Jonathan Edwards

1703-1758

The premier leader and theologian of the great awakening. DMLJ: said, “I am tempted to compare the Puritans to the Alps, Luther and Calvin to the Himalayas, and Jonathan Edwards to Mount Everest. He has always seemed to me the man most like the Apostle Paul.”

1. **YOUNG PURITAN IN THE MAKING**: Born in 1703. East Windsor, Connecticut. Father, Timothy, and mother, Esther, 10 sisters, only son. Father was a Harvard trained pastor who pastored the New Hampton church for 60 years. It would be later that Edwards would pastor this very same church. Jonathan Edwards grew up in a very privileged home. His mother, Esther Stoddard Edwards came from one of the most prestigious families in New England. Solomon Stoddard was the father of J. Edward’s mother. He was sovereignly placed in a very influential place in New England. Brilliant mind, father educated him in grammar and secondary education and groomed him for the ministry and grounded him in reformed theology, in the Westminster catechism, and in the reading of the Puritans. Edwards grew up with a transcendent view of God though he did not yet know the Lord. The supremacy of God in all things was placed before him. Started Yale at age 13 and received a broad liberal education: Grammar, rhetoric, logic, ancient history, arithmetic, Greek, Hebrew, Theology, Philosophy, Classical Literature. He read the Puritan authors. In 1720, graduated at the head of his class. He stood out.
2. **EDWARD’S SALVATION:** He entered the master’s program which required two years of independent study. During his second year, when he was age 17, God sovereignly brought him into the kingdom of God with the text - 1 Timothy 1:17. Edwards writes, “There came into my soul a sense of the glory of the divine being, a new sense quite different from anything I have ever experienced before.” … I began to have a new kind of apprehension, and ideas about Christ in the work of redemption and glorious salvation by Him. And my mind was greatly engaged to spend my time in reading and meditating on Christ on the beauty and excellency of His person and the lovely way of salvation by free grace in him.” At age 18, he becomes the interim pastor of the Presbyterian Church in downtown New York City - near the intersection of Wall Street and Broadway.
3. **EDWARD’S RESOLUTIONS**: During this time, he felt the responsibility laid upon his shoulders, a burning desire to be in everything a complete Christian. He begins to write his “Resolutions”. They will be like a moral compass that will guide his life in the pursuit of the glory of God. He will review these resolutions once a week. It will take him two years to write all 70 of these Resolutions.
* Preamble: “Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God’s help, I do humbly entreat Him by His grace to enable me to keep these resolutions as far as they are agreeable for His will for Christ’s sake. He knows I can only do it by the strengthening, sanctifying grace of God.”
* Resolution # 1. "Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God’s glory, and my own good, profit and pleasure.” Underlining maxim, what will most glorify God? 1 Corinthians 10:31.
* Edwards does not want to die with regrets, straining his ear to hear the last trumpet. A man of self-denial & self-control, he purposely tries to keep even his body weight, his eating, and his drinking under the guidance of what will most glorify God. He decided to trace back any evil action on his part to the original cause and to fight and pray with all his mind to identify the origin of it – to his motives and attitudes. With the purpose of repenting at the point of origin. The root of his sin. He understood his Christian life could not grow one inch beyond the intake of the Word of God in his life, 1 Peter 2:2. Wanted to strive to his utmost to be higher in religion, more like Jesus Christ. Every week of his life. No Christ every week of his life with no weeks to be taken off. Always in hot pursuit of Christ likeness. Not the tyranny of the urgent, but what is most important in eternity. Very mature thinking for an 18-year-old boy. He did not want to do anything in this life that would increase the suffering he would endure in hell were he not to be saved. He wrote, “I frequently hear persons in old age say how they would live differently if they were to live their lives over again." He prepared for the day of his death his entire life. He wanted to end well. He wanted to be the finest Christian in his generation.
* It was not an accident that Jonathan Edwards became the greatest leader in the Great Awakening. He set the course of his life when he was 18 years of age. He also kept a diary, and recorded in the diary, “my wife has had the following quote typed up, put on paper, framed, in all of our kids’ bedrooms, in my study, in our den, in our living room: “I claim no right to myself. No right to this understanding. These affections that are in me, neither do I have any right to this body or to its members, no right to my time, my hands, feet, ears, or eyes.  I have given myself clear away and not retained anything of my own. I have been to God this morning and have told Him that I’ve given myself wholly to Him. And given myself so that in the future I claim no right to myself in any respect. I have expressed and promised Him that by His grace I will not fail. I take them as my whole portion and felicity looking upon nothing else as part of my happiness. His law is the constant rule of my obedience. I will fight with all of my might against the world, the flesh, and the devil to the end of my life. I will adhere to the faith of the gospel however hazardous and difficult the profession and practice of it may be. I pray God for the sake of others to look on this as self-dedication. 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 or do anything that is not to the glory of God or to fail to make the glorifying of Him my whole entire business. If I murmur in the least affliction, if I am in any way uncharitable, if I revenge my own case, if I do anything purely to please myself, or omit anything because it is a great denial, if I trust myself, if I take any praise for any good which Christ does by me, or if I am in anyway proud, I shall act as my own and not God’s. But I purpose to be absolutely His.”
* Can you see how God was laying the foundation in this young man’s life? How God was “previous“, tilling up the soil, how God was putting things in place, how there was in the soul of Jonathan Edwards a godliness that exceeded even his giftedness and his giftedness outshined the others. Yes it was his piety, his spirituality, that distinguished Jonathan Edwards as God was grooming him to become the leader of The Great Awakening. After the interim pastor died, he returns to Yale and completes the Master of Arts. He had to defend his thesis in Latin. The title of his thesis was, A Sinner Is Not Justified Except Through The Righteousness Of Christ By Faith. He passed in flying colors.
* He serves a short interim pastorate. He comes back to Yale to serve as a professor. He meets Sarah Pearpot the daughter of a pastor in New Haven Connecticut. And she possessed the social graces that he needed. He married a woman who was eminently gifted in her own walk with the Lord and in her own social graces, and she would be the treasure in his life who would take care of the house, and who would oversee the chores so that Edwards could lock himself in his study and be so deeply immersed in the word of God.
1. **EARLY NORTHAMPTON MINISTRY**: (1727-1733) He becomes the assistant pastor for Solomon Stoddard at North Hampton Church. Stoddard was 83 years old, the most influential clergyman mentioned in the Region. Edwards was ordained in 1727. It was known that he would succeed Stoddard. He marries Sarah after 4 years courtship. Stoddard died the following year. Edwards becomes the pastor of the most important church in the region at age 26. Positioned perfectly by God for what is to take place. He was an exceptional preacher. His sermons came with riveting expository skill. He was able to fix his hearers minds on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. **DESCRIPTION OF HIS SERMON SKILLS**. “No theologian in the history of Christianity held a higher or stronger view of God’s majesty, sovereignty, glory and power than Jonathan Edwards.” He was always magnifying and exulting in the majesty of God. After hearing him, you were not saying what a great preacher but what a great God we have. There was a dominance of God that filled the worship House. In 1731, as his reputation began to be known, when he stepped into the public spotlight, he chose for his text 1 Corinthians 1:29-31 which is a statement on the absolute unrivaled sovereignty of God. The title of the message was "God Glorified In Man’s Dependence". His preaching notes were published by those who heard him. A presentation that all sinners are totally dependent upon the free grace and the pure mercy of God for their salvation beginning with the doctrine of election, predestination, and all the way down to glorification, that is all of the Lord. He burst onto the scene preaching the sovereignty of God.
3. **START OF THE GREAT AWAKENING**: Two years later, in December of 1733, he preached two sermons on Justification by Faith Alone, The Great Awakening begins, and through the winter months the entire town was seized by a deep concern for their souls. In a short period of time, more than 300 towns people professed faith in Jesus Christ out of the town of 1100 people. Edwards wrote, “The town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It was never so full of love nor so full of joy. There were remarkable tokens of God‘s presence in almost every house. Everyone was earnestly intent on the public worship. Everyone was eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth.” The whole said he was concerned with our souls. Edwards wrote down the account of the conversions that took place and it would be this letter that would find its way across the Atlantic to Isaac Watts and become published in England. It would be the first that England would hear of this young preacher. And in this account, Edwards wrote, “Our public assemblies were then beautiful, our congregations were alive in God service, everyone was in intent on the public worship. Everyone was eager to hear the pastor's words as they came from his mouth. The assembly in general were in tears, some weeping of sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors.” D. Martin Lloyd Jones: “God does in five hours what would normally take 50 years to occur. There’s a concentrated movement of God in a concentrated period of time. In a circle of people, God comes with great power by His Spirit and gives the word success into the hearts of His people in such a way that they are aware of the presence of God and her midst, and they are unusually aware of the holiness of God, and they are hungry for the Word of God all the more."