

Matthew 15:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Analysis

Jesus' teaching 'Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man' revolutionizes purity concepts. External ritual (dietary laws) doesn't make one unclean; rather, words revealing heart corruption defile. This shifts focus from external conformity to internal transformation. Jesus challenges Pharisaic emphasis on ceremonial purity while ignoring moral impurity. True defilement is spiritual and moral, not physical.

Historical Context

The Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of eating with unwashed hands (v. 2), violating tradition (not Mosaic law). Jesus responds by distinguishing divine law from human tradition, then teaching that moral impurity (evil thoughts, words, actions) truly defiles. This prepared for the gospel going to Gentiles, who wouldn't observe Jewish purity laws.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do you emphasize external religious practices over internal heart transformation?
2. What 'comes out of your mouth' that reveals heart defilement?

Interlinear Text

οὐ τὸ εἰσερχόμενον εἰς τὸ στόματος κοινοῖ τὸν
Not G3588 that which goeth into G3588 the mouth defileth G3588
G3756 G1525 G1519 G4750 G2840

ἄνθρωπον ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος
a man but G3588 that which cometh out of G3588 the mouth
G444 G235 G1607 G1537 G4750

τοῦτο κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον
this defileth G3588 a man
G5124 G2840 G444

Additional Cross-References

Mark 7:15 (Parallel theme): There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

Romans 14:17 (Parallel theme): For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Psalms 12:2 (Parallel theme): They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

Psalms 10:7 (Parallel theme): His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

Romans 14:20 (Parallel theme): For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

Hebrews 13:9 (Parallel theme): Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Isaiah 37:23 (Parallel theme): Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

Romans 14:14 (Parallel theme): I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

2 Peter 2:18 (Parallel theme): For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

Titus 1:15 (Parallel theme): Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.