

## The Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards

**Resolution 30:** Resolved, to strive to my utmost every week to be brought higher in religion, and to a higher exercise of grace, than I was the week before.

### **Anchor Text: 2 Peter 3:17-18**

Today's resolution is fairly straightforward, but I pray its familiarity does not skew the significance of what Edwards is resolving to undertake in this entry. Scripture teaches us that we, as believers, have been saved to "new life". This life is intended to be utilized for the glory of God through our growth in Him. Stated differently, the Lord has saved us to transform us and He transforms us through our walking with Him or, as Paul says in Galatians 5, as we walk "by the Spirit". Edwards' resolution is really a declaration of his intention to walk by the Spirit as that journey always leads to a growing intimacy and "higher exercise of grace".

#### 1. The problem

- a. You will notice that I chose verses 17 and 18 as our anchor text today
- b. The reason is that there is a great contrast between the two outcomes that Peter mentions in these closing words
- c. Verse 18 constitutes a contrast between those who are "carried away into lawlessness" and those who are growing in grace
- d. The fact is that Peter claims that the antidote to the problem of lawlessness is growth
  - i. Stated differently, there is no middle ground in our spiritual walk
  - ii. Either we are growing "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" or we are succumbing to some other temptation which leads us, inevitably, into lawlessness
- e. So many of us treat Christianity as if it is a movie or tv show
  - i. The idea is that we can switch it off and on as we see fit without losing our place
  - ii. The reality is that our Christian walk is much like our physical fitness
    1. We do not climb to a certain level of health and pause, instead we are either constantly working to maintain or grow our fitness OR we are losing the progress we have made
- f. If you are not growing in the truth, you are losing ground and this is why Edwards resolution is both wise and biblical

#### 2. The admonition

- a. Edwards desired to be brought into "higher religion"

- b. That might sound nice, but how do we do such a thing? The answer is found in Peter's words to the church
- c. Notice here how he connects growth in grace and growth in knowledge
- d. We grow in the grace of our faith as we grow in our understanding of the revelation of God
- e. There is no opposition between our minds and our hearts in Christ, instead there is a connection between what we know to be true and the grace God offers
- f. Our goal to grow in religion then is centered on our goal to know Christ and our desire to know Christ is fulfilled when we learn about Him and His expectations of us which are found, chiefly, in His Word
  - i. This Word is illuminated by the Spirit (listen to the last several sermons to flesh this out)
  - ii. This Word is given for our understanding
  - iii. This Word is applied to our hearts by God in order to conform us into His image

### 3. The finish line

- a. I want to call attention to one final thought
- b. Edwards' words have struck me as interesting this week because they denote the kind of ongoing pursuit that has no end save heaven
- c. Notice he doesn't say that he wants to grow in a higher exercise of grace than when he was converted, instead he says that his desire is to constantly (week by week) grow in the truth
- d. There is no mention of an end game here because there is no mere mortal who will ever achieve perfection this side of heaven
- e. This means that the resolution was just as binding on Edwards when he was in his 40's and had followed the Lord for decades as it would have been when he was in his teens
- f. Because God is so vast and because we are so imperfect, the journey to sanctification is a life long project
  - i. This means that all of us, at all times, should be able to repeat this resolution and mean it!