

(Peaks of Salvation 5) JONATHAN EDWARDS AND THE GLORY OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1: 18 – 31

The Westminster Confession of Faith: Shorter Catechism; Q1: What is the chief end of man? Ans. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

The GLORY of God was an essential theme in the life of American theologian & philosopher Jonathan Edwards (1703-58). **THE GLORY OF GOD**: Leviticus 10: 3; Psalm 19: 1; Isaiah 43: 7; Ephesians 1: 4-6, 11&12, 14; Isaiah 6. The Glory of God points to His greatness in power & knowledge, the excellence & splendour of His moral nature. He is Alpha & Omega, ie. the Glory of God, the Lord of all is the only source of Christian vitality. Edwards wrote: **'holiness is in a peculiar manner the beauty of the divine nature ... This renders all His other attributes glorious and lovely. 'Tis the glory of God's wisdom, that 'tis a holy wisdom, and not a wicked subtlety and craftiness. This makes His majesty lovely, and not merely dreadful and horrible, that it is a holy majesty'**.

Edwards was born in a Christian home, only son with four older sisters, studied Latin aged six & by thirteen reading Greek & Hebrew; matriculated at Yale University aged twelve, then Master's degree; converted in 1721 at Yale & prepared for pastoral ministry. Edwards; *personal narrative*: 'On January 12 1723, I made a solemn dedication of myself to God, & wrote it down; giving up myself, & all that I had to God; to be for the future, in no respect, my own; to act as one who had no right to be himself, in any respect. And solemnly vowed to take God for my whole portion & felicity; looking on nothing else, as any part of my happiness'. He worked 13 hours a day in his study; & usually read his sermons from manuscript. He held prayer meetings and began a sermon series on justification by faith alone & was involved in shaping the First Great Awakening & some of the first revivals 1733–35 at his church. Revival came and over 300 joined his church. Edwards wrote; Northampton was **'never so full of the love of God, nor of joy, & yet so full of distress'**. Renewal could not be worked up but was an act of the sovereign God. Letters & friendship with **George Whitefield** led to his arrival late 1739 & greater Awakening. In places where it was not customary for anyone to be disturbed by preaching; **'Men saw hell opening before them and themselves ready to fall into it'**. Those who were already grown-up at the time of the work of the Spirit

in 1735, & who had witnessed that revival without coming to the obedience of faith, 'seemed now to be almost wholly passed over & let alone'. After years of formal & dead religion, reaction & hostility against the Awakening contributed to the spread of Arminian and Unitarian ideas in Congregationalism.

During his grandfather's pastorate the church had adopted the 'half-way' covenant, the view that those could attend communion who though baptised, had made no personal profession of faith. So the Lord's Supper was regarded as a 'converting ordinance'. Edwards saw the half-way covenant as dulling the sinner's awareness of the need for God's sovereign mercy. He was dismissed from his pastorate because he believed only the saints; the true elect, should be members in full communion; ie. be converted for the Ordinances.

Became missionary to Indians at Stockbridge & wrote his most important work, *Freedom of the Will* (1754). Here he denied that human beings are free to choose God, which fitted with Calvinistic doctrines of election, predestination & total depravity. Reluctantly appointed President of new Princeton College, died from smallpox injection. Theologically Reformed [Calvinistic] & regarded as one of America's most important and original philosophical theologians. **1 Corinthians 1: 18-31**; the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ reveals the Glory of God. In God's holiness is revealed two vital truths. **1.** God is separate from His creation. His holiness sets Him above all things & He is the first and final source of all holiness. **2.** Because God is holy, His creatures cannot approach Him in their unholy state, unaided by sacrifice; Leviticus 17: 11 & Hebrews 9: 22

The Scottish preacher Ebenezer Erskine [1680-1754] visited a Christian woman who was dying and asked if she was ready for heaven. She assured him that she was ready to depart and to be with Christ because she was in that hand from which no one could pluck her. Erskine asked, "But are you not afraid that you will slip through His fingers in the end?" "That is impossible because of what you have always told us," she replied. "And what is that?" he asked. "That we are united to Him, and so we are part of His body. I cannot slip through His fingers because I am one of His fingers. Besides, Christ has paid too high a price for my redemption to leave me in Satan's hand. If I were to be lost, He would lose more than I; I would lose my salvation, but He would lose His glory, because one of His sheep would be lost."