

# Reformation and Revival, 3

by Ian Murray

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*The sermon warns against the danger of fanaticism, which can hinder revival and discredit the Gospel, and emphasizes the importance of recognizing and guarding against it.*

**Duration:** 49:16

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Luke 23:8

**Topics:** "Biblical Revival", "Spiritual Discernment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the dangers of fanaticism and the importance of being grounded in the word of God. He references a statement by Dr. Tozer that a revival without a strong foundation in scripture would be a calamity. The speaker also mentions the 1904 revival in Wales and how it was damaged by the media's involvement. He emphasizes the need for wisdom in dealing with the media during times of revival. The sermon concludes with a reminder to resist abnormal and wildfire behavior and to seek God's will above our own.

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## Transcript

I'd like to mention a few books. Some of you may know, and if you do, you'll have enjoyed them as I have done. Little books that Dr. Belcher discovered, which are the letters of A. W. Pink from the years 1918-1921.

Two thin paperbacks, which are absolutely fascinating. And if you haven't seen those books of Pink's letters from that early period, which have never been published before, and you're a lover of Pink, you'll find them, I'm sure, well worth obtaining. Now books on revival and the Holy Spirit, may I say that I do think the best doctrinal theological work that I know is the book by George Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Smeaton was a man who saw revivals, he was also a professor of theology, he was very suited to write on the subject, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Then there's the book by the southern Presbyterian, Vaughan, The Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The title is a little misleading, it's not simply on gifts, it's on the whole work of the Spirit of God, that's an outstanding book by Vaughan.

Winslow, small paperback, Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, very readable, spiritual, devotional, Octavius Winslow. And then books on the history of revival, let me just mention two. Tracy, Joseph Tracy, The Great Awakening, wonderful book, American of the last century.

If you want a starting point, that would be a very good one to buy. Or J.C. Ryle, Eighteenth Century Leaders, sometimes called Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century. John Charles Ryle, Whitfield, Wesley, these others.

Now some books we can borrow, some we can get from church libraries and so on, but every pastor should have a two-volume of Jonathan Edwards' work, quite sure we should. A goldmine of information, history, sermons, narratives of revival, and the two particular, or the three particular works on revival in Edwards' writings are his Narratives of Surprising Conversions, his Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God, and then his largest work, Thoughts on the Revival in New England in 1740. These and much else are in those two thick banner volumes of works of Jonathan Edwards.

And then could I just mention A Hunger for God by John Piper, not in the book room, I don't think yet, just published last week. It's a book with the subtitle Desiring God Through Fasting and Prayer. And I don't know what your experience has been, but I'm afraid a lot of books that deal with fasting are cranky books and one should be hesitant about recommending them.

This is not in that category at all. I think this is a very helpful, serious, valuable book, A Hunger for God by John Piper. You can get it from Desiring God Ministries or Mottonoma, publish it, you won't have any problems.

The subject that I want to take up with you this evening is the subject of hindering revival. Hindering revival. We have said that revival is the sovereign work of God, that revival seasons come according to the counsel of God who works all things after his own will.

And if that is true, how can we speak of hindering revival? How can omnipotence and sovereignty be hindered? I think it helps us to think of that question if we put it in a broader context. We have to remember that it's not simply revival that is sovereign, but every blessing we possess, every success in the kingdom of God, nothing comes to us in the Christian life without God's purpose. Our meeting this week, all that we have done today, the breath that we draw, everything is in the hands of God.

So the question is a broader question, isn't it? How can we be responsible for anything if everything is in God's hands and under his control? And the scripture does not offer us an explanation. It simply tells us that God is sovereign and that we are responsible. Scripture never makes the sovereignty of God an excuse for inaction on our part, not at all.

We have responsibility for the salvation of men and women. Proverbs 24 says, If thou dost forbear to deliver them that are destined unto death, let not he that thundereth the heart consider it. We have looked at the text this week in Timothy.

We have to give ourselves wholly to these things to save ourselves and those who hear us. We are responsible, ministers of the gospel, for the salvation of the souls of men and women. How can the spirit of God, who is omnipotent, who is independent, how can we speak of hindering him? We do not know, but we do know that the Holy Spirit can be grieved, the Holy Spirit can be quenched.

We know also, don't we, parallel to this, that faith is a sovereign gift of God, not of ourselves. But we also read in the scriptures that Jesus did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief. So it would be very wrong of us to suppose that we have no responsibility with regard to the subject of revival.

Now, this opens a large field. If we are right in believing what I have sought to put before you this week, that revivals are the heightening of normal Christianity, if that is true, then everything that hinders normal Christian living is potentially a hindrance to revival, because the two are not two different things, as we were saying. So, unbelief, pride, impurity, moral laxity, prayerlessness, contention between brethren, error, unfaithfulness to scripture is a very wide field indeed of matters which hinder the work and the life of the church and which potentially therefore hinder revival.

But instead of trying to cover anything like a field of that kind, I want to concentrate this evening on one particular danger, one particular issue, which I believe is a great danger to revival, which hinders revival, and oftentimes when revival comes, becomes an obstacle and a danger in revival itself. Now again, we have a problem of terminology. What words do we use? The word that used to be used to describe what I'm talking about has long gone out of use in the sense in which it was originated.

Transliteration from the Greek in the 17th century was the word enthusiasm, which meant to be possessed or indwelt by a god and therefore to have some very special nearness to God. And enthusiasm was a derogatory term religiously used to describe those who were unbalanced emotionally and who made great claims about their familiarity with God. Now, that use of the word enthusiasm, although it'll no doubt come up a few times this evening, it's long since passed out of use, so I don't believe we can use it.

And I think the best word to describe what I'm talking about is the word fanaticism. That has some weaknesses too, because that's a broad word and it's an ugly word. And what we're going to talk about has to do with Christians and evangelicals.

So we're talking about evangelical fanaticism. That's our subject. And it's a distressing subject.

You know, if we weren't in the right spirit we could easily pass on stories of fanatics which would be very amusing. But the fact is it's a very sad story, quite different from our subject last night, but I believe very important and relevant to us in the Church. Let me quickly try to give you a description.

Fanaticism among Christians is the opposite of cold intellectualism. It's the opposite of that. Fanaticism usually pays little attention to books.

Its great interest is in experience. Fanaticism may be orthodox in belief, but it is more interested in emotion and results than it is with teaching. While fanaticism may say that it believes what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit, it is often more interested in what the Holy Spirit is said to be revealing to the person, or revealing to the person, in a way that people that only have the Bible wouldn't understand.

Fanaticism is a kind of ultra-supernatural Christianity. It supposes it has some kind of blessedness which does not belong to the ordinary Christian. But fanaticism cannot distinguish between fire and wildfire.

It does not see the danger of confusing imagination with truth. Fanaticism is zealous, eager to make potteries, often proclaiming that a revival has begun, or at any rate it will very soon begin. That is something of the character of evangelical fanaticism.

Now I want first to speak about the danger of fanaticism. And my first proof that I want to give you that it's dangerous, is the fact that it's constantly liable to reappear in evangelical churches. Not something that very rarely in history has made an appearance, but there's a pattern in history.

The Reformation began, work was going forward, and then in the midst of it, fanaticism arose. In the next century, the Puritan era, there was a point in history when it seemed that trans-Protestant biblical churches would be established, that a new day was dawning, and suddenly in the midst of that, fanaticism appeared, controversy, division. Same thing in the 18th century.

John Wesley had often to warn his society in the evangelical revival of the danger of fanaticism. But it arose all the same. A man called James Kershaw prophesied very solemnly that all the Methodists in Britain were to go over the Atlantic in the belly of a whale.

John Wesley said he was a stark man. But there were other fanatics who weren't mad. There was a man called George Bell, and Wesley said that at one point no man was more profitable to him than George Bell.

But George Bell declared with certainty that on February 28, 1763, the world was going to end. Fanaticism. The same thing happened in Calvinistic New England at the same date.

Reaction against coldness, people like the Reverend James Davenport became fanatic. It was said of Davenport, he not only gave an unrestrained liberty to noise and outcry, both in distress and joy in time of divine service, but he promoted both with all his might. And the result was that false deals took hold and had a devastating influence.

Jonathan Edwards, talking about it, says, The cry was, Oh, there's no danger of being misled if we are but lively in religion and full of God's spirit and live by faith. If we do but follow God, there is no danger of being led wrong, they said. This was the language of many, says Edwards, till they ran on deep into the wilderness and were taught by the briars and thorns of the wilderness.

So, the First Great Awakening, as you know, came to be quenched largely through outbreaks of fanaticism. Fifty years later, Second Great Awakening, beginning in 1798, again it appeared. Sometimes it takes a slightly different form.

For example, in the Second Great Awakening, one of the new teachings that appeared was that a special mark of the favour of the Holy Spirit was to be able to pray the prayer of faith, by which it was meant that God has to be true to his word, and if we pray in faith, God is certain to give us what we ask for. The scripture says that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. But it doesn't tell us that we have any infallible knowledge of God's will.

But this was a teaching that said, if we ask in faith for a hundred conversions, we'll have a hundred conversions. If we ask in faith for somebody to be healed, somebody will be healed, because God has to be true to his word. And Dr. Gardner, Spring of New York, who was one of the leaders in the Second Great Awakening, called this a fanatical view that would sanction every species of wild enthusiasm.

And then he went on, I have known some people in our city who acted under the influence of this delusion. There are men and women still alive among us in New York, who remember the circumstances of the death of Mrs. Pearson, around whose lifeless body her husband assembled a company of believers with the assurance that if they prayed in faith, she would be restored to life. Their feelings were greatly excited, their impressions of their success peculiar and strong.

They prayed in faith, but they were disappointed. There was none to answer, neither was there any that regarded her. She slept the sleep of death.

They were constrained to follow her to the grave. And Spring says, the prayer that God's will may be done, and not our own, is always answered. Now that's but an illustration, and the point that I'm making is simply this.

Over and over again in history, fanaticism reappears. There was a large book written on the subject in the year 1950, and in the preface the author, actually a Roman Catholic, gave the statement that he thought the days of fanaticism were all cursed. How wrong he was.

It's a recurring danger, and that's what makes it a danger. It's alive in our own day, it may get even stronger, and we have to know what it is. The second reason it's dangerous is that it appears, or it's least expected.

That is to say, very often among earnest Christians. There is, of course, a fanaticism which is not evangelical, which we easily recognize. But there's a fanaticism which arises within the Church, and it can operate in our own hearts without our even suspecting it.

For in all of us there's a mixture of grace and fallen humanity. And it's a very dangerous error to think that only non-Christians are susceptible to fanaticism. On the contrary, sometimes it has been eminent Christians, and certainly earnest Christians, who have fallen and done great damage in this way.

So spirituality and false zeal can go together. Someone has said that the best friends of revival have sometimes proved their worst enemies. That's right.

So fanaticism arises for we may least expect it. Sometimes you see, we're tempted to think that fanaticism is just an excess of what is good. Zeal is good.

Coldness is something as Christians we should all abhor. So when we have lived in cold, dead times, if zeal reappears, we think it must necessarily be an ally. But it may not be.

There's a carnal zeal. And if we are so convinced of the danger of coldness that we're going to welcome any kind of zeal, then we are not seeing a real danger. And then once the revival begins, Christians are very prone not to see any danger.

When there is evident power in the preaching of the word, when God has raised up leaders who speak with authority, in times of awakening, there's a danger of Christians thinking everything is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We don't need to be particularly watchful. And that is entirely wrong.

Sprog, W.B. Sprog says, You may be assured that the cause of revival is far more likely to suffer by an attempt on the part of its friends to pass off everything for gold than by giving to that which is really dropped its proper name. In other words, he's saying, don't act as though there's nothing ever wrong because of the revival. Good men, he says, are only sanctified in part and may fall into excess.

Nothing is more certain than that to tolerate evil in good men because they are good men is directly contrary both to the spirit and matter of the gospel. Let me give you an illustration. We mentioned the other day Whitfield's visit to Northampton, I think we did.

He was there in October of 1740 and his first meeting with Jonathan and Sarah Edward and the joyful time they had together. But as they travelled down river when Whitfield was leaving, Edward did counsel Whitfield that there was an area where he thought Whitfield was in danger of going wrong. And that was in

a revival, feelings run high, and Whitfield was falling into the danger of thinking that because we feel something strongly, we have a strong impression that it must therefore be of the spirit of God.

If we feel it strong enough, impressions they were called. And Edward pointed out that it's a very dangerous thing to think that we can make our impressions a guide to what the Holy Spirit would have us do. Well, friends though they were, Whitfield didn't really hear him.

But three years later, Whitfield did, and he did for this reason. In 1743 he was blessed with his son, John. John.

He was called John because Whitfield was reading at the time of his birth in Luke chapter 1, the fourteenth verse, and it was impressed very powerfully on him. His name shall be called John, and he shall be great, and many will rejoice at his birth. And Whitfield truly believed that God had used the verse and imprinted it upon his heart because his son, by God's blessing, was to be an evangelist and to be used in the kingdom of Christ.

He died four months later, and Whitfield had to rethink. And this is what he said. Many good souls, both among the clergy and the laity, for a while mistook fancy for faith and imagination for revelation.

Now, if Whitfield went wrong at this point, my friends, well who are we? So my point is that this danger often arises for its least suspected, and we all have to guard ourselves very carefully. A third reason why it's dangerous is because it gives occasion for the enemies of revival to dismiss the whole work of the Holy Spirit. I've said that there's a pattern of this recurring in history, and it's true it arises because of human weakness.

But that's not the whole truth. The pattern is of such a kind that it's impossible not to believe that Satan has a direct interest in discrediting experimental Christianity. And he does it by overdriving Christians.

Baxter used to say that overdoing is undoing, by which he meant that if Christians can be driven to great excitement and unthinking emotion, they are going sooner or later to discredit the Gospel. That's what the Puritans meant when they said that there's nothing more dangerous for the chariot of the Gospel than when Satan is the driver. He comes as an angel of light, he is for zeal, he's for enthusiasm, he's for revelation, he's for impression.

And before long the whole work of God is discredited. An enemy has done this. It's not just human fallibility and mistake.

The devil quite clearly has an interest in discrediting real emotion, discrediting true revival by the way in which he injects, if he can, that which is simply carnal. So if things can be explained in psychological terms, if people attribute to the Holy Spirit things which are obviously foolish, the world around, society, looks on and the authority of the Christian faith is undermined. I mentioned that book by the Roman Catholic who wrote in 1950.

And although he doesn't present his argument very openly, the argument quite clearly is that Protestant evangelical religion is so prone to fanaticism that there's really no safe haven except to be in the Church of Rome. Well, one can understand the line of that argument, but what he didn't understand was how's that picture been created. Where does fanaticism come from? Does it come from the Bible, does it come from Protestant belief, or is something being injected into our midst which is foreign and alien and ultimately demonic? So these are reasons why this subject is indeed important.

Fanaticism is a very dangerous thing. I want to move on to the recognition of fanaticism. It's subtle, it's deceptive, it may be in our own hearts.

How do we recognize it? The first thing probably to say is that fanaticism commonly gains its strength among young, immature, enthusiastic Christians. Older Christians are liable for many sins. But this is not the sin to which they are most tempted.

It is fervent young converts who are most likely to be tempted by this sin. Richard Baxter, talking about the upheaval in the churches in the 1640s, he attributes a good deal of the difficulties to those who stirred up, now this is Baxter, the younger and more inexperienced sort of religious people to speak too vehemently and intemperately, for he says, for the young and raw sort of Christians are usually prone to this kind of sin, to be self-conceited, petulant, willful, censorious and injurious in their management of their differences in religion and in all their attempts at reformation. Now that pattern has happened again and again.

The young, the untrained, William Williams of Wales, in the 18th century, in a time of revival, he says, complaining, raw youth, whom no one would entrust to shepherd his sheep, is today riding high in boldness, much superior to old ministers who have borne the burden and the heat of the day. Samuel Miller of Princeton, in the Second Great Awakening, he says, it's a remarkable fact that in all ages, young and of course inexperienced ministers have commonly taken a lead and discovered the most headstrong obstinacy in commencing and pursuing measures of an innovating character, planning to have a gift unknown to others of promoting genuine revival themselves. So when Paul says he must not be, that is, a leader in the church, he must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil, the Apostle is saying something immensely important.

There's no youth cult in the Bible. And it seems to me that one of the saddest things that's happening in the evangelical world at the moment is often the idea that unless we let the young people do what they wish, unless we hurry them forward to positions of leadership, we'll lose them from the church. It's a great delusion and it does great harm.

So that's the first characteristic. Often it begins amongst the young. And then secondly, the second characteristic, it generally concentrates interest on phenomena and on experiences, on feelings and on excitement.

These are the main focus of interest. Now I don't mean that fanaticism does that deliberately. Those who do this would say that they are seeing the Holy Spirit at work, and they no doubt believe that.

That's what makes it so subtle. But the question is, is their spirit Bible-centered? Is it God-centered? Or has subjective feeling taken control? Now, at this point, we need to be very careful. And Jonathan Edwards is very careful here.

Outward phenomena may be of the Spirit of God or it may not. And it may look identical. If people are laughing, if people are crying, if people have fallen.

What is the cause of that? Well, what's the context? Have they been hearing the truth? Has the Word of God gripped them? Have their minds been arrested? Has Biblical teaching clearly been set out? If there's physical phenomena which is not in the context of clear Biblical teaching, we may well suspect that it's purely natural. For example, once when Whitefield was preaching, a vast crowd of people. And here on

the edge of the crowd, much too far away to hear what Whitefield was actually saying, was a woman standing, weeping.

Why was she weeping? Because she could see a lot of other people weeping. That was the reason. And you know, there are things that are infectious, as serious as infection.

If people start weeping, others can very easily weep. That good woman had no reason to weep. She hadn't heard the truth.

She hadn't heard teaching. It was purely natural. So what John of Edwards said is this.

If there are bodily effects, we're not to be impressed by that. But if these things are taking place, he says, under the preaching of the important truths of God's Word, urged and enforced by proper arguments and motives, then we can take it more seriously. But in the end, nothing outward and physical is of great importance.

It's the spiritual fruit that counts. And you can't judge fruit by physical phenomena. John Wesley was not against emotion, far from it, but he says, I dislike something that has the appearance of enthusiasm.

Now he's using it in that old sense. Overvaluing feelings and inward impressions, mistaking the mere work of imagination for the voice of the Spirit, expecting the end without the means, and undervaluing reason, knowledge and wisdom in general. So a third mark of fanaticism is that it generally reveals itself by a spirit of pride.

This is what happened, isn't it, in the church at Corinth. All the debate about gifts. The church had forgotten the fundamental truth that no flesh is to glory in his presence.

But fanaticism generally, almost invariably, leads to a spirit of self-importance. Edwards says how in the Great Awakening, people of this spirit were so ready to speak about themselves and about their own experiences. Gardner's Spring contrasts converts who are true, biblical, with the fanatical.

And this is how he describes the fanatical. The fanatical has a spirit who seeks observation and wishes to be seen, and obtrudes itself on the notice of others, talks of its own experiences and attainments, that is bold and assuming, that wishes to be put forward, and unblushingly exclaims, but Jesus, come and see my zeal for the Lord. How different is that? How different the spirit of the modest, retiring, young convert who esteems others better than himself, who looks on Christ whom he has pierced and mourns, and who goes to the communion of saints, conscious that he is not worthy of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table.

Self-confidence and pride. And so fanatics are people who are always well-instructed to teach others, but they are unteachable themselves. They don't have respect for the wisdom of the Church accumulated through centuries of creeds and confessions and books.

They don't think much of that at all. They may call that book learning or dead orthodoxy. They say we're taught by the Holy Spirit and we don't need these things.

And so it's almost always a mark of fanaticism that it attacks the Christian ministry in some way or another. Fanatics are generally unwilling to recognize any leaders beyond themselves. John Wesley says in this society where Bell was one of the leaders, Wesley went amongst them and tried to help them.

He says, Pride and great uncharitableness appeared in many who once had much grace. I very tenderly reproved them. They would not bear it.

One of them, Mrs. Coventry, cried out, We will not be browbeaten any longer. And a few days later she came and before a hundred people she brought hers and her husband's tickets, membership to the Society, and she said, Sir, we will have no more to do with you. Mr. Maxwell is our teacher.

And soon after, several more left the Society saying, Blind John is not capable of teaching us. Well, that's fanaticism. People who have special knowledge and inspiration and they don't need the guidance of ministers.

Let's move on to the consequences of fanaticism. It produces controversy and division amongst Christians. Now every true revival causes controversy.

People that are self-satisfied and nominal Christians don't welcome revivals. So, every revival produces controversy. But the sad thing about fanaticism is that it produces controversy among real Christians.

And that has happened again and again. It happened in the days of Abraham Nettleson and he said in the 1820s, As we have it now, the great contest is among professors of religion. A civil war in Zion.

A domestic broil in the household of faith. I haven't time to go into that, but this is what happens. Christians are diverted from the great work by these things.

Then, consequences of fanaticism. Secondly, it gives opportunity for large numbers of unconverted people to enter the church. You see, unregenerate people can get excited.

Oh yes. Unconverted people like to have high emotions. You remember how King Herod would like to see a miracle.

We read in Luke's Gospel, chapter 23, He had long hoped to see a miracle. Plenty of people like Herod still alive. And if you can offer miracles and excitement and sensation, and then under the influence of excitement, tell people what they've got to do, and people do it, and then they are treated as Christians, then you've got multitudes of people entering evangelical circles without really knowing Christ.

So, fanaticism always introduces large numbers of unconverted people into the church. Now, I want to just give you an illustration of fanaticism before I begin to conclude. And this is from the Welsh Revival of 1904.

There's a recent life published of Evan Roberts, who was one of the leaders in that revival. Some of you may have seen it. It was a great revival.

Many, many people were converted. But in the revival, there was also fanaticism. And prayer.

Send the Spirit now for Jesus' sake. I had put in three more words, he explained, but the Spirit rejected them. The first form of the prayer was, O Lord, send the Holy Spirit now for Jesus' sake.

Amen. But I was forced to leave out, he said, Lord and Holy and Amen, because the Spirit will have no idle words. So, he believed that the Spirit's leading was everything.

And there was very little preaching. There was a lot of song and prayer and testimony. But it was said, quotation, Preaching has failed as a saving agency for a long time.

God is now going to save sinners for a while without the pulpit. So, characteristic began of very little preaching. And at first, Evan Roberts' behavior drew no criticism.

No one, it was said, quoting a newspaper, No one is sure where the revivalist will appear because he will only go where the Spirit prompts him. And Evan Roberts didn't try to control the meetings. But then, when 1905 came, he changed.

And he believed that the Holy Spirit was now guiding him to control the meetings. And he did control them. To this extent, somebody might be praying and he'd stop them in the middle of his prayer.

Or they might be singing, and Roberts would stop them in the middle of the singing and saying that it wasn't the Holy Spirit's will but there should be any more. And sometimes he'd simply stop a service in the middle. Other times, he believed that God had given him clairvoyant powers, somebody here is a hypocrite, I know them, I see them, he says.

Or somebody here is hindering the meeting, they must leave, they must go. Somebody here is ready to be converted, he said, ready to surrender. And people said, people were excited and awestruck and asked, how is it possible that each time he makes a prediction, someone is ready and waiting to yield? Well, these meetings became more and more sensational.

And it's a very sad story, because in 1906, the poor man just broke down completely. He'd been made a sort of national idol, he'd been turned into a prophet, and he had a breakdown in 1906. He lived another 45 years, he never entered the ministry.

He really was wrecked by, in a sense, his ignorance of the pattern of fanaticism. He was being carried along by influences that had been seen many times in church history and he knew them not. And to my mind, it's a very sad story.

Now, I want to then come quickly to closing lessons. The first lesson is, what's the remedy for fanaticism? Surely, friends, it has to be knowledge, teaching, the Word of God, makes all the difference in the world. When a revival comes, whether people are grounded and taught.

You know, Dr. Tozer said, writing what, in the 1950s, he said a revival of the present Christianity, which we have in the United States, would be a calamity, from which we wouldn't recover in a hundred years. See what he meant? When God sends a spirit, it's very important that people are grounded in Scripture, otherwise all kinds of things can happen. So then, it's not difficult for us to believe that God mercifully, and we are seeing a day in which truth is being disseminated.

People are being brought back to the Scriptures. That's what we need. Now, if God should allow us, young or old, to see a revival, let me just give a few words which some of you may remember.

The first is, obviously, we have to be very watchful and very humble and prayerful and careful. We have to realize that there's supernatural subtlety at work. Revivals are not times when we can give up watchfulness.

Secondly, we have to do everything possible to avoid mere excitement. Very important. For example, when a revival comes, people want more and more teaching.

They happily stay up to midnight or later for the preaching of the Word. It mustn't be allowed. It's a great mistake.

We haven't got to give way to the feelings of the people. One has to do everything possible to see that excitement is kept in check. One of the problems with Evan Roberts was that he scarcely slept for three weeks.

Well, if that happens, it's a certainty that before long you're going to get all kinds of aberrations. We shouldn't allow the abnormal to take control. And ministers and leaders need to resist all wildfire.

And you know that's very difficult to do. It wasn't done in the 1904 revival in Wales because the ministers were afraid of the people. The people said it was quenching the spirit, so the ministers kept quiet and fanaticism spread.

It's a great mistake. You know, Whitefield was in New England once and he'd been preaching and he'd gone back to the parsonage and someone came running to the parsonage and said, you've got to come back to the church. Wonderful, great things are happening in the church and there's a lot of noise.

So Whitefield and the minister went back to the church and sure enough, some people were jumping and others were dancing. Tremendous noise. You know what Whitefield did? He stamped his foot with great force and he shouted out.

He said, you're like little chickens running around with the eggshells still on your eyes. Go home, he said. Go home.

You know, that's not easy to do. A lot of ministers wouldn't have done it. But he did the right thing.

If you give way to feeling and excitement, it will take control. And so most ministers have taken the view that if somebody is physically overcome in a service, maybe they cry aloud or perhaps they fall. The best thing to do is to gently remove them from the service.

Don't make them an exhibit because you'll then have many more people showing the same symptoms very quickly. If people can't be restrained in emotion, let them be quietly taken from the service. These are very important practical things.

And then another practical lesson is, and I don't honestly know how this can be dealt with, but the 1904 revival, as I've been saying, Evan Roberts was very seriously damaged by the media. One of the first revivals where the newspapers were very interested. Some of them were very sympathetic.

They praised him to the skies, made him a personality. I don't know how we'll be able to keep the media at a distance. But it's quite certain that if we throw open the doors and let media into public worship in a time of revival, it's going to create tremendous difficulties.

It'll need very great wisdom indeed. Well, I hope that this subject has not been without profit. It's a sad subject, isn't it? But I think we need to study it.

It's a very relevant one. It's a great danger and hindrance to the true work of the Holy Spirit. Shall we pray? Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we give thanks to Thee that Thou art reigning over all things.

Lord, help us to see that we can indeed do nothing without Thy light and grace and presence. Deliver us from all confidence in ourselves. Humble us under Thy mighty hand.

Help us to know Christ as our only Lord and Saviour day by day. We pray for the churches to which we belong. Lord, we pray that Thou wouldst come and indeed work with grace and power.

Help us to know Thee more. Help us to grow in grace. Be with us as we continue in this evening hour.

We thank Thee for the privileges and the blessings of our fellowship together. Pardon all that Thou dost see and miss in us. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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