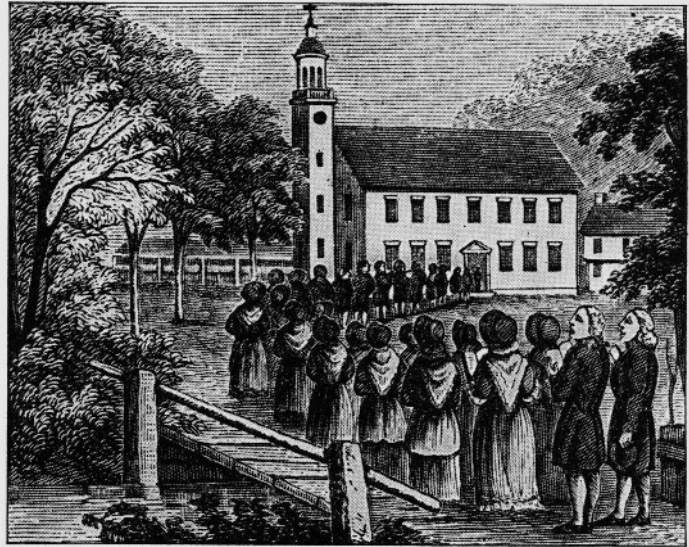


# THE WAY OF HOLINESS

by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)



*Used of God to bring about the “Great Awakening” in America. Known for the sermon “Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God”. Considered by many to be the “Father of the Evangelical Church”. My question as I read this is...if he is the Father—where did the children go? ~Bro Dean*

**M**any are not sensible enough of the necessity of holiness in order to salvation. Everyone hopes for heaven, but if everyone that hoped for heaven ever got there, heaven by this time would have been full of murderers, adulterers, common swearers, drunkards, thieves, robbers, and licentious debauchers. It would have been full of all manner of wickedness and wicked men, such as the earth abounds with at this day. There would have been those there that are no better than wild beasts, howling wolves, and poisonous serpents; yea, devils incarnate, as Judas was.

What a wretched place would the highest heavens have been by this time if it were so: that pure, undefiled, light and glorious place, the heavenly temple, would be as the temple of Jerusalem was in Christ's time, a den of thieves; and the royal palace of the Most High the holy metropolis of the creation, would be turned into a mere hell. There would be no happiness there for those that are holy. What a horrible, dreadful confusion would there be if the glorious presence of God the Father; the glorified Lamb of God; and the Heavenly Dove, spirit of all grace and original of all holiness; the spotless, glorified saints; the holy angels; and wicked men, beasts and devils were all mixed up together!

Therefore, it behooves us all to be sensible of the necessity of holiness in order to salvation; of the necessity of real, hearty and sincere inward and spir-

itual holiness, such as will stand by us forever and will not leave us at death, that sinners may not be so foolish as to entertain hopes of heaven, except they intend forthwith to set about repentance and reformation of heart and life.

## WHAT IS HOLINESS

I shall answer to this question in three things which fully comprehend the nature of holiness, which are not in themselves distinct as so many parts of holiness, but the same thing in three different lights, to give us the fuller understanding of it.

**1** Holiness is a conformity of the heart and the life unto God. Whatever outward appearance men may make by their external actions, as if they were holy, yet if it proceeds not from a most inward hearty and sincere holiness within, it is nothing. Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart all that he did was not acceptable to God, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

And whatever holiness they may pretend to have in their hearts, whatever hypocritical pangs of affection they may have had, it is all to no purpose except it manifest itself in the holiness of their lives and conversations: Jas. 1: 2627, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in

their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." And in the second chapter, eighteenth verse: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." And in the nineteenth and twentieth verses, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" So that there must be a conformity of both heart and life to God, in order to true holiness.

Holiness is the image of God, his likeness, in him that is holy. By being conformed unto God is not meant a conformity to him in his eternity, or infinity, or infinite power. These are God's inimitable and incommunicable attributes; but a conformity to his will, whereby he wills things that are just, right, and truly excellent and lovely; whereby he wills real perfection, and goodness; and perfectly abhors everything that is really evil, unjust, and unreasonable. And it is not only a willing as God wills, but also a doing as he doth: in acting holily and justly and wisely and mercifully, like him. It must become natural thus to be, and thus to act; it must be the constant inclination and new nature of the soul, and then the man is holy, and not before.

2 It is a conformity to Jesus Christ. Christ Jesus is perfectly conformed unto God, for he is God. He is his express image. Now Christ is nearer to us in some respects than God the Father, for he is our Mediator and is more immediately conversant with us; John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Jesus Christ, he has been with us in the flesh and as one of us he appeared in the form of a servant, and we have seen his holiness brightly shining forth in all his actions. We have seen his holy life; we have a copy drawn, and an example set for us.

Now holiness is a conformity unto this copy: he that copies after Jesus Christ, after that copy which he has set us and which is delivered to us by the evangelists, is holy. He that diligently observes the life of Christ in the New Testament need not be at a loss to know what holiness is. Christ commands us to follow his example: Matt. 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Have you ever read the four Gospels, and did you not observe in the life of Christ wonderful instances of humility, love to God, love to religion; wonderful instances of zeal for God's glory, steadfastness in resisting temptations, entire trust and reliance on God, strict adherence to all his com-

mands; astonishing instances of condescension, humility, meekness, lowliness, love to men, love to his enemies, charity and patience? Why, this is holiness. When we imitate Christ in these things, then are we holy, and not till then.

3 Holiness is a conformity to God's laws and commands. When all God's laws without exception are written in our hearts, then are we holy. If you can go along with David in Psalm 119, where he speaks of his love and delight in God's law, in your own experience; when a man feels in some good measure what David declares concerning himself towards the law of God, then may God's law be said to be written in his heart. By God's law I mean all his precepts and commands, especially as they are delivered to us in the gospel, which is the fulfillment of the law of God. If you feel Christ's Sermon upon the Mount engraver on the fleshly tables of your hearts, you are truly sanctified.

The new covenant is written in the hearts of those that are sanctified, of which the prophet Jeremiah speaks, 31:31,33, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. This shall be my covenant, that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

The commands and precepts which God has given us are all pure, perfect, and holy. They are the holiness of God in writing, and, when the soul is conformed to them, they have holiness of God upon their hearts; 11 Cor. 3:3, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart." When the soul is molded and fashioned according to the image of God, the example of Christ and the rules of the gospel, then it is holy, and not else.

## CONCLUSION

Those that have not this holiness are not in the way to heaven. Those that are not thus conformed to God, to Christ, and God's commands, are not in the way to heaven and happiness; they are not traveling that road; the road they are in will never bring them there. Whatever hopes and expectations they may have, they will never reach heaven to eternity except they alter their course, turn about, and steer [towards] another point; for the way is a way of holiness, and

the unclean shall not pass over it. Christ said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into heaven, but yet he left it absolutely possible with God that it might be; but he said positively and without exception that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. None but those that are holy are in the way to heaven, whatever profession they may make, whatever church they may be in: for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Whatever external acts of religion they may perform, however they may be constant attendants on the public or family worship, and live outwardly

moral lives; yea, what is more, if they speak with the tongues of men and angels, though they could prophesy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though they have faith that they can remove mountains; though they bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and though they give their very bodies to be burnt: yet if they have not charity or holiness which is the same thing, for by charity is intended love to God as well as man though they have and do all those things, yet they are nothing; they are as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal (see I Cor. 13). It is good that we should be thoroughly convinced of the most absolute and indispensable necessity of a real, spiritual, active and vital yea, immortal—holiness. □