

March 22, 1758: Before and After

Scripture Reading — Psalm 90

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. 2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. 3 You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." 4 For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. 5 You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning- 6 though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered. 7 We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. 8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. 9 All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. 10 The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. 11 Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. 12 Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. 13 Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. 15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. 16 May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children. 17 May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us-- yes, establish the work of our hands. —

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12

George Marsden, in his recent biography *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, writes, "Edwards spent his whole life preparing to die." How accurate! As a young man, Edwards was terrified of dying-fearful of the holy God to whom he knew he was accountable. Edwards thought of death often; he considered the reality of hell and eternal damnation in many of his sermons and other writings. He knew hell as the real place of torment for sinners who rob God of the glory due his name by refusing to be satisfied in God.

The brevity of life, the judgment of God, and death are important themes in many of Edwards's Resolutions:

Resolution 7: "Resolved, never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life." Resolution 17: "Resolved, that I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die." Resolution 52: "I frequently hear persons in old age say how they would live, if they were to live their lives over again. Resolved, that I will live just so as I can think I shall wish I had done, supposing I live

to old age."

Jonathan Edwards died at a young age, however, of smallpox, on March 22, 1758. He was 54 years old. But because Edwards was singularly devoted to and satisfied in Christ, the "work of [his] hands" was established and lives on to this day.

Prayer

"Jesus, the very thought of you fills us with sweet delight, but sweeter far your face to view and rest within your light." Help us to live faithfully for you, Lord. Amen.

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