

## The Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards

**Resolution 31:** Resolved, never to say anything at all against anybody, but when it is perfectly agreeable to the highest degree of Christian honor, and of love to mankind, agreeable to the lowest humility, and sense of my own faults and failings, and agreeable to the golden rule; often, when I have said anything against anyone, to bring it to, and try it strictly by the test of this Resolution.

### **Anchor Texts: Galatians 2:11; Galatians 6:1; Galatians 6:2**

In light of our culminating journey through the book of Galatians, I felt like it would be helpful and interesting to utilize a few passages that have come to the forefront of our study as we have walked through the epistle together. Today's resolution is quite dense! Our goal is to divide it up into sections and study the biblical wisdom in each.

1. A few generic thoughts
  - a. Notice here that Edwards' concern is one that we can all learn from
  - b. The Bible is full of warnings against ungodly speech (Ephesians 4:29; James 4:11; Proverbs 10:18-19; etc.)
    - i. This makes evident the concern that Edwards is writing to guard himself against here
    - ii. It is wise, and necessary, to recognize our propensity to speak in an unholy and hurtful manner
  - c. Interestingly enough, while the sin of gossip and "back-biting" is almost universally despised, those who are often the most passionately opposed are chief offenders!
    - i. I am always leery of people who parade their so-called "straightforward" speech as I have learned that this often means they are happy to be blunt about others when they are not in their presence!
    - ii. Conversely, those who are faithful to Christ may well say hard things but only to the individuals concerned and with a heart for their growth and good
2. Clause 1: "Resolved, never to say anything at all against anybody, but when it is perfectly agreeable to the highest degree of Christian honor, and of love to mankind" (Galatians 2:11)
  - a. In this first portion of the resolution, Edwards is dealing with the commitment to only say what is necessary to whom it is necessary!
  - b. Notice here that he speaks of speaking in a way that is agreeable to the highest degree of "Christian honor"
  - c. What does he mean by this? The term honor most likely refers to an upstanding manner in which our conduct is in keeping with our confession of Christ

- d. Stated differently, we would consider something “honorable” when it deals with a topic head on and with purity of heart
  - e. This purity includes both our own holiness and transparency (meaning we do not hide our intentions or our true desires from those we are speaking to) and love for our brother
    - i. We see an example of this kind of holy and honorable speech in Paul’s confrontation of Peter
      - 1. While this was a hard conversation to have, Paul does so honorably because he goes directly to Peter and speaks with clarity and conviction
      - 2. There is no beating around the bush and there is no pursuit of “back channels”, instead one Apostle goes straight to the other Apostle in order to deal with the circumstance
    - ii. Folks, so much of what ails us as a fellowship could be straightened out if we simply went to our brother when they have sinned (see Matthew 18)
  - f. Paul’s action was born out of love
    - i. Love for Peter and his reputation
      - 1. Remember that Peter was a man who had a public ministry
      - 2. Paul knew that this behavior would undercut his effectiveness and credibility
    - ii. Love for the Gentiles
      - 1. Men and women were being treated as second class citizens in the church!
      - 2. Paul’s intervention was undertaken in order to affirm their worth and worthiness (through Christ) to be a part of the fellowship
    - iii. Love for God
      - 1. More importantly, Peter had been commissioned by Christ to be a witness to the Gospel which tore down the walls of separation between the Jews and Gentiles
      - 2. This meant that Peter’s actions were an affront not just to men but to the Lord of heaven and earth
3. Clause 2: “agreeable to the lowest humility, and sense of my own faults and failings” (Galatians 6:1)
- a. As Edwards resolves to speak with honor and love, he also wants to remember that he is also prone to failure and hypocrisy
  - b. This undercuts and informs his interactions with others
  - c. In Galatians 6:1, we are reminded that even those who are “spiritual” (defined as those who are currently walking by the Spirit) can be tempted

- i. This means that we must operate with requisite humility as we understand that the issues we see in others could be ours as well!
  - d. Our understanding of our own need for grace and propensity to sin helps provide grace and mercy to those who are around us
4. Clause 3: “and agreeable to the golden rule; often...” (Galatians 6:2)
- a. The “golden rule” here is most certainly the rule of loving your neighbor as yourself
  - b. As Paul would say in Galatians 6:2, this is part and parcel of fulfilling the “law of Christ”
  - c. When we see in others a neighbor who experiences the pain of life like we do, we are able to deal with him or her in a way that we would like to be treated
  - d. People are valuable, they are image bearers and, therefore, they deserve our respect
    - i. We should never correct out of a sense of arrogance or pride and our conversations that include correction should always be done with a spirit of gentleness for the precise reason that we would want to be treated with gentleness and compassion