

Revival Stories: Jonathan Edwards

by E.A. Johnston

E.A. Johnston's sermon explores the life and impact of Jonathan Edwards, emphasizing the urgent need for revival in today's society.

Duration: 18:44

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:35, Psalm 9:17, Matthew 25:41, Romans 3:23, Hebrews 9:27, Jude 1:23, Revelation 3:4

Topics: "Biography"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need to study the lives of great men of God who have brought revival in their time. He encourages the audience to learn from their experiences and understand how God moved among his people during those times. The preacher also highlights the urgency of seeking God's face and praying for revival in the present day. He references a sermon by Mr. Edwards of Northampton, who preached a powerful message on the wrath of God and the need for salvation. The sermon had a profound impact on the listeners, leading to cries for salvation and a deep awareness of the impending judgment of hell. The preacher concludes by urging the audience to reach out to sinners and share the message of Christ's sacrifice, while also praying for revival in America.

Transcript

It was said of the Great Awakening that the fires of revival were lit under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitfield came along and threw gasoline on it. Jonathan Edwards was a preacher of rare power, and he wrote wisely on the subject of revival, his work *The Distinguishing Marks of the Work of the Spirit of God* is the best thing written on revival. I highly recommend every student of revival should read that masterpiece.

Well friends, in our series on revival stories, our subject today is Jonathan Edwards. As a Christian biographer and student of revival, I have often traveled to historical scenes where revival took place. I have conducted research in university archives, and I always will remember holding in my hand two special handwritten letters by Jonathan Edwards, one written while he was still a pastor in Northampton, Massachusetts, and the other letter written shortly after he arrived in Stockbridge to minister to the Indians there.

I visited the town of East Windsor, Connecticut, and stood at Jonathan Edwards' birthplace. I have walked through the town of Northampton, Massachusetts, many times, and have stood on the hill where the old Northampton church stood, where Edwards was pastor, and where George Whitfield preached. And as I

have stood there, my mind would ponder those serious scenes of revival.

I have gone to the old mission post in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and saw how Edwards lived while he labored among the Indians there. And I have stood with trembling knees on the spot in Anfield, Connecticut, where the old church was, where Edwards preached his famous sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. As I stood there, I could not help imagining that terrible night when the power of God came in revival to the people there.

As Edwards preached that penetrating sermon, the people, it was said, felt as if the soles of their very feet were warm as he described the wrath of God and the terrors of hell. And some felt they sat upon a trap door that would open any minute, dropping them into the very pit of hell. At times, we need to retrace the footsteps of these great men whom God has used so mightily in revival in their day.

We must carefully study their lives and learn from them. We must study how God moved among his people in revival so we will be able to pray more effectively for revival in our time. Oh, friends, how we need to seek the face of the Almighty today and plead with him on behalf of our nation.

We as a nation are standing on a preface of doom. God must judge America for her multiplied sins, and while the church slumbers, people perish, and our nation stands on the very brink of ruin. As we peer into the life of Jonathan Edwards today, let us humbly ask God that he will, in his wrath, remember mercy.

We should call a moratorium on every building program in our churches today, and sit in sackcloth and ashes, and turn from our wicked ways, and pray, seeking the face of an offended creator who is ready to pour out his judgment upon our wicked society today. Only a heaven-sent revival will save America from utter destruction, but who in our land today is willing to pay the price to lay hold of God in desperate prayer and petition? Who is willing to intercede on behalf of our sinful nation? Who is willing to stand and cry out against the sins of America today? Pray that the Almighty will raise up an army of preachers filled with the Holy Ghost, and who fear no man but fear God and hate sin, and who want to storm the very citadels of hell in our country today for the good of our nation, and all glory to God. O Lord, how we need a Jonathan Edwards for our day! Well, friends, the year was 1740, and God was moving in New England.

There was a work of grace going on in the town of Northampton, Massachusetts. The pastor of the congregational church there was Jonathan Edwards, the grandson of the great former pastor Solomon Stoddard. Edwards had grown concerned over the spiritual condition of the young people in his church, and he began to pray on their behalf and to preach pointed sermons on sin and the need for repentance, and soon God began to do a work of grace among those teenagers in Edwards' congregation.

Soon, a powerful revival gripped the entire town, and the town was under the whole sense of the awful presence of God. By the time George Whitefield came to Northampton to preach for Edwards in October, the whole of New England was in the midst of the Great Awakening. A New England minister said of this time that the great revival broke upon the slumbering churches like a thunderbolt rushing out of a clear sky.

But where God used Jonathan Edwards most powerfully in revival occurred in the town of Anfield, Connecticut, on July 8, 1741. It was here that Edwards preached his sole search and sermon entitled Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, whereby the people became so startled by the awful presence of the Almighty that strong men gripped the pillars of the church so not as to fall into an open hell. Listen to an account of this meeting from a minister who was with Edwards at the time.

This is from that man's diary. We went over to Anfield where we met Dear Mr. Edwards of Northampton who preached a most awakening sermon from these words of Deuteronomy 32, 35, Their foot shall slide in time. And before the sermon was done, there was a great moaning and crying out through ye whole house, what shall I do to be saved? Oh, I'm going to hell.

Oh, what shall I do for Christ? And so on. So the minister was obliged to desist from preaching since the shrieks and cries were so piercing and amazing. Well, friends, the terror that pierced the heart of the people in that meeting house that night in Anfield was a solemn fact of that revival.

Men were confronted with a holy God who hates sin. They saw their lost condition before that holy God, and they felt the danger of an opening hell before them. They cried out to the one true God who could save them from that burning hell of judgment, and they pled the blood of Christ to save them.

Edwards' graphic descriptions of the doom that awaited them struck terror to their hearts. They seemed to be on the very precipice of hell itself. Well, I will now present a part of that famous sermon to you.

Perhaps it can be used today to stir our own hearts in an awakening to the desperate need of our hour. Here now is part of Edwards' sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. God has laid himself under no obligation by any promise to keep any natural man out of hell one moment.

God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the mediator of the covenant that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes till he believes in Christ, God is no under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction. So that thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell.

They have deserved the fiery pit and are already sentenced to it and God has dreadfully provoked his anger as great toward them as to those who are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger. Neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment. The devil is waiting for them.

Hell is gaping for them. The flames gather and flash about them and would faintly hold on them and swallow them up. The fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out and they have no interest in any mediator.

There are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of. All that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone is extended abroad under you.

There is a dreadful pit of glowing flames of the wrath of God. There is hell's wide gaping mouth open and you have nothing to stand upon nor anything to take hold of. There is nothing between you and hell but the air.

It is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up right now. Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell. And if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf and your healthy constitution and your own care and prudence and best contrivance and all your righteousness would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell than a spider's web would have to stop a fallen rock.

Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment for you are burdened to it. The creation groans with you. The creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly.

The sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan. The earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts, nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon. The air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire abhors you and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath towards you burns like fire. He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire.

He is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight. You are ten thousand times more aboundable in his eyes than the most hateful, venomous serpent in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince, and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment.

It is to be ascribed to nothing else that you did not go to hell last night that you would suffer to awake again in this world after you close your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell since you have sat here in this house of God provoking his pure eyes by your sinful, wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner, consider the fearful danger you are in. It is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit full of the fire of wrath that you were held over in that hand of God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it and burn it asunder.

And you have no interest in any mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do to induce God to spare you one moment. Well friends, is this kind of preaching too tough for us today? Do we have a problem with that kind of God? Would our God act like that today? Is our God only a God of love today? Is our God too nice to send anybody to a burning hell? Is our God comfortable with our sins today? Has he ignored the sins of our nation? Or is he the same God today as he was in the days of Jonathan Edwards? My Bible states that God is angry with the wicked every day, but we don't dare preach like this today because we might offend someone, and the last thing we want to do is be offensive or be unpopular. So we preach nice little sermons that don't disturb anybody and that don't disrupt anybody's peace, no matter how false a foundation they rest upon.

My friends, pray that God will raise up some fearless preachers for our day, men like Edwards, to preach the great truths of the Bible and preach them with the anointing of the Holy Spirit to break up the false foundations of the self-righteous and to cause sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Life is short, eternity is forever. The letter of Jude stands in our Bibles right before the book of Revelation.

In it, Jude tells all witnesses for Christ to do the following, and others, safe with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Oh friends, go find a sinner today and throw your arms around their neck and tell them about the Christ who bled and died for sinful man and pull some out of the fire while there is time, and pray, friends, that God would be pleased to send revival to America in our desperate day.

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