

CHAPTER SEVEN

Concerning the disciples when they ate with unwashed hands.

Concerning the transgression of the commandment of God.

Concerning the Syro-Phoenician woman.

Concerning the deaf man with an impediment of speech.

1-5. Then came together unto Him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, who came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands up to the elbow, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, such as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and dining couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, **Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?** The Lord's disciples had been taught to apply themselves to virtue alone, and not to busy themselves with anything else. Therefore they simply ate, without the business of hand ablutions. The Pharisees wanted to find something to ridicule, and they seize on this. Not able to accuse the disciples of transgressing the law, the Pharisees fault them with transgressing the tradition of the elders. For it is not written in the law to wash one's hands up to the elbow;¹ this is but a tradition passed down to them from the elders.

6-13. He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, **This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me, and in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.** Leaving the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, such as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And He said unto them, **Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.** For Moses said, Honour

¹ Here Bl. Theophylact interprets the Greek New Testament word, *pygme*: "that is, 'up to the elbow.' For *pygme* means 'from the elbow to the tips of the fingers'"

thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him surely die: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That which thou mightest have gained from me, is Corban, that is, a gift, he shall be absolved; and ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have handed down: and many such like things do ye. The Lord gives the Jews a sharp rebuke, also bringing forward the prophet as their accuser. For while they had accused His disciples of transgressing the tradition of the elders, He in turn lays against them a far more serious charge, that of transgressing the law of Moses. For the law says, He tells them, Honour thy father and thy mother.² But you are teaching sons to say to their parents, "The money that you ask from me is Corban, that is, a gift dedicated to God." For the Pharisees sought to devour the means of the simple, and thus were teaching the sons that if they had something, such as a sum of money, which their parents were asking of them, to say, "I have already consecrated this to God, so do not ask for something dedicated to the Lord." Thus the Pharisees were deceiving the sons, persuading them to dedicate, ostensibly to God, what they possessed, while the Pharisees devoured what was dedicated, and the sons ignored their parents. The Lord, then, lays this charge against them, that for the sake of profiteering they transgress the law of God.

14-23. And when He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Harken unto Me every one of you, and understand: 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. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the drain, purging everything eaten. And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart

² See Ex. 20:12 and 21:16.