

Jonathan Edwards' Resolutions

As an English major, one of the literary works that caught my attention during my college studies was *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, a sermon and a classic of American literature written by Jonathan Edwards.



Edwards (1703 – 1758) was a revivalist preacher, philosopher and Protestant pastor widely acknowledged to be one of America's most important and original philosophical theologians. Edwards played a critical role in shaping the First Great Awakening and oversaw some of the first revivals in 1733 to 1735 at his church in Northampton, Massachusetts.

As we move into 2016 and consider how we may better our lives in the coming year, perhaps it is helpful for you – as it is for me – to consider Edwards' resolutions, printed in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 1*. Here they are:

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, so far as they are agreeable to His will, for Christ's sake. I will remember to read over these resolutions once a week.
Resolved ...

- *That I will do whatsoever I think to be most to the glory of God, and my own good, profit and pleasure, in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriads of ages hence.*
- *To do whatever I think to be my duty, and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general.*
- *Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.*
- *To live with all my might, while I do live.*
- *Never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.*
- *Never to do anything out of revenge.*
- *Never to speak evil of any one, so that it shall tend to his dishonor, more or less, upon no account except for some real good.*
- *To study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive, myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.*
- *Never to count that a prayer, nor to let that pass as a prayer, nor that as a petition of a prayer, which is so made, that I cannot hope that God will answer it, nor that as a confession which I cannot hope God will accept.*

(more)

- *To ask myself, at the end of every day, week, month, and year, wherein I could possibly, in any respect, have done better.*
- *Never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.*
- *After afflictions, to inquire, what I am the better for them, what good I have got by them, and what I might have got by them.*
- *Always to do that which I shall wish I had done when I see others do it. Let there be something of benevolence in all that I speak.*

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, defines a New Year's resolution as a tradition "in which a person makes a promise to do an act of self-improvement or something slightly nice, such as opening doors for people beginning New Year's Day."

That definition is fulfilled – and then some – in all of Jonathan Edwards' list of resolutions. His words of wisdom from more than 250 years ago can both inspire and challenge us.

But keep in mind, too, God's promise for a good new year:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter