

## Humility

Jonathan Edwards

Humility may be defined to be a habit of mind and heart corresponding to our comparative unworthiness and vileness before God, or a sense of our own comparative meanness in His sight, with the disposition to a behavior answerable thereto. And a truly humble man is sensible of the small extent of his understanding as compared with the understanding of God. He is sensible of his weakness, how little his strength is, and how

**Humility is a most essential and distinguishing trait in all true piety.**

little he is able to do. He is sensible of his natural distance from God, of his dependence on Him, of the insufficiency of his own power and wisdom; and that it is by God's power that he is upheld and provided for; and that he needs God's wisdom to lead and guide him, and His might to enable him to do what he ought to do for Him.

Humility tends to prevent an aspiring and ambitious behavior amongst men. The man that is under the influence of a humble spirit is content with such a situation amongst men as God is pleased to allot to him, and is not greedy of honour, and does not affect to appear uppermost and exalted above his neighbours. Humility tends also to prevent an arrogant and assuming behavior. On the contrary, humility disposes a person to condescending behaviour to the meekest and lowest and to treat inferiors with courtesy and affability, as being sensible of his own weakness and despicableness before God.

If we then consider ourselves as the followers of the meek and lowly and crucified Jesus, we shall walk humbly before God and man all the days of our life on earth.

Let all be exhorted earnestly to *seek* much of an humble spirit, and to endeavour to be humble in all their behaviour toward God and men. Seek for a deep and abiding sense of your comparative meanness before God and man. Know God. Confess your nothingness and ill-desert before Him. *Distrust yourself. Rely only on God.* Renounce all glory except from Him. Yield yourself heartily to His will and service. Avoid an aspiring, ambitious, ostentatious, assuming, arrogant, scornful, stubborn, wilful levelling, self-justifying behaviour; and *strive*

for more and more of the humble spirit that Christ manifested while He was on earth. *Humility is a most essential and distinguishing trait in all true piety.*

Earnestly seek then, and diligently and prayerfully cherish a humble spirit, and God shall walk with you here below; and when a few more days shall have passed, He will receive you to the honours bestowed on His people at Christ's right hand.

## Jonathan Edwards and The Religious Affections

Scott Aniol

In present day culture, all emotion is seen as an indivisible whole. Emotion is judged only based upon what it is directed toward and nothing else. No matter how those emotions are developed, their only criterion of worth is their object.

Eighteenth century theologian, Jonathan Edwards, however, saw things differently. He made a sharp distinction between what he called "passions" and "affections."

"The affections and passions are frequently spoken of as the same, and yet in the more comment use of speech, there is in some respect a difference. Affection is a word that in the ordinary signification, seems to be something more extensive than passion, being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination, but passion for those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command" (27).

"The affections are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul" (p 24).

Notice that he says the "inclination" and "will." These are objective, rational terms. Edwards was right when he said that "passions" can negate any sense of thought or rationality. These have no place in the worship of God, for one occupied with these irrational feelings cannot truly appreciate the objective truths about God and worship Him accordingly. True worship music must be that which appeals to the mind first (which understands the truth and beauty), the will second (which acknowledges the truth and accepts it), and finally to the affections (which respond to that objective truth and beauty).

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## A Balanced Approach to Balance

Kevin T. Bauder

We hear a lot these days about balance. We are told that we should affirm a balanced theology, hold a balanced position, and exercise a balanced ministry. Of course, we agree. Who could object to balance? We join the rest of the world in stating our respect for balance—whatever it means.

Therein lies the problem. What does it mean? Too often, *balance* is used as a slippery term to which no one can object but that no one can quite define. One person's balance is another person's extreme and a third person's compromise. Yet we all favor balance.

In popular usage, *balance* means "just like me; agreeing with my position." To be *imbalanced*, a theology or ministry needs only to differ from one's own. To say that someone's position is imbalanced often means simply that we don't agree with it or like it.

Contemporary Christians habitually confuse the two ideas of *balance* and *average*. Given a particular question or issue, most people assume that the balanced position is the one closest to the middle. This approach, however, dooms balance to constant flux and allows the extremists to define the balanced position.

Against this subjectivism and relativism stands genuine balance. Real balance is a virtue, and it is not relative. It is grounded in truth. How do we know when we are balanced in theology and ministry? How can we seek to become more balanced?

We must begin by heeding all of Scripture. We must resist the tendency to pay attention to only the biblical teachings and passages that seem to support our own views. We must be careful not to explain away Scripture when it does not seem to agree with us. We must seek to learn all that God has to say, whether it seems to support our views or not. We can

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## Putting Theology Back in the Pew

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never truly emphasize one biblical truth by deprecating another.

Second, we must refuse to surrender any truth that God has revealed either for faith or for practice. We commit ourselves to believe everything that the Bible teaches and to practice everything that it requires. This may obligate us to believe some teachings that appear to be incompatible with one another. A balanced Christian is able to hold such truths in tension while seeking for the agreement between them. Any balance that falls short of full obedience to the Word is not balance at all, but a compromise of the truth.

Third, we must learn which truths and practices to emphasize. Without abandoning any teaching or requirement of the Word of God, we recognize that some doctrines and practices are more central than others. Therefore, we must weigh carefully the importance

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of the various teachings of Scripture. While all the teachings and requirements of the Bible are important, they are not equally essential. Doctrines and practices may be more or less pivotal to the Christian faith.

Why must we weigh the importance of biblical doctrines and requirements? Not in order to decide which we should believe and obey! We have already said that we must affirm and practice everything that is revealed in the Word of God. But we cannot emphasize every truth or practice equally. We cannot spend equal time and energy on everything in Scripture. A balanced ministry is one that emphasizes what the Bible itself emphasizes.

Rightly understood, balance is crucial to biblical, effective ministry. While we must never permit balance to become an excuse for

accommodating disobedience or making concessions to error, we should nevertheless strive to be balanced. We ought to try to know all that Scripture says, to believe all that Scripture teaches, and to obey all that Scripture requires. But we must also learn to emphasize those doctrines and duties that Scripture accentuates. We must spend our time and energy on the most important things.

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## The Second Step to Christlikeness, Part 2

Steven Owen

When I was a boy, businesses were closed all day on the Lord's Day so that people could attend church. Actors wore clothes and didn't swear on TV. Gambling was illegal, except in Las Vegas. The divorce rate was half of its current level. Most children my age had a mommy and a daddy at home. Homosexuality was a shameful perversion. My public grade school had dress standards, and all of my classmates could read. What's happened that all these things have changed? The church lost her ability to be salt in the world (Mt. 5:13). How did that happen? It is not because the church is less politically active today; indeed, the church is far more politically active. It is because she has stopped, in a large measure, being Christlike. 2 Timothy 3:1-13 warns us that during these last days, church people would be "lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power." Paul further counsels "avoid such men as these" (2 Ti. 3:5). The pastor and the church must insist that its members pursue Christlikeness. True Christians must manifest God's power to change lives. Only then can the church regain the influence she has lost. And it starts with putting off the garments of sin.

Sadly many believers aimlessly waste their lives because they do not understand that Christlikeness is to be the ultimate pursuit of their life (Co. 3:1-4). These have simply not put forth any systematic effort to change. Others are still enslaved to Satan although Christ has broken the chains of slavery (Jn. 8:31-36).

Their slavery is imposed because they have yet to accept the fact that angry outbursts, pouting, grudge holding, and sulking are sinful. Others remain in bondage because they have bought into the lie that "I can't change." Their excuses vary from blaming their personality to psychological "dysfunctions" for which they seek relief via some drug and counseling to placing responsibility for their condition upon others ("my parents abused me"). They haven't come to the realization that Christ has freed them and that they can change. In fact, they died (Co. 3:3). The past does not matter anymore. All that really matters now is getting to the work of becoming like Christ (Co. 3:2).

The fundamental reason that we have not become more Christlike than we have is that we have failed to put off the old garments of sin. Colossians 3:8-9 directs believers to put off "anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another." Like choking weeds in a garden these sins extract the nutrients from the Word and render it ineffectual. It grieves the Spirit (Ep. 4:30-32) and hinders the gracious work of God in our lives.

The Holy Spirit warns us three times that anger stops spiritual growth (Ep. 4:30-32; Ja. 1:20, 21; 1 Pe. 2:1). The Greek word translated "anger" (NASB) is the word "orge." It refers to a deep, smoldering, resentful bitterness. "Wrath" refers to the outward explosions of anger; malice refers to the longstanding grudges over perceived wrongs of such intensity that we would actually wish for harm to come to our offender. All these the believer must put off to become Christlike.

Let it first be noted that not all anger is sin. The most common usage of the Greek word is applied to God's righteous anger in judgment upon the sins of man (Mt. 3:7; Lu. 3:7; Jn. 3:36; Ro. 1:18). God commands believers to "Be angry and sin not" (Ep. 4:26). Jesus was righteously indignant with the hard hearts of men who had no compassion (Mk. 3:5). Another type of anger that is not necessarily sinful is anger for self-preservation. I once had a robber try to cut me in half with a razor. I was amazed at how incredibly angry I instantly became, and how that anger saved my life as I rapidly moved to meet the danger. So the anger of self-preservation and the anger of righteous indignation for God's glory are not sin.

But most human anger is sinful. The anger that arises because someone has wronged you or cheated you or frustrated you is most certainly sinful. The angry person resents his place in life, his upbringing, his economic status, his spouse, and/or untold other people, circumstances and events. His life is an unhappy and

resentful life because he thinks that he has been cheated in some way(s). The offense(s) may be real or imagined. This is the common attitude of a person living for self. Life has not turned out as one had hoped, and now he is resentful of those barriers that block him from having his way.

Sinful anger carries a very high price. The Holy Spirit is grieved when we allow anger to remain in us (Ep. 4:30-32). Like a wounded spouse, we can bring acute sorrow to God. No Apostle or pastor wants to see it in the church (2 Co. 12:20). It is the work of the flesh (Ga.

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5:20). Those who allow anger to arise in church hinder the prayer life of the church (1 Ti. 2:8). It is so dangerous to the life of the church that we should even interrupt our worship to get it settled (Mt. 5:23-24). It blocks spiritual growth (Ja. 1:19-20). The angry person who holds a grudge is a murderer; his worship is rejected; and he is in danger of eternal damnation (Mt. 5:21-26; Ga. 5:21). The quick-tempered man is disqualified from leadership (Ti. 1:7).

So how may we deal with anger in a godly way? God says, "put it off" (Co. 3:8). In other words, get rid of it. Let's admit that our angry reaction is sin. Stop making excuses for it. Stop blaming the deeds of others, and focus instead on our reaction to their deeds. Confess our anger as sin (1 Jn. 1:9). Moreover, Ephesians 4:26 says we must not let anger abide with us after sunset. Get over it quickly. Refuse to hold grudges. Be tenderhearted to the weakness and ignorance and sins of others (Ep. 4:32). Remember that our sin debt against God is far greater than another's sin against us (Ep. 4:32; Mt. 18:21-35). Instead of anger, fill your mind and heart with the word of God (Co. 3:16; Pp. 4:8). And then pray to the Father that He will forgive you just like you forgave those who wronged you (Mt. 6:12). And if that is hard to do, pray that He will deliver you from the evil of anger (Mt. 6:13). Christians do not need an antidepressant pill for bitterness; Christians need to put it off by the power of God. The Word of God is able to "[equip you] for every good work" (2 Ti. 3:16-17).

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## 2004 Ekklesia Consortium Illinois Regional Ministry Conference

Review

The Lord blessed the Ekklesia Consortium regional ministry conference at First Baptist Church in Rockford, Illinois on October 9. God's people received helpful instruction, had sweet fellowship with members of like-minded churches, and were challenged in their Christian walk.

The day's workshops consisted of topics ranging from teaching to music to practical life issues. The day began with Pastor Bryan Bice preaching a message entitled "A Life of Sense and Nonsense" from Titus 2:11-12. He encouraged each believer to recognize their biblical purposes in life and strive to fulfill those purposes.

Beth Keith from Schaumburg, Illinois provided three workshops in areas of teaching children, Pastor Scott Aniol from Rockford presented workshops on worship and music ("Worship with Purpose" and "Good Old Hymns' that Aren't So Good"), and Pastor Roger Carlson from Rock Falls, Illinois provided a biblical view of Christian counseling. Other workshops included "Christian Estate Planning" by attorney Bob Alexander, "The Christian and Alcohol" by Pastor Scott Williquette from Rockford, and "What is the Saving Gospel?" by Pastor Steve Owen from Monroe, Wisconsin. Participants also benefited from the teaching of Christiane Bice ("A Woman of Modest Manner") and Pastor John Moore from Watertown, Wisconsin ("Feeding Myself: How to Study the Bible").

This enriching day ended with a sermon by host Pastor Scott Williquette. He entreated the group from Malachi 1 on "Worship God Hates."

Those who attended the ministry conference were quite encouraged by the day's events. Highlights included the variety and depth of the workshops along with the chance to fellowship with other believers.

A Detroit regional conference is scheduled for March 12 at First Baptist Church in Troy, Michigan. Speakers at this year's theology conference on Worship and Music included Pastor Mark Minnick (Greenville, SC), Pastor Dave Doran (Allen Park, MI/Detroit Baptist Seminary), and Dr. John Makujina (Central Baptist Seminary).

Audio recordings of each workshop will soon be available at [www.fbcrockford.com](http://www.fbcrockford.com).