

Quotes on the Unbelief

by

Jonathan Edwards

An unbeliever is not sensible that Christ is worthy of any glory, and therefore does not at all seek the glory of Christ in anything that he does; he does nothing in religion out of respect to Christ's glory, but wholly for other ends; which shows that he sees not Christ to be worthy of any glory.—Christ is set last and lowest in the heart of an unbeliever.—He has high thoughts of other things; he has high thoughts of created objects and earthly enjoyments, but mean and low thoughts of Christ.

It often appears strange to natural men that unbelief should be spoken of as such a heinous and crying sin. They cannot see such evil in it. There are other sins which often trouble their consciences, when this troubles them not at all, though it be that which brings far greater guilt upon them, than those sins about which they are more troubled...What has been said may show why unbelief is spoken of as a heinous sin.... For thereby all the glory of Christ is set at nought, though it be so great, though it be infinite, though it be the glory of the Godhead itself, and though it has been so gloriously manifested in what Christ has done and suffered. Natural men in their unbelief cast contempt on all this glory, and tread it under foot, as being nothing worth. Their unbelief treats the Excellency of Christ as being of less value than the meanest earthly enjoyments.

God would convince men of their guilt before he reveals a pardon to them. Now a man cannot be said to be thoroughly sensible of his guilt, till he is sensible that he deserves hell. A man must be sensible that he is guilty of death, or guilty of damnation, to use the scriptural mode of expression, before God will reveal to him his freedom from damnation. Is God bound to put honour upon you, and to advance you to such dignity as to be a child of the King of kings, and the heir of glory, while at the same time you set him too low to have even the lowest place in your heart?

The gospel stands in no need of external evidences of its truth and divinity. It carries its own light and evidence with it—There is that in its nature that sufficiently distinguishes it, to those who are spiritually enlightened, from all the effects of human invention. There are evident appearances of the divine perfections; the stamp of divine glory, of which this of the divine wisdom is not the least part..... The contrivance of our salvation is of such a nature that no one can rationally conclude that man had any hand in it. The nature of the contrivance is such, so out of the way of all human thoughts, so different from all human inventions; so much more sublime, excellent, and worthy, that it does not savour at all of the craft or subtlety of man: it savours of God only.

The unbeliever shows the mean and contemptible thoughts that he has of Christ, in refusing to accept of him, and in shutting the door of his heart against him. Christ stands at the door and knocks, and sometimes stands many years knocking at the door of his heart, but he refuses to open to him.—now it certainly shows that men have a very mean thought of a person, when they shut him out of their doors. Unbelievers show the mean and dishonourable thoughts they have of Christ, in that they dare not trust him. They believe not what he says to be true: they will not trust the word of Christ, so far as the word of one of their honest neighbours, or of a servant whom they have found to be faithful. It also appears that they have no real honour for Christ in their hearts, in that they refuse to obey his commands. They do nothing from a spirit of obedience to him: and that external obedience which they render is but a forced, feigned obedience, and not from any respect to Christ's authority or worthiness to be obeyed.

It arises from thy foolish stupidity and senselessness, and is because thou hast a heart of stone, that thou art so senseless of thine own wickedness as to think thou hast not deserved such a punishment (as eternal damnation), and that it is to thee incredible that it will be inflicted upon thee.—But if, when all is said and done, thou be not convinced, wait but a little while, and thou wilt be convinced: God will undertake to do the work which ministers cannot do. —Though judgment against thine evil works be not yet executed, and God now let thee alone, yet he will soon come upon thee with his great power, and then thou shalt know what God is, and what thou art.

Will not many be found inexcusable in the sinful ways in which they live through ignorance and mistake, because their ignorance is a wilful, allowed ignorance? They are ignorant of their duty, but it is their own fault they are so; they have advantages enough to know, and may know it if they will; but they take pains to acquire knowledge, and to be well skilled in their outward affairs, upon which their temporal interest depends; but will not take pains to know their duty. We ought to take great pains to be well informed, especially in those things which immediately concern us, or which relate to our particular cases.

It is in vain for you to pretend that those are sins of ignorance, of which you would not dare to proceed in the practice, if you knew that your soul was to be required of you this night. Persons do many things, for which they plead, and pretend they think there is no evil in them, who yet would as soon eat fire, as do the same, if they knew that they were to stand before the judgment seat of Christ within four and twenty hours. This shows that persons do but prevaricate, when they pretend that their sins are sins of ignorance.

The heart cannot be set upon an object of which there is no idea in the understanding. The reasons which induce the soul to love must first be understood, before they can have a reasonable influence on the heart. God hath given us the Bible, which is a book of instructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind.

If men were as lavish of their money as they are of their time, if it were as common a thing for them to throw away their money, as it is for them to throw away their time, we should think them beside themselves, and not in the possession of their right minds. Yet time is a thousand times more precious than money; and when it is gone, cannot be purchased for money, cannot be redeemed by silver or gold.

The curse of God attends them (*wicked men*) in the afflictions which they meet with, whereas the afflictions that good men meet with, are fatherly corrections, and are sent in mercy. The afflictions which wicked men meet with are in wrath, and come from God as an enemy, and are the foretaste of their everlasting punishment. The curse of God attends them also in their spiritual enjoyments and opportunities, and it would have been better for

them not to have been born in a land of light. Their having the Bible and the Sabbath is only to aggravate their guilt and misery. The word of God when preached to them is a savour of death unto death. Better would it be for them, if Christ had never come into the world, if there had never been any offer of a Saviour. Life itself is a curse to them; they live only to fill up the measure of their sins. What they seek in all the enjoyments, and employments, and concerns of life, is their own happiness; but they never obtain it; they never obtain any true comfort, all the comforts which they have are worthless and unsatisfying. If they lived a hundred years with never so much of the world in their possession, their life is all filled up with vanity.

How can you be willing to have Christ for a Saviour from a desert of hell, if you be not sensible that you have a desert of hell? If you have not really deserved everlasting burnings in hell, then the very offer of an atonement for such a desert is an imposition upon you. If you have no such guilt upon you, then the very offer of a satisfaction for that guilt is an injury, because it implies in it a charge of guilt that you are free from. Now therefore it is impossible that a man who is not convinced of his guilt can be willing to accept of such an offer; because he cannot be willing to accept the charge which the offer implies. A man who is not convinced that he has deserved so dreadful a punishment, cannot willingly submit to be charged with it. If he thinks he is willing, it is but a mere forced, feigned business; because in his heart he looks upon himself greatly injured; and therefore he cannot freely accept of Christ, under that notion of a Saviour from the desert of such a punishment; for such an acceptance is an implicit owning that he does deserve such a punishment...Now by this it is evident that you are not willing to accept of Christ as your Saviour; because you never yet had such a sense of your own sinfulness, and such a conviction of your great guilt in God 's sight, as to be indeed convinced that you lay justly condemned to the punishment of hell.

Would any spectator who should judge only by their practice, in the least imagine that these men expected within a few years to burn in everlasting fire, if they did not please and serve an infinitely holy God, and to be received to an everlasting paradise of blessedness if they did; could he be persuaded to think that such men are in heart, as they profess to be, the

followers of the meek, holy, and humble Lamb of God, of him who laid down his life for his enemies?

So when wicked men are inquired of why, when they professed to believe a future state, they took no more pains to prepare for it; why, when they professed to be the followers of Christ the Lamb of God, they were no more like him; why, when they owned him for their head, and expressed such wonderful love to him, they could turn and become his enemies; why, when they lived in hope of a life of such unspeakable glory in heaven, they set their affections wholly on this world; why, seeing they made such a show of regard to God and their duty at one time, they discovered such a total disregard at another; why, when they made such pretences to religion, and had such appearances of it in some things, they were so irreligious and wicked in others; what will they answer? Wicked men will appear self-condemned every way: their own reason and their own consciences, their own mouths and their own actions, have condemned them: their reason and consciences will still condemn them, and God will condemn them, and men and angels will and must condemn them: so that they will appear universally condemned; they will have nothing to say for themselves, nor will anyone have anything to say for them.

So they may tell how God has manifested his love to their souls, has given his Spirit to witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, and that they have much communion with God. But if God has done such great things for them, and they are admitted to such unspeakable privileges above others, surely they ought to do more than others. They should not appear more carnal, and careless, and unChristian in their temper and walk than other men who make no such pretences. Thus wicked men's practice is very often inconsistent with their profession, agreeably to Titus i. 16. "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him; being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."

There are but few who are sinners, and know themselves to be such, who do not encourage themselves with intentions of future repentance and reformation; but few who do not flatter themselves, that they shall in good earnest set themselves to seek God some time or other. Hell is full of GOOD INTENDERS who never proved to be TRUE PERFORMERS.

There are but few who have undertaken the service of God, and are come to a resolution and preparedness of mind to serve God and follow Christ at all times, and to whatever difficulties it may expose them. Yet, at the same time, neither are they determined that they will continue to serve Satan: they are afraid to draw up such a conclusion.—thus many spend their lives without making their choice, though they do in the meantime practically choose the service of Satan.

Not all sins, which one knows not with a certain knowledge to be sinful, are justly called sins of ignorance. Men often will excuse themselves for venturing upon a sinful action or practice, with this, that they know not that it is sinful; which is at most true no otherwise, than as they do not know it to be sinful with a *certain* knowledge, or with the evidence of absolute demonstration; although at the same time it is a sin against their light, and against great light. They have been so taught, that they have had light enough to make them sensible that it is displeasing to God, and not warranted or allowed by him. And they do in their consciences think it to be sinful; they are secretly convinced of it, however they may pretend the contrary, and labour to deceive themselves, and to persuade themselves that they do not think there is any evil in it. Those sins which are contrary to sufficient information and instruction, and contrary to the real dictates of their own consciences, or to the judgment of their own minds; whether there be certain or demonstrative knowledge or no; these are what I would be understood to mean, when I speak of known sins. Such light as this, whether there be absolutely certain knowledge or no, is sufficient to render the action utterly inexcusable, and to render it, when allowed, a horrible profanation and pollution of the holy ordinances of God.