

Sometimes we read things in the Bible and do not see their application to our present time. We think we are studying a historical instance that we do not have to watch out for. I believe that the word "corban" falls into this category. We see a foreign word and pass over it without looking at the real principle involved. Look at the passage which describes this in Mark 7:1-13:

*The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"*

*He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."*

Corban can be defined as setting aside the commands of God for the sake of the tradition of men. We definitely have a problem with this in our present day. But I think there is more to it than that. I see that we use the idea of corban to enable us to abandon our responsibility when we don't want to fulfill it. It is using religion as a cover for escaping our duty. For example, corban is choosing "church work" or activities over spending time with your children. It is finding the minimum way to interact with them and yet attempting to take a prominent place in the activity of the church. It is thinking that we are so important that we can ignore the true needs of others so that our own agenda is achieved.

The perfect example of this is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in Luke 10:25. Remember that Jesus was asked how one could inherit eternal life. He answered the same way he did when he was asked which was the greatest commandment, that we should love God with all of our being and our neighbor as ourselves. But His questioner wanted to 'justify himself' and asked who his neighbor was. Jesus continued with the story of a man who fell into the hands of robbers and was beaten and robbed. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan saw the man, took pity on him, and took care of him.

Now the priest and the Levite thought that they were being very spiritual. Their position was so lofty and their business so important that they let the man suffer. Perhaps they were going to the temple services and were scheduled to read or lead in prayer! But they totally missed the idea of what God really wants from his servants and his spiritual leaders. They were doing their duty; they were 'keeping their promises.'" But in Luke 17:10 we see that those who have only done their duty are unworthy servants. Instead of being legalistic about this and saying "I have kept my promise," we should say, "I have loved with all of my heart."

What if Christ had said, "Corban!" when it came to the dilemma that man found himself in. What if he said, "I must do the work of God here in heaven, and I cannot come to earth to die for man." Nothing was more important to Christ than the salvation of man, not even equality with God (Philippians 2:6). We must take a lesson from this great example of love, and fulfill our duties with love. We must not be guilty of Corban.

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