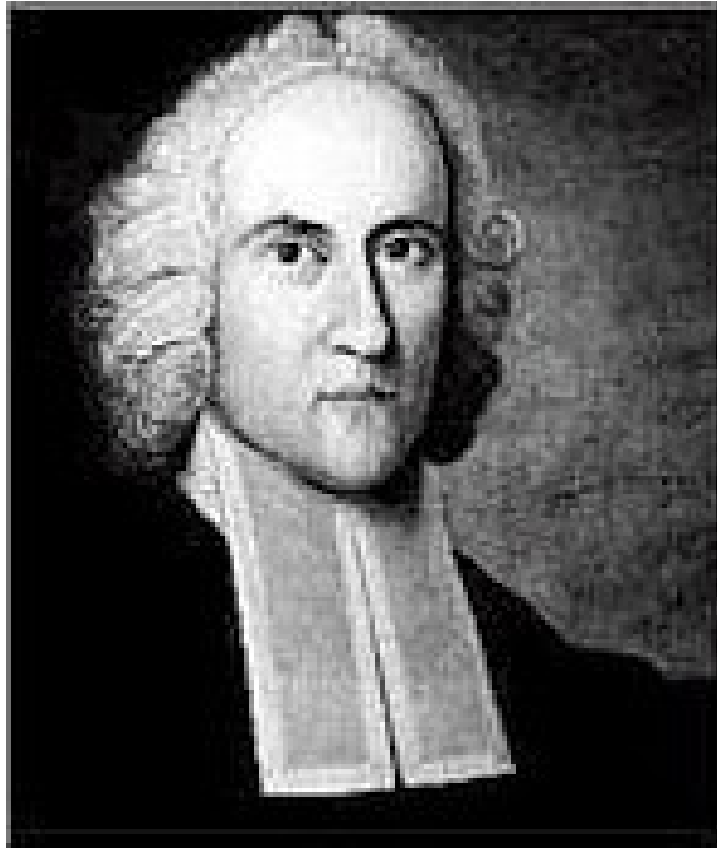


THE RESOLUTIONS OF  
**JONATHAN EDWARDS**



*Jonathan Edwards*

**RESOLVED:** *never to lose one moment of time;  
but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.*



**THE RESOLUTIONS OF**  
**JONATHAN EDWARDS**  
 HOW EDWARDS PURSUED  
 THE GLORY OF GOD (III)

“Mr. Edwards is a solid, excellent Christian...I think I have not seen his fellow in all New England.”<sup>1</sup>

❖ George Whitefield

**I**f you were to ask me who was the greatest American pastor over the last 300 years, I believe the answer is Jonathan Edwards. If you were to ask me who was the greatest American preacher over the last three centuries, my answer is the same—Jonathan Edwards. If you were to ask me who was the greatest theologian/philosopher to ever live on America over the same 300 years, the answer is again, Jonathan Edwards. And if you were to ask me who is the most profound author America has ever produced over the last 300 years, once again, the answer is Jonathan Edwards. But Edwards did not become this spiritual force for God overnight. Like every believer, he was a work of grace in progress, one in whom God had been at work since his teenage years.

By the time Jonathan Edwards was nineteen years old, he was firmly resolved to live for the glory of God. So serious was Edwards to achieve this life goal that he wrote his *Resolutions* to help chart a carefully defined course in this direction. These resolutions would serve as his personal mission statement for the rest of his life. They were a series of seventy purpose statements, each beginning with the strong, affirmation “Resolved.” These *Resolutions* recorded his supreme desire to live wholeheartedly for God’s honor and to discipline himself to reach this end. Edwards was unshakably determined to live for the glory of God. The first four resolutions made that ambition abundantly clear. Edwards was, according to J. I. Packer, “God-centered, God-focused, God-intoxicated, and God-entranced.”<sup>2</sup> “There is no overstatement here,” Packer writes. “Every day, from morning till night, he sought to live in conscious communion with God.” That was the unmistakable heartbeat of Jonathan Edwards.

<sup>1</sup> George Whitefield, *Journals*, (Edinburgh & Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1998) Oct. 17, 1740.

<sup>2</sup> J. I. Packer, “The Glory of god and the Reviving of Religion,” *A God-Entranced Vision of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 86.

## THE “NITTY-GRITTY” OF GLORIFYING GOD

The only question that remained for Edwards was this: *How* would he, practically speaking, live this out? What major areas of his life must be mastered and disciplined and brought under the control of the Lordship of Christ? The answers to these pressing questions would be the focus of the remaining resolutions. For Edwards, the pursuit of the glory of God was *not* something ethereal or philosophical, *not* disconnected from the “nitty-gritty” of daily life. This was *not* a “heady” mind game to be carried out in a remote ivory tower somewhere, far removed from the realities of life. Instead, Edwards believed that the practical outworking of God’s glory in his life would involve things very down-to-earth, day-to-day, and commonplace. The glory of God would be lived out in the basic, routine, daily grind of life—such things as the use of his time, the tongue, eating and drinking, Bible study and prayer, honoring parents, love for others, self-examination, repentance, and more. Thus, as Edwards wrote the remaining resolutions, they dealt with matters of intense *practicality*—we would say, “where the rubber meets the road.”

### BRUTALLY PRACTICAL

So, having established this core foundation in the first four resolutions, the question then remained, *how?* *How* would Edwards conduct himself in a practical, daily way so as to most glorify God with his life? Beginning with the fifth resolution and going all the way through the seventieth, which brings them to conclusion, Edwards gave careful thought as to the *necessary means* that would achieve this *highest end*. In other words, he knew what he wanted to be the highest goal for his life. It was to glorify God. *How* could he most glorify God? As Edwards took his Bible and as he looked within his heart, he tried to bring the two together. He purposed to match the Scripture with his life.

## LIVING WITH AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

At the heart of the remaining sixty-six resolutions, Jonathan Edwards documented his desire to live with an *eternal perspective*. Many of these resolutions deal with a focus upon three crucial subjects: *time*, *death*, and *eternity*. Each of these played a critical part of Edwards living this way with an *eternal* perspective. He must live with *eternity* stamped upon his eyeballs—even as an eighteen year old boy. The pressing nature of *eternity* must govern and guide the way he lived within time. If he lost sight of eternity, his time would be misspent, misused, and wasted. Specifically, Edwards fixed his gaze upon the *shortness* of time, the *certainty* of death, and the *length* of eternity. Gazing upon those three realities would help bring his life into focus. Consequently, many of the remaining resolutions deal with these three subjects. This will be the focus of this study.

### I. RESOLUTION #5: “NEVER TO LOSE ONE MOMENT OF TIME”

For Edwards, time was a very precious commodity, something very valuable and utterly irreplaceable when lost. What time he had belonged to God. Edwards rightly understood that he was only a steward of his time. It was on loan from God and must be invested wisely. With the majority of his life yet before him, this young Puritan wanted every

remaining moment to strategically count for God’s glory. He must not waste his life, nor his time. These two—his *life* and his *time*—were inseparably connected together. If he was to glorify God with his life, then he must redeem the time allotted to him. The misuse of his time would dishonor God. Thus, the profitable use of his time was a medium by which he would glorify the Lord.

**5. Resolved**, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.<sup>3</sup>

## A. VALUE YOUR TIME

### “NEVER TO LOSE...TIME”

Edwards realized that he had no time to lose while living in this world. Losing time was like losing money, only worse. Lost riches can be regathered—but not lost time. Once time is lost, it is lost forever, never to be recaptured. Once forfeited, it can never be replaced. Each person is allotted only so much time by God. The number of days, hours, and seconds that any person has, has already been determined by God, long before the world was created. The amount of time one has, has been ordained by God. Therefore, whatever time you have, it must be used very wisely.

“Since his **days** are **determined**, The number of his months is with You; And his **limits** You have set so that he **cannot pass**.

- Job 14:5

So teach us to number our **days**, That we may present to You a heart of **wisdom**.

- Psalm 90:12

Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The **days** that were **ordained** for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

- Psalm 139:16

Further, God has decreed certain *opportunities* within our allotted time which must be used for Him. These windows of time are opened to us by God, but only for a time. Those open doors will soon shut. They can only be entered at the God-appointed time. That door of opportunity will soon be shut. If that opened door is to be gone through, it must be done so *now*. It will soon be closing, perhaps never to open again. If that window of time is squandered and lost, it is lost forever. These are *divine appointments* within time, a divinely arranged season of time that will never be reproduced again. These opportunities are God-moments, orchestrated by God with eternal purposes at stake. Wise is the person who captures these God-created opportunities within time and uses for the glory of God.

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<sup>3</sup> *Memoirs*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh & Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1834, 1979), xx.

### **PASSING SEASONS, ACCEPTABLE TIMES**

There are seasons and times when God affords every believer to have ministry towards their children that can never be recovered – times to have ministry towards unbelievers that cannot be recaptured tomorrow. These seasons must be captured now.

Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a **time** when You may be found;

- Psalm 32:6a

But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Lord, at an **acceptable time**; O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness, Answer me with Your saving truth.

- Psalm 69:13

Seek the Lord **while** He may be found; Call upon Him **while** He is near.

- Isaiah 55:6

For Jonathan Edwards, he was resolved not to lose one moment *of* time, nor any opportunity *within* time. He must not allow any time to slip through his fingers. He must not squander either seconds nor seasons to serve God. Such a loss would utterly *fail* to glorify God. To waste one's time is to waste one's life. How does one waste their time away? In so many ways—by idleness, laziness, dullness, frivolousness, etc.—none of which Edwards purposed would creep into his life.

### **B. MAXIMIZE YOUR TIME**

#### **“IMPROVE IT THE MOST PROFITABLE WAY”**

Edwards believed that the proper use of his time must be continually improved upon if it is to be used most profitably. He must invest it with the greatest rate of return for eternity. He was committed to the fact that his time must always be being redirected and reinvested for eternal purposes. “The most profitable way” to use time is to spend it in what matters *most* for eternity. This fact necessitates investing every moment of every day for the glory of God. Every second invested in honoring God is *well* invested.

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your **time**, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

- Ephesians 5:15-17

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the **opportunity**.

- Colossians 4:5

## II. RESOLUTION #7: “IF IT WERE THE LAST HOUR OF MY LIFE”

Edwards also realized that he could best use his time only as he considered each hour to be the last hour of his life. As a result, he purposed never to do anything that he would not want to be found doing should it be the last hour of his life. Edwards stated:

7. **Resolved**, never to do anything that I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.<sup>4</sup>

Focusing upon the last hour of one’s life—those *final* minutes and moments when one will come to the end of this life—has a dramatic way of prioritizing *now* what is more important in life. Edwards desired to live *presently* for what would be most important in that future last hour. Edwards knew if he would always live as if it were his last hour, it would have the effect of restraining *sinful* thoughts, activities, and words. Further, it would have the effect of helping choose the highest ends in life. Not all choices in the use of one’s time are between *good* and *evil*. Some of the most difficult choices are between *good*, *better*, and *best*. Always living as if he were at the end of his life would cause him to keep short accounts with God and others—and live for what is best, the glory of God. It would help him live without unconfessed, unrepented of sin in his life. Further, always living as if *this* hour was his *last* hour would help keep *superficial* things *out* of his life. The last hour of one’s life has time only for what is *most* important. One’s final hour is a time for sharing the gospel with loved ones, determining that one’s salvation is in order, purposing that love be expressed with those who matter most, confessing all known sin, and so forth.

Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the **hour** has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.

- John 17:1

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is **finished!**” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

- John 19:30

### IF THIS WERE THE LAST HOUR OF YOUR LIFE

Let me ask you this: If you had one hour to live, how would you spend that last hour? What would be most pressing? Whatever would be most important in your life would certainly rise to the surface? Who would you need to tell that you love? To whom would you need to witness for Christ? What sin would be confessed? What wrong would need to be made right? What relationship would need to be restored? Whatever answer you would give to this revealing question, then that’s how you need to live right *now*. This is how Jonathan Edwards *resolved* to live his life.

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<sup>4</sup> *Memoirs*, xx.

### III. RESOLUTION #10: “THINK OF THE PAINS OF MARTYRDOM, HELL”

In order to maintain right perspective, Edwards *resolved* to think about the death of the martyrs, those saints whose lives had been so violently taken from them for the cause of the gospel. Further, he chose to think about the pains of damned souls in hell, suffering under the wrath of God. Whatever difficulty Edwards was experiencing was relatively minimal compared with the pains of martyrdom and hell. Maintaining this *eternal* perspective would build up his endurance in the midst of his trials and cause him to *press on* yet harder.

**10. Resolved,** Resolved, when I feel pain, to think of the pains of martyrdom, and of hell.<sup>5</sup>

#### A. THINK OF THE PAINS OF MARTRYDOM

##### “WHEN I FEEL PAIN, TO THINK OF THE PAINS OF MARTYRDOM”

Whenever Edwards felt pain, he compared it to the pains associated with martyrdom. Whatever physical illnesses and emotional hurts he would feel could not compare with the pains of those who met a violent death at the hands of their evil persecutors. Whatever disappointment he would experience in life and the ministry could *not* compare with the pains of martyrdom. Such a vantage point on life would keep him going strong.

He sent and had John **beheaded** in the prison. And his **head** was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.

- Matthew 14:10-11

When they had driven him out of the city, they began **stoning** him...They went on **stoning** Stephen...he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell **asleep**.

- Acts 7:58-60

#### THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS

I have certainly seen this resolution to be true in my own life. I have been greatly encouraged and strengthened by thinking of the pains of martyrdom. For the last several years, I have had glued inside the front cover of my preaching Bible a picture of John Rogers (1500-c.1555). He is there to remind me to be courageous whenever I preach. Rogers was the first martyr to be put to death under the reign of terror of Bloody Mary, Queen of England. He was suffered because of his commitment to preach the truth of God’s Word. Bloody Mary, this she-devil, had this godly pastor burned at the stake in front of his own church in the presence of a vast mob of thousands that gathered that day to witness this foul spectacle. The officials denied the requests of Rogers’ own family to see him the final weeks he was held in prison. As they led him away to the stake, his

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<sup>5</sup> *Memoirs, xx.*



own children burst through the crowd and ran to their father and wrapped their arms around him for only a passing moment before they pulled his children away from him and proceeded with the death march to the stake.

In the providence of God, He called me to live through a very difficult time a couple of years ago. It proved to be a time in which I had to pay a great price for preaching the truth of God's Word. As I went through my difficult experience which was most painful for me, I drew great courage and comfort from the picture and example of John Rogers. As I reflected upon his life, I realized that, compared to him, my life had been very easy. No one had tried to burn me at the stake. No one had denied my family access to me. The days after my ordeal, I was surrounded by hundreds of people who loved me. The truth is, it was good for me that I had meditated often upon the martyrdom of John Rogers. God used the heroic example of this man to keep me going strong.

## **B. THINK OF THE PAINS OF HELL**

### **“WHEN I FEEL PAIN, TO THINK OF THE PAINS...OF HELL”**

Even more graphically, Edwards also considered the pains of the damned in hell. Edwards believed that whenever he felt life's pains, he should compare it with the unspeakable torment of those already in hell. Such a perspective would put everything in right perspective. Whatever difficulty he was experiencing could not begin to compare with the full fury of the eternal wrath of God inflicted upon Christ-rejecting sinners. How could he complain in his trials? How could he whine in his troubles? Or give up? His ordeal was relatively insignificant when compared with the torment of the damned in hell.

The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the **furnace of fire**; in that place there will be **weeping** and **gnashing of teeth**.

- Matthew 13:41-42

In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in **torment**...Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in **agony** in this **flame**.

- Luke 16:23-24

he also will drink of the wine of the **wrath** of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His **anger**; and he will be **tormented** with **fire** and **brimstone** in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

- Revelation 14:10

#### IV. RESOLUTION #50: “WHEN I COME INTO THE FUTURE WORLD”

Edwards wanted his present life to be shaped by what ever would be most important upon entering the “future world”—heaven. Whatever would be most important *then*—in eternity—should be most important *now*—in this world. Thus, Edwards purposed to always live with an *eternal* perspective. He resolved to live with his eye *riveted* upon heaven and the eternal reward. He chose to be always looking away *from* this present world—with all its vain promises and empty pleasures—be looking *to* the eternal reward that awaited those who love God. Therefore, on July 5, 1723, Edwards wrote the following:

**50. Resolved,** I will act so as I think I shall judge would have been best and most prudent when I come into the future world” (July 5, 1723).<sup>6</sup>

#### FOURTH AND GOAL

If you knew that if you pressed on in glorifying God just a little bit more, that it would catapult you into the end zone, you would hurl your body into what yet remains in front of you – anything, as it were, to get in to the end zone and to score. How dreadful it would be to fumble on the one yard line or have to settle for a field goal on the one yard line.

What will matter most when one enters into glory? Not the trivial minutia of this world. Not the passing, temporal things of this age. Not the gaining of earthly riches. Not the achieving of worldly fame. All these will be separated from one by death. Rather, what will matter most *then* is that which is eternal and lasting.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are **not seen**; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are **eternal**.

- 2 Corinthians 4:18

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was **looking to the reward**. By faith he left Egypt; not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as **seeing Him who is unseen**.

- Hebrews 11:24-27

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<sup>6</sup> *Memoirs*, xxii.

## V. EDWARDS' SERMON: "THE PRECIOUSNESS OF TIME"

In December, 1734, Edwards preached a sermon entitled "The Preciousness of Time and the Importance of Redeeming It." The timing of this sermon is important because it marks the beginning of the first great revival (1734-1736) that came to his pastoral ministry at Northampton. The previous month—November, 1734—Edwards preached two landmark sermons entitled "Justification by Faith." They were polemics against the deadliest dangers he saw confronting the New England churches—*Arminianism* and *antinomianism*. These two theological aberrations often go hand-in-hand together, both promoting a man-centered gospel. As a result, God began to awaken the church at Northampton. The following month—December, 1734—saw the first three conversions in the congregation. Soon thereafter, dozens, scores, even hundreds, would come to know Christ.

Standing at the headwaters of this revival was this sermon which Jonathan Edwards preached on the preciousness of time. His text was Ephesians 5:16—"making the most of your time"—and Edwards used it to drive home the admonition that believers should always improve the use of the time allotted to them by God. In the sermon's brief introduction, Edwards stated that "time is exceedingly precious." As a result, Christians should "study to improve the opportunities they enjoy" and "labor to reclaim others from their evil courses." Having stated this, he immediately proceeded to establish his first major heading regarding why time is so precious.

### A. WHY TIME IS PRECIOUS

With penetrating powers of reason, Edwards first pressed upon his congregation that time is precious for the following four reasons:

1. **Time Affects Eternity.** Edwards reasoned that how the believer invests his time, whether wisely or unwisely, has eternal consequences. Eternal issues rest and hinge upon the proper use of one's time.

A happy or miserable eternity depends on the good or ill improvement of it...this renders time so exceedingly precious, because our eternal welfare depends on the improvement of it...it is above all things precious, as our state through eternity depends upon it...Time is so exceedingly precious, because by it we have opportunity of escaping everlasting misery, and of obtaining everlasting blessedness and glory. On this depends our escape from an infinite evil, and our attainment of an infinite good.<sup>7</sup>

2. **Time Is Very Short.** Compounding the preciousness of time is the fact that every person has so little of it. Time is in increasingly short supply. No person

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<sup>7</sup> The Preciousness of Time, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, edited and corrected by Edward Hickman, vol. 1, (Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1834, 1979), 233.

has enough time to squander one moment of it. Edwards sounded this warning followed by these verses:

The scarcity of any commodity occasions men to set a high value upon it, especially if it be necessary and they cannot do without it...So time is the more to be prized by men, because a whole eternity depends upon it; and yet we have but a little of time...It is but a moment to eternity. Time is so short, and the work which we have to do in it is so great, that we have none of it to spare. The work which we have to do to prepare for eternity, must be done in time, or it never can be done;<sup>8</sup>

- 3. Time Is Uncertain.** Edwards also reasoned that no person ever knows how little he has remaining. The ever-diminishing amount of time that one has is always an uncertain amount. Most often, it is *less* than what one would presume.

Time ought to be esteemed by us very precious, because we are uncertain of its continuance. We know that it is very short, but we know not how short. We know not how little of it remains, whether a year, or several years, or only a month, a week, or a day...If a man had but little provision laid up for a journey or a voyage, and at the same time knew that if his provision should fail, he must perish by the way, he would be the more choice of it.—How much more would many men prize their time, if they knew that they had but a few months, or a few days, more to live!<sup>9</sup>

- 4. Time Cannot Be Recovered.** Once time is lost, it can never be recovered. A vast estate can be lost in bankruptcy and recovered later through shrewd investments. But not so with time. Once time is lost, it is lost *forever*. This is what makes time so precious. When it is squandered, it is irrecoverable.

Time is very precious, because when it is past, it cannot be recovered. There are many things which men possess, which if they part with, they can obtain them again...But it is not so with respect to time; when once that is gone, it is gone forever; no pains, no cost will recover it. Though we repent ever so much that we let it pass, and did not improve it while we had it, it will be to no purpose...If a man should lose the whole of his worldly substance, and become bankrupt, it is possible that his loss may be made up. He may have another estate as good. But when the time of life is gone, it is impossible that we should ever obtain another such time.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Works*, I, 233-234.

<sup>9</sup> *Works*, I, 234.

<sup>10</sup> *Works*, I, 234.

## B. WHO WASTES TIME

In this major section, Edwards proceeded to more directly challenge his listeners. He now speaks to those most in danger of squandering their time and, thus, bringing dishonor to God. He has three main groups in his crosshairs, who are as follows:

1. **Those Involved in *Idleness*.** Edwards considered that frivolous, idle living was a major threat to living for the glory of God. Those who are involved in “doing nothing” regarding God’s kingdom are demeaning the glory of God. Edwards issued this rebuke supported by the following verses:

Some spend much of their time at the tavern, over their cups, and in wandering about from house to house, wasting away their hours in idle and unprofitable talk which will turn to no good account.<sup>11</sup>

Edwards then quoted the following verses to establish this point:

In all labor there is profit, But **mere talk** leads only to poverty.

- Proverbs 14:23

He also who is **slack** in his work Is brother to him who destroys.

- Proverbs 18:9

**Laziness** casts into a deep sleep, And an **idle** man will suffer hunger.

- Proverbs 19:15

And **drowsiness** will clothe one with rags.

- Proverbs 23:21

2. **Those Involved in *Wickedness*.** Edwards also challenged the gross misuse of time by others who squandered it sinful activities. This, he reasoned, was *worse* than doing nothing with their time, as previously mentioned. Here their time was worse than wasted, but used, instead, to their own harm, as well as to the harm of others.

Some spend much time in reveling, and in unclean talk and practices, in vicious company keeping, in corrupting and ensnaring the minds of others, setting bad examples, and leading others into sin, undoing not only their own souls, but the souls of others. Some spend much of their precious time in detraction and backbiting; in talking against others; in contention, not only quarreling themselves, but fomenting and stirring up strife and

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<sup>11</sup> *Works*, 235.

contention...The time which they spend on earth will be worse to them than if they had spent so much time in hell.<sup>12</sup>

3. **Those Involved in *Only Worldly Pursuits*.** Finally, Edwards sought to confront and challenge those who spend their time exclusively in worldly pursuits to the neglect of their souls.

They, therefore, whose time is taken up in caring and laboring for the world only, in inquiring what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed; in contriving to lay up for themselves treasures upon earth, how to enrich themselves, how to make themselves great in the world, or how to live in comfortable and pleasant circumstances, while here; who busy their minds and employ their strength in these things only; and the stream of whose affections is directed towards these things; they lost their precious time...You have spent a great part of your time, and a great part of your strength, in getting a little of the world; and how little good doth it afford you, now you have gotten it! What happiness or satisfaction can you reap from it? Will it give you peace of conscience, or any rational quietness or comfort? What is your poor, needy, perishing soul the better for it? And what better prospects doth it afford you of your approaching eternity? And what will all that you have acquired avail you when time shall be no longer?<sup>13</sup>

### C. HOW TO IMPROVE TIME

In this next section, Edwards proceeded to give his listeners a powerful exhortation regarding the best use of their time. Here is what they must consider:

1. **Consider Your Accountability to God.** Edwards rightly reasoned that every believer is a bond-servant of Christ. Thus, every servant will give an account of himself to his Master, Christ, for all that had been entrusted to him—even for the use of his time. This is a major part of the believer's accountability to God.

Time is a talent given us by God; He hath set us our day; and it is not for nothing, our day was appointed for some work; therefore He will, at the day's end, call us to an account...Would you not behave otherwise than you do, if you considered with yourselves every morning, that you must give an account to God, how you shall have spent that day? And if you considered with yourselves, at the beginning of every evening, that you must give an account to God, how you shall have spent that evening?<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Works*, 235.

<sup>13</sup> *Works*, 235.

<sup>14</sup> *Works*, 235.

- 2. Consider You Have Already Lost Much Time.** Edwards pressed home the point that his listeners had *already* lost much of the time allotted to them. They cannot afford to lose any more time. Much has *already* been lost. This sober realization demands thorough correcting of this mismanagement *now*.

In that you have lost so much time, you have the more need of diligence...(1) As your opportunity is so much the shorter...(2) You have the same work to do that you had at first. Hither to you have done nothing at all of your work, all remains to be done...So that the time in which to do your work is not only grown shorter, but your work is grown greater. You not only have the *same* work to do, but you have *more* work...(3) This is the best of your time which you have lost...You who have lived in sin till past your youth, have lost the best part.<sup>15</sup>

- 3. Consider Those at the End of Their Time.** Further, Edwards, impressed his congregation with how greatly time is valued by men when they come to the end of their life—and, thus, to the end of their time. Those on their death bed cannot do anything to regain their time back—consider this! Edwards exhorted:

What a sense of its preciousness have poor sinners sometimes, when they are on their death-beds. Such have cried out, *O, a thousand worlds for an inch of time!* Then time appears to them indeed precious...The near approach of death makes men sensible of the inestimable worth of time.<sup>16</sup>

- 4. Consider Those Past Their Time.** Edwards concluded this section by urging his listeners to consider those already *past* the end of their allotted time. That is, he pleaded that they consider those souls already in hell. They would give anything to use their time differently in this world. Do not fall into the same trap, Edwards warned, as those tormented souls now in hell.

What thoughts do you think they would have of its preciousness, who have lost all their opportunity for obtaining eternal life, and are gone to hell? Though they were very lavish of their time while they lived, and set no great value upon it; yet how have they changed their judgments...What would they not give for one of your days, under the means of grace!—So will you, first or last, be convinced. But if you be not convinced except in the manner in which they are, it will be too late.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Works*, 235-236.

<sup>16</sup> *Works*, 236.

<sup>17</sup> *Works*, 236.

#### D. ACT NOW WHILE YOU HAVE TIME

The sheer force of Edwards' highly impactful sermon now came to a dramatic and powerful conclusion. This faithful pastor challenged his listeners to improve the use of their time *now* without delay. To *hesitate* in correcting the use of time only compounds the problem. Changes in the improvement of time must be done *now*! Edwards concluded with this pressing exhortation:

If you delay and put off its improvement, still more time will be lost...Talk not of more convenient seasons hereafter; but improve your time while you have it.<sup>18</sup>

Edwards then drove his point home with the following biblical passages:

I hastened and did **not delay** To keep Your commandments.  
- Psalm 119:60

Seek the Lord **while** He may be found; Call upon Him **while** He is near.

- Isaiah 55:6

Behold, **now** is “the acceptable time,” behold, **now** is “the day of salvation”

- 2 Corinthians 6:2

#### EDWARDS' DEATH: AN UNTIMELY TRIUMPH

Fast forward with me now to the end of Edwards' remarkable life. After the heart-wrenching disappointment of being removed as the pastor at Northampton, Massachusetts after 22 faithful years there, and after seven difficult, isolated years in obscurity on the mission field in Stockbridge, the last volume of Edwards' life was now ready to be written—a *glowing* chapter at that. In January, 1759, Jonathan Edwards assumed the presidency of Princeton, succeeding his son-in-law, Aaron Burr, Sr., who had married his daughter, Esther. Being in the prime of his life, he was full of aspirations for the future as many writing projects lay before him. He was eager to write what would have surely been his *magnum opus*, a systematic theology—really a *biblical* theology—an expanded version of a series of sermons he had preached earlier entitled, *The History of the Work of Redemption*. Such a finished work would have been a cherished treasure for the church, something along the order of Martin Luther's, *The Bondage of the Will*, and John Calvin's, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. But it was not to be. The last volume of Edwards' life was to be merely a last *chapter*.

One month into his presidency, on February 13, 1759, Jonathan Edwards was inoculated for smallpox. Tragically, it had the opposite effect on him. The pustules in his throat became so large that he could not swallow the fluids necessary to fight the fever. It soon

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<sup>18</sup> *Works*, 236.



became obvious that he would die. Edwards called for his daughter Lucy to come to his bedside as the only family member in Princeton—Sarah, his wife, was still in Stockbridge preparing to pack their belongings and travel to Princeton. Lucy received his last words. With unwavering trust in God’s absolute sovereignty, Edwards spoke *not* with *regret*, but with *resolution*.

Dear Lucy, it seems to me to be the will of God that I must shortly leave you; therefore give my kindest love to my dear wife, and tell her, that the uncommon union, which has so long subsisted between us, has been of such a nature as I trust is spiritual and therefore will continue forever: and I hope she will be supported under so great a trial, and submit cheerfully to the will of God. And as to my children you are now to be left fatherless, which I hope will be an inducement to you all to seek a father who will never fail you.<sup>19</sup>

Edwards died suddenly on March 22, 1759 at age 55, only two short months after becoming president of Princeton. He died ablaze for the glory of God. He had prepared for *this* day all his life. Upon learning of Jonathan’s death, Sarah, still in Stockbridge, packing their belongings, wrote their daughter Esther on April 3, saying:

What shall I say: A holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. O that we may kiss the rod, and lay our hands on our mouths! The Lord has done it, He has made me adore His goodness that we had him so long. But my God lives; and He has my heart. O what a legacy my husband, and your father, has left to us! We are all given to God: and there I am and love to be.

Your ever affectionate mother,  
*Sarah Edwards*<sup>20</sup>

### **RESOLVED: TO DIE WITHOUT REGRETS**

As an 18 year old college student, pastoring in downtown New York City, Jonathan had written his *Resolutions* in order that he might live “most to God’s glory:” If he could *maximize* his life for God, then could he die without regret. The course that he had charted as a young man, he kept firm until the end. Jonathan Edwards *died as he lived*—pursuing the glory of God. Never was he more resigned to fulfill his resolutions than he was in his death. Years earlier, as a teenager, Edwards had prepared for this day. He died as he had desired—without regrets. Earlier, he had written:

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<sup>19</sup> *Memoirs*, p. clxxviii.

<sup>20</sup> *Memoirs*, p. clxxxix.

52. **Resolved**, I frequently hear persons in old age, say how they would live, if they were to live their lives over again: **Resolved**, that I will live just so as I can think I shall wish I had done, supposing I live to old age. (July 8, 1723).<sup>21</sup>

Jonathan Edwards was the embodiment of this resolution. He lived and died without regrets. Will *you*?

*Soli Deo Gloria.*

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<sup>21</sup> *Resolutions*, I, xxii.