

What Defiles a Person

Mark 7:14-23 (Parallel passage: Matthew 15:10-20)

Jesus' statements in Mark 7 seem to be in response to his disciples being charged with eating with ceremonially impure hands. They had not followed the precise tradition of the elders to make sure their hands were pure enough to ingest food. (Mark 7:2-5)

Jesus wanted them (and you, today) to understand (Mark 7:14). He is about to teach them about what defiles someone.

What is it to be defiled? Am I defiled? Are you? Is it important or extraneous?

When we look at the verses under consideration, the Greek word is κοινῶω (pronounced koinoō), is found in Mark 7:14-15, 18, 20, 23. Scholars say it means to be ceremonially profane, to be called common, polluted, unclean; to desecrate; or to render unholy. By implication, we could use the generic term "sinful" or "sinner". This allows us to determine if I am currently defiled, or if it is important to my soul.

Jesus clearly stated there is nothing outside the human body that can be ingested that will make a person profane, unclean, or a sinner.

Under Jewish law during Jesus' time, it was possible to become ceremonially polluted by touching a dead rat, mouse, great lizard of any kind, gecko, monitor lizard, sand lizard or chameleon. See Leviticus 11:29-31. Numbers 5:2 speaks of everyone who is unclean being put outside the camp and cut off from contact with other Jews, because they had "contact with the dead."

Jesus went on to teach that it is not about what you eat, but about what comes out of your heart Mark 7:20-21. Matthew 15:18 says clearly, "But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person."

So, what can come out of the heart that would defile people? What starts in the heart, is acted out, that is sinful or wrong?

Jesus gave us a list. Each of these starts in the heart and is wrong. The list is in Mark 7:21-22. "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, (22) coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness."

“EVIL THOUGHTS”. Two Greek words combine into a single thought. “Kakos” is the word for worthless, depraved, injurious, of a bad nature, harm, ill, wrong, or destructive. The word “dialogismos” (similar to the English word dialogue) is for thought, reasoning, or purpose.

These are the things we think. They may, or may not, ever become a real action, but they describe the character of the heart. It is a heart that creates harm or hurtful ideas. The heart contrives depraved actions. The heart dreamfully plans wrong.

Just before Jesus helped the man with the withered hand, he knew the thoughts of his adversaries. They were trying to find a reason to accuse him. They had an evil thought. Luke 6:7-8.

Next is “SEXUAL IMMORALITY”. Some versions have “fornications”. Can you think of an English word similar to the Greek word “porneia”? The word includes adultery and incest. It is any illicit sexual intercourse including, but not limited to, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, or sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman.

Sexual immorality, in any form, was cited by Jesus as defiling, according to the Old Testament scriptures (Mark 10:19). New Gentile Christians were told to stop any sexual immoral actions (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25). The Corinthian church was told to discipline a man who was having sexual relations with a close relative (1 Corinthians 5:1). Paul wrote to the Galatians describing the “works of the flesh”, which included sexual immorality (Gal 5:19-21). He also told the Ephesians that such activity should not be a part of their congregation (Eph 5:3). The sanctified Thessalonians, those set apart for God’s duties – Christians, were told to abstain from such behavior.

Then there is THEFT. “Klope” means theft or stealing. It is used only twice in the New Testament: in our text and in the parallel passage of Matthew 15:19.

There is only a slight difference between theft and robbery. Robbery involves the taking of what is not yours by force or threats, as in a mugging or armed robbery. Theft also involves the taking of what is not yours, but by stealth. Stuff is taken without permission or knowledge of the victim. The thief takes it, smiles as he walks past the victim as though nothing had changed. He is a hypocrite – he is a thief who acts as though his relationships have not changed.

“Phonos” is the Greek word for MURDERS. It means to slay, to slaughter or murder.

Barabbas was a murderer (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19, 25). Romans 1:28-29 speaks of God giving up on people who “Phonos”, murder. The man who would later become a prolific New Testament writer began as one who was “...breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, ...” (Acts 9.1).

And then there are ADULTERIES. “Moicheia”, adultery, is found only 3 times in the New Testament. It is used in our text and in the parallel of Matthew 15:19. The third time it is used is in John 8:3. There a woman was “caught in adultery” by the Pharisees. They threw her in front of Jesus for his vote to condemn or release.

The difference between sexual immorality and adultery is this. Sexual immorality (porneia) is a very broad term, umbrella-like, that includes all sexual activity outside of the marriage relationship. But adultery is narrow and specific to the marital relationship. When a married individual has a sexual encounter with anyone other than their mate, the marital bond is being broken. They are sexually unfaithful to their partner.

Next in Jesus’ list is COVETING. It can be defined with words like fraudulency, extortion, greediness – a strong desire to have more, and are part of “pleonexia” (pronounced pleh-on-ex-ee’-ah). It is the idea of never having enough.

Jesus spoke of guarding against covetousness because “...*one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*” Luke 12:15. Covetousness should not be mentioned in connection with any Christian (Eph 5:3). The attitude is to be put to death (Col 3:5). Because of greed, Christians were being exploited (2 Pet 2:3). Without restraint, hearts can become “trained in greed” (2 Pet 2:14).

WICKEDNESS is from “poneria”, meaning malice, iniquity, evil purposes and desires.

Jesus was aware of the malice of the Pharisees and Herodians (Matt 22:18). He said the Pharisees were full of “*greed and wickedness.*” Luke 11.39. God raised up Jesus to turn people from their wickedness (Acts 3:26). No Christian would have such attitudes.

Jesus next listed DECEIT as originating in the heart and defiles anyone with it. “Dolos” comes from a word meaning decoy and is similar to “trick” or “bait”. It means craft, guile, subtle, cunning, or wiles. Duck hunters are good at using “dolos”, decoys. Fishermen use stinky “dolos” baits, to catch catfish, and shiny baits to catch bass. And the devil uses “wiles” in the King James Version. Ephesians 6:11 *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

Jesus said he met a man without deceit. His name was Nathaniel (John 1:47). Paul's appeal to the Thessalonians contained no deceit (1 Thess 2:3). Peter urged Christians to put away all deceit (1 Pet 2:1). He added that Jesus was never deceitful (1 Pet 2:22). He further added that anyone who wants a good long life must not have deceit (1 Pet 3:10). The Jewish leadership used stealth to arrest Jesus (Matt 26:4; Mark 14:1)

And what is SENSUALITY? It is from "aselgeia". Its meanings include licentiousness, filthy, lasciviousness, unbridled lust, excess, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence, absence of restraint, and indecency.

Paul tried to correct this Corinthian problem (2 Corinthians 12:21). Paul called it a work of the flesh (Gal 5:19). It is listed with the sins of the unrepentant (Eph 4:19). Christians have already spent enough time in their lives with sensuality (1 Pet 4:3).

The emotion of ENVY is included in Jesus' list. The Greek combined two words to get the correct sense of this defiling action. It used a familiar sounding word, ophthalmos (pronounced of-thal-mos'), meaning eye, vision, or sight. The other word is "poneros" meaning hurtful, bad, or malicious. Envy is always an evil word. One scholar said, "...the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others."

Pilate recognized that it was out of envy the Jewish leaders had brought Jesus to him (Matt 27:18; Mark 15:10). Paul put envy next to drunkenness and orgies as a work of the flesh (Gal 5:21). Paul said that some people were envious of him and so preached the gospel themselves (Phil 1:15). Peter told Christians to put envy away from their lives (1 Pet 2:1).

Next in the list is SLANDER. The Greek word is quite recognizable – "blasphemia". It is vilification. It is blasphemy, evil speaking, or speaking injuriously of another's good name.

Paul said slander, the speaking evil about anyone, was to be put away by the Ephesian Christians (Eph 4:31) and the Colossians (Col 3:8). Titus was told to tell Christians in Crete to slander no one (Titus 3:2). It is a tactic of persecutors, as described by Peter (1 Pet 4:4). After the Jewish leadership had condemned Jesus wrongfully of blasphemy against God, they hypocritically slandered him (Matt 27:39; Mark 15:29; Luke 22:65).

PRIDE is a problem that defiles. The Greek word huperephania (pronounced hoop-er-ay-fan-ee'-ah) is haughtiness, arrogance, and pride. One scholar said it is "the character of one who, with a swollen estimate of his own powers or merits, looks down on others and even treats them with insolence and contempt"

Our text is the only place in the New Testament where this particular word is used. But it is also translated as “haughty”, as in Romans 1:30 and “arrogant” in 2 Tim 3:2. James and Peter both say “...*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*” (James 4:6; 1 Pet 5.5)

Our text ends the list with FOOLISHNESS. “Aphrosuna” (af-ros-oo’-nay) originates from the concept of senselessness. It includes moral recklessness, folly, thoughtlessness, and without reason.

Jesus told a parable of a wealthy farmer who experienced a very successful harvest. He used far too many personal pronouns in describing what he would do next. “*And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.*” As a result, God called him “*Fool!*”. (Luke 12:16-20). Paul urged Christians to not be “thoughtless” concerning what the will of the Lord is (Eph 5:17). Peter challenged his readers to use good deeds to silence the “ignorance of foolish people” (1 Pet 2:15).

Jesus would not be found “koinoo”. Jesus was never defiled. He was never profane. He was never polluted or unclean. He was always holy. He, himself, was not sinful or a sinner. But it was in God’s eternal plan for Jesus to take on sin. My sins. Your sins. 2 Corinthians 5:21 *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

By his taking our sins to the cross, we can have God’s grace.

But gaining his grace requires obedience. We [believe Jesus is God’s son](#). [We have acknowledged](#), or pledged our allegiance to him by saying He is God’s son. We have been begun the [process of reversal](#), of repentance. We have allowed ourselves to be [immersed to have our sins removed](#), forgiven.

Afterwards, we work daily to remain undefiled. We are correcting our hearts, tuning it with the words and teachings of Jesus and his apostles. We keep on eliminating these evils from our hearts.

Why?

To fail is to be lost, again. Not changing our hearts will bring us heartache, disappointment, grief, possibly prison time, or never having enough – no satisfaction or contentment. We

experience unending deceit, slandering and being slandered, looking down and being looked down on, and acting without any sense or restraint. And that is while you are living. And after this life, hell is the final destination.

Don't go down this path! [Contact us today](#) if you need help