

Wrong Revival Principles - Part 1

by Jonathan Edwards

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and jealousy over our hearts in avoiding the dangers of spiritual pride and ensuring the success of revival.

Duration: 35:44

Scripture: Luke 21:36, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 14:37-38, Ephesians 6:11, 1 Peter 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of remaining vigilant and watchful in the face of spiritual challenges. He reminds the listeners that despite experiencing divine revelations and comforts, they are still in a world controlled by the enemy. The preacher references Luke 21:36, where Jesus instructs his disciples to watch and pray always. He highlights the need for believers to be diligent and to put on the whole armor of God in order to stand firm in the face of evil. The preacher also addresses the criticism and complaints against those who are zealous for the work of God, urging the listeners to avoid being prejudiced against the call for prudence and orderliness in promoting the work of God.

Transcript

The Discourses and Sermons of Jonathan Edwards, heirs that attend a great revival, showing what things are to be corrected or avoided in promoting this work, or in our behavior under it. Having thus observed, in some instances, wherein the conduct of those that have appeared to be the subjects of this work, or have been zealous to promote it, has been objected against, or complained of, without or beyond just cause, I proceed now to show what things ought to be corrected or avoided. Many who are zealous for this glorious work of God are heartily sick of the great noise there is in the country about imprudences and disorders.

They have heard it so often from the mouths of oppressors that they are prejudiced against the sound, and they look upon it that what is called being prudent and regular, so much insisted on, is no other than being asleep or cold and dead in religion, and that the great imprudence, so much blamed, is only being alive and engaged in the things of God. They are therefore rather confirmed in any practice they brought off from it, by the clamor they hear against it, as imprudent and irregular. And to tell the truth, the cry of irregularity and imprudence has been much more in the mouths of those who have been enemies to the main of the work than others, for they have watched for the halting of the zealous, and eagerly captured at anything that has been wrong, and have greatly insisted on it, made the work most of it, and magnified it.

Especially have they watched for heirs and zealous preachers, who are much in reproveth and condemning the wickedness of the times. They would, therefore, do well to consider that scripture, Isaiah 29, 20, and 21, the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off, that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth and negate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught. They have not only too much insisted on the magnified real errors, but have very injuriously charged them as guilty in things wherein they have been innocent, and have done their duty.

This is so prejudiced the minds of some, that they have been ready to think that all that which has been said about errors and imprudences was injurious, and from an ill spirit. It is confirmed them, that there is no such thing as any prevailing imprudences, and it has made them less cautious and suspicious of themselves, lest they should err. Herein the devil has had an advantage put into his hands, and has taken it, and doubtless has been too subtle for some of the true friends of religion.

That would be strange indeed, if in so great a commotion and revolution, and such a new state of things, wherein so many have been engaged, none have been guilty of any imprudence. It would be such a revival of religion as never was if among so many men, not guided by infallible inspiration, there had not been many notable errors in judgment and conduct. Our young preachers and young converts must in general vastly exceed Luther, the head of the Reformation, who was guilty of a great many excesses in that great affair in which God made him the chief instrument.

If we look back into the history of the church of God in past ages, we may observe that it has been a common device of the devil to upset a revival of religion. When he finds he can keep men quiet and secure no longer, then he drives them to excesses and extravagances. He holds them back as long as he can, but when he can do it no longer, then he will push them on, and if possible run them upon their heads.

It has been by this means, chiefly, that he has been successful in several instances to overthrow most hopeful and promising beginnings. Yea, the principle means by which the devil was successful, by degrees, to upset the grand religious revival of the world in the primitive ages of Christianity, and in a manner to overthrow the Christian church through the earth, and to make way for the great anti-Christian apostasy. That masterpiece of all the devil's works was to improve the indiscreet zeal of Christians, to drive them into the three extremes of enthusiasm, superstition, and severity towards opposers, which should be enough for an everlasting warning to the Christian church.

Though the devil will do his diligence to stir up the open enemies of religion, yet he knows what is for his interest so well that in time of revival of religion his main strength shall be tried with the friends of it, and he will chiefly exert himself in his attempts to mislead them. One truly zealous person in the time of such an event that seems to have a great hand in the affair, and draws the eyes of many upon him, may do more through Satan's being too subtle for him to hinder the work than a hundred great and strong and open opposers. In a time of the great work of Christ, his hands with which he works are often wounded in the house of his friends, and his work hindered chiefly by them, so that if anyone inquires as in Zechariah 13 verse 6, what are these wounds in thine hands, he may answer, those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

The errors of the friends of the work of God, and especially of the great promoters of it, give vast advantages to the enemies of such a work. Indeed there are many things which are no errors, but are only duties faithfully and thoroughly done that wound the minds of such persons more than real errors. But yet

one real error gives opposers as much advantage, and hinders and clogs the work as much as ten that are only supposed ones.

Real errors do not fret and gall the enemies of religion so much as those things that are strictly right, but they encourage them more. They give them liberty and open a gap for them, so that some who before kept their enmity burning in their own breasts, and durst not show themselves, will on such an occasion take courage and give themselves vent, and their rage will be like that of an enemy let loose. Those who lay still before have nothing to say but what they would be ashamed of.

Agreeable to Titus 2 verse 8, when they have such a weapon put into their hands, will fight with all violence. And indeed the enemies of religion would not know what to do for weapons to fight with were it not for the errors of its friends, and so must soon fall before them. Besides, in real errors, things that are truly disagreeable to the rule of God's word, we cannot expect the divine protection, that God will appear on our side as if errors were only supposed ones.

Since therefore the errors of the friends and promoters of such a glorious work of God are of such dreadful consequence, and seeing the devil being sensible of this, is so assiduous, watchful, and subtle in his attempts with them, and is thereby been so successful to overthrow religion heretofore, certainly such persons ought to be exceeding circumspect, and vigilant, diffident, and jealous of themselves, and humbly dependent on the guidance of the good shepherd. 1 Peter 4 verse 7 Be sober, and watch, and to prayer. 5 Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil is a roaring lion, and walketh about.

For persons to go on resolutely in a kind of heat, and vehemence, despise, and admonition, and correction, being confident that they must be in the right because they are full of the spirit, is directly contrary to the import of these words, be sober, be vigilant. It is a mistake I have observed in some by which they have been greatly exposed to their wounding, that they think they are in no danger of going astray, or being misled by the devil, because they are near to God, and so have no jealous eye upon themselves, and neglect vigilance and circumspection as needless in their case. They say they do not think that God will leave them to dishonor him, and ruin religion as long as they keep near to him, and I believe so too, as long as they keep near to God, so as to maintain a universal and diligent watch, and care to their duty, of voicing and stares with diffidence in themselves, and humble dependence and prayerfulness, but not merrily, because they are receiving blessed communications from God, and refreshing views of him, if at the same time they let down their watch, and are not jealous over their own hearts, by reason of its remaining blindness and corruption, and a subtle adversary, it is a grand error for persons to think they are out of danger from the devil, and a corrupt deceitful heart, even in the highest flights, and most raised frames of spiritual joy, for persons in such a confidence to cease to be jealous of themselves, and neglect watchfulness, and care, is a presumption by which I have known many woefully ensnared.

However highly we may be favored with divine discoveries and comforts, yet as long as we are in the world, we are in the enemy's country, and therefore that direction of Christ to his disciples is never out of date in this world. Luke 21, verse 36, Watch, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and stand before the Son of man. It was not out of date with the disciples to whom it was given, after they came to be full of the Holy Ghost, and out of their bellies flowed rivers of living water, by that great effusion upon them that began on the day of Pentecost.

And though God stands ready to protect his people, especially those that are near to him, yet he expects of all great care and labor, that we should put on the whole armor of God, that we may stand in the evil day. To whatever spiritual privilege as we are raised, we have no warrant to expect protection in any other way, for God has appointed this whole life to be all as a race or a battle. The state of rest, wherein we shall be so out of danger as to have no need of watching and fighting, is reserved for another world.

I have known it in abundance of instances, that the devil has come in very remarkably, even in the midst of the most excellent frames. It may seem a great mystery that it should be so, but it is no greater mystery than that Christ should be taken captive by the devil, and carried into the wilderness immediately after the heavens had been opened to him, and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon him. And when he heard that comfortable, joyful voice from the Father, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in like manner Christ, in the heart of a Christian, is oftentimes, as it were, taken and carried captive into a wilderness, presently after heaven has been, as it were, opened to the soul, and the Holy Ghost has descended upon it like a dove.

And when God has been sweetly owning the believer, and testifying his favor to him as his beloved child, it is therefore a great error and sin in some persons at this day, that they are fixed in some things which others account errors, and will not hearken to admonition and counsel, but are confident that they are in the right, because God is much with them. There were some such in the apostles' days. The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, was sensible that some of them would not be easily convinced that they had been in any error, because they looked upon themselves as spiritual, or full of the Spirit of God.

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. And although those who are spiritual amongst us have no infallible apostle to admonish them, yet let me entreat them, by the love of Christ, calmly and impartially, to weigh what may be said to them by one who is their hearty and fervent friend, though an inferior worm, and given his humble opinion concerning the errors that have been committed by the zealous friends or promoters of this great work of God.

In speaking of past errors, and those we are in danger of, I would in the first place take notice of the causes whence the errors that attend the great revival of religion usually arise, and as I go along, take notice of some particular errors that arise from each of those causes. Secondly, observe some errors that have been owing to the influence of several of those causes conjunctly. The errors that attend the great revival of religion usually arise from these three things.

One, undiscerned spiritual pride. Number two, wrong principles. And number three, ignorance of Satan's advantages and devices.

Section number one. One cause of errors attending a great revival of religion is undiscerned spiritual pride. The first and the worst cause of errors that prevail in such a state of things is spiritual pride.

That is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of religion. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit to darken the mind and mislead the judgment. This is the main handle by which the devil has hold of religious persons, and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces to clog and hinder a work of God.

This cause of error is the main spring, or at least the main support of all the rest. Till this disease is cured, medicines are in vain applied to heal other diseases. It is by this that the mind defends itself and other

errors, and guards itself against light by which it might be corrected and reclaimed.

This spiritually proud man is full of light already. He does not need instruction, and is ready to despise the offer of it. But if this disease be healed, other things are easily rectified.

The humble person is like a little child. He easily receives instruction. He is jealous over himself, sensible how liable he is to go astray, and therefore if it be suggested to him that he does so, he is ready most narrowly and impartially to inquire.

Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility, and so prepares the mind for true divine light without darkness, and so clears the eye to look on things as they truly are. Psalm 25 verse 9. The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. Therefore we should fight neither with small nor with great, but with the King of Israel.

Our first care should be to rectify the heart, and pull the beam out of our eye, and then we shall see clearly. I know that a great many things at this day are very injuriously laid to the pride of those that are zealous in the cause of God. When any person appears in any respect remarkably distinguished in religion from others, if he professes those spiritual comforts and joys that are greater than ordinary, or appears distinguishingly zealous in religion, if he exerts himself more than others in the cause of religion, or seems to be distinguished with success, ten to one, but it will immediately awaken the jealousy of those about him.

They will suspect, whether they have cause or no, that he is very proud of his goodness, and affects to have it thought that nobody is so good as he, and all his talk is heard, and all his behavior beheld with this prejudice. Those who are themselves cold and dead, and especially such as never had any experience of the power of godliness on their own hearts, are ready to entertain such thoughts of the best Christians, which arises from a secret enmity against vital and fervent piety. But zealous Christians should take heed, lest this prove a snare to them, and the devil take advantage from it, to blind their eyes from beholding what there is indeed of this nature in their hearts, and make them think, because they are charged with pride wrongfully and from an ill spirit in many things, that therefore it is so in everything.

Alas, how much pride have the best of us in our hearts! It is the worst part of the body of sin and death, the first sin that ever entered into the universe, and the last that is rooted out. It is god's most stubborn enemy. The corruption of nature may all be resolved into two things, pride and worldly mindedness, the devil and the beast herself and the world.

These are the two pillars of Dagon's temple, on which the whole house leans. But the former of these is every way the worst part of the corruption of nature. It is the firstborn son of the devil, and his image in the heart of man chiefly consists in it.

It is the last thing in a sinner that is overborn by conviction in order to conversion. And here is a saint's hardest conflict, the last thing over which he obtains a good degree of conquest, that which most directly militates against God and is most contrary to the spirit of the Lamb of God. It is most like the devil its father in a serpentine deceitfulness and secrecy.

It lies deepest, is most active, and is most ready secretly to mix itself with everything. And of all kinds of pride, spiritual pride is upon many accounts the most hateful. It is most like the devil, most like the sin he committed in a heaven of light and glory, where he was exalted high in divine knowledge, honor, beauty,

and happiness.

Pride is much more difficult to be discerned than any other corruption, because its nature very much consists in a person's having too high a thought of himself. No wonder that he who has too high a thought of himself does not know it, for he necessarily thinks that the opinion he has of himself has just grounds, and therefore is not too high. If he thought such an opinion of himself was without just grounds, he would therein cease to have it.

Those that are spiritually proud have a high conceit of these two things, their light and their humility, both which are a strong prejudice against the discovery of their pride. Being proud of their light, that makes them not jealous of themselves. He who thinks a clear light shines around him is not suspicious of an enemy lurking near him unseen.

Then being proud of their humility, that makes them least of all jealous of themselves in that particular, as being under the prevalence of pride. There are many sins of the heart that are very secret in their nature and difficultly discerned. The psalmist says, Psalm 19 verse 12, Who can understand his errors? Cleansed thou me from secret faults? But spiritual pride is the most secret of all sins.

The heart is deceitful and unsearchable in nothing so much as in this matter. And there is no sin in the world that men are so confident in. The very nature of it is to work self-confidence and drive away jealousy of any evil of that kind.

There is no sin so much like the devil as this for secrecy and subtlety and appearing in a great many shapes undiscerned and unsuspected. It appears as an angel of light, takes occasion to arise from everything. It perverts and abuses everything, and even the exercises of real grace and real humility as an occasion to exert itself.

It is a sin that has, as it were, many lies. If you kill it, it will live still. If you mortify and suppress it in one shape, it rises in another.

If you think it is all gone, yet it is there still. There are a great many kinds of it that lie in different forms and shapes, one under another, and encompass the heart like the coats of an onion. If you pull off one, there is another underneath.

We had need, therefore, to have the greatest watch imaginable over our hearts with respect to this matter, and to cry most earnestly to the great searcher of hearts for his help. He that trusts his own heart is a fool. God's own people should be the more jealous of themselves with respect to this particular at this day, because the temptations that many have to this sin are exceeding great.

The great and distinguishing privileges to which God admits many of His saints and the high honors He puts on some ministers are great trials of persons in this respect. It is true that great degrees of the spiritual presence of God tends greatly to mortify pride and corruption. But yet, though in the experience of such favors there be much to restrain pride one way, there is much to tempt and provoke in another, and we shall be in great danger thereby without great watchfulness and prayerfulness.

The angels that fail while in heaven had great honors and high privileges in beholding the face of God and viewing His infinite glory to cause in them exercises of humility and to keep them from pride. Yet, through want of watchfulness in them, their great honor and heavenly privilege proved to be to them an undoing temptation to pride, though they had no principle of pride in their hearts to expose them. Let no saint,

therefore, however imminent and however near to God, think himself out of danger.

He that thinks himself most out of danger is indeed most in danger. The apostle Paul, who doubtless was as imminent a saint as any now, was not out of danger, even just after he was admitted to see God in the third heaven, 2 Corinthians 12. And yet, doubtless, what he saw in heaven of the ineffable glory of the divine being had a direct tendency to make him appear exceedingly little and vile in his own eyes.

Spiritual pride in its own nature is so secret that it is not so well discerned by immediate intuition on a thing itself as by the effects and fruits of it, some of which I would mention together with the contrary fruits of pure Christian humility. Spiritual pride exposes to speak of other persons' sins, their enmity against God and His people, the miserable delusion of hypocrites, and their enmity against vital piety, and the deadness of some saints with bitterness or with laughter and levity in an air of contempt, whereas pure Christian humility rather disposes either to be silent about them or to speak of them with grief and pity. Spiritual pride is very apt to suspect others, whereas an humble saint is most jealous of himself.

He is so suspicious of nothing in the world as he is of his own heart. The spiritually proud person is apt to find fault with other saints, that they are low in grace, and to be much in observing how cold and dead they are, and being quick to discern and take notice of their deficiencies. But the imminently humble Christian has so much to do at home and sees so much evil in his own heart, and is so concerned about it that he is not apt to be very busy with others' hearts.

He complains most of himself, and complains of his own coldness and loneliness and grace. He is apt to esteem others better than himself, and is ready to hope that there is nobody but what has more love and thankfulness to God than he, and cannot bear to think that others should bring forth no more fruit to God's honor than he. Some who have spiritual pride mixed with high discoveries and great transports of joy disposing them in an earnest manner to talk to others, are apt in such frames to be calling upon other Christians about them, and sharply reproving them for their being so cold and lifeless.

There are others who in their raptures are overwhelmed with a sense of their own vileness, and when they have extraordinary discoveries of God's glory are all taken up about their own sinfulness. And though they also are disposed to speak much and very earnestly, yet it is very much in blaming themselves and exhorting fellow Christians, but in a charitable and humble manner. Pure Christian humility disposes a person to take notice of everything that is good in others, and to make the best of it, and to diminish their failings, but to have his eye chiefly on those things that are bad in himself, and to take much notice of everything that aggravates them.

In a contrariety to this, it has been the manner in some places, or at least the manner of some persons, to speak of almost everything that they see amiss in others, in the most harsh, severe, and terrible language. It is frequent with them to say of others' opinions, or conduct, or advice, or of their coldness, their silence, their caution, their moderation, their prudence, and so on, that they are from the devil, or from hell, that such a thing is devilish, or hellish, or cursed, and that such persons are servants of the devil, or the devil is in them, that they are soul murderers, and the like, so that the words devil and hell are almost continually in their mouths, and such kind of language they will commonly use, not only towards wicked men, but towards them who they themselves allow to be the true children of God, and also towards ministers of the gospel, and others who are very much their superiors, and they look upon it as a virtue in high attainment, thus to behave themselves. Oh, say they, we must be plain-hearted and bold for Christ, we must declare war against sin wherever we see it, we must not mince the matter in the cause of God, and when speaking

for Christ, and to make any distinction in persons, or to speak the more tenderly, because that which is amiss is seen in a superior, they look upon as very mean for a follower of Christ when speaking in the cause of his master.

What a strange device of the devil this is, to overthrow all Christian meekness and gentleness, and even all show an appearance of it, and to defile the mouths of the children of God, and introduce the language of common sailors among the followers of Christ under a cloak of high sanctity, and zeal, and boldness for Christ. And it is a remarkable instance of the weakness of the human mind, and how much too cunning the devil is for us. The grand defense of this way of talking is, that they say no more than what is true, they only speak the truth without mincing the matter, and that true Christians who have a great sight of the evil of sin, and acquaintance with their own hearts, know it to be true, and therefore will not be offended to hear such harsh expressions concerning them and their sins.

It is only, they say, hypocrites, or cold and dead Christians that are provoked and feel their enmity rise on such an occasion. But it is a grand mistake to think that we may commonly use all such language as represents the worst of each other according to strict truth. It is really true that every kind of sin, and every degree of it, is devilish, and from hell, and is cursed, hellish, and condemned, or damned.

And if persons had a full sight of their hearts, they would think no terms too bad for them. They would look like beasts, like serpents, and like devils to themselves. They would be at a loss for language to express what they see in themselves.

The worst terms they could think of would seem as it were faint to represent what they see in themselves. But shall a child, therefore, from time to time use such language concerning an excellent and eminently holy father or mother, that the devil is in them, that they have such and such devilish, cursed dispositions, that they commit every day hundreds of hellish, damned acts, and that they are cursed dogs, hellhounds, and devils? And shall the meanest of the people be justified in commonly using such language concerning the most excellent magistrates, or the most eminent ministers? I hope nobody has gone to this height. But the same pretenses of boldness, plain-heartedness, and declared war against sin will as well justify these things as the others.

If we proceed in such a manner, on such principles as these, what a face will be introduced upon the church of Christ, the little beloved flock of that gentle shepherd, the Lamb of God! What a sound shall we bring into the house of God, into the family of His dear little children! How far off shall we soon banish that lovely appearance of humility, sweetness, gentleness, mutual honor, benevolence, complacence, and an esteem of others above themselves, which ought to clothe the children of God all over! Not but that Christians should watch over one another, and in any wise reprove one another, and do it plainly and faithfully, but it does not thence follow that dear brethren in the family of God, in rebuking one another, should use worse language than Michael, the archangel, durst use when rebuking the devil himself. Christians who are but fellow worms ought at least to treat one another with as much humility and gentleness as Christ, who is infinitely above them, treats them. But how did Christ treat His disciples when they were so cold towards Him, and so regardless of Him, at a time when His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, and He in a dismal agony was crying and sweating blood for them, and they would not watch with Him, and allow Him the comfort of their company, one hour in His great distress, though He once and again desired it of them? One would think that then was a proper time, if ever, to have reproved them for a devilish, hellish, cursed, damned, slothfulness, and deadness.

But after what manner does Christ reprove them? Behold His astonishing gentleness, says He. What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And how did He treat Peter when he was ashamed of his master, while he was made a mocking stock and a spitting stock for him? Why, He looked upon him with a look of love, and melted his heart.

And though we read that Christ once turned and said unto Peter, on a certain occasion, Get thee behind Me, Satan, this may seem like an instance of harshness and severity in reproofing Peter, yet I humbly conceive that this is by many taken wrong, that this indeed no instance of Christ's severity in His treatment of Peter, but on the contrary of His wonderful gentleness and grace distinguishing Peter and the devil in him, not laying the blame of what Peter had then said, or imputing it to him, but to the devil that influenced him. Christ saw the devil then present, secretly influencing Peter to do the part of a tempter to his master. And therefore Christ turned him about to Peter, whom the devil then was, and spake to the devil, and rebuked him.

Thus the grace of Christ does not behold iniquity in His people, imputes not what is amiss in them to them, but to sin that dwells in them, and to Satan that influences them. Spiritual pride often disposes persons to singularity and external appearance, to affect the singular way of speaking, to use a different sort of dialect from others, or to be singular in voice, countenance, or behavior. But he that is an eminently humble Christian, though he will be firm to his duty, however singular, going in the way that leads to heaven alone, though all the world forsake him, yet he delights not in singularity for singularity's sake.

He does not affect to set up himself to be viewed and observed as one distinguished, as desiring to be accounted better than others, despising their company or conformity to them, but on the contrary is disposed to become all things to all men, to yield to others, and conform to them, and please them in everything but sin. Spiritual pride commonly occasions a certain stiffness and inflexibility in persons in their own judgment and their own ways, whereas the eminently humble person, though he be inflexible in his duty and in those things wherein God's honor is concerned, with regard to temptation, to those things he apprehends to be sinful, though in never so small a degree, he is not at all of a yielding spirit, but is like a brazen wall. Yet in other things he is of a pliable disposition, not disposed to set up his own opinion or his own will.

He is to pay deference to others' opinions, loves to comply with their inclinations, and has a heart that is tender and flexible, like a little child. Spiritual pride disposes persons to affect separation, to stand at a distance from others, as being better than they, and loves to show an appearance of the distinction, but on the contrary the eminently humble Christian is ready to look upon himself as not worthy that others should be united to him, to think himself more brutish than any man, and worthy to be cast out of human society, and especially unworthy of the society of God's children. And though he will not be a companion with one that is visibly Christ's enemy, but delights most in the company of lively Christians, choosing such for his companions, and will be most intimate with them, not delighting to spend much time in the company of those who seem to relish no conversation but about worldly things, yet he does not love the appearance of an open separation from visible Christians, as being a kind of distinct company from them who are one visible company with him by Christ's appointment, and will as much as possible shun all appearances of a superiority or distinguishing self as better than others.

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And remember that John Calvin, in defending the Reformation's regulative principle of worship, or what is sometimes called the scriptural law of worship, commenting on the words of God, which I commanded them not, neither came into my heart, from his commentary on Jeremiah 731, writes, God here cuts off from men every occasion for making evasions, since he condemns by this one phrase, I have not commanded them, whatever the Jews devised. There is then no other argument needed to condemn superstitions than that they are not commanded by God. For when men allow themselves to worship God according to their own fancies, and attend not to his commands, they pervert true religion.

And if this principle was adopted by the Papists, all those fictitious modes of worship in which they absurdly exercise themselves would fall to the ground. It is indeed a horrible thing for the Papists to seek to discharge their duties towards God by performing their own superstitions. There is an immense number of them, as it is well known, and as it manifestly appears.

Were they to admit this principle, that we cannot rightly worship God except by obeying his word, they would be delivered from their deep abyss of error. The prophet's words then are very important, when he says that God had commanded no such thing, and that it never came to his mind. As though he had said that men assume too much wisdom, when they devise what he never required, nay, what he never knew.

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