

Matthew 23:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Analysis

Cleanse first that which is within the cup (καθάρισον πρῶτον τὸ ἐντὸς τοῦ ποτηρίου)—Jesus shifts from metaphor (v. 25) to direct command. The word "first" (πρῶτον) establishes priority: internal transformation precedes external conformity. Katharison (cleanse) implies removing defilement, requiring repentance from harpagē (robbery, extortion) and akrasia (self-indulgence, lack of self-control) mentioned in verse 25.

That the outside of them may be clean also—genuine inward purity naturally produces outward righteousness. Jesus reverses Pharisaic methodology: they cleaned the outside hoping it would sanctify the inside. This echoes Ezekiel 36:25-27—God cleanses the heart, then empowers obedience. The gospel works from heart to behavior, never behavior to heart.

Historical Context

Pharisaic purity laws (detailed in Mishnah Kelim) meticulously addressed ritual cleansing of vessels. They would immerse cups in mikveh (ritual baths) while ignoring that the wealth filling those cups came from extortion—foreclosing on widows' homes (23:14), demanding excessive Temple taxes, corrupt business practices. Jesus condemned this divorce between ritual purity and ethical righteousness throughout His ministry.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What "outside of the cup" religious behaviors do you maintain while tolerating inner greed, lust, or pride?
2. How does the gospel's "inside-out" transformation differ from moralistic religion's "outside-in" behavior modification?
3. What practices of self-indulgence or extortion might you be rationalizing while maintaining external religious respectability?

Interlinear Text

Φαρισαῖς τυφλέ καθάρισον πρῶτον τὸ ἐντὸς
Pharisee Thou blind cleanse first G3588 that which is within
G5330 G5185 G2511 G4412 G1787

τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος, ἵνα γένηται καὶ τὸ
G3588 the cup also G3588 platter that G2443 may be also G3588
G4221 G2532 G3953 G1096 G2532

ἐκτὸς αὐτῶν καθαρόν
the outside of them clean
G1622 G846 G2513

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 7:1 (Parallel theme): Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

James 4:8 (Parallel theme): Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Hebrews 10:22 (Parallel theme): Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Isaiah 55:7 (Parallel theme): Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Matthew 12:33 (Parallel theme): Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

Ezekiel 18:31 (Parallel theme): Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Jeremiah 13:27 (Parallel theme): I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?

Jeremiah 4:14 (Parallel theme): O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

Luke 6:45 (Parallel theme): A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.