

Quotes on Holiness

by

Jonathan Edwards

Be often searching your own heart, and seek and pray that you may see the filthiness of it. If ever you are made pure you must be brought to see that you are filthy; you must see the plague and pollution of your own heart.

He is pure in heart, who delights in holy exercises. Those exercises that are holy are natural and pleasant to him, he sees the beauty there is in holiness, and that beauty has such strong influence upon his heart that he is captivated thereby. He delights in the pure and holy exercise of love to God, in the fear of God, in praising and glorifying God, and in pure and holy love to men. He delights in holy thoughts and meditations.

It is not rational to suppose, that those whose minds are full of spiritual pollution, and under the power of filthy lusts, should have any relish or sense of divine beauty or excellency; or that their minds should be susceptible of that light that is in its own nature so pure and heavenly. It need not seem at all strange, that sin should so blind the mind.

Take heed you do not rest in external purity, but seek purity of heart in the ways of God's appointment; seek it in a constant and diligent attendance on all God's ordinances.

It is no way fit or suitable that those who have not pure hearts should be admitted to this privilege (of entering God's presence). It would be most unsuitable for those who are all over defiled with the most loathsome filth, to be admitted into the glorious presence of the King of heaven and earth. It would not become the majesty of God, to allow those who are so abominable to come into his blessed presence; nor is it at all becoming his holiness, whereby he is of purer eyes than to behold such pollution. It becomes persons when they come into the presence of a king, so to attire themselves, that they may not appear in a sordid habit, and it would be much more unsuitable still, for any to come all defiled with filth; but sin is that which renders the soul much more loathsome in the sight of God.

Though they live wickedly, yet they hope in a little time to go to be with an infinitely holy God, to be received by him with perfect approbation and delight, to be near to him, and to dwell in the courts of his love. They hope to enter into that same holy of holies, into which Christ the forerunner of saints has entered, and there to dwell, there to be as a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out. Yea, they hope there to sit in that heavenly holy of holies, to be admitted to a higher privilege than the high priests were of old in the earthly holy of holies, who were admitted only to appear in the holy of holies once a year. What holiness was expected of the high priests of old who were admitted to this privilege! What holiness then may well be expected of those who hope to be admitted to a so much greater privilege! Their wicked life is very unsuitable to that state of heaven. Those who are in heaven are all perfectly holy, and so must they become if ever they go to heaven; they will perfectly hate all wickedness, and perfectly delight in the contrary. How disagreeable therefore is the hope of spending eternity in such a heaven, to their wallowing like swine in the filth and mire of sin, and feeding with such eagerness and delight on the loathsome objects of their lusts, as worms feed with pleasure on the loathsome carcass!

Christ commanded to separate from us those things that are stumbling-blocks, or occasions of sin, however dear they are to us....If there be any practice that naturally tends and exposes us to sin, we must have done with it; though we love it never so well, and are never so loth to part with it; though it be as contrary to our inclination, as to cut off our own right hand, or pluck out our own right eye; and that upon pain of damnation, for it is intimated that if we do not, we must go with two hands and two eyes into hell fire. A prudent sense of our own weakness, and exposedness to yield to temptation, obliges us to avoid that which leads or exposes to sin. Whoever knows himself, and is sensible how weak he is, and his constant exposedness to run into sin—how full of corruption his heart is, which, like fuel, is ready to catch fire, and bring destruction upon him—how much he has in him to incline him to sin, and how unable he is to stand of himself—who is sensible of this, and has any regard of his duty, will he not be very watchful against everything that may lead and expose to sin? This (spiritual) light and this only, has its fruit in a universal holiness of life. No merely notional or speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will ever bring to this. But this light, as it reaches the bottom of the heart, and changes the nature, so it will effectually dispose to a universal obedience. It shows God's worthiness to be obeyed and served. It

draws forth the heart in a sincere love to God, which is the only principle of a true, gracious, and universal obedience; and it convinces of the reality of those glorious rewards that God has promised to them that obey him.

We may determine whether a thing be of an evil tendency or not, by the effect that an outpouring of the Spirit of God, and a general flourishing of religion, has with respect to it. If this puts a stop to any practice or custom, and roots it out; surely it argues, that that practice or custom is of no good tendency. For if there be no hurt in it, and it tends to no hurt, why should the Spirit of God destroy it? The Spirit of God has no tendency to destroy any thing that is neither sinful, nor has any tendency to sin....That custom that religion tends to destroy, that custom, if it prevail, tends also to destroy religion.

In order to a person's being rightly disposed to the work of praise, he must be an humble person. A proud person is for assuming all praise to himself, and is not disposed to ascribe it to God. It is humility only that will enable us to say from the heart, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the glory." The humble person admires the goodness and grace of God to him. He sees more how wonderful it is that God should take such notice of him, and show such kindness to him, that is so much below his notice.

Spiritual wisdom and grace is that highest and most excellent gift that ever God bestows on any creature: in this the highest Excellency and perfection of a rational creature consists. It is also immensely the most important of all divine gifts: it is that wherein man's happiness consists, and on which his everlasting welfare depends.

The truths of divinity are of superlative Excellency, and are worthy that all should make a business of endeavouring to grow in the knowledge of them. They are as much above those things which are treated of in other sciences, as heaven is above the earth. God himself, the eternal Three in one, is the chief object of this science; and next Jesus Christ, as God, man and Mediator, and the glorious work of redemption, the most glorious work that ever was wrought: then the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchased by Christ, and promised in the gospel; the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the

hearts of men; our duty to God, and the way in which we ourselves may become like angels, and like God himself in our measure. All these are objects of this science.

There is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning. Therefore, the preaching of the gospel would be wholly to no purpose, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind. .. But they teach in vain, if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. It is impossible that their teaching and preaching should be a means of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by knowledge imparted to the understanding.