith alone in Christ, and not by faith and anything we do, whether it be baptism, church membership, good works, sincerity, or anything else. God is the proper object of faith. When we have faith in the work of Christ and his sacrifice on the cross, we are justified (Romans 5:1).

5. **Soli Deo Gloria – the Glory of God alone**

1. This means that God alone is the one who is to receive all the glory. He alone is the author and finisher of our salvation and works all good things through our lives. He has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus, and in great humility and love, died on the cross bearing our sins (1 Peter 2:24) so that we might enjoy his presence forever. We are to live for Him and glorify Him (Isaiah 43:7).

These five solas were developed during the Protestant Reformation in response to the heresies found in the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, to fully understand the context of the five solas, it is important to understand what the Roman Catholic Church teaches on these subjects:

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1. **Scripture:** Roman Catholicism denied the sufficiency of Scripture and sought to consider sacred tradition as of equal value.
 1. “...the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation are entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC*, par. 82).
2. **Christ:** Though it did affirm that Christ was the only means of true salvation, it adds the intercession of the Saints and Mary as an additional means of accessing God.
 1. “If any one saith, that it is an imposture to celebrate masses in honour of the saints, and for obtaining their intercession with God, as the Church intends; let him be anathema” (Council of Trent, Canons on Justification, Canon 5).
3. **Grace:** Furthermore the Roman Catholic Church denied that a person’s sins are forgiven by the unmerited grace of God alone. Catholicism teaches that salvation is merited by obedience to the commandments.
 1. “...Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life” (CCC 2010).
 2. “Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods” (CCC 2027).
4. **Faith:** In addition, Roman Catholicism condemns the idea of faith alone and says that salvation is dependent on faith and participation in the sacraments, among other things.
 1. “If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema” (Council of Trent, Canons on Justification, Canon 9).
5. **Glorify:** The Roman Catholics largely say they seek the glory of God. it is unfortunate that too much of the glory and adoration given is focused on the Pope and Mary.
 1. “By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the ‘Mother of Mercy,’ the All-Holy One” (CCC 2677).
 2. “After speaking of the Church, her origin, mission, and destiny, we can find no better way to conclude than by looking to Mary” (CCC 972).
 3. “...so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother” (Vatican Website: Encyclical of Pope Leo 13th on the Rosary, Octobri Mense, Pope Leo 13th, 1903-1914).

In light of the Roman Catholic errors, the reformers developed the five solas as a set of declarations that stood in opposition to the Roman Catholic heresies.