

Quotes on Eternity and Time

by

Jonathan Edwards

Upon time we should set a high value, and be exceeding careful that it be not lost; and we are therefore exhorted to exercise wisdom and circumspection, in order that we may redeem it. And hence it appears, that *time is exceedingly precious*...Time is precious for the following reasons: Because a happy or miserable eternity depends on the good or ill improvement of it. Things are precious in proportion to their importance or to the degree wherein they concern our welfare. Men are wont to set the highest value on those things upon which they are sensible their interest chiefly depends. And this renders time so exceedingly precious, because our eternal welfare depends on the improvement of it.

You are accountable to God for your time. Time is a talent given us by God; he hath set us our day; and it is not for nothing, our day was appointed for some work; therefore he will, at the day's end, call us to an account...Would you not behave otherwise than you do, if you considered with yourselves every morning, that you must give an account to God, how you shall have spent that day.

It is but as a moment to eternity. Time is so short, and the work which we have to do in it is so great, that we have none of it to spare. The work which we have to do to prepare for eternity, must be done in time, or it never can be done; and it is found to be a work of great difficulty and labour, and therefore that for which time is the more requisite.

If a man by the utmost skill in arithmetic, should denote or enumerate a great number of ages, and should rise by multiplication to ever so prodigious numbers, should make as great figures as he could, and rise in multiplying as fast as he could, and should spend his life in multiplying; the product of all would be no nearer equal to the duration which the wicked must spend in the misery of hell, than one minute. Eternity is that, which cannot be made less by subtraction. If we take from eternity a thousand years or ages, the remainder is not the less for it. Eternity is that which will forever be but beginning, and that because all the

time which is past, let it be ever so long, is but a point to what remains. The wicked, after they have suffered millions of ages, will be, as it were, but in the first point, only setting out in their sufferings. It will be no comfort to them that so much is gone, for they will have none the less to bear.

They (*wicked men*) will dwell in a fire that never shall be quenched, and here they must wear out eternity. Here they must wear out one thousand years after another and that without end. There is no reckoning up the millions of years or millions of ages; all arithmetic here fails, no rules of multiplication can reach the amount, for there is no end. They shall have nothing to do to pass away their eternity, but to conflict with those torments; this will be their work for ever and ever; God shall have no other use or employment for them; this is the way that they must answer the end of their being. And they never shall have any rest, nor any atonement, but their torments will hold up to their height, and shall never grow any easier by their being accustomed to them. Time will seem long to them, every moment shall seem long to them, but they shall never have done with the ages of their torment.

Improve well your time of *leisure* from worldly business. Many persons have great deal of such time, and all have some. If men be but disposed to it, such time may be improved to great advantage. When we are most free from cares for the body, and business of an outward nature, a happy opportunity for the soul is afforded. Therefore spend not such opportunities unprofitably, nor in such a manner that you will not be able to give a good account thereof to God. Waste them not away wholly in unprofitable visits, or useless diversions or amusements. Diversion should be used only in subservience to business. So much, and no more, should be used, as doth most fit the mind and body for the work of our general and particular callings. You have need to improve every talent, advantage, and opportunity, to your utmost, while time lasts.

They that improve time only for their benefit in time, lose it; because time was not given for itself, but for that everlasting duration which succeeds it.—They, therefore, whose time is taken up in caring and labouring for the world only, in inquiring what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed; in contriving to lay up for themselves treasures upon earth, how to enrich themselves, how to make themselves great

in the world, or how to live in comfortable and pleasant circumstances, while here; who busy their minds and employ their strength in these things only, and the stream of whose affections is directed towards these things; they lose their precious time....You have spent a great part of your time, and a great part of your strength, in getting a little of the world; and how little good doth it afford you, now you have gotten it!.. What is your poor, needy, perishing soul the better for it? and what better prospects doth it afford you of your approaching eternity? and what will all that you have acquired avail you when time shall be no longer?

Every *day* that you have enjoyed has been precious; yea, your *moments* have been precious. But have you not wasted your precious moments, your precious days, yea your precious years? If you should reckon up how many days you have lived, what a sum would there be! and how precious hath every one of those days been! Consider, therefore, what have you done with them? what is become of them all?.. When you look back, and search, do you not find this past time of your lives in a great measure empty, having not been filled up with any good improvement? And if God, that hath given you your time, should now call you to an account, what account could you give to him?

If a man were brought to the mouth of a great furnace to be cast into the midst of it, if at the same time he knew he should suffer torment but for one minute, yet that minute would be so terrible to him, that fearfulness would surprise and astonish him. How much more, if he were to be cast into a fire much fiercer; the fire in which wicked men are hereafter to be tormented! And if the thought of suffering this devouring fire for one minute would be enough to fill one with such surprising fearfulness, what will seize them, when they shall know that they are to bear it, not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one year, nor for one age, nor for a hundred ages, nor for a million of ages, one after another, but *for ever and ever*; without any end, and never, never be delivered!