

What Comes Out of My Heart?

"And he called the people to him again and said to them, 'Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.' And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, 'Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?' (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'"

(Mark 7:14-23, ESV)

I don't drink: I want to have a good influence with brethren and outsiders. I recognize this is a choice I make with my liberty God gives me: I want to please God and be respectful to others. Being a Christian is more than simply saying, "I don't drink." Why does one not drink? Is it to please God or to obey a set of man-made rules? (cf. Col. 2:16) We are to let no one pass judgment on these things but we are to judge ourselves. Jesus said that any food or drink that goes through our body does not defile us. What is it that defiles a person? An unclean heart that desires evil things. How many sins come forth due to unrestrained passion? How many boasts, insults, thefts, and injuries came about when we have not checked our inward person first? Change the actions, and perhaps the inside has changed. But, change the heart, definitively change the man. One whose heart is continually given to God cannot help but desire to do good.

Traditions are not necessarily evil: It is how they are handled and handed to others: Let us never forsake the Word of God for the commandments of men. Let us ask, what is our motive for partaking or abstaining? Focusing so much on what goes into our bodies may deceive us into thinking that all we have to do is eat certain things and not eat other things. What is it that really matters in God's sight? A good tree produces good fruit, a bad tree produces bad fruit. One doesn't pour water into a glass with a crack and five holes: one needs a new container, a new vessel. One can perfectly obey a list of man-made rules and be as hollow as a beach-ball on the inside. Let us first focus on changing the person we are, our character, our heart, our motives, our attitudes, and then concern ourselves with actions.