

Study Notes Matthew 15:1-20 James Mondon (26 February 2017)

1. Recall a time when someone has spoken really harshly to you? How did it make you feel? What were the consequences?
2. What about when you have spoken harshly to someone? What did it do for communication? for relationship? When might it be justified?
3. Jesus uses harsh words to the Pharisees in these verses. He sort of made a habit of it – can you recall other instances? Is Jesus ever recorded as praising the Pharisees?
4. James suggested we read this story through the lens of Jesus actually loving the Pharisees? How does this square up with His harsh language? See Ephesians 4:15 and 29.
5. Do you agree that it was because the Pharisees were so proud, they needed something more brutal than the prodigal son?
6. James spoke about the importance of motives. e.g. his example of not drinking to demonstrate spiritual superiority. The Pharisees paraded their 'righteousness' looking down on others. Recall the story of Jonah who was more interested in seeing the Ninevites judged than saved. Consider the danger of sharing the gospel for our benefit rather than the benefit of those we share with. Could it sometimes be inconvenient for us if certain categories of people got saved? How do we guard against this?
7. In Matthew 15, the presenting issue is ritual washing of cups when hearts were unclean. What contemporary religious practices can we identify which may mask the bankruptcy of our hearts? A line from a Christian song in the seventies went like this 'always holds his hymnbook higher, than his neighbour or the choir, deep inside his life is full of sin.'
8. How do we ensure we get the relationship between outward appearance or actions and the state of our hearts in sync? Do the externals matter at all? How do we ensure we do not throw out the baby with the baptistry water?
9. James made reference to the relationship between the letter and the spirit of the law? We are told that love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8) What do we do when love for the sinner leaves us in tension with the clear letter of scripture? Can you think of examples?