

In Mark 7:13 we have another very interesting illustration of Christ's attitude on this matter. Here He summed up His whole criticism of the Pharisees in the words, "making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition."

All through the centuries every great Christian church has witnessed to its belief that the Bible is a revelation from God. Yet all too often the ideas of the founders or leaders of the particular group have assumed the place of prominence, and the responsibility of each member of the church to study the Bible for himself and to learn from it the principles that God wishes him to know has been forgotten. When the Pharisees made the Word of God of none effect through their tradition, a great reform was needed, and a similar situation in any group will make a reformation necessary. Such was the case at the beginning of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. When Luther and Calvin and the other great reformers brought the Bible into the foreground, it resulted in a tremendous revival that made itself felt throughout Europe.

It was through a return to loyalty to the Word of God that the great Reformation of the sixteenth century came into being. Sometimes we think of the Reformation as a return to the teachings of St. Augustine and of the other great early Fathers, and indeed it was. It was a return to the pure doctrine of the days of the early church, but far more, it was a return to the Bible, which is the source of all true doctrine.

Our day is very similar to the sixteenth century. People are turning away from the Word of God. They are substituting all sorts of human ideals for the ideals taught in the Bible. Ecumenism is the great cry of the day. But organizational unity is never taught or insisted upon in the New Testament. Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one in spirit, not necessarily that they would be united in one organization. In case after case it can be said of leaders of today that they have made the Word of God of no effect through their tradition. Human ideas and human ideals have been substituted for the Word of God.