

Diary - First Pastorate 1722

by Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards reflects on his spiritual journey, emphasizing the necessity of grace, self-denial, and the influence of the Holy Spirit in achieving true holiness.

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 7:18, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Galatians 5:16, Philippians 3:13, James 4:10

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Personal Sanctification"

Description

Jonathan Edwards reflects on his struggles with doubts about his faith, feelings of hypocrisy, and sins of omission and commission, as well as his constant battle with spiritual dryness and dullness. He emphasizes the need to fully surrender to God, depend on His grace, and be vigilant in mortifying sin and self-denial. Edwards acknowledges the importance of continuous self-examination, repentance, and reliance on the Holy Spirit for growth in grace. He highlights the dangers of pride, negligence in spiritual disciplines, and the necessity of constant vigilance in pursuing holiness and humility.

Transcript

AT NEW YORK PASTORATE

Dec. 18. This day made the 35th Resolution. The reason why I, in the least, question my interest in God's love and favor, is, -- 1. Because I cannot speak so fully to my experience of that preparatory work, of which divines speak: -- 2. I do not remember that I experienced regeneration, exactly in those steps, in which divines say it is generally wrought: -- 3. I do not feel the Christian graces sensibly enough, particularly faith. I fear they are only such hypocritical outside affections, which wicked men may feel, as well as others. They do not seem to be sufficiently inward, full, sincere, entire and hearty. They do not seem so substantial, and so wrought into my very nature, as I could wish. -- 4. Because I am sometimes guilty of sins of omission and commission. Lately I have doubted, whether I do not transgress in evil speaking. This day, resolved, No.

Dec. 19. This day made the 36th Resolution. Lately, I have been very much perplexed, by seeing the doctrine of different degrees in glory questioned; but now have almost got over the difficulty.

Dec. 20. This day somewhat questioned, whether I had not been guilty of negligence yesterday, and this morning; but resolved, No.

Dec. 21, Friday. This day, and yesterday, I was exceedingly dull, dry and dead.

Dec. 22, Saturday. This day, revived by God's Holy Spirit; affected with the sense of the excellency of holiness; felt more exercise of love to Christ, than usual. Have also felt sensible repentance for sin, because it was committed against so merciful and good a God. This night made the 37th Resolution.

Sabbath-night, Dec. 23. Made the 38th Resolution.

Monday, Dec. 24. Higher thoughts than usual of the excellency of Christ and his kingdom. -- Concluded to observe, at the end of every month, the number of breaches of Resolutions, to see whether they increase or diminish, to begin from this day, and to compute from that the weekly account, my monthly increase, and, out of the whole, my yearly increase, beginning from new year days.

Wednesday, Dec. 26. Early in the morning yesterday, was hindered by the headache all day; though I hope I did not lose much. Made an addition to the 37th Resolution, concerning weeks, months and years. At night; made the 33d Resolution.

Saturday, Dec. 29. About sunset this day, dull and lifeless.

1722-23. Tuesday, Jan. 1. Have been dull for several days. Examined whether I have not been guilty of negligence today; and resolved, No.

Wednesday, Jan. 2. Dull. I find, by experience, that, let me make Resolutions, and do what I will, with never so many inventions, it is all nothing, and to no purpose at all, without the motions of the Spirit of God; for if the Spirit of God should be as much withdrawn from me always, as for the week past, notwithstanding all I do, I should not grow, but should languish, and miserably fade away. I perceive, if God should withdraw his Spirit a little more, I should not hesitate to break my Resolutions, and should soon arrive at my old state. There is no dependence on myself. Our resolutions may be at the highest one day, and yet, the next day, we may be in a miserable dead condition, not at all like the same person who resolved. So that it is to no purpose to resolve, except we depend on the grace of God. For if it were not for his mere grace, one might be a very good man one day, and a very wicked one the next. I find also by experience, that there is no guessing on the ends of Providence, in particular dispensations towards me -- any otherwise than as afflictions come as corrections for sin, and God intends when we meet with them, to desire us to look back on our ways, and see wherein we have done amiss, and lament that particular sin, and all our sins, before him: -- knowing this, also, that all things shall work together for our good; not knowing in what way, indeed, but trusting in God.

Saturday evening, Jan. 5. A little redeemed from a long dreadful dullness, about reading the Scriptures. This week, have been unhappily low in the weekly account: -- and what are the reasons of it? -- abundance of listlessness and sloth; and if this should continue much longer, I perceive that other sins will begin to discover themselves. It used to appear to me, that I had not much sin remaining; but now I perceive that there are great remainders of sin. Where may it not bring me to, if God should leave me? Sin is not enough mortified. Without the influences of the Spirit of God, the old serpent would begin to rouse up himself from his frozen state, and would come to life again. Resolved, That I have been negligent in two things: -- in not striving enough in duty; and in not forcing myself upon religious thoughts.

Sabbath, Jan. 6. At night; Much concerned about the improvement of precious time. Intend to live in continual mortification, without ceasing, and even to weary myself thereby, as long as I am in this world, and never to expect or desire any worldly ease or pleasure

Monday, Jan. 7. At night, made the 40th Resolution.

Tuesday, Jan. 8. In the morning, had higher thoughts than usual of the excellency of Christ, and felt an unusual repentance of sin therefrom.

Wednesday, Jan. 9. At night: Decayed. I am sometimes apt to think, that I have a great deal more of holiness than I really have. I find now and then that abominable corruption, which is directly contrary to what I read of eminent Christians. I do not seem to be half so careful to improve time, to do every thing quick, and in as short a time as I possibly can, nor to be perpetually engaged to think about religion, as I was yesterday and the day before, nor indeed as I have been at certain times, perhaps a twelve month ago. If my resolutions of that nature, from that time, had always been kept alive and awake, how much better might I have been, than I now am. How deceitful is my heart! I take up a strong resolution, but how soon doth it weaken.

Thursday, Jan. 10, about noon. Recovering. It is a great dishonor to Christ, in whom I hope I have an interest, to be uneasy at my worldly state and condition; or, when I see the prosperity of others, and that all things go easy with them, the world is smooth to them, and they are very happy in many respects, and very prosperous, or are advanced to much honor; to grudge them their prosperity, or envy them on account of it, or to be in the least uneasy at it, to wish and long for the same prosperity, and to desire that it should ever be so with me. Wherefore, concluded always to rejoice in every one's prosperity, and not to pretend to expect or desire it for myself, and to expect no happiness of that nature, as long as I live; but to depend on afflictions, and to betake myself entirely to another happiness. -- I think I find myself much more sprightly and healthy, both in body and mind, for my self-denial in eating, drinking and sleeping. I think it would be advantageous, every morning to consider my business and temptations, and the sins to which I shall be exposed on that day, and to make a resolution how to improve the day, and avoid those sins, and so at the beginning of every week, month and year. I never knew before what was meant, by not setting our hearts on those things. It is not to care about them, nor to depend upon them, nor to afflict ourselves with the fear of losing them, nor to please ourselves with the expectation of obtaining them, or with the hopes of their continuance. -- At night; made the 41st Resolution.

Saturday, Jan. 12. In the morning. I have this day, solemnly renewed my baptismal covenant and self-dedication, which I renewed, when I was taken into the communion of the church. I have been before God, and have given myself, all that I am and have, to God; so that I am not, in any respect, my own. I can challenge no right in this understanding, this will, these affections, which are in me. Neither have I any right to this body, or any of its members -- no right to this tongue, these hands, these feet; no right to these senses, these eyes, these ears, this smell, or this taste. I have given myself clear away, and have not retained any thing, as my own. I gave myself to God, in my baptism, and I have been this morning to him, and told him, that I gave myself wholly to him. I have given every power to him; so that for the future, I'll challenge no right in myself, in no respect whatever. I have expressly promised him, and I do now promise Almighty God, that by his grace, I will not. I have this morning told him, that I did take him for my whole portion and felicity, looking on nothing else, as any part of my happiness, nor acting as if it were; and his Law, for the constant rule of my obedience; and would fight, with all my might, against the world, the flesh and the devil, to the end of my life; and that I did believe in Jesus Christ, and did receive him as a Prince and Savior; and that I would adhere to the faith and obedience of the Gospel, however hazardous and difficult, the confession and practice of it may be; and that I did receive the blessed Spirit, as my Teacher, Sanctifier, and only Comforter, and cherish all his motions to enlighten, purify, confirm, comfort and assist me. This, I have done; and I pray God, for the sake of Christ, to look upon it as a self-dedication, and to

receive me now, as entirely his own, and to deal with me, in all respects, as such, whether he afflicts me, or prospers me, or whatever he pleases to do with me, who am his. Now, henceforth, I am not to act, in any respect, as my own. -- I shall act as my own, if I ever make use of any of my powers to any thing that is not to the glory of God, and do not make the glorifying of him, my whole and entire business: -- if I murmur in the least at affliction; if I grieve at the prosperity of others; if I am in any way uncharitable; if I am angry because of injuries; if I revenge them; if I do any thing purely to please myself, or if I avoid any thing for the sake of my own ease; if I omit any thing, because it is great self-denial; if I trust to myself; if I take any of the praise of any good that I do, or that God doth by me; or if I am in any way proud. This day, made the 42d and 43d Resolutions: -- Whether or no, any other end ought to have any influence at all, on any of my actions; or whether any action ought to be any otherwise, in any respect, than it would be, if nothing else but religion had the least influence on my mind. Wherefore, I make the 44th Resolution.

Query: Whether any delight, or satisfaction, ought to be allowed, because any other end is obtained beside a religious one. In the afternoon, I answer, Yes; because if we should never suffer ourselves to rejoice, but because we have obtained a religious end, we should never rejoice at the sight of friends, we should not allow ourselves any pleasure in our food, whereby the animal spirits would be withdrawn, and good digestion hindered. But the query is to be answered thus: -- We never ought to allow any joy or sorrow, but what helps religion. Wherefore, I make the 45th Resolution.

The reason why I so soon grow lifeless, and unfit for the business I am about, I have found out, is only because I have been used to suffer myself to leave off, for the sake of ease, and so, I have acquired a habit of expecting ease; and therefore, when I think I have exercised myself a great while, I cannot keep myself to it any longer, because I expect to be released, as my due and right. And then, I am deceived, as if I were really tired and weary. Whereas, if I did not expect ease, and was resolved to occupy myself by business, as much as I could; I should continue with the same vigor at my business, without vacation time to rest. Thus, I have found it in reading the Scriptures; and thus, I have found it in prayer; and thus, I believe it to be in getting sermons by heart, and in other things.

At night. This week, the weekly account rose higher than ordinary. It is suggested to me, that too constant a mortification, and too vigorous application to religion, may be prejudicial to health; but nevertheless, I will plainly feel it and experience it, before I cease, on this account. It is no matter how much tired and weary I am, if my health is not impaired.

Sabbath day, Jan. 13. I plainly feel, that if I should continue to go on, as from the beginning of the last week hitherto, I should continually grow and increase in grace. After the afternoon meeting, made an addition to the 45th Resolution. At noon; I remember I thought that I loved to be a member of Christ, and not any thing distinct, but only a part, so as to have no separate interest, or pleasure of my own. At night, resolved to endeavor fully to understand 1 Cor. 7:29-32, and to act according to it.

Monday, Jan. 14. About 10 o'clock in the morning, made this book, and put these papers in it." [He refers to slips of paper on which the first part of the Diary is written; as far as Jan. 15, at night.] The dedication, which I made of myself to God, on Saturday last, has been exceedingly useful to me. I thought I had a more spiritual insight into the Scriptures, when reading the 8th of Romans, than ever before. At night. Great instances of mortification, are deep wounds, given to the body of sin; hard blows, which make him stagger and reel. We thereby get strong ground and footing against him, he is the weaker ever after, and we have easier work with him the next time. He grows cowardly; and we can easily cause him to give way, until at length, we find it easy work with him, and can kill him at pleasure. While we live without great

instances of mortification and self-denial, the old man keeps about where he was; for he is sturdy and obstinate, and will not stir for small blows. This, without doubt, is one great reason why many Christians do not sensibly increase in grace. After the greatest mortifications, I always find the greatest comfort. Wrote the 63d Resolution. Such little things as Christians commonly do, will not evince much increase of grace. We must do great things for God. -- It will be best, when I find that I have lost any former ancient good motions or actions, to take notice of it, if I can remember them.

Tuesday, Jan. 15. -- About two or three o'clock. I have been all this time decaying. It seemed yesterday, the day before, and Saturday, that I should always retain the same resolutions to the same height. But alas! how soon do I decay! O how weak, how infirm, how unable to do any thing of myself! What a poor inconsistent being! What a miserable wretch, without the assistance of the Spirit of God! While I stand, I am ready to think that I stand by my own strength, and upon my own legs; and I am ready to triumph over my spiritual enemies, as if it were I myself, that caused them to flee: -- when alas! I am but a poor infant, upheld by Jesus Christ; who holds me up, and gives me liberty to smile, to see my enemies flee, when he drives them before me. And so I laugh, as though I myself did it, when it is only Jesus Christ leads me along, and fights himself against my enemies. And now the Lord has a little left me, how weak do I find myself. O let it teach me to depend less on myself, to be more humble, and to give more of the praise of my ability to Jesus Christ! The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it! -- The occasion of my decaying is a little melancholy. My spirits are depressed, because I fear that I lost some friendship the last night; and, my spirits being depressed, my resolutions have lost their strength. I differ today from yesterday in these things. I do not resolve any thing today, half so strongly. I am not so perpetually thinking of renewing my resolutions, as I was then. I am not half so vigorous as I was then; or am I half so careful to do every thing with vigor. Then, I kept continually acting; but now, I do things slowly, and satisfy myself by thinking of religion in the mean time. I am not so careful to go from one business to another. -- I felt humiliation about sunset. What shall I do, in order that I may, with a good grace, fall into Christian discourse and conversation. At night. -- The next time I am in such a lifeless frame, I will force myself to go rapidly from one thing to another, and to do those things with vigor, in which vigor would ever be useful. The things, which take off my mind, when bent on religion, are commonly some remarkable change or alteration -- journeys, change of place, change of business, change of studies, and change of other circumstances; or something that makes me melancholy; or some sin.

Thursday, Jan. 17. About three o'clock, overwhelmed with melancholy.

Friday, Jan. 18. -- At night. Beginning to endeavor to recover out of the death, I have been in for these several days.

Sabbath day, Jan. 20. -- At night. The last week I was sunk so low, that I fear it will be a long time, before I am recovered. I fell exceedingly low in the weekly account. I find my heart so deceitful, that I am almost discouraged from making any more resolutions. -- Wherein have I been negligent in the week past; and how could I have done better to help the dreadful low estate in which I am sunk?

Monday, Jan. 21. Before sunrise, answered the preceding questions thus: I ought to have spent the time in bewailing my sins, and in singing Psalms -- especially psalms or hymns of penitence; these duties being most suited to the frame I was in. I do not spend time enough in endeavoring to affect myself with the glories of Christianity. -- Fell short in the monthly account. It seems to me, that I am fallen from my former sense of the pleasantness of religion.

Tuesday, Feb. 5. -- At night. I have thought, that this being so exceedingly careful, and so particularly anxious, to force myself to think of religion, at all times, has exceedingly distracted my mind, and made me altogether unfit for that, and every thing else. I have thought, that this caused the dreadful low condition I was in on the 15th of January. I think that I stretched myself farther than I could bear, and so broke. -- But now, it seems to me, though I know not why, that I do not do enough to prepare for another world. I do not seem to press forward, to fight and wrestle, as the apostles used to speak. I do not seem so greatly and constantly to mortify and deny myself, as the mortification of which they speak represents. Therefore, wherein ought I to do more in this way? -- I answer: I am again grown too careless about eating, drinking and sleeping -- not careful enough about evil speaking.

Saturday, Feb. 16. I do certainly know that I love holiness, such as the gospel prescribes. At night. For the time past of my life, I have been negligent, in that I have not sufficiently kept up that part of divine worship, singing the praise of God in secret, and with company. -- I have been negligent the month past, in these three things. I have not been watchful enough over my appetites, in eating and drinking; in rising too late in the morning; and in not applying myself with sufficient application to the duty of secret prayer.

Sabbath day, Feb. 17. -- Near sunset. Renewedly promised, that I will accept of God for my whole portion, and that I will be contented, whatever else I am denied. I will not murmur nor be grieved, whatever prosperity upon any account I see others enjoy, and I am denied. To this I have lately acted contrary.

Thursday, Feb. 21. I perceive that I never yet have adequately known, what was meant by being weaned from the world, by not laying up treasure on earth, but in heaven, by not having our portion in this life, by making the concerns of another life our whole business, by taking God for our whole portion. I find my heart, in great part, yet adheres to the earth. O that it might be quite separated from thence. I find when I have power and reputation as others, I am uneasy, and it does not satisfy me to tell me, that I have chosen God for my whole portion, and that I have promised to rest entirely contented with him.

Saturday, Feb. 23. I find myself miserably negligent, and that I might do twice the business that I do, if I were set upon it. See how soon my thoughts of this matter, will be differing from what they are now. I have been indulging a horrid laziness a good while, and did not know it. I can do seven times as much in the same time now, as I can at other times, not because my faculties are in better tune; but because of the fire of diligence that I feel burning within me. If I could but always continue so, I should not meet with one quarter of the trouble. I should run the Christian race much better, and should go out of the world a much better man.

Saturday, March 2. O how much more base and vile am I, when I feel pride working in me, than when I am in a more humble disposition of mind! How much, how exceedingly much, more lovely is an humble, than a proud, disposition! I now plainly perceive it, and am really sensible of it. How immensely more pleasant is a humble delight, than a high thought of myself! How much better do I feel, when I am truly humbling myself, than when I am pleasing myself with my own perfections. O how much more pleasant is humility, than pride. O that God would fill me with exceeding great humility, and that he would ever more keep me from all pride. The pleasures of humility are really the most refined, inward and exquisite, delights in the world. How hateful is a proud man. How hateful is a worm, that lifts up itself with pride! What a foolish, silly, miserable, blind, deceived, poor worm am I, when pride works! At night. -- I have lately been negligent as to reading the Scriptures. Notwithstanding my resolutions on Saturday was se'night, I have not been sedulous and diligent enough.

Wednesday, March 6. -- Near sunset. Regarded the doctrines of election, free grace, our inability to do any thing without the grace of God, and that holiness is entirely throughout, the work of the Spirit of God, with greater pleasure than ever before.

Thursday, March 7. I think I now suffer from not forcing myself enough on religious thoughts.

Saturday night, March 24. I intend, if I am ever settled, to concert measures, and study methods, of doing good in the world, and to draw up rules of acting in this matter, in writing, of all the methods I can possibly devise, by which I can in any respect do good.

Saturday night, March 31. This week I have been too careless about eating.

Monday morning, April 1. I think it best not to allow myself to laugh at the faults, follies and infirmities, of others.

Saturday night, April 7. This week I found myself so far gone, that it seemed to me I should never recover more. Let God of his mercy return unto me, and no more leave me thus to sink and decay! I know, O Lord, that without thy help I shall fall, innumerable times, notwithstanding all my resolutions, how often soever repeated.

Saturday night, April 13. I could pray more heartily this night for the forgiveness of my enemies, than ever before. -- I am somewhat apt, after having asked one petition over many times, to be weary of it; but I am now resolved not to give way to such a disposition.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jonathan-edwards/diary-first-pastorate-1722/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net