

Jesus' Response to Empty Tradition

Matthew 15:1-20

Halifax: 8 January 2006

Introduction:

Today, we enter into a new section in Matthew's gospel.

- In this section, we will be looking at Jesus' responses to a number of things.
- Today, it is His response to empty tradition as recorded for us in Matthew 15.

But before I begin, I want to say a word about tradition.

- Tradition (*paradosiv* in the original) has to do with those ways of living that have been handed down from one generation to the next.
 - In Greek, the verbal from which this word is derived means "to deliver over."
 - This is used, for example, by Paul in 1 Cor 11:2 when he says:
 - "For I have received of the Lord that which also I **delivered** unto you"
 - He was passing along a way of doing things that he received from the Lord which continues in the church to this day.
- You need to understand that the attitude of the people about tradition in Jesus' day was nearly the opposite of our attitude toward it today.
 - Just to mention "the tradition of our fathers" is to immediately stir up negative connotations in our society.
 - But for the people in Jesus' day, the proven ways of the past were seen to be the very foundation on which a stable society was to be built.
 - When they heard the phrase, "the tradition of the fathers," they thought of something good and positive.
- There are many reasons for this difference in their attitude.
 - One of the reasons was because they understood society in a covenantal way whereas we understand society individualistically.
 - According to the Bible, they were correct.
 - There is a real connection and solidarity between us and those that have gone before us for good or for ill.
 - In our society there has been, over the last hundred years or so, a very deliberate attempt to create a generation gap so that every succeeding generation establishes their own culture and traditions.
 - Rather than having families that share similar characteristics (the Jones and the Smiths),

- we have age groups that share similar ways of doing things (the Baby Boomers and the Generation Xers.)
- Ironically, this rebellion against our fathers is something that has become a tradition that we have learned from our fathers.
 - They taught us that the best way to establish a beautiful society is for each generation to break out of the traditions of the past and establish something new!
 - That is why whenever we have an election, the candidates for office always promote themselves as agents of change!
 - The idea is that the way things have been in the past is not good, so change will be better!
 - And in churches, it has ironically become the tiresome tradition that we hear over and over again that “we are not a traditional church.”
 - Oddly enough, the tradition today is to not be traditional, but of course it is always presented as a new and revolutionary idea!
- But this is not to say that the people in Jesus’ day had it right either.
 - They erred in placing too much confidence in the traditions of the fathers to such an extent that they were unwilling to be moulded and shaped by the word of God.
 - Rather than repenting of their fathers’ sins, they continued in them without thinking.
 - Unfortunately, despite our contempt for tradition, we tend to do the same thing.
 - As I mentioned, for several generations now, we have embraced the tradition that every generation needs to start over again.
 - We blindly follow this tradition again and again without even realising that we are doing it.
- We need to understand that the real issue is not about whether we follow tradition!
 - It seems that we always do.
 - Our concern should be whether we are following tradition that are true to God’s word.
 - According to the Bible, tradition itself is neither good nor evil...
 - rather some traditions are good and some traditions are evil.
 - In fact, it is either very good or very bad...
 - because good tradition is a powerful force that keeps us on the right path—

- if you have a firmly entrenched tradition in your family of helping people in need, that is an excellent thing...
- and bad tradition is a powerful force that keeps you on the wrong path...
 - if you have a firmly entrenched tradition of getting revenge on those who cross you, you are in bondage to evil...
- The Lord calls us in His word to follow the good traditions and repent of the bad traditions.
 - Matthew 15 is a call to repent of bad traditions that have been handed down to us from our fathers...
 - But in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, the Apostle Paul commands the believers to follow a good tradition:
 - 2 Thes 2:15: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”
 - Likewise, in 1 Cor 11:2, he praises them for remember the traditions:
 - “Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.”
 - And so you see that if you come away from a passage like Matthew 15 with a contempt for all tradition,
 - You have missed the point!
 - You are steeped in the traditions of this present age!
 - It is not that tradition is evil, but rather that evil tradition is evil.
 - Our interest must never be in revolution, but rather in reformation...
 - And reformation means that very often we have to break free of the established traditions of our day!

In our text today, we see how

I. Jesus leads the way in breaking out of the mould of empty traditions.

A. In Matthew 15:1-2, He is confronted about this by the heavyweights from Jerusalem.

- Matthew 15:1-2: Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”
1. Notice that this time, these are not just local Pharisees confronting Him Jesus...

- This is delegation of scribes and Pharisees that have come all the way from Jerusalem.
 - It would seem that they had heard about Jesus and his rising popularity!
 - After all, He had just fed the 5000 and they wanted to make Him king.
 - These men have come to investigate and find out what is going on!
2. It would seem that after observing Jesus, the thing that really stands out to them is His disciples' failure to wash their hands before they eat!
- a. Now before you children run home and tell your mothers that you don't need to wash your hands before lunch,
 - let me explain to you what this was all about.
 - These men were not concerned about good hygiene.
 - b. They were concerned about spiritual defilement.
 - 1) In the Old Testament ceremonial worship,
 - God required the priests and the people to perform certain ceremonial washings before coming to worship God at the temple.
 - The purpose of these washings was to show them that they must be cleansed before they could serve God or come into His presence.
 - But these washings were not something that had to be done all the time...
 - They were only prescribed for certain occasions connected with certain aspects of worship.
 - 2) The problem was that some of the fathers (who probably loved God and had the best intentions),
 - starting looking at these washings...
 - And in their love for God, they knew that God's people ought to strive to be holy all the time since they are always before the face of God—
 - and so they began to add more washings to remind everyone that God wants us to be clean all the time.
 - Over the years, more and more ceremonies of washing were developed until, by the time of Jesus, it had become a real obsession (and burden).
 - 3) The particular tradition of washing one's hands was such a huge subject that when these traditions were put into writing in the *Mishnah* which was compiled by Rabbi Jehuda in 200 AD,
 - there was a whole book dedicated to the subject of hand washing.

- a) It said that a minimum of one and half egg shells of water was to be used.
 - The water was to be poured over the hands in such a way that it would drip off the wrist without running back over the hands.
 - Then more water was to poured over the hands in the same fashion but with the fingers pointing downward.
 - And then more water was to be applied with rubbing of the hands.
- b) A zealous Pharisee would do this not only before each meal, but even between each course of a multi-coursed meal!
 - Stories were told of one Rabbi who was in prison and chose to use the little amount of water he had to wash his hands rather than to eat with defiled hands.
 - Some said they would rather die than eat without washing.

3. With all this zeal for washing,

- you can imagine what a stir it caused when these men from Jerusalem noticed that Jesus and His disciples did not perform these washings before they ate!
- Surely they have seen enough to discredit Him!
 - They weren't sure of Him all along, but now they know for sure that He is not worthy of anyone's esteem!
 - He has transgressed the tradition of the elders and so they confront Him about it:
 - "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?"

B. Jesus, rather than answering them directly, turns the table on them and says,

- v. 3: "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"
- 1. If they demanded to know why He would transgress the tradition of the elders, Jesus wants to know why they transgress the commandment of God!
 - a. The alleged reason for their traditions was, according to their own words, to put up fences to make sure that no one would transgress the commandments of God.
 - And it is very likely that that was indeed the intention of some of the ones who originally established these traditions.
 - b. But as is usually the case when men add their own ceremonial regulations to those of God,
 - It is only a matter of time until these man-made commandments become more important than God's commandments!

- And gradually, as the importance of the human regulations increases, a tyranny grows along with them...
 - A tyranny that demands a rigid compliance to these traditions and will not allow the slightest deviation.
 - Rabbi Jose said, “whoever eats bread without washing of hands, is as if he lay with a whore,”
 - And Rabbi Eleazer said that anyone who despises the washing of hands shall be “rooted out of the world.”
 - c. Whenever the commandments of men are elevated, it is almost always the case that God’s commandments are given second place.
2. Jesus illustrates that this is exactly what had happened with the scribes and Pharisees.
- a. He refers to a tradition they had in which they would dedicate their possessions to God with a vow...
 - This was considered a very fine thing to do!
 - And this vow was so important that the person who took it was not allowed to use his possessions to help his own parents if they fell into financial need!
 - This was looked on as a mark of godliness.
 - They were so devoted to God that they could not use their possessions for anything other than God’s purposes!
 - As if caring for your parents is not one of God’s purposes!
 - b. Jesus shows them that in their zeal to keep the traditions of men,
 - they have completely ignored the commandment of God to honour your father and mother—
 - which honour most certainly includes caring for them if they are in financial need!
 - Paul says that you are worse than an unbeliever if you won’t care for your own when they are in need!
3. But need I point out that things don’t really change very much?
- Such commandment-trumping-traditions grow up gradually and often go unchallenged—
 - Often, the persons practising them are actually admired and held in high esteem.

- a. Do we not find in Roman Catholicism those zealots who leave their own wife and children to go and serve God—
 - claiming to follow Jesus when He said we must hate our father and mother, our wife and our children for His sake?
 - What an abuse of that passage!
 - Jesus was not talking about refusing to care for them, He was talking about being his faithful disciple even if it brought division to your family.
 - He was talking about doing His will even if they are opposed to it.

 - b. And need I point out that many Protestant missionaries even in our day have done the very same thing and been honoured for it?
 - They abandon their wife and children to go off to the mission field.
 - Jay Adams tells of counselling missionaries who had basically abandoned their children because of their devotion to the ministry.
 - Is a man who abandons his children qualified to minister the gospel?

 - c. And need I point out further that many parents today are encouraged to devote themselves to traditional church programmes that God has not commanded,
 - and are looked down on if they don't it,
 - even though these programmes keep them from teaching God's word to their own children as God has commanded them to do.
 - Each member of the family is pulled into a different direction.
 - Do we not see the fruits of this practice in the modern church today where the gospel rarely continues in a household for more than two or three generations if that?
 - Does it matter more that the positions in the church school are filled or that fathers obey God's commandment to teach their children?
- C. Brothers and sisters, we must follow our Lord by breaking out of the mould of human traditions that trump God's commandments.
1. Jesus shows here that such traditions lead to hypocrisy!
 - a. They are dangerous because they provide an easy way to gain the approval of others in the church!
 - If you give yourself earnestly to human traditions, you are considered to be faithful and devout.
 - If you are leading the cell group or on the worship team or singing in the choir or the chairman of the women's circle,

- It doesn't matter how you may be treating your spouse and children.
 - It doesn't matter what you act like at work and whether you are honest.
- b. The commandments of men and the outward form of religion can be followed without any consideration of the heart.
- Jesus says that Isaiah described this sort of thing exactly.
 - Matthew 15:7-9: "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men."
 - Hypocrisy is when you have a reputation for serving God before men without a heart that is truly dedicated to God.
 - You say the right things and do the right things to be seen of men,
 - but you really have no love for God.
 - You praise Him in form and you disobey Him in heart.
 - Of course we must be careful because we can even use commanded traditions without any real devotion to God...
 - We can go to worship each Sunday and engage in regular family worship with a heart that is far from God...
 - But then the problem is not that we have replaced God's commandments with human commandments,
 - but rather that we are obeying God's commandments superficially.
 - That is another topic for another day.
 - In this passage, Jesus is dealing with the commandments of men that are substituted for the commandments of God.

TRANS> Now I want you to consider some of the commandment trumping traditions that are common in our society that we need to break out of as Christ's disciples.

2. What are some specific traditions in our society that you have to go along with if you are to be accepted?
 - a. Well, there are the traditions surrounding the respect for freedom of choice!
 - Freedom of choice is considered sacred in our society, and we have traditions to honour it...
 - 1) There is the tradition of never speaking against someone's sexual practices.

- Just try cutting off your son from his inheritance for taking up homosexuality—
 - of try opposing someone for office because they are living in a sexual relationship with someone to whom they are not married.
 - You will be accused of all sorts of things—bigotry, intolerance, cruelty, pride, living in the darkness, a lack of love.
 - We have a tradition in our society that you ought never to speak against someone’s sexual choices.
- 2) In the church, this same respect for choice is often seen in the tradition that makes it taboo to speak against anyone’s calling to ministry.
- If someone says, “God told me to do this or that,” you are not to question it...
 - Even if their calling is contrary to the word of God.
 - Try confronting your Aunt who claims to be called to preach the gospel in a Pentecostal church or a United Church...
 - Or try suggesting to a young a man who claims to be called for the ministry that he is not qualified...
 - It is a breach of tradition and you will be looked on as hindering the work of God!
 - Our traditions make void the word of God.
- 3) The same respect for choices is guarded in our society by the tradition of withholding punishment from those who do wrong...
- Instead of chastening your child when they sin, we are taught to put something else before them to lead them away from the wrong...
 - The child’s freedom has to be respected.

TRANS> Of course there are other commandment trumping traditions besides those having to do with freedom of choice...

- b. Some of you found out what happens if you refuse to participate in certain Christmas traditions that trump God’s commandments—
- Suddenly, your choices didn’t matter any more because you were breaking with established tradition.
 - You dared to break out of the mould of human tradition that you might not be hindered from obeying God’s commandments by observing the Lord’s Day!
 - Some of the largest churches in North America actually cancelled their Lord’s Day services so as not to interfere with Christmas traditions!

- Bringing in the New Year was seen to be more important than the worship God has commanded.
 - This is calling making void the commandment of God for the sake of our traditions.
- c. I could go on and on with the traditions that Christ's disciples often find themselves in hot water about!
- 1) See what happens if you choose not to conform to the long-standing tradition of sending your children to government schools...
 - You will be challenged and confronted and called evil.
 - You have broken with the established traditions that are accepted without question, and you are sure to hear about it.

TRANS> There are many examples that could be given...

- 2) The commandments of God will always run up against the commandments of men—and when they do, your loyalty to God is tested.
 - I have included the human traditions in our society that are the most entrenched,
 - Just as Jesus had to confront the human traditions in his society that were most entrenched.
 - and just as the reformers had to confront those in their society that were most entrenched.
 - Every generation of Christ's disciples has this battle, and we must be faithful to fight our battles.

TRANS> When you are faithfully following Christ, you will break out of many deeply entrenched traditions, and whenever you do, you can be sure that you will cause offense.

II. What should you do when you offend the establishment by breaking their traditions in your service to Christ?

- We are shown in today's text what we must do...
- A. You see in verse 12 that the disciples come to Jesus and point to Him that He has offended these important persons who have come down from Jerusalem!
1. In verse 12, they ask Him,
 - Mt 15:12: "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"
 - That is, the saying that contradicts their traditions about the washing of hands...

- The saying in verse 11 that
 - “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”
- 2. In asking Jesus about this, His disciples give us an example of what almost always happens when we cause offense by breaking traditions.
 - a. The opposition to what you are doing makes you start to question if you are really doing the right thing.
 - Perhaps you should just go along with the established practice.
 - b. And then there are the consequences that come from offending the powers that be.
 - Pharisees can make life pretty uncomfortable for non-conformists!
 - And there is a tendency to say,
 - “Do I really need to be doing this?”
 - “Maybe there are more important battles to fight than battles about hand washing?”
 - “Surely there would be a lot less inconvenience to go ahead and wash according to the tradition than to deal with these irate Pharisees!”
 - And maybe then the Pharisees would listen to us...
 - Doesn’t the Bible say that we should be all things to all men?
 - c. I tell you that when you disciples start to think like that, they do not think according to Christ!
 - If Christ had thought that way,
 - He would have avoided offense by keeping the traditions of the Sabbath and by keeping the traditions of washings.
 - If Paul had thought this way,
 - He would have avoided all the trouble he had about circumcision.
 - What’s the big deal, just go ahead and circumcise the Gentiles, he would have surmised.

TRANS> Weak disciples will waver and question what they have done when opposition comes...

- It is good to examine yourself...
 - to be sure that you are not fighting a cause that is not really God cause.

- But do not suppose that just because people are offended, you have done something wrong.
 - Jesus tells us how to deal with the offended establishment!
- B. First, you deal with the offended establishment by recognising that they (and their traditions) will not last.
1. In verse 13 Jesus says simply:
 - “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.”
 - a. These men boasted in the name of God and claimed to be His representatives,
 - but Jesus says that they were not planted by God.
 - This is often a hard thing to accept.
 - Many people will continue to respect teachers in the church even though they substitute popular ideas or vain human traditions for the commandments of God.
 - b. You need to understand that Christian teachers who do this were not put into the ministry by God.
 - Sure, they are there in His providence and by His sovereign will, but they are not there according to His calling.
 - As the Lord often says of false prophets who come in His name,
 - “I have not sent them.”
 - They are there by God’s decree, but they are not there in obedience to His command.
 - You need to accept this fact.
 2. Notice that Jesus says that these plants will be uprooted!
 - a. Yes, they may be the establishment of the day—
 - They may occupy high seats and have a great deal of popular acclaim—as the Pharisees did!
 - It should be understood that the Pharisees were actually popular with the people—
 - the Sadducees were not, but the Pharisees were generally respected and loved by the members of the community.
 - And indeed, their positions seemed quite secure!
 - b. But the truth is that neither these men nor their vain traditions will endure.
 - God will root them out.

- Therefore, you don't need to be worried about it if they are offended!
 - You don't need to bend your life around this way and that to please them.
 - This is not like the brother of Romans 14 with the weak conscience who is offended because of the exercise of your Christian liberty...
 - This is the strong person who is obstinate and as Calvin said,
 - "If we determined to satisfy all obstinate people, we must bury Christ, who is *the stone of offence*."
- Jesus is saying, you have no obligation to please teachers like this...
 - They are not from God and God will remove them in time.

C. Secondly, He tells us to deal with them by leaving them alone.

1. He is saying that it is better to ignore persons like this...
 - Just leave them alone, disassociate yourself from them.
 - It is one thing to try to win their disciples who are blindly following alone, but there is little reason to mess with them.
2. You must be careful lest they drag you to ruin with themselves.
 - a. Jesus describes them as the blind who lead the blind with the result that both fall into the ditch.
 - The idea is,
 - if you start trying to please them by keeping all their traditions based on the commandments of God,
 - it won't be long until you have also forgotten the commandments of God.
 - Do not join them unless you want to go to destruction because that is where they are headed.
 - b. I have witnessed this myself—
 - How persons who were committed to God's commandments accommodated teachers who were committed to the commandments of men...
 - and now these persons are not longer committed to God's commandments.
 - They have been brought into the ditch by the one they chose to follow.
 - It is hard to understand why there is so much carelessness about this!

- c. J. C. Ryle, the great Anglican bishop, said,
 - “There is a duty, according to the Lord, to forsake false teachers if they will not give up their delusions. Let there be no false delicacy, no mock humility.”

TRANS> And so you see that the best way to deal with the offended establishment is:

- to realise that they are not of God and so will not continue...
- to disassociate yourself from them entirely.

- We have seen so far that traditions are evil when they trump God’s commandments.
 - But Jesus goes a step farther and shows us a deeper problem...
 - Adding our own commandments is not just wrong because it trumps God’s commandments,

III. Adding to God’s commandments is also wrong because it leads people to think that defilement comes from somewhere besides your own heart.

A. Those who teach as doctrines the commandments of men almost always place defilement outside the human heart.

1. First of all, anyone who thinks they are morally capable of adding to God’s commandments obviously has a pretty high view of his moral ability!
 - If he supposes that he or those who have gone before him are able to add something that will move people along to salvation,
 - he obviously does not see himself or others as corrupt from within.
 - He supposes that there is enough good in us at least to contribute to saving ourselves.
 - Such a person will see defilement coming from outside himself rather than from within.
2. Secondly, because of this pride that goes together with those that would add their own commandments to God,
 - It is almost always the case that their traditions do not aim at the defilement that is in man’s heart...
 - They believe that man’s defilement comes from elsewhere.
3. Where do these persons say that defilement comes from?
 - a. Well, of course, the Pharisees were saying that it came from eating foods that were unclean, or specifically here, eating with hands that were not washed...
 - This, of course, was connected to a whole system in which defilement could be picked up from Gentiles and all sorts of other things.

- It was a complete misuse of the ceremonies that God had appointed which were designed to show them their own need to be cleansed from their own defilement
 - They had turned it around so as to say that they need cleansing,
 - not from what was in themselves,
 - but from what came from Gentiles and foods and things outside of themselves.

TRANS> Those who add to God's commandments err greatly because they place the cause of defilement outside man's heart.

b. Similar error abounds in our society—

- 1) Some believe that defilement comes from the abuse of other people...
 - a) They think the problem all has to do with one's parents or associates.
 - A person murders because his parents did not love him,
 - or steals because he grew up in a society that ignored him and did not provide him with a proper education.
 - They do not believe that the problem originates from the persons own sinful heart.
 - No, they have been defiled by other people, and the society is responsible.
 - b) There is, of course, a certain element of truth here...
 - We are covenantal creatures and the sins of the fathers are passed to the children and so are the sins of the society at large...
 - But the reason that these sins are passed along is because there is a corrupt heart that gladly embraces them.
 - Jesus, who had sinful parents, did not have a sinful heart and so was not corrupted.
 - In the final analysis,
 - God will judge our parents and our society for their wrongs...
 - But you cannot blame them for your sins.
 - You learned sinful ways because your heart is corrupt.
- 2) Others believe that defilement comes from our circumstances...
 - a) They would suggest that you would be fine if it were not for all the troubles that come upon you...

- For example, poverty is what caused you to steal...
 - If you had everything you wanted, you would not steal.
 - Or stresses and pressures of life and work caused you to lash out at your neighbour or your children.
 - You would be a good person if you could just get out from under all the stress.
 - These persons also place sin in things rather than in man...
 - In their minds, wine is responsible for drunkenness and guns are responsible for murder.
- b) Again, there is a certain element of truth here in that our circumstances are often the *occasion* of sin...
- Your selfishness is not usually seen if you are thirsty and there is a rushing river to drink from...
 - but it becomes quite evident if you are in the desert and there is only one small fountain with a big line up!
 - Likewise, a man who has no access to wine will not express his lack of love and irresponsibility to others by drunkenness,
 - but the thing is, he will find other ways to do it.
 - Circumstances do not create sin in us, but they do bring out to visible expression the sin that is already there.
 - Nobody had a problem with pornography on the internet 50 years ago because there was no internet,
 - but the problem of lust goes back quite a bit more than fifty years!

TRANS> So you see that defilement does not come from our circumstances either.

3) Still others believe that defilement comes from our bodies...

- a) This has become a very popular theory today!
- Deviate behaviour is attributed to chemical imbalances or to something not firing right in the brain.
 - Everything from stealing to child molestation is seen as due to bodily infirmities.
 - We have modern priests who specialise in mixing up various formulas and using them on different kinds of behaviour.

- b) Now I will not deny that their concoctions most certainly do alter behaviour!
 - The restless can be calmed down.
 - The angry can be soothed and made passive (especially if you give him enough)
 - The gloomy can be cheered up.
- c) But chemically altering one's mood is not the same thing as putting love in a person's heart for God and neighbour,
 - nor is masking guilt the same as removing it by the blood of Christ.
 - Man's fundamental problem is not because of his body, but because of his sinful heart before God.
 - What can any of these man made solutions do to fit you for communion with a holy God?

TRANS> Men devise ways and traditions in an effort to remove defilement, but their ways don't strike at the source of human defilement.

- B. The doctrine of Jesus is that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.
 - This is by no means an exhaustive list, but deals with some of the main heads.
- 1. We want to place the problem outside of ourselves,
 - But Jesus says clearly here that **you** are the problem.
 - The heart does not refer to the organ that pumps your blood,
 - but to the core of what you are as a person.
 - Any evil that is found in your thoughts, words or actions, comes from but one source—
 - You!
 - You cannot blame your parents or your teachers or your husband or your circumstances or your body...
 - the fountain of your defilement in your own heart.
- 2. The implication of this doctrine is obvious!
 - a. Salvation can't come from within yourself.
 - 1) It cannot come from your own wisdom.
 - 2) It cannot come from your own works because they are all defiled.

- 3) It cannot come from your own good intentions
 - 4) It cannot come from your neighbour or your government or your society...
- b. Salvation must come from God!
- 1) We must look to Jesus Christ whom He has sent to save His people from their sins, and we must wholly lean on Him.
 - 2) We must not trust our own wisdom, but look to Him as our prophet who speaks to us through the scriptures—
 - The ideas and doctrines of men are worthless.
 - 3) We must not trust in our own works, but look to His works who came to die on the cross for our sins.
 - Keeping man made traditions cannot wash away our guilt, nor can any good work or ceremony that you might perform.
 - God sent His Son to die on the cross because there was no other way for us to be saved.
- c. If you have a superficial relationship with God, it is a sure sign that you are not looking to Christ for salvation.
- 1) The world's solutions are all superficial.
 - They do not go deep enough.
 - With a corrupted heart, everything about us is corrupted.
 - We are entirely unfit for communion with God.
 - At best, the world's solutions can only mask the problem,
 - and in the final analysis, they only exacerbate the problem.
 - 2) The Christian is unique because he is able to deal with His heart before God through Christ.
 - He is not content with mere external changes.
 - He does not have to pretend the problem is but a shallow one...
 - He looks to Christ to pardon the sin that goes so deep, and to root it out by His sanctifying grace.
 - He looks to Him with hope for salvation that nothing less than divine power can accomplish!
 - No more feeble excuses!
 - No more blame-shifting!
 - No more superficial solutions!

- Christ has died and you are free, though you are wholly defiled, whoever you are that trust in Him.
 - It is this deep defilement that He came to remove.
 - Praise be to His glorious name forever and ever.