

OUTLINE OF JONATHAN EDWARDS'S FAREWELL SERMON

Preached June 22, 1750

1. **Exposition** of 2 Cor 1:14 “And also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.”
 - 1.1. Four comforts
 - 1.1.1. He had approved himself to his own comfort (2 Cor 1:12).
 - 1.1.2. He had the consciences of his hearers to approve him before God.
 - 1.1.3. He hoped to see the fruit of his ministry labors.
 - 1.1.4. He had approved himself to his Judge.
 - 1.2. Paul expected a joyful meeting with the Corinthian Christians.
2. **Doctrine:** *Ministers and the people that have been under their care, must meet one another, before Christ's tribunal, at the day of judgment.*
 - 2.1. In what **manner, ministers and the people** which have been under their care, **shall meet** one another **at the day of judgment.**
 - 2.1.1. Two things in general
 - 2.1.1.1. The way in which ministers and their people will meet will be different from the way everyone else meets at the day of judgment.
 - 2.1.1.1.1. They will recognize each other.
 - 2.1.1.1.2. They will have a “special concern one with another” in what is happening on that day.
 - 2.1.1.2. That meeting will be very different from the way they met together in this world. They will not be meeting for public worship or other governmental meetings. There are other differences in particular,
 - 2.1.1.2.1. They meet now in a state where change can happen, but then there will be no change. Sinners will be in an unchangeable state of sin. “[T]hey who then shall be under the guilt and power of sin, and have the wrath of God abiding on them, shall be beyond all remedy or possibility of change, and shall meet their ministers without any hopes of relief or remedy, or getting any good by their means.” (466)
 - 2.1.1.2.2. Their future meeting will be “a state of clear, certain and infallible light.” (466)
 - 2.1.1.2.2.1. Sometimes, in the present, ministers and their people meet together and disagree. There is “unhappy debate and controversy, managed with much prejudice, and want of candor; not tending to light and conviction, but rather to confirm and increase darkness, and establish opposition to the truth, and alienation of affection one from another.” (467) But then the mind of Christ will be made known, and there will no debate or difference of opinions.
 - 2.1.1.2.2.2. In the present ministers meet with unconverted sinners, and those people stubbornly remain in sin: “...they remain still, notwithstanding all their ministers can say, stupid and unawakened, and their consciences unconvinced.” (467) But then, they will be convinced of all the truths of Scripture by the light of Christ.
 - 2.1.1.2.2.3. In the present, ministers meet with their people to help them see the state of their soul before God, but they are unable to know for sure who is saved and who is not. Moreover, the people don't know for sure the state of their own minister. In the present, men often mistake themselves to be God's children. “Yea, there is reason to think, that often some that are most bold in their confidence of their safe and

happy state, and think themselves not only true saints, but the most eminent saints in the congregation, are in a peculiar manner a smoke in God's nose." (468) The self-conceit of hypocrites and doubts of true believers will come to a final end. "And then shall all know the state of one another's souls: the people shall know whether their minister has been sincere and faithful, and the minister shall know the state of every one of their people..." (468)

2.1.1.2.2.4. In the present, when ministers and their people debate controversies, they can be mistaken. In the future, all "shall be certainly known."

2.1.1.2.3. In the present, both ministers and their people cannot see the Lord. But in the future, "they shall meet in his most immediate and visible presence." (469)

2.1.1.2.4. In that future meeting, no one will have a "careless, heedless heart." (469) *With such an heart are their meetings often attended in this world, by many persons, having little regard to him whom they pretend unitedly to adore in the solemn duties of his public worship, taking little heed to their own thoughts or the frame of their minds, not attending to the business they are engaged in, or considering the end for which they are come together: but the meeting at that great day will be very different; there will not be one careless heart, no sleeping, no wandering of mind from the great concern of the meeting, no inattentiveness to the business of the day, no regardlessness of the presence they are in, or of those great things which they shall hear from Christ at that meeting . . .* (469)

2.2. For what **purposes [ministers and the people]** which have been under their care, **shall meet** one another **at the day of judgment**. What is the purpose of this great future meeting?

2.2.1. **First Purpose:** *To give an account before the Great Judge, of their behavior one to another, in the relation they stood in to each other in this world.* (470)

2.2.1.1. Ministers must give an account, not only of their own works, but of their reception (Heb 13:17; Luke 14:16-21).

2.2.1.1.1. Ministers will give an account of those who received them well "and made a good improvement of their ministry." (470)

2.2.1.1.2. Ministers will also give an account of those who treated them poorly. "And at the same time they will give an account of the ill treatment, of such as have not well received them and their messages from Christ: they will meet these, not as they used to do in this world, to counsel and warn them, but to bear witness against them, and as their judges, and assessors with Christ, to condemn them." (470)

2.2.1.2. Congregants will rise up to judge unfaithful and wicked ministers.

Those "who have sought their own temporal interest, more than the good of the souls of their flock." (470)

2.2.2. **Second Purpose:** *...that he [Christ] may judge between them, as to any controversies which have subsisted between them in this world.* (470-71)

2.2.2.1. Whether the conflict is over doctrine, leadership, conduct, or their stewardship, Christ will settle all disputes.

2.2.2.2. Christ, "the infallible Judge, the infinite fountain of light, truth and justice, will judge between the contending parties. (471)

2.2.3. **Third Purpose:** *...to receive an eternal sentence and retribution from the Judge, in the presence of each other, according to their behavior in the relation they stood in to one*

another in the present state. (471) Dan 12:3; Isa 49:4; Matt 10:40-41; 1 Thess 2:19-20; Matt 10:14-15; Deut 33:8-11; Ezek 33:6; Matt 23:1-33.

2.2.3.1. Ministers will receive justice for their acts.

2.2.3.2. The congregation will receive justice for their acts.

2.2.3.3. “And so all things will be adjusted and settled forever between them; everyone being sentenced and recompensed according to his works; either in receiving and wearing a crown of eternal joy and glory, or in suffering everlasting shame and pain.” (472)

2.3. For what **reasons** God has so ordered it, that **ministers and their people shall** then **meet together** in such a matter, and for such purposes. [Two observations:]

2.3.1. **First observation:** “The mutual concerns of ministers and their people are of the greatest importance.” (473)

2.3.1.1. If God is going to judge every work of man, both public and private, then it only follows that God will especially judge the concerns of a pastor and his flock.

2.3.1.2. “[T]he mutual concerns of a Christian minister, and his church and congregation, are of the vastest importance; in many respects, of much greater moment than the temporal concerns of the greatest earthly monarchs, and their kingdoms or empires. It is of vast consequence how ministers discharge their office, and conduct themselves towards their people in the work of the ministry, and in affairs appertaining to it. ’Tis also a matter of vast importance how a people receive and entertain a faithful minister of Christ, and what improvement they make of his ministry.” (473)

2.3.2. **Second observation:** The concerns of ministers and their people especially pertain to the day of judgment. Ministers represent the Judge. Moreover, minister are sent “to promote the eternal salvation of the souls of men, and their escape from eternal damnation; and the day of judgment is the day appointed for that end, openly to decide and settle man’s eternal state.” (474)

3. **Application:** “The improvement I would make of the things which have been observed, is to lead the people here present, who have been under my pastoral care, to some reflections, and to give them some advice suitable to our present circumstances; relating to what has been lately done in order to our being separated, as to the relation we have heretofore stood in one to another; but expecting to meet each other before the great tribunal at the day of judgment.” (474)

3.1. **Personal Remarks.**

3.1.1. Edwards asks how many times they had met together. “How often have I spoke to you, instructed, counseled, warned, directed and fed you, and administered ordinances among you, as the people which were committed to my care, and whose precious souls I had charge of?” (475)

3.1.2. He reminds them that, like the prophet Jeremiah in Jer 25:3, he had been with them for 23 years.

3.1.3. “And though my strength has been weakness, having always labored under great infirmity of body, besides my insufficiency for so great a charge in other respects, yet I have not spared my feeble strength, but have exerted it for the good of your souls.” (475)

3.1.4. “You are my witnesses, that what strength I have had, I have not neglected in idleness, nor laid out in prosecuting worldly schemes, and managing temporal affairs, for the advancement of my outward estate, and aggrandizing myself and family; but have given myself to the work of the ministry, laboring in it night and day, rising early and applying myself to this great business to which

Christ appointed me. I have found the work of the ministry among you to be a great work indeed, a work of exceeding care, labor and difficulty: many have been the heavy burdens that I have borne in it, which my strength has been very unequal to." (475) God gave him these struggles, and he was thankful for them and for God's help in sustaining him through them.

3.1.5. "But I now I have reason to think, my work is finished which I had to do as your minister: you have publicly rejected me, and my opportunities cease." (476)

3.1.6. And Edwards's point here is that though they now part, the parting is not final. They must still meet before Christ on the day of judgment. Then Christ Jesus "will judge us with respect to all that we have said or done in our meetings here, all our conduct one towards another, in the house of God and elsewhere, on sabbath days and on other days; who will try our hearts, and manifest our thoughts, and the principles and frames of our minds, will judge us with respect to all the controversies which have subsisted between us, with the strictest impartiality, and will examine our treatment of each other in those controversies." (476) "And then our hearts will be turned inside out, and the secrets of them will be made more plainly to appear than our outward actions do now." (476)

3.1.7. "Then it will appear, whether I acted uprightly, and from a truly conscientious, careful regard to my duty to my great Lord and master, in some former ecclesiastical controversies, which have been attended with exceeding unhappy circumstances, and consequences: it will appear whether there was any just cause for the resentment which was manifested on those occasions." (476)

3.1.8. Regarding "our late grand controversy" concerning the necessary qualifications for the Lord's Supper, "[t]hen it will appear whether the doctrine which I have preached and published concerning this matter be Christ's own doctrine, whether he won't own it as one of the precious truths which have proceeded from his own mouth, and vindicate and honor as such before the whole universe." (477)

3.1.9. In the day of judgment it will appear "whether what I have done has not been from a careful, strict and tender regard to the will of my Lord and Master, and because I dare not offend him, being satisfied what his will was, after a long, diligent, impartial and prayerful inquiry; having this constantly in view and prospect, to engage me to great solicitude not rashly to determine truth to be on this side of the question where I am now persuaded it is, that such a determination would not be for my temporal interest, but every way against it, bringing a long series of extreme difficulties, and plunging me into an abyss of trouble and sorrow." (477)

3.1.10. "Then every step of the conduct of each of us in this affair, from first to last, and the spirit we have exercised in all, shall be examined and manifested, and our own consciences will speak plain and loud, and each of us shall be convinced, and the world shall know; and never shall there be any more mistake, misrepresentation or misapprehension of the affair to eternity." (477)

3.1.11. The final day of judgment will ultimately decide the issue between Edwards and his congregation. "[T]herefore I leave it to that time, and shall say no more about it at present." (478)

3.2. **Application to Particular Groups of People.**

3.2.1. *To those who profess to be Christians.*

- 3.2.1.1. Edwards reminds them that he had emphasized “the distinguishing notes of true piety” among them in order that the hypocrites would repent and true saints would be comforted. “And yet ’tis to be feared, that after all that I have done, I now leave some of you in a deceived, deluded state; for ’tis not to be supposed that among several hundred professors, none are deceived.” (478)
- 3.2.1.2. Remember the rules I laid down and examine yourselves. “[W]hatever your pretenses to experiences, discoveries, comforts and joys have been,” everyone will be judged according to their works. So Edwards wishes for them, “May you have a minister of greater knowledge of the Word of God, . . . and greater skill in applying himself to souls, whose discourses may be more searching and convincing; that such of you as have held fast deceit under my preaching, may have your eyes opened by his.” (478-79) Your time is short to repent, Edwards warns.
- 3.2.2. *To those who live in a “Christless, graceless” state.*
- 3.2.2.1. “I leave you in most melancholy circumstances; because I leave you in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, having the wrath of God abiding on you, and remaining under condemnation to everlasting misery and destruction.” (479)
- 3.2.2.2. “Your consciences bear me witness, that while I had opportunity, I have not ceased to warn you and set before you your danger. I have studied to represent the misery and necessity of your circumstances in the clearest manner possible. I have tried all ways that I could think of tending to awaken your consciences, and make you sensible of the necessity of your improving your time, and being speedy in flying from the wrath to come, and thorough in the use of means for your escape and safety. I have diligently endeavored to find out and use the most powerful motives to persuade you to take care for your own welfare and salvation. I have not only endeavored to awaken you that you might be moved with fear, but I have used my utmost endeavors to win you.” (480)
- 3.2.2.3. “May God in mercy grant, that however all past means have been unsuccessful, you may have future means which may have a new effect; and that the Word of God, as it shall be hereafter dispensed to you, may prove as the fire and the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. However, let me now at parting exhort and beseech you not wholly to forget the warnings you have had while under my ministry. When you and I shall meet at the day of judgment, then you will remember ’em: the sight of me your former minister, on that occasion, will soon revive ’em in your memory; and that in a very affecting manner.” (480)
- 3.2.2.4. “O do your part, that in such a case, it may not be so, that you should be forced eternally to part from me, and all that have been faithful in Christ Jesus. This is a sorrowful parting that now is between you and me; but that would be a more sorrowful parting to you than this.” (481)
- 3.2.3. *To those who are “under some awakenings,” i.e., who are “almost” Christians.*
- 3.2.3.1. Some of them had spoken to Edwards concerning their souls. Edwards says he especially concerned for them, and he says that he won’t know what will happen to them until the day of judgment.
- 3.2.3.2. Don’t let the upheaval at the church overturn the work of the Spirit in you.

3.2.3.3. Edwards says that no matter who the next pastor is, his hope is that “the great Shepherd of the sheep” will show “special respect” to them and turn them from darkness to light (481).

3.2.4. *To the young people of the congregation.*

3.2.4.1. “Since I have been settled in the work of the ministry in this place, I have ever had a peculiar concern for the souls of the young people, and a desire that religion might flourish among them; and have especially exerted myself in order to it; because I knew the special opportunity they had beyond others, and that ordinarily those whom God intended mercy for were brought to fear and love him in their youth.” (482)

3.2.4.2. Edwards says he thinks that young people walking in “Christian piety” is “peculiarly amiable.” It would have been a beautiful thing if the young people could have been persuaded to avoid “impurity, levity and extravagance,” and would have kept “strictly to the rules of virtue,” speaking amongst themselves of spiritual matters. “This is what I have longed for: and it has been exceedingly grievous to me when I have heard of vice, vanity and disorder among our youth. And so far as I know my heart, it was from hence that I formerly led this church to some measures, for the suppressing vice among our young people, which gave so great offense, and by which I became so obnoxious.” (482)

3.2.4.3. All that he did, Edwards explains, was so that young people would find happiness in another world and dignity and honor in this world.

3.2.4.4. Edwards urges them, even as he leaves them, “not to despise and forget the warnings and counsels I have so often given you; remembering the day when you and I must meet again before the great Judge of quick and dead.” (482)

3.2.4.5. “I have, from time to time, earnestly warned you against frolicking (as it is called) and some other liberties commonly taken by young people in the land. And whatever some may say in justification of such liberties and customs, and may laugh at warnings against them, I now leave you my parting testimony against such things; not doubting but God will approve and confirm it in that day when we shall meet before him.” (483)

3.2.5. *To the children of the congregation.*

3.2.5.1. “[Y]ou know, dear children, how I have instructed you, and warned you from time to time: you know how I have often called you together for that end.” (483)

3.2.5.2. He is afraid that many of them remain unconverted.

3.2.5.3. “Only I desire you not to forget, but often think of the counsels and warnings I have given you.” (483)

3.2.5.4. “Dear children, I leave you in an evil world, that is full of snares and temptations. God only knows what will become of you. This the Scripture has told us, that there are but few saved: and we have abundant confirmation of it from what we see. This we see, that children die as well as others: multitudes die before they grow up; and of those that grow up, comparatively few ever give good evidence of saving conversion to God.” (483-84)

3.3. **Advice to All in General**

3.3.1. *Maintain family order.*

3.3.1.1. “Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules. And

family education and order are some of the chief of the means of grace.”
(484)

- 3.3.1.2. “Let me now therefore, once more, before I finally cease to speak to this congregation, repeat and earnestly press the counsel, which I have often urged on heads of families here, while I was their pastor, to great painfulness, in teaching, warning and directing their children; bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; beginning early, where there is yet opportunity; and maintaining a constant diligence in labors of this kind: remembering that, as you would not have all your instructions and counsels ineffectual, there must be government as well as instructions, which must be maintained with an even hand, and steady resolution; as a guard to the religion and morals of the family, and the support of its good order. Take heed that it ben't with any of you as it was with Eli of old, who reproved his children, but restrained them not; and that by this means you do not bring the like curse on your families, as he did on his.” (484)
- 3.3.1.3. He urges the children to obey their parents as well.
- 3.3.2. ***Avoid contention.***
 - 3.3.2.1. “The contentions which have been among you, since I first became your pastor, have been one of the greatest burdens I have labored under in the course of my ministry: not only the contentions you have had with me, but those which you have had one with another, about your lands, and other concerns.” (485)
 - 3.3.2.2. He repeats for them 2 Cor 13:11, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect: be of one mind: live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”
 - 3.3.2.3. “And here I would particularly advise those, that have adhered to me in the late controversy, to watch over their spirits, and avoid all bitterness towards others. Your temptations are in some respects the greatest; because what has been lately done, is grievous to you. But however wrong you may think others have done, maintain, with great diligence and watchfulness, a Christian meekness and sedateness of spirit: and labor, in this respect, to excel others who are of the contrary part: and this will be the best victory: for "he that rules his spirit, is better than he that takes a city." Therefore let nothing be done through strife or vainglory: indulge no revengeful spirit in any wise; but watch and pray against it: and by all means in your power, seek the prosperity of this town: and never think you behave yourselves as becomes Christians, but when you sincerely, sensibly and fervently love all men of whatever party or opinion, and whether friendly or unkind, just or injurious, to you, or your friends, or to the cause and kingdom of Christ.” (485-86)
- 3.3.3. ***Beware of false teaching.***
 - 3.3.3.1. He reminds them that many of them were alarmed at the attacks on the doctrine of justification by faith alone right before the beginning of the first revivals in the 1730s.
 - 3.3.3.2. But loose doctrines were on the rise, Edwards laments, all over the country over the past seven years. “[T]hey are still prevailing and creeping into almost all parts of the land, threatening the utter ruin of the credit of those doctrines, which are the peculiar glory of the gospel, and the interests of vital piety.” (486)

- 3.3.3.3. The older people in the congregation may be well opposed to such doctrines, but the church that stands should take heed lest they fall. Edwards worries the unsaved young people might especially get taken up with the false doctrines swirling about.
- 3.3.3.4. “And if these principles should greatly prevail in this town, as they very lately have done in another large town I could name, formerly greatly noted for religion, and so for a long time, it will threaten the spiritual and eternal ruin of this people, in the present and future generations.” (486)
- 3.3.4. **“Give yourselves much to prayer.”**
- 3.3.4.1. “God is the fountain of all blessing and prosperity, and he will be sought to for his blessing. I would therefore advise you not only to be constant in secret and family prayer, and in the public worship of God in his house, but also often to assemble yourselves in private praying societies. I would advise all such as are grieved for the afflictions of Joseph, and sensibly affected with the calamities of this town, of whatever opinion they be with relation to the subject of our late controversy, often to meet together for prayer, and to cry to God for his mercy to themselves, and mercy to this town, and mercy to Zion and the people of God in general through the world.” (487)
- 3.3.5. **Take care in the next minister you “settle.”**
- 3.3.5.1. *Be careful about the doctrine he maintains.* “I know the danger. I know the manner of many young gentlemen of corrupt principles, their ways of concealing themselves, the fair specious disguises they are wont to put on, by which they deceive others, to maintain their own credit, and get themselves into others' confidence and improvement, and secure and establish their own interest, till they see a convenient opportunity to begin more openly to broach and propagate their corrupt tenets.” (487)
- 3.3.5.2. *Find a man of “serious religion, and fervent piety.”* (487).
- 3.3.5.2.1. If you're going to get someone who resist all the errors and dangers to religion, you must find someone with “sincere piety of heart.”
- 3.3.5.2.2. You will hazard your own soul if you find someone who is not a true believer.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. “Having briefly mentioned these important articles of advice, nothing remains; but that I now take my leave of you, and bid you all, farewell; wishing and praying for your best prosperity. I would now commend your immortal souls to him, who formerly committed them to me; expecting the day, when I must meet you again before him, who is the Judge of quick and dead. I desire that I may never forget this people, who have been so long my special charge, and that I may never cease fervently to pray for your prosperity. May God bless you with a faithful pastor, one that is well acquainted with his mind and will, thoroughly warning sinners, wisely and skillfully searching professors, and conducting you in the way to eternal blessedness. May you have truly a burning and shining light set up in this candlestick; and may you, not only for a season, but during his whole life, and that a long life, be willing to rejoice in his light.
- 4.2. “And let me be remembered in the prayers of all God's people that are of a calm spirit, and are peaceable and faithful in Israel, of whatever opinion they may be, with respect to terms of church communion.
- 4.3. “And let us all remember, and never forget our future solemn meeting, on that great day of the Lord; the day of infallible decision, and of the everlasting and unalterable sentence, Amen.” (488)