

Jonathan Edwards (1703 — 1758) is probably the most eminent theologian that America has yet produced; and his famous sermon — "Sinners In the Hands of an Angry God" — is probably the greatest sermon ever preached, outside the Holy Bible (Preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741). First, for the edification of the Church; and, Second, for the education of the church: To Wit: First, a brief biographical study of Jonathan Edwards. He was born in Connecticut and educated at Yale, where he studied theology. His early career was spent as minister in the church at Northampton, Massachusetts, where he encouraged the Great Awakening, the first of a series of religious revivals in America, that have long since been forgotten.

It appears that despite the fruitfulness of his ministry, his congregation became angry at his attempts to maintain discipline and in particular to bar unbelievers from the Lord's Table, and in 1750 they dismissed him. From there, he went to an Indian mission village, Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he served as minister from 1751 to 1757. He was then appointed president of the College of New Jersey (later, Princeton), but died, according to some, after receiving a smallpox vaccination, or according to others, of smallpox. Whatever the cause, it was just three months after assuming the office, on March 22, 1758.

He published a long list of important religious works still read by students of religion and literature, among them *A Divine and Supernatural Light* (1734) and *Freedom of the Will* (1754). AND NOW TO "The Greatest Sermon Ever Preached" (Outside the Holy Bible), By Jonathan Edwards. Described as follows: *"Jonathan Edwards, the latter-day New England Puritan, was among the noblest and ablest Christians of his age, and can now be seen, two centuries after, as one of the greatest theologians ever given by God to His church. As saint and scholar, evangelist and educator, pastor and teacher and missionary, he showed a grasp of the grandeur of God's sovereignty, and the glory of divine grace equaled only by men of the caliber of John Calvin and John Owen. 'A History of the Work of Redemption,' entitles Edwards to be called 'The Theologian of Revival,' in the same sense in which Augustine, Luther, and Calvin are rightly called the theologians of grace, justification and the Holy Spirit respectively."*

The front, printed version of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," also announces as follows: A Sermon, Preached at Enfield, 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.

***"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 will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them."*(Amos 9:2,3)**

Printed and sold by S. Kneeland and T. Green, in Queen-Street over against the Prison, 1741. Hell Fire. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," is a fair representation of the condition of things when Alexis de Tocqueville visited America and wrote his classic, *Democracy in America*, 1842, wherein he opined that America was great because America was good, and America was good because America's numerous pulpits thundered against sin and in favor of righteousness; and that if America ceased to be good, she would cease to be great.

I say, that Jonathan Edwards and his famous sermon fairly reflect the condition of things in America when de Tocqueville wrote; and that largely exists today. America is no longer good; because American pulpits no longer ring with the righteous judgments of God. They are filled with silly, light, sloppy-agape, and it's OK to be gay. Dr. Bob Jones often opined that America was in serious danger of going to Hell, and needed 50 Jonathan Edwardses turned loose with his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Edwards was a monotone who read his sermons in a rather boring fashion. Nevertheless, so powerful was the working of the Holy Spirit, that it was not unusual for people to rush to pillars, seizing them for support lest they slide into Hell, while screaming, 'Edwards! Isn't God a God of Love?' We have had similar experiences at Westboro Baptist Church. A look over the next three weeks at the famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," may prove a blessing to you.

***"Their foot shall slide in due time."*(Deut. 32:35)**

"In this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, who were God's visible people, and who lived under the means of grace; but who notwithstanding all God's wonderful works towards them, remained void of counsel, having no understanding in them. Under all the cultivations of Heaven, they brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; the expression I have chosen for my text, 'Their foot shall slide in due time,' seems to imply the following things, relating to the punishment and destruction to which these wicked Israelites were exposed.

- 1. That they were always exposed to destruction; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction coming upon them, being represented by their foot sliding. The same is expressed, **Psa. 73:18.** 'Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.'*
- 2. It implies, that they were always exposed to sudden, unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once without warning.*
- 3. Another thing implied is that they are liable to fall of themselves, without being thrown by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery grounds needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.*
- 4. That the reason why they are not fallen already, and do not fall now, is that God's appointed time has not yet come. For it is said that when that due time, or appointed time, comes, their foot shall slide. Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined, by their weight. God will not hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then, at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction; as he that stands in such slippery, declining ground, on the edge of a pit, he cannot stand alone, when he is let go, he immediately falls and is lost.*

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon, is this — ‘There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment, out of Hell, but the mere pleasure of God.’ I mean, His mere sovereign pleasure, His arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God’s mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment. The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations.

1. There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into Hell at any moment. Mens’ hands cannot be strong when God rises up; the strongest have no power to resist Him, nor can any deliver out of His hands. — He is not only able to cast wicked men into Hell, but He can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty to subdue a rebel, who has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the number of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defense from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God’s mighty enemies combine and associate, they are easily broken in pieces. They are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or, large quantities of dry stubble before the devouring flame. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the ground before us. So it is for us to cut or singe a tiny thread of cloth. Thus is it easy for God, when He pleases, to crush out and easily destroy His enemies in Hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before him, at whose rebuke, the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

*2. They deserve to be cast into Hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God’s using His power any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, ‘**Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?**’ **Luke 13:7.** The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy and God’s mere will, that holds it back.*

*3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to Hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between Him and mankind, has gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to Hell. **John 3:18.** ‘**He that believeth not is condemned already.**’ So that every unconverted person properly belongs to Hell, it is his place, it is where he is from. **John 8:23** ‘**Ye are from beneath,**’ and there he is bound, it is the place that justice, and God’s word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law, assigned to him.*

4. They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with

them, as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, and who they feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yes, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth; doubtless with some that are now in this congregation, who may be at ease, than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell. So, it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such a one as themselves, though they imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

*5. The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods, **Luke 11:21**. The devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.*

*6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out unto hell-fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell-fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceeding violent in their nature, and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruptions, the same enmity, does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in Scripture compared to the troubled sea, **Isaiah 57:20**. For the present, God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, '**Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;**' (**Job 38:11**) but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints, whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin were not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone."*

I love you. Amen.