

Positively Speaking

By Mark Wilson

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Sandcastle Character

Edwards stands among the greatest Americans who have ever lived. He is noted for his significant role in the Great Awakening and was appointed as the third president of Princeton University. His prolific writings still influence countless thousands today.

If we could boil Edwards' life down to one word, it would be "character." The commitment to integrity marked everything he did. Even as a young man, he understood the importance of being true and standing strong. In 1722, at age 19, he penned the following commitments in his journal:

RESOLVED:

Resolved, to live with all my might while I do live.

Resolved, never to lose one moment of time, to improve it in the most profitable way I can.

Resolved, never to do anything which I should despise or think meanly in another.

Resolved, never to do anything out of revenge.

Resolved, never do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.

Resolved, to be strictly and firmly faithful to my trust, that in Proverb 20:6, "A faithful man who can find?" may not be partly fulfilled in me."

Nearly 300 years after Edward's death, he stands as a model of integrity for the rest of us.

Billy Graham, another man of character observed, "When wealth is lost -- nothing is lost. When health is lost -- nothing is lost. When integrity is lost -- all is lost."

When our family lived in California, we would occasionally build sandcastles on the beach. It would take a while for my kids to pry me out of the lounge chair -- but once they got me started on the project, I dove in all the way! "If we're going to make a sandcastle," I declared, "we need to do it right!" Our massive building project ended up including towers, moats, ramps -- all the important castle stuff. Then, the tide came in and ruined everything! Instead of splendid architecture, our castle looked more like the ruins of Pompeii.

Unfortunately, many people are building interior "sandcastles". The desire to look good becomes more important than being good. Truth is tweaked for personal advantage. The sandcastle motto: "Morality doesn't matter. It's o.k. if I can get away with it."

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The problem with building a "sandcastle character" is that sooner or later, the tide will come in and crumble the foundations.

Perhaps the old philosopher was right when he advised writing our grievances in sand and our convictions in concrete. Concrete convictions stand firm in the face of cultural tides.

The old English preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, noted that you can have no lasting influence, "except by being firm in your principles and decided in what you do. If you yield an inch, you are beaten."

Honest Abe Lincoln said the same thing in a different way, "Be sure you put your feet in the right place -- then stand firm!"

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