

Diary - After Receiving Masters Degree - 1723

by Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards reflects on the importance of duty, faith, and positive thinking in spiritual life after receiving his Master's degree.

Scripture: Psalm 19:14, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:5, Proverbs 12:23, Matthew 6:34, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 3:2, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:22, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Living"

Description

Jonathan Edwards reflects on his resolutions and observations after receiving his Master's degree at Yale, focusing on the importance of duty, self-examination, and the pursuit of virtue and religion. He acknowledges the need to address hidden faults, maintain a positive attitude in difficulties, and prioritize spiritual meditation and prayer. Edwards emphasizes the significance of free, religious conversation, the glorification of God, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. He also highlights the dangers of worldly distractions, the value of self-denial, and the transformative power of Scripture in maintaining a vibrant spiritual life.

Transcript

AFTER RECEIVING MASTER'S DEGREE AT YALE

Thursday forenoon, Oct. 4, 1723. Have this day fixed and established it, that Christ Jesus has promised me faithfully, that, if I will do what is my duty, and according to the best of my prudence in the matter, that my condition in this world shall be better for me than any other condition whatever, and more to my welfare, to all eternity. And, therefore, whatever my condition shall be, I will esteem it to be such; and if I find need of faith in the matter, that I will confess it as impiety before God. Vid. Resolution 57, and June 9.

Sabbath night, Oct. 7. Have lately erred, in not allowing time enough for conversation.

Friday night, Oct. 12. I see there are some things quite contrary to the soundness and perfection of Christianity, in which almost all good men do allow themselves, and where innate corruption has an unrestrained secret vent, which they never take notice of, or think to be no hurt, or cloak under the name of virtue; which things exceedingly darken the brightness, and hide the loveliness, of Christianity. Who can understand his errors? O that I might be kept from secret faults!

Sabbath morning, Oct. 14. Narrowly to observe after what manner I act, when I am in a hurry, and to act as much so, at other times, as I can, without prejudice to the business.

Monday morning, Oct. 15. I seem to be afraid, after errors and decays, to give myself the full exercise of spiritual meditation: -- Not to give way to such fears.

Thursday, Oct. 18. To follow the example of Mr. B. who, though he meets with great difficulties, yet undertakes them with a smiling countenance, as though he thought them but little; and speaks of them, as if they were very small.

Friday night, Nov. 1. When I am unfit for other business, to perfect myself in writing characters. [He probably refers to short-hand characters. See Friday, Jan. 10.]

Friday afternoon, Nov. 22. For the time to come, when I am in a lifeless frame in secret prayer, to force myself to expatiate, as if I were praying before others more than I used to do.

Tuesday forenoon, Nov. 26. It is a most evil and pernicious practice, in meditations on afflictions, to sit ruminating on the aggravations of the affliction, and reckoning up the evil, dark circumstances thereof, and dwelling long on the dark side: it doubles and trebles the affliction. And so, when speaking of them to others, to make them as bad as we can, and use our eloquence to set forth our own troubles, is to be all the while making new trouble, and feeding and pampering the old; whereas, the contrary practice, would starve our affliction. If we dwelt on the bright side of things in our thoughts, and extenuated them all that we possibly could, when speaking of them, we should think little of them ourselves, and the affliction would really, in a great measure, vanish away.

Friday night, Nov. 29. As a help to attention in social prayer, to take special care to make a particular remark, at the beginning of every petition, confession, etc.

Monday morning, Dec. 9. To observe whether I express my kind of fretting emotion, for the next three weeks.

Thursday night, Dec. 12. If, at any time, I am forced to tell others wherein I think they are somewhat to blame; in order to avoid the important evil that would otherwise ensue, not to tell it to them so, that there shall be a probability of their taking it as the effect of little, fretting, angry emotions of mind. -- Vid. Aug. 28. When I do want, or am likely to want, good books, to spend time in studying mathematics, and in reviewing other kinds of old learning; to spend more time in visiting friends, in the more private duties of a pastor, in taking care of worldly business, in going abroad and other things that I may contrive.

Friday morning, Dec. 27. At the end of every month, to examine my behavior, strictly, by some chapter in the New Testament, more especially made up of rules of life. -- At the end of the year, to examine my behavior by the rules of the New Testament in general, reading many chapters. It would also be convenient, some time at the end of the year, to read, for this purpose, in the book of Proverbs.

Tuesday night, Dec. 31. Concluded never to suffer, nor express any angry emotions of mind, more or less, except the honor of God calls for it in zeal for him, or to preserve myself from being trampled on.

1724. Wednesday, Jan. 1. Not to spend too much time in thinking, even of important and necessary worldly business, and to allow every thing its proportion of thought, according to its urgency and importance

Thursday night, Jan. 2. These things established. -- That time gained in things of lesser importance is as much gained in things of greater; that a minute gained in times of confusion, conversation, or in a journey, is as good as a minute gained in my study, at my most retired times; and so in general that a minute gained at one time, is as good as at another.

Friday night, Jan. 3. The time and pains laid out in seeking the world, is to be proportioned to the necessity, usefulness, and importance of it, with respect to another world, together with the uncertainty of succeeding, the uncertainty of living, and of retaining; provided, that nothing that our duty enjoins, or that is amiable, be omitted, and nothing sinful or unbecoming be done for the sake of it.

Friday, Jan. 10. (After having written to a considerable extent, in shorthand, which he used, when he wished what he wrote to be effectually concealed from every one but himself, he adds the following.) Remember to act according to Pro. 12:23, A prudent man concealeth knowledge.

Monday, Jan. 20. I have been very much to blame, in that I have not been as full, and plain and downright, in my standing up for virtue and religion, when I have had fair occasion, before those who seemed to take no delight in such things. If such conversation would not be agreeable to them, I have in some degree minced the matter, that I might not displease, and might not speak right against the grain, more than I should have loved to have done with others, to whom it would be agreeable to speak directly for religion. I ought to be exceedingly bold with such persons, not talking in a melancholy strain, but in one confident and fearless, assured of the truth and excellence of the cause.

Monday, Feb. 3. Let every thing have the value now which it will have on a sick bed: and frequently, in my pursuits of whatever kind, let this question come into my mind, "How much shall I value this on my deathbed?"

Wednesday, Feb. 5. I have not, in times past, in my prayers, enough insisted on the glorifying of God in the world, on the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, the prosperity of the Church and the good of man. Determined that this objection is without weight, viz. That it is not likely that God will make great alterations in the whole world, and overturnings in kingdoms and nations, only for the prayers of one obscure person, seeing such things used to be done in answer to the united prayers of the whole church; and that if my prayers should have some influence, it would be but imperceptible and small.

Thursday, Feb. 6. More convinced than ever, of the usefulness of free, religious conversation. I find by conversing on natural philosophy, that I gain knowledge abundantly faster, and see the reasons of things much more clearly than in private study: wherefore, earnestly to seek, at all times, for religious conversation; for those, with whom I can, at all times, with profit and delight, and with freedom, so converse.

Friday, Feb. 7. Resolved, If God will assist me to it, that I will not care about things, when, upon any account, I have prospect of ill-success or adversity; and that I will not think about it any further than just to do what prudence directs to for prevention, according to Phil. 4:6, "Be careful for nothing;" to 1 Pet. 5:7, "Cast all your care upon God, for he careth for you;" and again, "Take no thought for the morrow;" and again, "Take no thought, saying, What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed: seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Saturday night, Feb. 15. I find that when eating, I cannot be convinced in the time of it, that if I should eat more, I should exceed the bounds of strict temperance, though I have had the experience of two years of

the like; and yet, as soon as I have done, in three minutes I am convinced of it. But yet, when I eat again, and remember it, still while eating, I am fully convinced that I have not eaten what is but for nature, nor can I be convinced that my appetite and feeling is as it was before. It seems to me that I shall be somewhat faint if I leave off then; but when I have finished, I am convinced again, and so it is from time to time. -- I have observed that more really seems to be truth, when it makes for my interest, or is, in other respects, according to my inclination, than it seems, if it be otherwise; and it seems to me, that the words in which I express it are more than the thing will properly bear. But if the thing be against my interest, the words of different import seem as much as the thing will properly bear. -- Though there is some little seeming, indecorum, as if it looked like affectation, in religious conversation, as there is also in acts of kindness; yet this is to be broke through.

Tuesday, Feb. 18. Resolved, To act with sweetness and benevolence, and according to the 47th Resolution, in all bodily dispositions, -- sick or well, at ease or in pain, sleepy or watchful, and not to suffer discomposure of body to discompose my mind.

Saturday, Feb. 22. I observe that there are some evil habits, which do increase and grow stronger, even in some good people, as they grow older; habits that much obscure the beauty of Christianity: some things which are according to their natural tempers, which, in some measure, prevails when they are young in Christ, and the evil disposition, having an unobserved control, the habit at last grows very strong, and commonly regulates the practice until death. By this means, old Christians are very commonly, in some respects, more unreasonable than those who are young. I am afraid of contracting such habits, particularly of grudging to give, and to do, and of procrastinating.

Sabbath, Feb. 23. I must be contented, where I have any thing strange or remarkable to tell, not to make it appear so remarkable as it is indeed; lest through the fear of this, and the desire of making a thing appear very remarkable, I should exceed the bounds of simple verity. When I am at a feast, or a meal, that very well pleases my appetite, I must not merely take care to leave off with as much of an appetite as at ordinary meals; for when there is a great variety of dishes, I may do that, after I have eaten twice as much as at other meals, is sufficient. If I act according to my resolution, I shall desire riches no otherwise, than as they are helpful to religion. But this I determine, as what is really evident from many parts of Scripture, that to fallen man, they have a greater tendency to hurt religion.

Monday, March 16. To practice this sort of self-denial, when at sometimes on fair days, I find myself more particularly disposed to regard the glories of the world, than to betake myself to the study of serious religion.

Saturday, May 23. How it comes about I know not, but I have remarked it hitherto, that at those times, when I have read the Scriptures most, I have evermore been most lively and in the best frame.

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