FREEDOM STORIES

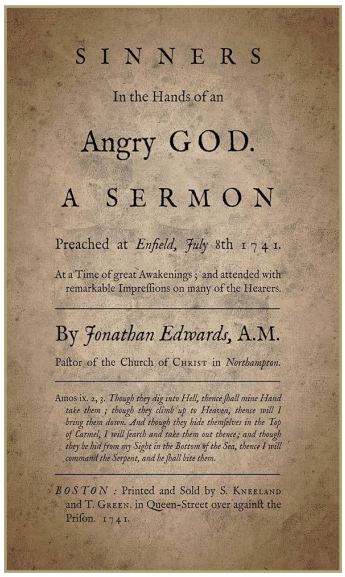
Jonathan Edwards

July 8, 1741

The Sermon That Shook The Colonies

Historical Spotlight

In the summer of 1741, Jonathan Edwards traveled to Enfield, Connecticut, carrying a sermon he had preached before. Few imagined it would become one of the most influential sermons in American history. Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God confronted every listener with the holiness of God, the reality of sin, and the mercy freely offered through Jesus Christ.


SINNERS

In the Hands of an

Angry GOD.

A SERMON

Preached at *Enfield*, *July* 8th 1741.

At a Time of great Awakenings; and attended with remarkable Impreſſions on many of the Hearers.

By *Jonathan Edwards*, A.M.

Paſtor of the Church of CHRIST in *Northampton*.

Amos ix. 2, 3. *Though they dig into Hell, thence ſhall mine Hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themſelves in the Top of Carmel, I will ſearch and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my Sight in the Bottom of the Sea, thence I will command the Serpent, and he ſhall bite them.*

BOSTON: Printed and Sold by S. KNEELAND and T. GREEN, in Queen-Street over againſt the Priſon. 1741.

Preaching from Deuteronomy 32:35, Edwards warned of God's coming judgment and called his hearers to repentance. Eyewitnesses described people weeping openly, crying out for mercy, and even clinging to the pillars of the meetinghouse, fearing they might perish before finding salvation. The congregation became so overcome that Edwards paused several times until he could continue. Before the service ended, the Great Awakening had gained one of its defining moments. The great traveling evangelist George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards were friends and contemporaries, and Whitefield even preached in Edwards' church while staying with his family. Together, they helped ignite a movement of repentance and renewal that profoundly shaped colonial America and helped prepare many Americans for the struggle for liberty that followed.

The sermon's power rested in its unwavering and unapologetic confidence in Scripture. Edwards did not offer inspirational advice or promise a more successful life. He proclaimed God's holiness, man's accountability, the certainty of eternity, and salvation through Christ alone. Instead of self-centered "manifestation," Edwards leaned into the law of God and man's inability to bridge the gap between sin and holiness on his own. Thousands who heard the same message during the Great Awakening turned to Christ. The sermon was printed as a small pamphlet soon after the Enfield revival. It spread throughout the colonies, was reprinted for generations, and became the best-known sermon in American history.

Jonathan Edwards' influence reached far beyond that remarkable day. Pastor, theologian, philosopher, and educator, he became one of America's greatest Christian thinkers. His writings continue to be studied nearly three centuries later.

Why it Matters Today

The family is God's most powerful tool for a nation's renewal. Jonathan and Sarah Edwards raised eleven children, and their family became one of the most influential in American history. Among their many descendants were college presidents, missionaries, pastors, judges, physicians, legislators, and other public servants who helped shape the intellectual, spiritual, and civic life of the young nation.

Sermon cover from "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God", Jonathan Edwards