

The Regulative Principle of Church (John 2:13-17)

Introduction: Review

1. *Feeling: You shall rejoice in the Lord your God (Deut 12: 7, 12, 18)*

2. *Form: Take care to obey all that I command you, neither adding nor taking away (Deut 12)*

(a) *Not like the Canaanites (v. 2-5)*

(b) *Not "every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes" (v. 8-12)*

(c) *Not adding or taking away (v. 32)*

3. *"The Regulative Principle"*

- "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:6-7).
- "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." (Deu 12:32)
- "These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." (Col 2:23)
- The **normative principle** says, "Whatever is not forbidden is permitted." "If any tradition is not contrary to Scripture, it is for Scripture and Scripture for it" (Luther).
- The **regulative principle** on the other hand says, "Whatever is not commanded is forbidden."

Exposition: *"And he shall purify"—or, why Jesus is so upset? (v. 16)*

What sin have they committed that so rouses his holy anger? The answer is found in verse 16: they have made his father's *house* into a *house* of merchandise, or some of you have a market, or a place of business. And he tells the people to take these things away!

If you ask, "Where are these things forbidden," you have asked the wrong question, because you will search in vain. The question you need to ask is, "Where are these things commanded?"

Application: *The need for a holy Christ-like cleansing in God's house*

And we need today a holy Christ-like cleansing in the house of God. George Barna says, "Think of your church not as a religious meeting place, but as a service agency--an entity that exists to satisfy people's needs." Michael Horton says, "It's a religion of the mall, by the mall, and for the mall." It's a total consumer mentality. If it works, and the people like it, God must be happy. The worshipper and the customer are always right.

Before you get involved in any money-changing ministries within the courts of God, and before you avail yourselves of any houses of merchandise that operate under the name of church, consider. Consider the zeal of your savior when he saw these things in his father's house. Consider whether it would be better for you to make a whip of cords and drive these things out in his name. And say to all these lawful activities happening in an unlawful place, "Take these things away!"

In Christ, we see what a man ought to be in the presence of sacrilege, how a holy man will feel and act, if he has the honor of God and the good of God's people burning in his heart.