

They Have Their Exercise and Fruit in Christian Practice

by Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards emphasizes that true Christian practice is characterized by universal obedience, diligent pursuit of righteousness, and earnestness in faith.

Scripture: Matthew 5:29

Topics: "Christian Practice", "Holy Living"

Description

Jonathan Edwards emphasizes the importance of gracious and holy affections being manifested through Christian practice, where one's behavior is consistently aligned with Christian principles, pursued diligently as the main focus of life, and persevered in until the end. He highlights the necessity for true Christians to be universally obedient, cutting off all sinful practices, and engaging in positive acts of faith and love. Edwards stresses the urgency of zeal and earnestness in serving God, comparing it to running a race or fighting a battle, and warns against slothfulness in the Christian walk, as it can be as damning as open rebellion.

Transcript

XII. Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice.

I mean, they have that influence and power upon him who is the subject of them, that they cause that a practice, which is universally conformed to, and directed by Christian rules, should be the practice and business of his life.

This implies three things: 1. That his behavior or practice in the world be universally conformed to, and directed by Christian rules. 2. That he makes a business of such a holy practice above all things; that it be a business which he as chiefly engaged in, and devoted to, and pursues with highest earnestness and diligence: so that he may be said to make this practice of religion eminently his work and business. And 3. That he persists in it to the end of life: so that it may be said, not only to be his business at certain seasons, the business of Sabbath days, or certain extraordinary times, or the business of a month, or a year, or of seven years, or his business under certain circumstances; but the business of his life; it being that business which he perseveres in through all changes, and under all trials, as long as he lives.

The necessity of each of these, in all true Christians, is most clearly and fully taught in the word of God.

1. It is necessary that men should be universally obedient: 1 John 3:3 &c., "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.--And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. He that doeth righteousness, is righteous even as he is righteous: he that committeth sin is of the devil." Chap. 5:18, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." John 15:14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

If one member only be corrupt, and we do not cut it off, it will carry the whole body to hell, Matt. 5:29, 30. Saul was commanded to slay all God's enemies, the Amalekites; and he slew all but Agag, and the saving him alive proved his ruin. Caleb and Joshua entered into God's promised rest, because they wholly followed the Lord, Numb. 14:24, and 32:11, 12, Deut. 1:36. Josh. 14:6, 8, 9, 14. Naaman's hypocrisy appeared in that, however ever he seemed to be greatly affected with gratitude to God for healing his leprosy, and engaged to serve him, yet in one thing he desired to be excused. And Herod, though he feared John, and observed him, and heard him gladly, and did many things; yet was condemned, in that in one thing he would not hearken to him, even in parting with his beloved Herodias. So that it is necessary that men should part with their dearest iniquities, which are as their right hand and right eyes, sins that most easily beset them, and which they are most exposed to by their natural inclinations, evil customs, or particular circumstances, as well as others. As Joseph would not make known himself to his brethren, who had sold him, until Benjamin the beloved child of the family, that was most hardly parted with, was delivered up; no more will Christ reveal his love to us, until we part with our dearest lusts, and until we are brought to comply with the most difficult duties, and those that we have the greatest aversion to.

And it is of importance that it should be observed that in order to man's being truly said to be universally obedient, his obedience must not only consist in negatives, or in universally avoiding wicked practices, consisting in sins of commission, but he must also be universal in the positives of religion. Sins of omission are as much breaches of God's commands as sins of commission. Christ, in Matt. 25 represents those on the left hand as being condemned and cursed to everlasting fire for sins of omission. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat," &c. A man, therefore, cannot be said to be universally obedient, and of a Christian conversation, only because he is no thief, nor oppressor, nor fraudulent person, nor drunkard, nor tavern haunter, nor whoremaster, nor rioter, nor night walker, nor unclean, nor profane in his language, nor slanderer, nor liar, nor furious, nor malicious, nor reviler. He is falsely said to be of a conversation that becomes the gospel, who goes thus far and no farther; but in order to this, it is necessary that he should also be of a serious, religious, devout, humble, meek, forgiving, peaceful, respectful, condescending, benevolent, merciful, charitable and beneficent walk and conversation. Without such things as these, he does not obey the laws of Christ, and laws that he and his apostles did abundantly insist on, as of the greatest importance and necessity.

2. In order to men's being true Christians, it is necessary that they prosecute the business of religion, and the service of God with great earnestness and diligence, as the work which they devote themselves to, and make the main business of their lives. All Christ's peculiar people not only do good works, but are zealous of good works, Tit. 2:14. No man can do the service of two masters at once. They that are God's true servants do give up themselves to his service, and make it as it were their whole work, therein employing their whole hearts, and the chief of their strength: Phil. 3:13, "This one thing I do."

Christians in their effectual calling, are not called to idleness, but to labor in God's vineyard, and spend their day in doing a great and laborious service. All true Christians comply with this call (as is implied in its

being an effectual call), and do the work of Christians; which is everywhere in the New Testament compared to those exercises wherein men are wont to exert their strength with the greatest earnestness, as running, wrestling, fighting. All true Christians are good and faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ, and "fight the good fight of faith;" for none but those who do so, do "ever lay hold on eternal life."

Those who "fight as those that beat the air," never win the crown of victory. "They that run in a race, run all, but one wins the prize," and they that are slack and negligent in their course, do not "so run as that they may obtain." The kingdom of heaven is not to be taken but by violence. Without earnestness there is no getting along, in that narrow way that leads to life; and so no arriving at that state of glorious life and happiness which it leads to. Without earnest labor there is no ascending the steep and high hill of Zion, and so no arriving at the heavenly city on the top of it.

Without a constant laboriousness there is no stemming the swift stream in which we swim, so as ever to come to that fountain of water of life that is at the head of it. There is need that we should "watch and pray always, in order to our escaping those dreadful things that are coming on the ungodly, and our being counted worthy to stand before the Son of man." There is need of our "putting on the whole armor of God, and doing all, to stand," in order to our avoiding a total overthrow, and being utterly destroyed by "the fiery darts of the devil."

There is need that we should "forget the things that are behind, and be reaching forth to the things that are before, and pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord," in order to our obtaining that prize. Slothfulness in the service of God in his professed servants, is as damning as open rebellion; for the slothful servant is a wicked servant, and shall be cast into outer darkness, among God's open enemies, Matt. 25:26, 30. They that are slothful are not "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Heb. 6:11, 12, "And we desire that everyone of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." And all they who follow that cloud of witnesses that are gone before to heaven, "do lay aside every weight, and the sin that easily besets them, and do run with patience the race that is set before them," Heb. 12:1. That true faith, by which persons rely on the righteousness of Christ, and the work that he hath done for them, and do truly feed and live upon him, is evermore accompanied with such a spirit of earnestness in the Christian work and course.

Which was typified of old, by the manner of the children of Israel's feeding on the paschal lamb; who were directed to eat it, as those that were in haste, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, Exod. 12:11.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jonathan-edwards/they-have-their-exercise-and-fruit-in-christian-practice/>

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