

Wrong Revival Principles - Part 2

by Jonathan Edwards

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and meekness in Christian behavior, particularly in the face of opposition, and warns against the dangers of spiritual pride.

Duration: 45:24

Scripture: Genesis 5:6, Jeremiah 1:7, Zechariah 13:5, Romans 8:14, Galatians 5:18, 2 Timothy 3:16, Revelation 3:9-10

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of receiving new revelations from God through impressions or signs. He argues that if a person receives a strong impression or sign, such as a specific scripture coming to mind, it should be interpreted as a new revelation from God. These new revelations may contain entirely new propositions or truths that are not explicitly stated in the scripture. The preacher also emphasizes the importance of ministers of the gospel being clothed with a spirit of innocence and gentleness, while also wielding the sharp sword of the word of God to awaken and convict consciences.

Transcript

And herein he follows the example of his meek and lowly Redeemer, who did not keep up such a separation and distance as the Pharisees, but freely ate with publicans and sinners, that he might win them. The eminently humble Christian is as it were clothed with lowliness, mildness, meekness, gentleness of spirit and behavior, and with a soft, sweet, condescending, winning air and deportment. These things are just like garments to him.

He is clothed all over with them. 1 Peter 5.5 And be clothed with humility. Colossians 3.12 Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved vows of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.

Pure Christian humility has no such thing as roughness, or contempt, or fierceness, or bitterness in its nature. It makes a person like a little child, harmless and innocent, that none need to be afraid of, or like a lamb, destitute of all bitterness, wrath, anger, and clamor, agreeable to Ephesians 4.31. With such a spirit as this ought especially zealous ministers of the gospel to be clothed, and those that God is pleased to employ as instruments in his hands of promoting his work. They ought indeed to be thorough in preaching the word of God without mincing the matter at all, and handling the sword of the Spirit as the ministers of the Lord of hosts.

They ought not to be mild and gentle. They are not to be gentle and moderate in searching and awakening the conscience, but should be thunders of thunder. The word of God, which is in itself sharper than any two-edged sword, ought not to be sheathed by its ministers, but so used that its sharp edges may have their full effect, even to the dividing asunder, soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

Yet they should do it without judging particular persons, leaving it to conscience and the Spirit of God to make the particular application. But all their conversation should savor of nothing but lowliness and goodwill, love and pity to all of mankind, so that such a spirit would be like a sweet odor to diffuse around them wherever they go. They should be like lions to guilty consciences, but like lambs to men's persons.

This would have no tendency to prevent the awakening of men's consciences, but on the contrary would have a very great tendency to awaken them. It would make way for the sharp sword to enter. It would remove the obstacles and make a naked breast for the arrow.

Yea, the amiable Christlike conversation of such ministers in itself would terrify the consciences of men, as well as their terrible preaching. Both would cooperate to subdue the hard and bring down the proud heart. If there had been constantly and universally observable such a behavior as this in itinerant preachers, it would have terrified the consciences of sinners ten times as much as all the invectives and the censorious talk there has been concerning particular persons for their opposition, hypocrisy, delusion, pharisaism, and so on.

These things in general have rather stupefied sinners' consciences. They take them up and make use of them as a shield, wherewith to defend themselves from the sharp arrows of the word that are shot by these preachers. The enemies of the present world have been glad of these things with all their hearts.

Many of the most bitter of them are probably such as in the beginning of this work had their consciences sometimes galled and terrified with it. But these errors of awakening preachers are the things they chiefly make use of as plasters to heal the sword that was made in their consciences. Spiritual pride takes great notice of opposition and injuries that are received and is apt to be often speaking of them, and to be much in taking notice of their aggravations, either with an air of bitterness or contempt.

Whereas pure and unmixed Christian humility disposes a person rather to be like his blessed Lord when reviled, dumb, not opening his mouth, but committing himself in silence to him that judges righteously. The imminently humble Christian, the more clamorous and furious the world is against him, the more silent and still will he be, unless it be in his closet, and there he will not be still. Our blessed Lord Jesus seems never to have been so silent as when the world compassed him around, reproaching, buffeting, and spitting on him with loud and virulent outcries and horrible cruelties.

There has been a great deal too much talk of late among many of the true and zealous friends of religion about opposition and persecution. It becomes the followers of the Lamb of God when the world is in an uproar about them and full of clamor against him, not to raise another noise to answer it, but to be still and quiet. It is not beautiful at such a time to have pulpits in conversation ring with the sound of persecution, persecution, or with abundant talk about Pharisees, carnal persecutors, and the seed of the serpent.

Meekness and quietness among God's people when opposed and reviled would be the surest way to have God remarkably to appear for their defense. It is particularly observed of Moses on occasion of Aaron and Miriam envying him, and rising up in opposition against him, that he was very meek above all men upon the face of the earth. Numbers 12 verse 3 Doubtless because he remarkably showed his meekness on

that occasion, being wholly silent under the abuse.

And how remarkable is the account that follows of God's being as it were suddenly roused to appear for his vindication. What high honor did he put upon Moses, and how severe were his rebukes of his opposers. This story is very remarkable and worthy everyone's observation.

Nothing is so effectual to bring God down from heaven in the defense of his people as their patience and meekness under sufferings. When Christ girds his sword upon his thigh with his glory and majesty, and in his majesty rise prosperously, his right hand teaching him terrible things. It is because of truth and meekness and righteousness.

Psalm 45 verse 3 and 4 God will cause judgment to be heard from heaven. The earth shall fear and be still, and God will arise to judgment to save all the meek of the earth. Psalm 76 verse 8 and 9 He will lift up the meek and cast the wicked down to the ground.

He will reprove with equity for the meek of the earth, and will smite the earth with a rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips will he slay the wicked. Isaiah 11 verse 4 The great commendation that Christ gives the church of Philadelphia is, Thou hast kept the word of my patience. Revelation 3 verse 10 We may see what reward he promises her in the preceding verse.

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and worship at thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Thus it is that we might expect to have Christ appear for us, if under all the reproaches we are loaded with, we behaved ourselves with a lamb-like meekness and gentleness.

But if our spirits are raised, and we are vehement and noisy with our complaints under color of Christian zeal, this will be to take upon us our defense, and God will leave it with us, to vindicate our cause as well as we can. Yea, if we go on in a way of bitterness and high censuring, it will be the way to have him rebuke us, and put us to shame before our enemies. Here some may be ready to say, It is not in our own cause that we are thus vehement, but it is in the cause of God.

And the apostle directed the primitive Christians to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. But how was it that the primitive Christians contended earnestly for the faith? They defended the truth with arguments and a holy conversation, but yet gave their reasons with meekness and fear. They contended earnestly for the faith by fighting violently against their own unbelief and the corruption of their hearts.

Yea, they resisted unto blood, striving against sin. But the blood that was shed in this earnest strife was their own blood, and not the blood of their enemies. It was in the cause of God that Peter was so fierce, and drew his sword, and began a smite with it.

But Christ bid them put up his sword again, telling him that they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. And while Peter wounds, Christ heals. They contend the most violently are the greatest conquerors in a time of persecution, who bear it with the greatest meekness and patience.

Great humility improves even the reflections and reproaches of enemies to put upon serious self-examination, whether or not there be not some just cause, whether they have not in some respect given occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully. Whereas spiritual pride improves such reflections to make them the more bold and confident, and to go the greater length than that for which they are found

fault with. I desire it may be considered whether there has been nothing amiss of late among the true friends of vital piety in this respect, whether the words of David, when reviled by Michael, have not been misinterpreted and misapplied to justify them in it when he said, I will be yet more vile and will be base in mine own sight.

The import of his words is that he would humble himself yet more before God, being sensible that he was far from being sufficiently abased. And he signifies this too, Michael, that he longed to be yet lower, and had designed already to abase himself more in his behavior, not that he would go the greater length to show his regardlessness of her revilings, that would be to exalt himself and not to abase himself as more vile in his own sight. Another effect of spiritual pride is a certain unsuitable and self-confident boldness before God and men.

Thus some, in their great rejoices before God, have not paid a sufficient regard to that rule in Psalm 2, verse 11. They have not rejoiced with a reverential trembling and a proper sense of the awful majesty of God and the awful distance between Him and them. There has also been an improper boldness before men that has been encouraged and defended.

By a misapplication of that scripture, Proverbs 29, 25, the fear of man bringeth a snare. As though it became all persons high and low, men, women, and children, in all religious conversation wholly to divest themselves of all manner of shamefacedness, modesty, or reverence towards men, which is a great error and quite contrary to Scripture. There is a fear of reverence that is due to some, in Romans 13, verse 7. Fear? To whom fear? Honor? To whom honor? There is a fear of modesty and shamefacedness and inferiors towards superiors, which is amiable and required by Christian rules.

1 Peter 3, verse 2. While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 1 Timothy 2, verse 9. In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. The apostle means that this virtue shall have place not only in civil communication, but also in spiritual communication, and in our religious concerns and behavior, as is evident by what follows, verses 11 and 12.

Let the women learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. Not that I would hence infer that women's mouths should be shut up from Christian conversation, but all that I mean from it at this time is, that modesty or shamefacedness and reverence towards men ought to have some place, even in our religious communication one with another.

The same is also evident by 1 Peter 3, verse 15. Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. It is well if that very fear and shamefacedness which the apostle recommends have not sometimes been condemned under the name of a cursed fear of man.

It is beautiful for persons when they are at prayer as a mouth of others, to make God only their fear and their dread, and to be wholly forgetful of men present, who, let them be great or small, are nothing in the presence of the great God. And it is beautiful for a minister, when he speaks in the name of the Lord of hosts, to be bold and to put off all fear of men. And it is beautiful in private Christians, though they are women and even children, to be bold and profess in the faith of Christ, in the practice of all religion, and in owning God's hand in the work of His power and grace without any fear of men, though they should be reproached as fools and madmen, frowned upon by great men, and cast off by parents and all the world.

But for private Christians, women and others, to instruct, rebuke, and exhort with the like sort of boldness as becomes a minister, when preaching, is not beautiful. Some have been bold in things that have really been errors, and have gloried in their boldness in practicing them, though odd and irregular. Those who have gone the greatest length in these things, have been by some most highly esteemed as appearing bold for the Lord Jesus Christ, and fully on His side, while others who have professed to be godly, and who have condemned such things, have been spoken of as enemies of the cross of Christ, or at least very cold and dead.

Thus many, that of themselves were not inclined to such practices, have by this means been driven on, being ashamed to be behind, and accounted poor soldiers for Christ. Another effect of spiritual pride is to make the subject of it assuming. It often times makes it natural to persons so to act and speak, as though in a special manner it belonged to them to be taken notice of and much regarded.

It is very natural to a person that is much under the influence of spiritual pride, to take all the respect that is paid him. If others show a disposition to submit to him, and yield him the deference of a preceptor, he is open to it, and freely admits it. Yea, it is natural for him to expect such treatment, and to take much notice if he fails of it, and to have an ill opinion of others that do not pay him that which he looks upon as his prerogative.

He is apt to think that it belongs to him to speak, and to clothe himself with a judicial and dogmatical air in conversation, and to take it upon him as what belongs to him, to give forth his sentence, and to determine and decide. Whereas pure Christian humility vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly, and is apt to prefer others in honor. One under the influence of spiritual pride is more apt to instruct others than to inquire for himself, and naturally puts on the airs of a master.

Whereas one that is full of pure humility naturally has on the air of a disciple. His voice is, What shall I do? What shall I do that I may live more to God's honor? What shall I do with this wicked heart? He is ready to receive instruction from anybody, agreeable to James 1, verse 19, Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak. The eminently humble Christian thinks he wants help from everybody, whereas he that is spiritually proud thinks that everybody wants his help.

Christian humility, under a sense of others' misery, entreats and beseeches, but spiritual pride affects to command and warn with authority. There ought to be the utmost watchfulness against all such appearances of spiritual pride, and all that profess to have been the subjects of this work, and especially in the promoters of it, but above all in itinerant preachers. The most imminent gifts and highest tokens of God's favor and blessing will not excuse them.

Alas, what is man at his best to state? What is the most highly favored Christian, or the most eminent and successful minister, that he should now think he is sufficient for something, and somebody to be regarded, that he should go forth and act among his fellow creatures as if he were wise and strong and good? Ministers who have been the principal instruments of carrying on this glorious revival of religion, and whom God has made use of to bring up his people as it were out of Egypt, should take heed that they do not provoke God as Moses did, by assuming too much to themselves, and by their intemperate zeal to shut them out from seeing the good things that God is going to do for his church in this world. The fruits of Moses' unbelief, which provoke God to shut him out of Canaan, and not to suffer him to partake of those great things God was about to do for Israel, were chiefly these two things. First, his mingling bitterness with his zeal.

He had a great zeal for God, and he could not bear to see the intolerable stiff-neckedness of the people, that they did not acknowledge the work of God, and were not convinced by all his wonders that they had seen. But human passion was mingled with his zeal. Psalm 106, 32 and 33 They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes, because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

Hear now, ye rebels, says he, with bitterness of language. Secondly, he behaved himself and spake with an assuming air. He assumed too much to himself.

Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock? Spiritual pride wrought in Moses at that time. His temptations to it were very great, for he had had great discoveries of God, and had been privileged with intimate and sweet communion with Him. And God had made him the instrument of great good to His church.

But though he was so humble a person, by God's own testimony, meek above all men upon the face of the whole earth, yet his temptations were too strong for him. We surely should make our young ministers, that have of late been highly favored, and have had great success, exceeding careful and distrustful of themselves. Alas, how far are we from having the strength of holy, meek, aged Moses! The temptation at this day is exceeding great to both those errors that Moses was guilty of.

There is great temptation to bitterness, and corrupt passion with zeal, for there is so much unreasonable opposition made against this glorious work of God, and so much stiff-neckedness manifested in multitudes of this generation, notwithstanding all the great and wonderful works in which God has passed before them, that it greatly tends to provoke the spirits of such as have the interest of this work at heart, so as to move them to speak unadvisedly with their lips. And there is also great temptation to unassuming behavior in some persons. When a minister is greatly succeeded from time to time, and so draws the eyes of the multitude upon him, when he sees himself followed, resorted to as an oracle, and people ready to adore him, and as it were to offer sacrifice to him, as it was with Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, it is almost impossible for a man to avoid taking upon him the heirs of a master, or some extraordinary person.

A man had need to have a great stock of humility, and much divine assistance to resist the temptation. But the greater our dangers are, the more ought to be our watchfulness, prayerfulness, and diffidence, lest we bring ourselves into mischief. Fishermen who have been very successful have caught a great many fish, and need to be careful that they do not at length begin to burn incense to their net.

And we should take warning by Gideon, who after God had highly favored and exalted him, and made him the instrument of work and a wonderful deliverance for his people, at length made a god of the spoils of his enemies, which became a snare to him and to his house, so as to prove the ruin of his family. All young ministers in this day of bringing up the ark of God should take warning by the example of a young Levite in Israel, Uzzah the son of Abinadab. He seemed to have a real concern for the ark of God, and to be zealous and engaged in his mind on that joyful occasion of bringing it up.

God made him an instrument to bring the ark out of its long-continued obscurity in Kurgess-Jerom, and he was succeeded to bring it a considerable way towards Mount Zion. But for want of humility, reverence, and circumspection, and assuming or taking too much upon him, God broke forth upon him and smote him for his error, so that he never lived to see and partake of the great joy of his church on occasion of the carrying up the ark into Mount Zion, and the great blessings of heaven upon Israel consequent upon it. Ministers employed to carry on this work have been chiefly of the younger sort, who have doubtless, as

Uzzah, had a real concern for the ark.

And it is evident that they are much animated and engaged in their minds, as he was in this joyful day of bringing up the ark. They are afraid what will become of the ark under the conduct of its ministers. They see it shakes, and they are afraid these blundering oxen will throw it.

Some of them, it is to be feared, have been over-officious on this occasion, have assumed too much to themselves, and have been bold to put forth their hand to take hold of the ark, as though they were the only fit and worthy persons to defend it. If young ministers had great humility without a corrupt mixture, it would dispose them especially to treat aged ministers with respect and reverence. As their fathers, notwithstanding that a sovereign God may have given themselves greater assistance and success, 1 Peter 5, verse 5, Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.

Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Leviticus 19, verse 32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God, I am the Lord. If spiritual pride disposes persons to assume much to themselves, so it also disposes them to treat others with neglect.

On the contrary, pure Christian humility disposes persons to honour all men, agreeable to that rule. 1 Peter 2, verse 17 There has been in some, who I believe are true friends of religion, too great appearance of this fruit of spiritual pride in their treatment of those whom they looked upon to be carnal men, and particularly in refusing to enter into any discourse or reasoning with them. Indeed, to spend a great deal of time in jangling and warm debates about religion is not the way to propagate, but to hinder it.

And some are so dreadfully set against this work that it is a dismal task to dispute with them. All that one can say is utterly in vain. I have found it so by experience.

To enter into disputes about religion is sometimes quite unseasonable, particularly in meeting for religious conference or exercises of worship. But yet we ought to be very careful that we do not refuse to discourse with men with any appearance of a supercilious neglect, as though we counted them not worthy to be regarded. On the contrary, we should condescend to carnal men, as Christ has condescended to us, to bear with our unteachableness and stupidity.

He still follows us with instructions, line upon line and precept upon precept, saying, Come, let us reason together, setting light before us, and using all manner of arguments with us, and waiting upon such dull scholars as it were hoping that we should receive light. We should be ready with meekness and calmness, without hot disputing, to give our reasons why we think this work is a work of God, to carnal men when they ask us, and not turn them by as not worthy to be talked with, as the Apostle directed the primitive Christians, to be ready to give a reason of the Christian faith and hope to the enemies of Christianity. Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

We ought not to condemn all reasoning about things of religion under the name of carnal reason. For my part, I desire no better than that those who oppose this work should fairly submit to have the cause betwixt us tried by strict reasoning. One qualification that the Scripture speaks of once and again, as requisite in a minister, is that he should be apt to teach 1 Timothy 3 verse 2. And the Apostle seems to explain what he means by it in 2 Timothy 2 verse 24 and 25.

Or at least there expresses one thing that he intends by it. That is, that a minister should be ready, meekly, to condescend to and instruct the opposers. And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

Section number 2 Another cause of errors in conduct attending a religious revival is the adoption of wrong principles. One erroneous principle, then, which scarce any has proved more mischievous to the present glorious work of God, is a notion that it is God's manner in these days to guide His saints, at least some that are more imminent, by inspiration or immediate revelation. They suppose He makes known to them what shall come to pass or after, or what it is His will that they should do by impressions made upon their minds, either with or without texts of Scripture, whereby something is made known to them that is not taught in the Scripture.

By such a notion the devil has a great door open for him, and if once this opinion should come to be fully yielded to and established in the church of God, Satan would have opportunity, thereby, to set up himself as the guide and oracle of God's people, and to have his word regarded as their infallible rule, and so to leave them where he would, and to introduce what he pleased, and soon to bring the Bible into neglect and contempt. Late experience, in some instances, has shown that the tendency of this notion is to cause persons to esteem the Bible as in a great measure useless. This error will defend and support errors.

As long as a person has a notion that he is guided by immediate direction from heaven, it makes him incorrigible and impregnable in all his misconduct. For what signifies it for poor blind worms of the dust to go to argue with a man and endeavor to convince him and correct him that is guided by the immediate counsels and commands of the great Jehovah? This great work of God has been exceedingly hindered by this error. Until we have quite taken this handle out of the devil's hands, the work of God will never go on without great clogs and hindrances.

Satan will always have a vast advantage in his hands against it, and as he has improved it hitherto, so he will do still. And it is evident that the devil knows the vast advantage he has by it that makes him exceedingly lofty to let go his hold. It is strange what a disposition there is in many well-disposed and religious persons to fall in with and hold fast this notion.

It is enough to astonish one that such multiplied plain instances of the felling of such supposed revelations in the event do not open everyone's eyes. I have seen so many instances of the felling of such impressions that would almost furnish a history. I have been acquainted with them when made under all kinds of circumstances, and have seen them fail in the event when made with such circumstances as have been fairest and brightest and most promising.

They have been made upon the minds of apparently eminent saints, and with an excellent heavenly frame of spirit, yet continued, and made with texts of Scripture that seemed exceedingly opposite. Yea, many texts following one another were extraordinarily and wonderfully brought to the mind, and the impressions repeated over and over, and yet all has most manifestly come to nothing to the full conviction of the persons themselves. God has in so many instances of late in his providence covered such things with darkness that one would think it should be enough quite to blank the expectations of those who have been ready to think highly of such things.

It seems to be a testimony of God that he has no design of reviving revelations in his church, in a rebuke from him to the groundless expectations of it. It seems to me that Zechariah 13 verse 5 is a prophecy

concerning ministers of the gospel in the latter and glorious days of the Christian church, which is evidently spoken of in this and the foregoing chapters. The words I apprehended are to be interpreted in a spiritual sense.

I am an husbandman. The work of ministers is very often in the New Testament compared to the business of the husbandman, that take care of God's husbandry to whom he lets out his vineyard and sends them forth to labor in his field, where one plants and another watches, one sows and another reaps. So ministers are called laborers in God's harvest.

And as it is added, men taught me to keep cattle from my youth. So the work of a minister is very often in Scripture represented by the business of a shepherd or pastor. Whereas it is said, I am no prophet, but man taught me from my youth, it is as much as to say, I do not pretend to have received my skill, whereby I am fitted for the business of a pastor or shepherd in the church of God by immediate inspiration, but by education, by being trained up to the business by human learning and instructions received from my youth or childhood by ordinary means.

And why cannot we be contented with the divine oracles, that holy pure word of God which we have in such abundance and clearness, now since the canon of Scripture is completed? Why should we desire to have anything added to them by impulses from above? Why should we not rest in that standing rule that God has given to his church, which the apostle teaches us is surer than a voice from heaven? And why should we desire to make the Scripture speak more to us than it does? Or why should any desire a higher kind of intercourse with heaven than by having the Holy Spirit given in his sanctifying influences, infused in an exciting grace and holiness, love and joy, which is the highest kind of intercourse that the saints and angels in heaven have with God and the chief excellency of the glorified man Christ Jesus? Some that follow impulses and impressions indulge a notion that they do no other than follow the guidance of God's word because the impression is made with the text of Scripture that comes to their mind. But they take that text as it is impressed on their minds and improve it as a new revelation to all intents and purposes, while the text as it is in the Bible implies no such thing. They themselves do not suppose that any such revelation was contained in it before.

Suppose, for instance, that text should come into a person's mind with strong impression, Acts 9, 6. Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And he should interpret it as an immediate signification of the will of God that he should now forthwith go to such a neighboring town, and there he should meet with a further discovery of his duty. If such things as these are revealed by the impression of these words, it is to all intents a new revelation, not the less because certain words of Scripture are made use of in the case.

Here are propositions or truths entirely new that those words do not contain. These propositions, that it is God's mind and will that such a person by name should arise at such a time and go to such a place, and that there he should meet with discoveries, are entirely new propositions, wholly different from those contained in that text of Scripture. They are no more implied in the words themselves without a new revelation than it is implied that he should arise and go to any other place, or that any other person should arise and go to that place.

The propositions supposed to be now revealed are as really different from those contained in that Scripture as they are from the propositions contained in that text, Genesis 5 verse 6. And Seth lived a hundred and five years and begot Enos. This is quite a different thing from the Spirit's enlightening the

mind to understand the words of God and know what is contained and revealed in them, what consequences may justly be drawn from them, and to see how they are applicable to our case and circumstances, which is done without any new revelation, only by enabling the mind to understand and apply a revelation already made. Those texts of Scripture that speak of the children of God as led by the Spirit have been by some brought to defend such impulses, particularly Romans 8, 14.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, in Galatians 5, 18. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. But these texts themselves confute them that bring them.

For it is evident that the leading of the Spirit which the Apostle speaks of is peculiar to the children of God, and that natural men cannot have. For he speaks of it as a sure evidence of there being the sons of God and not under the law. But a leading or directing of a person by immediately revealing to him where he should go, or what shall hereafter come to pass, or what shall be the future consequence of his doing thus or thus, if there be any such thing in these days, is not of the nature of the gracious leading of the Spirit of God, peculiar to God's children.

It is no more than a common gift. There is nothing in it but what natural men are capable of, and many of them have had in the days of inspiration. A man may have ten thousand such revelations and directions from the Spirit of God, and yet not have a jot of grace in his heart.

It is no more than the gift of prophecy, which immediately reveals what will be or should be hereafter. But this is only a common gift, as the Apostle expressly shows, 1 Corinthians 13, 2, and 8. If a person has anything revealed to him from God, or is directed to anything by a voice from heaven, or a whisper, or words immediately suggested to his mind, there is nothing of the nature of grace merely in this. It is of the nature of a common influence of the Spirit, and is but dross in comparison of the excellency of that gracious leading of the Spirit that the saints have.

Such a way of being directed, where one shall go and what he shall do, is no more than what Balaam had from God, who from time to time revealed to him what he should do, so that he was in this sense led by the Spirit for a considerable time. There is a more excellent way in which the Spirit leads the sons of God that natural men cannot have, and that is by inclining them to do the will of God, and go on in the shining path of truth and Christian holiness. From a holy, heavenly disposition, which the Spirit of God gives them, and which inclines and leads them to those things that are excellent and agreeable to God's mind, whereby they are transformed by the renewing of their minds, and prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12 verse 2 And so the Spirit of God does in a gracious manner teach the saints their duty, and he teaches them in a higher manner than ever Balaam or Saul or Judas were taught. The Spirit of God enlightens them with respect to their duty by making their eyes single and pure, whereby the whole body is full of light. The sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God rectifies the taste of the soul, whereby it savors those things that are of God, and naturally relishes and delights in those things that are holy and agreeable to God's mind.

And, like one of a distinguishing taste, it chooses those things that are good and wholesome, and rejects those that are evil. The sanctified ear tries words, and the sanctified heart tries actions. It is a mouse tastes meat.

And thus the Spirit of God leads and guides the meat in his way, agreeable to his promises. He enables them to understand the commands and counsels of his word, and rightly to apply them. Christ blames the Pharisees that they had not this holy distinguishing taste to discern and distinguish what was right and wrong.

Luke 12, 57 Yea, and why even of your own selves judge ye not what is right? The leading of the Spirit which God gives his children, and which is peculiar to them, is that teaching them his statutes and causing them to understand the way of his precepts, which the psalmist so very often prays for, especially in the 119th Psalm, and not in giving them new statutes and new precepts. He graciously gives them eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand. He causes them to understand the fear of the Lord, and so brings the blind by a way they knew not, and leads them in paths that they had not known, and makes darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.

So the assistance of the Spirit in praying and preaching seems by some to have been greatly misunderstood, and they have sought after a miraculous assistance of inspiration by the immediate suggestion of words to them, by such gifts and influences of the Spirit in praying and teaching as the apostle speaks of, 1 Corinthians 14, verse 14 and 26, which many natural men had in those days, instead of a gracious, holy assistance of the Spirit of God, which is a far more excellent way, as 1 Corinthians 12, 31, and 13, verse 1. The gracious and most excellent assistance of the Spirit of God in praying and preaching is not by immediately suggested words to the apprehension, which may be with a cold dead heart, but by warming the heart, and filling it with a great sense of things to be spoken, and with holy affections that these may suggest words. Thus indeed, the Spirit of God may be said, indirectly, immediately, to suggest words to us, to indict our petitions for us, and to teach the preacher what to say. He feels the heart, and that feels the mouth.

We know that when men are greatly affected in any matter, and their hearts are very full, it fills them with matter for speech, and makes them eloquent upon that subject. And much more have spiritual affections this tendency, for many reasons that might be given. When a person is in a holy and lively frame in secret prayer, or in Christian conversation, it will wonderfully supply him with matter, and with expressions, as every true Christian knows.

And it has the like tendency to enable a person in public prayer and preaching. And, if he has these holy influences of the Spirit on his heart in a high degree, nothing in the world will have so great a tendency to make both the matter and manner of his public performances excellent and profitable. But since there is no immediate suggesting of words from the Spirit of God to be expected or desired, they who neglect and despise study and premeditation in order to a preparation for the pulpit, in such an expectation are guilty of presumption.

Though doubtless it may be lawful for some persons in some cases, they may be called to it, to preach with very little study. And the Spirit of God, by the heavenly frame of heart that He gives them, may enable them to do it to excellent purpose. Besides, this most excellent way of the Spirit of God assisting ministers in public performances, which considered as a preacher's privilege, far excels inspiration.

There is a common assistance which natural men may have in these days, in which the godly may have intermingled with a gracious assistance, which is also very different from inspiration, and that is, his assisting natural principles, as a natural apprehension, reason, memory, conscience, and natural affection. But, to return to the head of impressions and immediate revelations, many lay themselves open

to a delusion by expecting direction from heaven in this way, and waiting for it. In such a case, it is easy for persons to imagine that they have it.

They are perhaps at a loss concerning something, undetermined what they shall do, or what course they shall take in some affair. And they pray to God to direct them, and make known to them His mind and will. And then, instead of expecting to be directed, by being assisted in considering the rules of God's word, His providence, and their circumstances, to look on things in the true light, and justly to weigh them, they are waiting for some secret, immediate influence, unaccountably swaying their minds, and turning their thoughts or inclinations that way in which God would have them to go.

Hereby they are exposed to two things. First, they lay themselves open to the devil, and give him a fair opportunity to lead them where he pleases. For they stand ready to follow the first extraordinary impulse that they shall have, groundlessly concluding it is from God.

Secondly, they are greatly exposed to be deceived by their own imaginations. For such an expectation awakens and quickens the imagination, and that oftentimes is called an uncommon impression. That is no such thing.

They ascribe that to the agency of some invisible being which is own only to themselves. This Reformation audio track is a production of Stillwater's Revival Books. SWRB makes thousands of classic Reformation resources available, free and for sale, in audio, video, and printed formats.

Our many free resources, as well as our complete mail-order catalog, containing thousands of classic and contemporary Puritan and Reform books, tapes, and videos at great discounts, is on the web them not, neither came into my heart." From his commentary on Jeremiah 7.31, 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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