

## Calvin on Lent, Ash Wednesday, and Good Friday

John Calvin expressed the idolatrous tendency of such religious holidays and seasons as Lent, Ash Wednesday, and Good Friday [Holy Friday] in his commentary on 1 Timothy 4:1-3:

Accordingly, although Papists laugh at us, when we censure their tyrannical laws about outward ceremonies, yet we know that we are pleading a cause of the greatest weight and importance; because the doctrine of faith is destroyed, as soon as the worship of God is infected by such corruptions. The controversy is not about flesh or fish, or about a black<sup>1</sup> or ashy color, or about [Black/Holy] Friday or [Ash] Wednesday, but about the mad superstitions of men, who wish to appease God by such trifles, and, by contriving a carnal worship of him, contrive for themselves an idol instead of God. Who will deny that this is revolting from the faith?<sup>2</sup>

. . . it is not an error of small importance, or one that ought to be concealed, when consciences are bound by the contrivances of men, and at the same time the worship of God is corrupted.<sup>3</sup>

1 Timothy 4:1-3: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." (NKJV)

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1 Good Friday is also known as "Black Friday." "The vestments used [today in the Roman Catholic Church] are red. Before 1970, they were black except for the Communion part of the rite, for which violet was used, and before 1955 black was used throughout." Electronically retrieved 28 January 2009 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good\\_Friday#cite\\_note-sanctamissa.org-14](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Friday#cite_note-sanctamissa.org-14).

2 John Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. Rev. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 98.

3 *Ibid.*, 99.