

# Jonathan Edwards

by Michael Haykin

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*Jonathan Edwards' experience and theology of revival offer insights into the characteristics of revival and how to cultivate a deeper relationship with God.*

**Duration:** 2:00:59

**Scripture:** Ephesians 2:8

**Topics:** "Justification By Faith", "Christian Family"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the life and ministry of Ed Woods, who was dying in Princeton. Despite his family not being present, he sends a message to his wife through his daughter, emphasizing the spiritual union they shared. The preacher also highlights the importance of raising children in the Christian faith and maintaining order in the town. Additionally, he mentions that Ed Woods preached on the theme of justification by faith alone, which was a central theme of the Reformation.

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## Transcript

Tonight we want to think about Jonathan Edwards and the theme that we want to particularly focus on is the whole issue of revival. And in the first hour we're going to talk about Jonathan Edwards, in the second hour I was going to talk about his daughter, but I'm going to talk about his wife instead, Sarah Edwards. In many, many respects spiritually as striking an individual as Jonathan Edwards.

The theme that we want to think about tonight, while the other themes that we have thought about in this series have been very important, especially that dealing for instance with George Whitefield's justification by faith, but the theme tonight I think has pertinent relevance to our situation in North America at the present time. Because we should as Christians long to see something different in our current religious climate, our spiritual climate. While we are thankful that God is still at work in conversion, and we see conversions here and there, and we hear of them, we should long for something more.

And Edwards had the privilege and blessing of living through a period of revival. We call it broadly speaking the First Great Awakening. And we want to think about his own experience, but also his theology of revival.

And I'm going to focus actually on a period of revival that took place before the First Great Awakening, that was located in his town, the town of Northampton, Massachusetts, and that spread beyond the borders of that town to about 30 other villages, up and down what is known as the Connecticut River Valley, the

Connecticut River splitting Massachusetts and Connecticut in half roughly, before it flows out into the Atlantic. I want to begin at the end of Jonathan Edwards' life, and I want to begin with some words that his wife Sarah, who we'll look at in the next hour, wrote to their daughter Esther when she received the word that her husband had died. She was not present at his deathbed.

He had actually, as we will see very quickly, he had gone on ahead to Princeton, where he had been appointed the president of the school, and she had stayed behind to wrap up affairs in the town in which they were living at that time, Stockbridge, Massachusetts, up in the northwest corner of Massachusetts near the New York border. And so it was with some shock that she received a letter telling her that her husband had died. She received that word on March the 22nd, 1758, and promptly wrote her daughter a letter to her daughter Esther Burr, and said this, God has made me adore his goodness that we had him, that is her husband, so long.

But my God lives and he has my heart. Oh, what a legacy my husband and your father has left us. Oh, what a legacy my husband and your father has left us.

Well, that legacy, as I hope you will see tonight, is more than simply for the family of Edwards, more than simply for the immediate family of Jonathan Edwards or his descendants, and there are numerous descendants still alive today. In the hundreds, he had, as we will see, 11 children, all of whom reached adulthood, most of whom had families as large, and therefore brought into the world numerous descendants of Jonathan Edwards. But the legacy that we want to talk about tonight is for the Church of God, not simply for the Edwards family.

The writings of Jonathan Edwards, I think, are of great significance for us in our present day, because he is, as once been described, he is the theologian of revival. Those who study Church history often have ways of describing individuals in the history of the Church. Augustine is often called the theologian of grace, because of the great emphasis on grace in his writings.

John Calvin, interestingly enough, is often called the theologian of the Holy Spirit. You wouldn't think it, by the way that sometimes Calvin is remembered, he's often remembered associated with the terms election and predestination, but he actually wrote more and was interested far more in the work of the Holy Spirit than in either of those issues, and so he's often described as the theologian of the Holy Spirit. Lloyd-Jones is rightly, rather, it's Lloyd-Jones who describes Edwards this way, Martin Lloyd-Jones describes Jonathan Edwards as the theologian of revival.

And that's the theme that we want to think about tonight. Edwards himself was eminently gifted to write on the subject. He personally experienced revival.

And I venture to say, I may be wrong in this, that very few churches in North America are experiencing what we call today revival. And you'll see the characteristics as we lay them out. And Edwards had the privilege, as I've already mentioned, of living through and working through two distinct seasons of revival.

Secondly, Edwards was a man who had a profound understanding of the human heart. He was a man who was able to think about and delineate the intricate workings of the human heart and soul. You get a picture of this very early on in his life, when as a teenager he was deciding as to where his career would actually lie.

And for a while he considered becoming a scientist or actually becoming an academic in a university context. And he wrote a book on spiders. It still exists.

It's still of value to those who are entomologists, whose specialty is spiders. And the particular subject of the book was the way in which spiders built their webs. A particular spider, and I forget the exact which one, but this particular spider, Edwards sat down and observed for a significant length of time, watching the spider, how the spider built its web.

And then proceeded to write a book on it. Now the sort of detail and patience that went into the writing of such a book also characterized his pastoral ministry and his ability to speak with individuals and ask them questions that probe deeply into their souls to see how is it the Spirit of God works in the life and the heart of human beings. And then to write about this.

But thirdly, Edwards is of great significance in this whole area of revival because he had a heart that was devoted to the glory of God. And if there's anything that resonates through Edwards' writings there is this passion and hunger for God, for the almost palpable experience of God. And a number of years ago, a man named Joseph Haratunian, back in the 1940s, writing about Edwards, gave as an illustration of this point the following passage.

It comes from a sermon that Edwards preached in 1735, in the middle of the revival actually we're going to talk about. And it's on that passage in the book of Ruth, Ruth chapter 1, where Ruth tells Naomi, her mother-in-law, that she is prepared to commit herself to Naomi's God, the God of Israel, and leave behind her all of her culture, her family, and her experience in Moab. And that where Naomi goes, she will go.

And Edwards asks the question at the beginning of his sermon, who is this God that Ruth is committing herself to? And he says this, this is the way he answers it, that this God is a glorious God, there is none like him, who is infinite in glory and excellency, he is the most high God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. His name is excellent in all the earth, and his glory is above the heavens. Among the gods there is none like unto him, there is none in heaven to be compared to him, nor are there any among the sons of the mighty that can be likened unto him.

God is the fountain of all good, an inexhaustible fountain. He is an all-sufficient God, able to protect and defend and do all things. He is the king of glory, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

He is a strong rock and a high tower. He is a God who has all things in his hands and does whatsoever he pleases. He killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up, he maketh poor and maketh rich, the pillars of the earth are the Lord's.

God is an infinitely holy God, there is none holy as the Lord, and he is infinitely good and merciful. Many that others worship and serve as gods are cruel beings, spirits that seek the ruin of souls. But this is a God that delighteth in mercy.

His grace is infinite and endures forever. He is love itself, an infinite fountain and ocean of it." And you get a sense there, and that's not an untypical passage from Edwards' sermons, you get a sense there of a man who has spent an enormous amount of time meditating on God and the attributes of God. Who is the God that he calls men and women under his pastoral ministry to serve and follow as Ruth follows? Well, let me go back to the beginning then of Edwards' life and get something of his early years, and then look at this revival that takes place in 1734-1735 in Northampton, and then very briefly look at the end of

Edwards' ministry.

First, though, his early years. He's born in 1703 in a place called East Windsor, Connecticut. East Windsor, like Northampton, is on the Connecticut River.

Now, the Connecticut River, as I've already said, cutting almost in half both of the states of Connecticut and then below it, Massachusetts, before the Connecticut River flows out into the Atlantic. He is born in a place that is far from the centers of power and influence, whether it be political power and influence, whether it be religious power and influence. He's born on the outskirts of what is called the First British Empire.

The British had, as you're well aware, been expanding through the world, and they had carved out for themselves a significant portion of the eastern seaboard of North America, running roughly from New England down to South Carolina, Florida at this period of time still being owned by the Spanish, and obviously what we now call Canada being in the hands of the French. And this is the First British Empire. They would eventually lose, as you well know, the American colonies and would have to carve out another empire, but he's born on the edge of that.

It's hard for us to think in these days of New England as being a wilderness, but that's the way it was, at least from the point of view of Europeans, not from the point of view of First Peoples, North American natives living there, but from the point of view of European settlers, it was a wilderness. And they were on the edge of European, British society. And Edwards was born far from the centers of influence.

Now, the town where he lived, in East Windsor, Connecticut, had been planted about 70 or so years, 80 or so years by the time that he was born. Being planted in the low 1640s or so. His father was the pastor of the church in the town, Timothy Edwards.

The church was a Congregationalist church. Congregationalists, Edwards would be a Congregationalist all his life. Congregationalists basically believed in the autonomy of the local church.

They believed in infant baptism, but that each church was an independent body unto itself. It could call its pastor, elders and leaders in the church, and dismiss them, and so on. His mother, Esther, was the daughter of a very powerful man.

A man whose name has long been forgotten, Solomon Stoddard. In his days, indicative of his power, he used to be known as the Pope of the Connecticut Valley. Which gives you some idea of the influence of the particular Roman Catholic sympathies, but he was a powerful figure.

And he was pastor of his church in Massachusetts, Northampton, Massachusetts, where Edwards would go to be his assistant. He was pastor of that church 60 years. Edwards' father was pastor of the East Windsor church 63 years.

That was typical of the day. When a pastor was called, he stayed for his life. In fact, it was almost in the calling of the pastor, often a kind of a marriage contract.

That's the way it was thought. You were entering into almost like a marriage with the congregation. If you had a good pastor, that would be great.

The opposite, as you can well imagine. So Edwards was raised then in a pastor's home. On both sides, godly forebears, because both of them went back to some of the early Puritans.

In fact, on his mother's side, Esther's side, there were a number of very leading Puritans who had first settled in New England. Among them, the man named Thomas Hooker, one of the great Puritan leaders who was one of the first generation Puritans. And that was on his mother's side.

Edwards was the only boy of eleven children. Ten girls and one son. And Edwards was the fourth in line.

All children survived into adulthood. Again, this is very unusual. They must have been a hardy family.

His children would display the same. This is a period, I believe I've already mentioned this on one occasion, Cotton Mather, great Puritan leader in Boston, an older contemporary of Edwards, had fifteen children. He'd buried thirteen before the age of two.

And so it's quite remarkable that the Edwards family, both Edwards' own siblings and his children, all of them survived into adulthood. His older sisters helped in the schooling of Jonathan. His father Timothy had what we would describe today advanced ideas on education.

The 18th century was a period in which women were not educated. The argument being women do not need to be educated. They're going to spend their time in the home as wives and managers of the home and maybe managing a small industry in the home, kind of a cottage industry, but there was no emphasis at all, there were no vehicles for education of women.

In fact, there would be no vehicles in that regard until into the 19th century. But Edwards' father didn't buy those ideas. And so he educated his daughters as much as he educated his son.

And so they became skilled in all the areas that he could educate them in. Basic mathematics and things like that, certainly reading, theology, history. He taught them Latin.

They helped educate young Jonathan in Latin. This was fairly unheard of. It's not completely unheard of, but it's fairly unheard of.

They became very independent women in many respects. At the height of the Revival, when Jonathan is a leading figure in it in the 1740s, his older sister Mary doesn't agree with him at all. She thinks he's crazy.

Writes him a long letter that almost amounts to a small book in which she basically criticizes his theological views and his defense of the Revival. And she does so fairly handily, knowing theology and scripture herself. Now Jonathan then is raised in a very godly environment.

From the time he could speak and understand language, he was given to realize the most important thing in life is to know God and to know him personally and to have a heartfelt relationship to God. Outwardly, young Jonathan was a model child. From all that we have, the evidence we have, there is no indication he ever went through a period, as many teens do, of rebellion.

No indication he ever caused his parents any problems. There are children like that. And no indication he was a model child.

But inwardly, he was a raging inferno. Because he knew what was expected of him. He knew what he should have, but did not have it.

He knew that he should have this relationship to God through Christ, but he did not have it. And thus he found himself in greater and greater despair as he got older. He had graduated from his class.

He was eventually sent to Yale in 1716. Yale at this time was giving what we would describe today as a high school education, as well as further education beyond that. And so he went there when he was 13 years old, after he had been what we would describe today as homeschooled.

He graduated in 1720 at the head of his class, academically well recognized, with great honors, but not converted. And thus in great inner turmoil. When his conversion took place, we don't know.

Edwards was never interested in dating it. It was probably in 1721. And the date that I'm reliant on there is from the most recent biographer, Ian Murray.

And if you want a biography of Edwards, that is fabulous. It doesn't cover everything of Edwards. But it focuses on his theological experience and thought.

Edwards, the churchman, the pastor. It's Ian Murray's Jonathan Edwards, published in the late 80s. I distinctly remember reading it late into the night.

It's one of those books I couldn't put down. I think I consumed it by staying up late, I mean late, like 3 or 4 in the morning, a number of nights. It's a fabulous biography.

Anyway, Mia Murray dates Edwards' conversion in 1721. It came upon reading 1 Timothy 1.17. 1 Timothy 1.17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Edwards later wrote, about 18 years later, he said that upon reading this verse, there came into my soul, and was, as it were, diffused through my soul a sense of the glory of the divine being. A new sense, quite different from anything I have experienced before. Never did any words of Scripture seem to me as these words did.

I thought with myself how excellent a being that was, how happy I should be if I might enjoy God, and be wrapped up to Him in Heaven, and be, as it were, swallowed up in Him forever. From about this time I began to have new ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation, and an inward sweet sense of these things came into my soul. That little phrase there, an inward sweet sense of these things came into my heart and soul, that's a very important phrase.

It emphasizes that for Edwards, conversion is not simply intellectually embracing the Christian worldview, but it is tasting, to use a metaphor, it is tasting the goodness of God. It is knowing personally in the heart, not only knowing intellectually with the mind that God is a glorious God, and that Christ is a great Savior. Edwards goes on to pastor briefly in New York.

He pastored a small work in New York City, a very different New York City. He talks about going out to the Hudson River, hardly thinkable today, and meditating in the fields on God. At least initially it wouldn't lend itself to that.

In 1724-1726 he goes back to Yale in New Haven, and is thinking, as I mentioned earlier, of becoming an academic, a professor, teaching there. He takes an MA there, finishes his MA, but he's in great turmoil. His turmoil is caused by two things.

One is his doubts about what he should do in life. Secondly, by meeting a woman, and her name, and we'll talk about her in the next hour, is Sarah Pierre-Ponce. Hardly a woman at this point, she was 13 when he first met her.

He met her in 1724. He would marry her four years later. Even in those days, you might think, well, they married her younger in those days.

Actually, they did not. In the 1700s, women generally married in their early 20s. Recent studies of marriage, and dates of marriage, have confirmed beyond a shadow of a fact, at least in New England, and England, it might be different in other parts of the Western world, that marriage for women was delayed until the early 20s.

For men, sometimes until the later 20s. It's very interesting. It goes against what we generally think of that earlier period.

In that period, it was somewhat young, but we'll talk about that in the next hour. Some of his inner turmoil was caused by meeting Sarah. She was the exact opposite of Jonathan.

Jonathan was bookish. Some might even say, to use a contemporary word, a bit nerdish today. He was very shy, in many respects.

Sarah was the exact opposite. Very outgoing, made friends easily, and did so joyfully. And so they would compliment each other in many, many respects, as we will see.

In 1727, the year of his marriage, he is called to become the assistant of the church of his grandfather, Solomon Stoddart. And finally, the decision as to what to do in his life is made up for him. He accepts the call, and goes to this church in Northampton, Massachusetts, where from 1727, he will be part of the pastoral staff until 1750.

After his grandfather's death in 1729, he will be the senior pastor. But for the first two years, he is an assistant pastor. Not a youth pastor, no such thing as those in that period of time, but he is an assistant pastor.

He didn't appear to have much preaching opportunities. His preaching begins really when his grandfather dies. The church he goes to is a church that is spiritually plateaued.

It's not moving ahead. It's spiritually stagnant. It had known great blessing in the past.

The church was about 60 years old when he got there. His grandfather, Solomon, had been the third pastor. The first two had been there for very brief periods of time.

And Solomon had known great blessing at periods in his ministry. He had also introduced something, though, that Jonathan disagreed with radically. Solomon, back in the... Let me go back now.

This is very important to understand the story of Jonathan Edwards. Let me go back to the 1620s and 30s. In the 1620s and 30s was when the first settlers, European settlers, British settlers, came from the Old World to the New World and came via, most of them, Holland.

And most of those men and women, as they planted churches in New England, were believers. And they planted churches that were made up of believing members. And membership was open only to believers.

Others could be in the church, but they could not be members unless they could confirm publicly that Christ was their Lord and Savior, the emphasis being on the... their... In other words, the emphasis on the personal heart relationship. In the 1660s, though, a number of the children of these men and women asked the following question. Here we are, they said.

We embrace the idea that Christianity is true. It is the truth. We embrace the idea that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.

But we have yet to experience conversion. In other words, they affirmed, yes, Christianity is the... the worldview of Christianity is true. We embrace the idea of Christian morality, but we have not yet experienced conversion.

Can we participate in the membership of the church? And there was a great division among those early Puritans in New England. Cotton Mather's family, the Mathers of Boston, disagreed radically. They said, no, church membership is for those who are born-again individuals.

It may be the case that some of them are not genuinely saved. As far as... that that is left up to God. As far as we're concerned, though, church membership has to be based on professional faith, as our forebearers, Congregationalist forebearers, believed.

Solomon Stoddard, though, disagreed radically. And he argued, if a man or a woman can come and say, we would like to be members of this church, and we affirm the truth of the Christianity, we affirm the morality of Christianity, and we all strive to live that way, even though we cannot affirm that Jesus has yet become our own Savior, then, he said, we should admit them to a halfway membership. This is known as the halfway covenant in the 1660s in New England.

And it would prove, ultimately, to be disastrous, spiritually, for the churches that embraced it. Because by the time you get Jonathan coming along, it's been at least two or three generations. What do you do then? You've got the original founders, who are all the original members of these churches, are all professing Christians.

And then you have men and women who embrace the Christian worldview, these are their children, some of them, they embrace Christian morality, but they're not yet, they cannot say that they're actually born-again individuals. You admit them to a halfway membership. What about then their children, and their children? And soon the doors were opened to admit men and women who did not profess that Christ was their Savior.

They professed the truth of Christianity, they strove to live moral lives. Solomon started to argue that, if we turn them away, if we say they can't be members, they won't come to our churches. And we want to establish here in the New World a Christian commonwealth.

And therefore we need to open our doors to them. In fact, Solomon started to go even further, and he argued that they should all be allowed to partake of the Lord's table. And he was convinced the Lord's Supper was a means of converting men and women.

He himself had experienced in the 1650s, early 1660s, he had had an experience where the partaking of the Lord's table on one occasion had been a means of assuring him of his salvation. It hadn't been a means of conversion, he'd already been converted, but it had doubts about it. And the Lord's table had assured him of his salvation.

And so he opened it even further. When Jonathan comes, he is radically in disagreement with that. He believes the stance of the earliest Puritans who came to New England.

However, it'll be nearly 20 years before he can publicly tackle the issue in his church. And we'll see what happens when he does. When he comes then, you've got a number of generations of men and women, they go to church.

Formally they're halfway members. They're even enjoying the Lord's table. The only thing they cannot do is vote for the minister.

But you've got the same minister in place, he's been there 60 years at this point in time, so really the only thing that they're not enjoying, that issue hasn't been exercised for all those decades. And so it is then, you've got these men and women, outwardly, they're upstanding citizens. Outwardly, they go to church.

Church has become for them a part of a moral obligation, to be there. But their heart's commitment is elsewhere. And we'll see, I'm going to read a text in a second.

What they actually, their lives revolved around was either getting the land that certain other people in the town had, or keeping it. When the first settlers came to New England, they used the rivers as a way to go back into the farther reaches of New England, back into the hinterland. And the rivers were their highways.

And when they came to the area of Northampton, the first settlers, they planted the town closest to the river. And those who were first there had to build, they got huge amounts of acreage. And they built their houses and farms back from the river.

And for the earliest settlers, it was arduous, arduous work. As it was for the first settlers here in Ontario. If you ever read or have read any of the accounts of settling here in Ontario in the early 1800s, as you tried to establish farms with crop rotation as they did in Europe, you had to clear the land, the boulders had to be taken out of the way, trees had to be felled, you had to pull up the tree stumps.

It was an arduous task. But after two or three generations, those, the descendants of those early settlers were wealthy. They had inherited the land that their grandparents and great-grandparents had cleared.

And they were now selling off the land to later settlers. And those later settlers had to buy the land often at exorbitant prices. And so there came to be in the town of Northampton, like many New England towns, two groups of people, the wealthy, who had power, financial, political power, and often church power, and those who had none of those things.

The haves and the have-nots. And so it grew up then that all of them went to church. Outwardly, they all appeared to be Christians, all fine, upstanding citizens.

But inwardly, in their hearts and in their homes, in the privacy of their homes, the truth about their lives was revealed. For many of them. What they were really concerned about was not the kingdom of God and the advance of that kingdom.

What they were really concerned about was keeping land, keeping power, or getting land and getting power. And not surprisingly, many of the children in New England of such parents saw through their parents' hypocrisy. Family government began to break down.

And you found the children, I'm going to read a text that Edwards will describe, the children are into a variety of things that are very common to today. Sexual immorality and drinking. One writer has said, if these children had access to drugs, they would have been into them as well.

Because then they looked at their parents' lives, what they saw was hypocrisy. They didn't see men and women. They saw men and women outwardly orthodox, but their passion was not God.

This is Edwards. Just after my grandfather's death, he died in 1729, two years after Edwards came. It seemed to be a time of extraordinary dullness in religion.

And for Edwards, religion is always a good term. Licentiousness for some years prevailed among the youth of the town. Many of them were addicted to night walking.

Those are up to all hours of the morning. Frequenting the tavern. There was one tavern in the town.

It was the back room of a house. Somebody had opened up. He got his own still in the backyard.

He was making liquor and selling it over the counter in this back room of the town. Frequenting the tavern and lewd practices were in some, by their example, exceedingly corrupted others. It was their manner very frequently to get together in conventions of both sexes for mercantility.

You need to read through some of the euphemisms, which they called frolics. What they're actually is times of sexual immorality, partying and so on. They would often spend the greater part of the night in them without any regard to order in the families they belonged to.

Indeed, family, government, too much fun in town. Then he goes on to talk about what these young people were like in church. It would become very customary for many of our young people to be indecent in their carriage at meetings.

They were indecent in their behavior in the meeting house. Everybody had to go to church. It was understood.

You went to church. The meeting house could hold about twelve to fifteen hundred. There were twelve hundred adults in the town of Northampton in this period of time.

Which doubtless would not have prevailed in such a degree had it not been that my grandfather was not able to observe them. During his final years of ministry, Solomon could not see what was going on at the back of the church. They all sat at the back.

They had also long prevailed in the town. Now Edwards turns his attention to the parents. They had also long prevailed in the town as a spirit of contention between two parties in which they had for many years been divided by which they maintained a jealousy one of the other and were prepared to oppose one another in all public affairs.

That's the real problem. In other texts, Edwards tells us it had to do with the whole issue of money and finances. And there were two groups in the town and they hated each other.

And they were at each other's throats. They all had to go to church. Only a few who had no care about what anybody else thought dared not to go to church.

Because you would be a social outcast if you didn't go. It was a culture that was very, very different from the one that we live in at the beginning of the 20th century. And so Edwards then finds himself he's got two years basically to observe because he's not doing the preaching his grandfather is.

Finally, he's called to be the minister in 1729 and he begins to preach in a number of areas. He begins to preach on family government that the parents in the town have a responsibility under God if they claim to embrace the Christian faith to raise their children in that faith and to maintain some order in the town. We'll touch on the way he sought to do this in his own family in a minute or rather in the next hour.

Secondly, he begins to preach on that great, great theme which George Whitfield was preaching on at the same time justification by faith alone. He goes back to the great theme of the Reformation. He goes back to that great theme which while one might dispute whether it lies at the heart of the New Testament it certainly is one of the great central themes of the New Testament.

That is this that when it comes to recommending ourselves to God we have nothing not who we are in terms of our lineage who our parents may have been our grandparents may have been not who we are in terms of our church attendance or how often we go to church or how upstanding we are in the community certainly not who we are in terms of our achievements in this world we have nothing. We are bankrupt. We come to God on the basis of one person alone namely the Lord Jesus Christ His person His life His merits His death and His resurrection.

It is through Christ alone we come to God we come as sinners those who are weak and who have nothing. And Edward thundered home the message we still have those sermons thundered home the message that the men and women in that congregation if they were expecting to be accepted by God on the basis of the fact that their grandparents were godly Puritans or that they were fine upstanding citizens and they didn't think they really sinned or that they gave generously to the church or whatever and so on none of those things would amount to anything in that great tremendous day when all men and women would stand before the living God and have to give an account.

There are two other things though that took place Edward would actually connect the revival intimately to this preaching on justification there were two other things that took place one was the death the sudden death of two young people one who lived in Northampton one that lived in a nearby town and it sobered many of the young people in that town they started to realize what is often forgotten by the young and they often think well death is something that comes only to the old they suddenly realized that they too were in danger of going into an eternity without Christ and then there was the conversion of a woman Edward describes her using a euphemism as one of the greatest company keepers in the town and she was a woman whose morality was quite questionable a woman who never darkened

the doors of that church who Edward said he had no idea that she had any interest in the things of God and then suddenly she was converted here's a woman whose moral life had been one of great immorality and suddenly God turns her around and many start to go to her and ask her what has happened to you and these events Edward is preaching the death of these two young people and the conversion of this woman become the means by which God brings revival to the town between December of 1734 and June the 1st and Edward knows the date exactly because he knows the date of which things start to change between December 1734 and June the 1st 1735 the spirit of God had profound dealings with men and women in that town out of a town of 1200 adults there are 300 conversions in the space of 6 months

that's a quarter of the town it doesn't sound like many in the large scope of things but in terms of many of these towns in New England that are close knit communities it is a tremendous upheaval in that town in which men and women are broken as the spirit of God confronts them in the preaching of the word and outside the preaching of the word through the scriptures Edward himself would later say it needed a spiritual giant to cope with what was going on at the time he was a young man he had no idea of how to deal with many of the pastoral problems that suddenly were at his door instead of now people frequenting the tavern the tavern was empty completely empty he says for 6 months where people had gone primarily not to drink socially but to get drunk it was completely empty instead he

says they were lining up at his door on a Monday morning Edward never gave altar calls as is common in certain evangelistic circles today he never gave altar calls he urged men and women if God is dealing with you come and speak to me he was only a few hundred yards from probably most people in that town because it was a small town on a Monday morning at the height of the revival in March and April 1735 there would be 30 to 40 people every Monday morning waiting to talk to them about their souls and about salvation Edward about 15 years later would take stock of the revival and would say yes there were some of those professions of faith that were spurious they were not genuine they didn't last but the bulk of them the overwhelming bulk of them were genuine and they ranged this is what

struck Edward they ranged from the young to the old especially among those who were quite elderly at least in the period of that period again you have to remember the average age in that period is probably the late 40's median age in terms of life span and so men and women converted in their 60's and 70's and 80's as were some was quite striking but there were some very young too there was a girl Phoebe Bartlett four years old Edward trained as he was as a Puritan in which conversion took over a space of a number of years the whole Puritan concept of conversion with which Edward was raised was when somebody came to you and said they were converted you would tell them yes that's great go back and come back and talk to me in six months and this might go on a number of times as a pastor

somebody would come in and then eventually maybe three years later you'd finally admit yeah maybe God has done something in your life there was a great concern for what we call today easy believism but Edward realized in the midst of his revival God can do extraordinary things in a shortened space of time if He wants He can save anybody doesn't matter who they are even four year old children I've seen an edition of the Edward wrote a book about the revival and I've seen an edition of it that was published about sixty years after the revival and the editor knew Phoebe Bartlett and said in a little footnote obviously Edward couldn't have written this that Phoebe who was converted at four in the revival was still walking with the Lord what an amazing thing to see a four year old exhorting

her parents to put their faith it was an extraordinary period there are four or five characteristics and I want to run through these very quickly that Edward mentions in this revival first of all there was a great sense of the presence of God a strong awareness of the presence of God Edward mentions the account of two men who came from another town to do business in Northampton and about a mile from the town this is extraordinary I know of other texts that report similar things in the history of the church but it's extraordinary but a mile from the town having no thought of God before they got to within a mile of the town suddenly they were gripped by the thought of God Edward talks about men and women who are not converted individuals afraid to sleep at night they couldn't go to sleep at

night wrestling night after night with fitful sleep because they were not at peace with God there was a sense of the presence of God I assume that many of you here have had such a sense I know I have at

times in congregations I can think of a few occasions where you come into a worship service and there is a sense of God being there powerfully that you can't run away from but here is a situation where it was not simply for a worship service it went on day after day after day for six months we as human beings it's very hard for us given the sinful world in which we live given the fact that we are that's what revival is there is a profound sense of the presence of God secondly, it's not surprising that there was a responsiveness to the word of God Edwards could say that at the time of this

period of revival it was the word that was treasured above all things I think by the way this is one of the great marks of a time of revival what do men and women think about the word of God? in our day I know that there are accounts of extraordinary events taking place in which it has been touted to be revival I have my questions about some of these situations and one of the reasons being what do they think of the word of God? if the word of God is not central then one wonders is this really the spirit of God at work? because he loves to delight he delights in exulting the word and having men and women treasure the word that's the second thing the third thing Edwards says is there was a profound sensitivity to sin not surprisingly if there's a deep sense of the awareness of God if his

word is coming home with power one of the great I think struggles we all have in the going to hear the word preached week after week the truths are rich and real but so often they don't strike home to us the words come out between the mouth of the speaker and drop down somewhere in here but in times of revival they go home with power the hearts of men and women are pierced as you find in Acts 2 or in Acts 7 but when that happens there is a profound sensitivity there's a realization of sinfulness that men and women we are sinners and we need a savior J.I.

Packer talking about this whole issue can say no upsurge of religious interest merits the name of revival if there is no deep sense of sin at its heart not trying to be morbid here or unnecessarily dour but simply to take a realistic stock of the human condition as men and women we are fallen individuals we still have within our being the image of God we are precious in God's sight but we are fallen and unless we acknowledge that there is no way forward now surprisingly the fourth aspect of revival is a great focus on the Lord Jesus Christ He becomes treasured as a savior this is Edwards again many have spoken of their hearts being drawn out in love to God and Christ their minds wrapped up in delightful contemplation of the glory and grace of God the excellency and dying love of Jesus

Christ and in times of revival not surprisingly if there is a deep sense of God's presence driving home His word so that men and women see themselves as they really are it's not surprising there is a hunger and a passion for the Lord Jesus Christ again in times of revival Christ is lifted up and the focus not the spirit I think this is very important and it's very interesting if you read the book that Edwards wrote about this particular revival it's called A Faithful Narrative of a Surprising Work of God I've gone through it and I've actually counted the number of times he mentions the Lord Jesus and he mentions the spirit and he mentions the Lord Jesus double the amount of times he mentions the spirit I actually went to the book thinking differently I thought he's speaking about revival

he'd mention the Holy Spirit a lot he does not I've read some of the sermons Edwards preached in this period they are filled with Christ he hardly says anything about the spirit there are some today again for whom revival is primarily a focus on the spirit of God I would venture to suggest the following from a history and I think Edwards is more typical of a history of revival it is a focus on the Lord Jesus Christ and that on the basis of passages like John 16 where Jesus predicts the coming of the spirit in John 16 verse 14 he says the spirit when he comes will glorify me the spirit is a Christ centered Christ exalting and his

focus is on our Lord Jesus and a ministry that the spirit blesses is one that lifts Christ up it is not inappropriate to talk about the Holy Spirit in his work

but it is inappropriate to talk about the spirit to the exclusion of the Lord Jesus and if we talk about revival to focus on the spirit in revival it is Christ who is lifted up and glorified fifthly God's people came alive Edwards talks about how worship was an incredible experience men and women coming out of sheer delight to hear God through the preaching of the word and to sense God in song worship and in fellowship he talks about how many of their times of worship together the men and women some were weeping with sorrow and distress others weeping with joy and Edward actually he saw and did experience some of the things that might be disturbing to some of us he saw men and women lose physical strength he saw men and women sometimes collapse physically in those services and he had to

deal with the whole issue of one that has been of recent discussion among Christian circles what about these various phenomena physical phenomena and Edwards had a two-fold approach to them one is they tell you nothing ultimately and to focus on them is a problem and he urged men and women not to restrain their emotions in public worship he well knew the dangers psychologically of if one person starts to let go of a variety of others letting go on the other hand he also knew that sometimes when the spirit of God is at work men and women can be overwhelmed emotionally and this can have an impact on their physical being so do physical phenomena tell you anything from Edwards' point of view no they don't tell you anything about the spirituality of the person should you therefore say that you

completely ruled them out of court no because sometimes when God draws near very powerfully men and women will be affected finally and this is the proof of the pudding for Edwards what changed outside those four church walls Edwards 15 years later could say this ever since the great work of God that was brought here there's been a great abiding alteration in the town there's been vastly more religion kept up in the town remember for Edwards religion is a good word among all sorts of persons and in common conversation there's been great alteration among the youth of the town with respect to reverie frolicking profane conversation and lewd songs there's been a great alteration with regard to tavern haunting I suppose the town has been in no measure so free of vice in these respects for any

long time together for 60 years as it has been in these years past and then there's been an evident alteration with respect to a charitable spirit very interesting he names that he saw the wealthy in the town the ones who had the power he saw that many of them changed in their attitudes and realized their, God's goodness to them in giving them so much of this world's goods was that they would be stewards in helping others one of the things I think the 18th century evangelicals can help us at this end is many of these men and women had a social conscience which evangelicals in this century for a variety of reasons have lost so many evangelicals in this century have come to the conviction that the most important thing is the saving of souls and that's the only thing that God calls them to

do it is ultimately probably the most important thing but it's not the only thing God calls us to do our Christianity should manifest itself in the way we conduct ourselves in society and there should be changes and alterations in our families and in our jobs and in our community relations and so Edwards then for Edwards there was profound social changes in that town and so Edwards realized that the revival was genuine his later years were ones in which he hungered again for this sort of thing it ceased suddenly in June of 1735 it came again in 1740 in that year George Whitfield came over from England and there was a movement of the Spirit of God that impacted not only Northampton but the entirety of New England and it's estimated that between 1740 and 1742 there was upwards of a seventh

of the population converted about 50,000 conversions it's not surprising the entire fabric of New England society was changed and when Americans look back and say that their nation was founded on Christian principles if they are looking back to this there was a profound impact on New England society in Northampton itself Edwards was at the forefront of much of that revival in Northampton itself finally Edwards in the mid 1740's believed he could tackle the issue of who could receive the Lord's table of the whole issue of membership in the church a woman came to him in 1746 or 1747 and Edwards asked her she wanted to receive the table Edwards asked her was she born again no she said but she believed that Christianity was true she embraced the Christianity as a world view and she was

striving to live a good life Edwards said that was not sufficient basis he felt as a pastor as one who tried to be true to the New Testament the Lord's table was for believers unless he refused to give it to her well the whole thing blew up in the church Edwards had not reckoned on the fact that his grandfather's ghost or spirit if I want to use it that phrase still controlled and dominated many in that church particularly among them Edwards' own family his cousins because Solomon had a number of other children besides Esther Edwards Edwards' mother and their children were now in the church a group known as the Williamses and they stood against Edwards finally Edwards wrote a book asked if he could read portions of it from the church in 1749 the congregation only the men could vote

refused and all they knew Edwards' position they didn't agree with it and they didn't want him reading his book from the pulpit finally they took a vote early 1750 should this man continue as our pastor 25 only the men voted the women were not allowed to vote only 25 of the congregation said yes he should around 250 said no he should not they then realized pretty quickly they didn't have anybody to fill the pulpit for the next little while it's not going to be easy to fill the pulpit for the next few months and they then quickly asked Edwards would he be interested and willing to fill the pulpit for six months until they found another minister it says much for Jonathan Edwards that he agreed we have nearly all of Edwards' sermons he preached in Northampton many of them never published if

what he wrote in those sermons is what he preached in the pulpit he never mentioned this very unhappy business all through those six months finally at the end of the six months he gave his farewell sermon and at that point he did mention it and he encouraged them to deal with their next pastor much more gently he ended up going he had offers to go to Scotland a number of Presbyterian brethren in Scotland encouraged him to come over they'd make way for him to pastor over there they'd open their churches to him but he felt it was impossible for him to take a family of eleven children across the Atlantic and so it was he went to a little village in North West Massachusetts Stockbridge it was a mission dealing mostly with Housatonic and the Mohegan Indian people living up in that area and so

it was a very different scenario that Edwards had ever been used to he was now a missionary preaching mission sermons he had a lot more spare time believe it or not he didn't have the large congregation and he had time to write and he wrote a number of his most powerful books The Freedom of the Will on Original Sin and he started work on what would be his kind of tour de force his magnum opus his best work a hymn a history of theology but in the middle of it in 1757 he was asked to come to be the minister to be the president of the College of New Jersey what would become Yale University what would become Princeton sorry not Yale Princeton he didn't want to go he told them I'm in the middle of a great theological work much of his time though I should mention was in great hardship he was

often without paper much of his books in that period were written on the backs of envelopes on this scrap of paper that scrap of paper it took him probably about three to four weeks to get a letter out to say Boston

he was living in significant hardship but he said no I can't come God's doing a great work up here in Stockbridge and I'm finishing this theology finally he prevailed upon and he left his family and he travelled down to Princeton and when he got there he found that the town was in the grip of a smallpox epidemic as many ministers were in favour he took an inoculation against smallpox this was only just coming in it took well initially but then pustules if you know what smallpox is it's like chickenpox but it's deadly pustules formed in his throat preventing him from either

drinking or eating and he died in early March a good way I think to end the study of Edwards is a hymn a portion of a hymn from one of his contemporaries Edwards I think understood in the way that we need to see today something of the glory of God and it is the hymn by Samuel Davies great God of wonders great God of wonders all thy ways are worthy of thy self divine but the bright glories of thy grace beyond thine other wonders shine who is a God like thee or who has grace so rich well let me stop here I went a bit later than I expected we'll have questions in the next hour at the end of the next hour and we want to think about his wife at the end of the next hour so it's quarter to nine and we'll break maybe for ten minutes and then come back and we'll try to finish by 930 and have a few

questions actually David before I start could you give me a glass of water that would be great juice would be fine well this hour we want to think about Sarah Edwards and I want to think about really two things in particular the whole area of family life and Sarah and Jonathan's understanding of raising of children and their own relationship in marriage and the way in which I think they do model for us what a Christian marriage should be like but then secondly I want to talk about something of Sarah's own experience of God and we have it from a manuscript that Edwards asked his wife Jonathan asked Sarah to write out and then he put it into a book that he published called Some Thoughts About the Present Revival of Religion in New England and in that book though he disguised the manuscript

in such a way that a reader would not know who Edwards was talking about and in fact many readers felt they thought it was actually Jonathan Edwards himself he was talking about himself but he was not he was talking the section of the book deals with his wife and we know that because the actual manuscript she wrote still exists and what Edwards has done is he has removed the first person singular the use of the terms I, me, mine and substituted the third person singular and he has also managed it in such a way that you do not even know the gender of the person in other words you would not have known that it was a woman but it gives us some insight into a couple of very profound experiences that touch on and once he uses this word cautiously Christian mysticism there is an element in the

Christian's relationship to God in the lives of certain individuals where they are so taken up with God that it moves beyond the bounds sometimes of what is our normal Christian experience and Sarah had such experiences and Edwards was quite struck by them and we have very little texts written by Sarah herself she was not a writer unlike her husband she did not leave behind her an extensive journal or correspondence by which we might outline her spiritual life and especially in her early years we have to rely on the words of others we have this other text that I mentioned that we are going to look at but many of her early years we have to rely on the writings of others in particular two people first of all Jonathan her husband what he said about her and then secondly a man named Samuel

Hopkins Samuel Hopkins lived in the household in the middle of the great awakening in 1740 1741 he turned up at their doorstep Jonathan had no idea who he was actually Jonathan wasn't even home at the time Samuel Hopkins had heard Edwards preach at Yale at the commencement address that fall had been so taken with the man that he felt that he had to go and speak to him actually spend time with him and ask

Edwards if he would kind of mentor him in the pastoral life and so he turned up at Edwards' door Jonathan was away and he told Sarah he had come to ask her husband if he would be willing to be his kind of shepherd or mentor for a number of months he ended up staying about a year and a half Edwards as I said had no idea who he was when he got home he had written some remarks which will

have cause to relate in a few minutes Jonathan's first recorded words about Sarah were written in the front of his grammar blank page and Edwards wrote these words in 1723 she was 13 they say there is a young lady in New Haven who is beloved of that great being who made and ruled the world and there are certain times in which this great being comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight that she hardly cares for anything except to meditate on him that she expects after a while to be received up to where he is to be raised up out of the world and caught up into heaven and being assured that he loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from him always there she is to dwell with him and to be ravished with his love and delight forever she has a strange sweetness in

her mind and singular purity in her affections is most just and conscientious in all her conduct and you could not persuade her to do anything wrong or sinful if you would give her all the world lest she should offend this great being she is of a wonderful sweetness calmness and universal benevolence of mind she goes sometimes from place to place singing sweetly and seems to be always full of joy she loves to be alone walking in the fields and groves and seems to have someone invisible always conversing with her she's 13 and undoubtedly there's something idealistic in that text and Jonathan has idealized his future wife to some degree but he was quite taken with her and what was taken with her was her spiritual life her spirituality and it was quite remarkable for a woman or a young girl

really at 13 to be described in such a way Edward at the time was 20 she was 13 far too young for Edward even to think about courting her in fact he waits 3 years until she's 13 until she's 16 sorry 3 more years and when it is not inappropriate for him to ask her parents whether or not he can actually court her we'll see that the whole process of dating if we can even describe it that way has changed radically between that period and this period our present day and I'll mention a little bit about that Edward doesn't mention anything in that document about her outward appearance she was quite striking physically Samuel Hopkins mentions when he got to know her she was in her 40s and he mentions how beautiful she was outwardly and how many remarks on that but that's not what Edward notices

at all what he's struck with was her spirituality and that's that which draws him to her both of Jonathan and Sarah were remarkable also in the fact that they were very tall Jonathan was six feet or more and Sarah was around 5'10 5'11 that is very tall for the day in which we're talking if you want to get an idea of the height in that day well I would have been of probably average height I'm small I think in today's height or if you go to Fort Henry old Fort Henry that's about 50, 60 years later early 1800s if you look at the size of the beds in old Fort Henry in Kingston and the size of the doorways you're looking at people being shorter considerably shorter than what we expect them to be today and so Jonathan and Sarah would have been stuck out quite considerably just in terms of their

height Sarah like Jonathan had been born into a family of a rich spiritual heritage her father James Pierpont was a minister he had been one of the leading figures in the founding of Yale the first university really founded in the New World the first or second is Harvard founded by the Puritans in the 1660s when by the 1690s it was felt that Harvard was maybe losing something of its spiritual punch a number of Puritans founded Yale and then when that started to go it was felt that they needed a new school and they founded Princeton what would become Princeton in the 1740s on her father's side she could also trace or

her mother's side this is Sarah Edwards she could also trace descent all the way back to that great Puritan leader a man named Thomas Hooker her conversion we don't know any

details beyond her conversion but beyond this that she was converted when she was around five Jonathan Edwards tells us in 1742 his wife had been converted about 27 years ago she was only five at the time so it became a big surprise to a believer very early on in her life in other words would never have known from her own conscious experience at the time that she did not love the Lord they're married in 1727 they have their first child in 1728 interesting little detail about their marriage she was not married in white apparently brides were not married in white she was married in the colour of green pea green pea green satin dress apparently I'm not sure when white came in to be the colour of her bride but it certainly wasn't among the puritans which is very interesting one later

biographer would say that perhaps no event of Jonathan Edwards life had a more close connection with his usefulness than his marriage no other event in his life had more a close connection with his usefulness than his marriage obviously his conversion but in terms of the impact of his ministry his marriage played a vital role in that Jonathan in many respects as he grew older and was involved in pastoral ministry was not the greatest in remembering things dealing with his own personal life or his household and Sarah took over running the house Samuel Hopkins noted how great an economist he was all the details of that great house you have all the children you have ministers coming and going regularly uninvited guests like himself turning up and staying for a year and a half he wasn't the

last by the way there were others it took a lot to run a household like that and it wasn't Jonathan who was running the house many years later Jonathan was the only thing he was fitted for was study in fact when the controversy blows up about his ministry one of the critiques that starts to get thrown at him is that he spent too long in his study he was in there reading or in there praying and people wanted to see him more and there probably was a little truth in that their first daughter Sarah was born in 1728 she was the first of 11 children all of them survived infancy they had children every two years until the 1740's when there was a hiatus of three years and then they had the final two two years apart often Jonathan is portrayed as a fairly stern father everything that we have goes

against that here is Esther his third oldest daughter the eldest daughter was Sarah and then there is Jerusha Jerusha dies at 19 she dies nursing David Brainerd the great missionary to the Susquehanna Indians in what is now central Pennsylvania who turns up again he turns up at Edward's home Edward doesn't know him he has a little correspondence he doesn't know him the man is dying of TB and he dies at Edward's living room about five months later the person of the children who nursed him was Jerusha and she contracted her she is the first of Edward's children and then there is Esther Esther she marries a man named Aaron Burr she marries him when she is twenty one and he is thirty six and Edward had known Aaron Burr for many years and he had become the president of what will become

Princeton University and so when he asked for her hand in marriage and permission to court his daughter Edward's was quite thrilled that such a man because he knew his character was interested in Esther she would be the father they would be the parents of Aaron Burr Junior the second Vice President of the United States the only one of Edward's grandchildren who turned out to be quite a disgrace to the family Aaron Burr if you know the story of Aaron Burr Junior he is the man who challenged Alexander Hamilton to a duel while he was the Vice President of the United States and killed him and that was illegal and he was forced to flee New England and went down to the southern part of the United States where he actually got involved in a plot to overthrow the government of the United States

and was forced to flee the United States completely and went to Europe for about 30 years with his wife who suffered with him tramping around European countries finally got an amnesty to come back to the United States and died penniless and friendless and instructed those who buried him to bury his body at the feet of Jonathan Edwards his grandfather and his father Aaron Burr Sr.

He wanted to be buried at the bottom of their tombs because he was not worthy to be buried alongside them.

He never professed faith in Christ. It's a very sad story. I haven't been to the Princeton cemetery.

You can see Jonathan Edwards' grave. Sarah is buried in the same grave. At the bottom is a head stone of Aaron Burr Jr. A very sad story.

Thankfully Jonathan never knew nor did Esther. Esther died four years after his birth. Here is Esther talking about her father.

She had married Aaron Burr and she had moved away to Princeton. He came to visit in 1756. Last evening I had some free discourse with my father on the great things that concern my best interest.

That is her faith in Christ. I opened my difficulties to him freely and he has freely advised and directed. The conversation has removed distressing doubts.

He gave me some excellent directions to be observed in secret that tend to keep the soul near to God. What a mercy I have such a father. Such a guide.

This is while she is married at this point in time. Her husband is a very godly man too but still has great respect for her father. That little diary entry is typical of all the children that knew Jonathan in a close relationship because his youngest son was only six when Jonathan died.

He never had the benefit of growing up under his tutelage. But the others did. And Jonathan would spend a significant amount of time with all of his children.

During the week there was a block of time he took with each of them to spend time going over their studies, their Christian life and so on. He spent time with all of his children for a block of time before dinner every night. And also on Saturday evening he would work through the Westminster catechism with them.

And he would go through individually with them asking them the questions and they would give them the answers and then he wanted to find out if they understood the answers and knew what they meant and he would ask further questions with the answers. Corporal discipline, this is quite amazing, Sammy Hopkins tells us that corporal discipline was rarely present in the house. He said Sarah seldom struck her children but would reprove them in few words but with all calmness and gentleness of mind.

Now if that was Jonathan speaking or if that was Sarah speaking you may not remember well but that's Daniel speaking, that's an outsider. And it's quite striking. None of the children were angels.

And let me give you the example of the eldest, Sarah. When a man named Elihu Parsons came to court and eventually came to ask questions of Jonathan Edwards for the hands of Sarah in marriage, Jonathan felt led to tell him that he needed to realize that she had quite an unpleasant temper. And then Elihu apparently said, but she has grace I trust.

That is, she's a Christian. Edwards replied, must have been delivered with a twinkle in his eye. I hope she has, but grace can live where you cannot.

Despite that, Elihu went on to marry her, and apparently it was a good marriage. So you shouldn't get the impression that the children were spotless angels. But it was an amazing family.

Very little corporal punishment as they were growing up. One of the great fears that Edwards had, especially when he moved to Northampton, was the way in which many of the other teens, or teenagers, that by the way is not a word that was used in the 1700s. That's a 20th century word.

There were obviously people of that age, but that category is almost historically, it really doesn't fit in some respects back in that period. Edwards had great concerns when he went to Northampton because many of the youth of the town were living lives that were dissolute and immoral. And his fears were that it would rub off on his children.

He publicly, in his preaching, as we've already seen, attacked some of the immorality of the youth of the town, but with his own children he sought to counteract it in a more positive response. First of all, dealing with them, getting to know each of them during the week, spending time with them, building a relationship. And so often, and this isn't always the case, but I think of it in terms of my own experience with my own parents when I went through my teen years, I was quite a rebellious and a lot of it had to do with the fact that I had little relationship with my father.

And my father sought to build discipline into my life, but without a relationship. And it's not surprising what it bred was rebellion. If you have rules and regulations, but there's no... I never knew his heart.

And there was no attempt to build a relationship there. It's not surprising that it was all external to me. And it led in a very rebellious life.

I don't look back on it with any pride, but Edward was very different. He knew that if he wanted his children to pursue a certain life and lifestyle, he needed to build that relationship with them. Not that even that would guarantee, but it certainly is a way of helping the children develop in the direction that he wanted.

Also, he made sure that none of them were out late at night. He emphasized none of them could be out after nine o'clock at night, unless as they got older they had specific reason and justification for so. And also, dating in those days was very different.

There's been a major change in the whole pattern of dating. Prior to probably taking it as a ballpark figure, 1900, the field of dating was the woman's choice. The man would go to the woman's home, and obviously initially speak to the parents about permission to court the daughter.

And all of the courting took place in the woman's home. You had the porch and so on. Things have radically changed, and I'm not suggesting that we can turn the clock back, but we need to think through some of these issues.

Things have radically changed since the development of large industrial centers, large towns and cities in North America since the early part of the century, and the ability of men and women to live outside of the family circle from a fairly early age, and the whole pattern of dating has changed. And in the period in which we're looking at, Edwards could have an effective control, especially over his daughters, who they saw, because the men would come to the house, and any of the courting was taking place in that house,

in that context. But just as important as all of this was their own marriage, and I'll have a statement which I think gives us great insight into this at the end of our time together.

Sarah, as we've already seen from that statement that Jonathan wrote about her when she was 13, had an uncommon spirituality from a very early age, and she was, in many respects, his equal, spiritually speaking. A man named Ebenezer Parkman, who was a minister at a place called Westboro. Westboro is a little town between North Hampton, Massachusetts, and Boston.

She was on her way to Boston once a year, or a couple times a year. Sarah and a number of her older daughters would go to Boston to shop. And Boston is the great metropolis that you would be able to buy things you could never get in North Hampton.

And on this one occasion in 1742, she stopped in Westboro where she was able to meet, among others, a man named Ebenezer Parkman, who was the minister of the town. Ebenezer wrote in his diary of their conversation. This is what he said.

He said he had had the pleasure of her company and conversation. It was wonderful, he said, her sense of divine things. It was wonderful, her sense of divine things.

In fact, from 1735 onwards, Sarah had had a number of striking experiences. Between 1735 and the mid-1740s, she had a number of very remarkable experiences. Jonathan asked her to write them down for him, and he eventually incorporated them, as I've mentioned, as part of a book, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England*.

I'm going to read a number of sections. Sarah was given, we read, such views of the glory. These originally were written in her words as first person, but Edwards has put them in third person singular.

She was given such views of the glory and perfection of Christ that the soul, Sarah, in the meantime, was overwhelmed and swallowed up with light and love and rest and joy. Sometimes this would go on for more than five or six hours together without any interruption in that clear, lively sense of the infinite beauty of Christ's person and the heavenly sweetness of his transcendent love. Her heart was swallowed up, or the heart, it was her heart, was swallowed up in a kind of glow of Christ's love, coming down from Christ's heart in heaven as a constant stream of sweet light.

At the same time, the soul all flowing out in love to him. So there seemed to be a constant flowing and reflowing from heart to heart. On the other hand, Edwards tells us in his edited version there were times Sarah had an extraordinary sense of the awful majesty and greatness of God, a sense of the holiness of God as of a flame infinitely pure and bright, an extraordinary view of the infinite terribleness of the wrath of God, together with a sense of the ineffable misery of sinners were exposed to this wrath.

Sometimes the exceeding pollution of the person's own heart, that is Sarah's own heart, as a sink of all manner of abomination and the dreadfulness of an eternal hell of God's wrath open to view both together. Also a very great sense of the certain truth of the great things revealed in the gospel, an overwhelming sense of the glory of the work of redemption and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ simply overwhelmed her. But undergirding all of these experiences, Edwards tells us, she had a sweet rejoicing of soul at the thought of God being infinitely unchangeably happy, an exulting gladness of heart that God is all sufficient and infinitely above all dependence and reigns over all and does His will with absolute and uncontrollable sovereignty.

Her soul often entertained with unspeakable delight, the thought of heaven as a world of love where love shall be the saints' eternal food and they shall dwell in the light of love and swim in love and where the very air and breath will be nothing but love, love to the people of God or to God's true saints or such that have the image of Christ and as those who will in a very little time shine in His perfect image that has been attended with that endearment of oneness of heart, that sweetness and ravishment of soul that has been altogether inexpressible. What he's describing here and I've only exerted it and maybe in exerting it I haven't done justice to his description is some incredible experiences that she went through in terms of her understanding and the heart experience of God and of Christ that went on for hours at times. She mentioned, Edwards mentioned that sometimes the views of divine things deprived her body of all ability to stand or speak.

She couldn't stand up. She was so overwhelmed. There were times she couldn't even speak.

One time, he says, Sarah was given an extraordinary sense of the awful majesty of God. She lost all bodily strength. Another time, it was the overwhelming sense of the glory of the work of redemption, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and she fainted.

On another occasion, a sense of the glory of the Holy Spirit as a great comforter overwhelmed her body and soul. On the other hand, there were times when she was filled, he says, with a kind of omnipotent joy that caused her to leap with all the might and exaltation of soul. And I used to think when I read that, that Edwards was talking metaphorically, but I think now that he's talking about physically.

Sometimes she was so overwhelmed with joy, she just felt like she just had to jump up and down for joy. These are remarkable things. And Edwards, they were remarkable because he had no context in which to evaluate them, except for one context, which is what was Sarah like at other times when these experiences weren't.

What was she like as a mother and as a mistress of that household? And Edwards mentions that it was this that kind of sealed for him the reality of these experiences, because he started to notice a situation of meals, and about little inconveniences in the household that annoyed her, or made her impatient, and one can well imagine the sort of things that daily life does to all of us, there's very few of us that don't get frustrated at times living in this world, and the various inconveniences that sometimes can come into our lives in daily life. And Edwards had noticed that after these experiences though, things began to change in Sarah, that there was a mellowness, that there was a patience, that there was a gentleness that was in her life, that was not there before. And all that Edwards could conclude is these things must be genuine.

Little wonder he could say, if such things are fanaticism and the fruits of a distempered brain, in other words, if you think such things are crazy, let my brain be ever more possessed with this happy distemper. If this is what it means to experience change in our daily lives, there's deepening of love to God that bears out in fruit in the way we love each other and bear with each other and help each other, then let me be possessed with this craziness. If this is distraction, what he means is if this is craziness, I pray God the world and mankind may well be seized, all seized, with this meek, beatifical, glorious distraction.

Fifteen years after, after these events, Edwards lay dying in Princeton. And none of his family were present except for his one daughter, his fourth daughter, I think it was, Lucy. And as he was dying, he gave to Lucy some words for Sarah.

And these are the words that Lucy told his wife. Give my kindest love to my dear wife, he told Lucy. Tell her that the uncommon union, which has so long subsisted between us, has been of such a nature that I trust is spiritual, and therefore will continue.

In which he speaks, I think, very powerfully about that the heart of their relationship was a spiritual union. And as such would be one that would not be ended by physical death, but would continue forever. Sarah came to Princeton to superintend the funeral and all the arrangements of her husband.

On her way home, she stayed a number of months, on her way home to Stockbridge, she fell and died and never reached home. And she died only a few months then after her husband. Probably the shock, the travel, and all the things that attended that led to her premature death.

She died aged 48 and was buried in the same tomb as Jonathan. Speech goes, I think, of a model of Christian marriage. These sorts of things are things we need to think about and set before ourselves and other young people as they enter into marriage today.

One of the great, I think, disturbing things I have found in the last 10 or 15 years is not so much the increase in divorce among unbelievers and among men and women who make no claim to be Christian, but the breakdown of marriage in and among Christians. I am aware that there are always circumstances that lead to that among Christians. I would be a fool to say, these things, there should never be any.

I mean, given human nature, given our simpleness, we should not expect that there would not be casualties in marriage in the Christian community. What disturbs me most deeply is the vast numbers. And I don't know, I mean, I probably could count, but in the last four or five years, I've had a number of students, these are ministers of the gospel whose marriages are broken up.

It's shattering. And we need to step before ourselves models of good Christian marriages. And Sarah and Jonathan certainly, I think, speak to us that the heart of marriage is a spiritual union and a friendship and ultimately a passionate love for Christ.

Well, let me stop here and ask if there might be questions on either what I've talked about in this hour or in the hour of previous. Yeah, Jonathan Edwards, well, Sarah's experience has been cited a number of times in writings defending the throne of lesson. And I think to some extent there's been an element of misuse in that.

One book in particular, I don't think always cites the exact text or draws conclusions from the text that are contradicted by the context. And if you're going to use material from the past for model or for argumentation today, you need to take the whole of the material from the past into context. And Edwards' defense of physical phenomena has to be seen in the light of this whole argument.

Edwards, while he recognized God can do and does do such things, and these things do happen, nonetheless they are not required and they are not necessarily a sign of spirituality. They can have different sources. And so I think that sometimes, yes, Sarah's experiences have not been properly put into context.

Yeah, and I think that's very good. And I think that that's Edwards' very point, is that he was well aware that individuals could have deep, powerful, spiritual experiences, but for him the evidence of the reality of them was the changed life, the fruit. And in fact, one of Edwards' great books is the Treatise on Religious Affections, and he has 12 signs which he argues for the genuineness of spiritual experience, and the last

sign, and the one that he devotes the most to, is fruit.

What is the fruit of, in the person's life? Yes, the question was asked whether the same types of experiences happened with Wesley and Whitfield. They did. Both Whitfield and Wesley did see them.

When they were preaching, sometimes individuals just, bang, went right down, physically, they were standing. Wesley and Whitfield related to them differently. Wesley, at times, actually, would encourage them.

Whitfield never encouraged them. They tended to happen more frequently at the beginning of their ministries, and sometimes, when the gospel was first introduced into a certain geographical area, and diminished as time went on, Whitfield was always cautious about emphasizing them, probably even more cautious than Edwards, because he feared that a great emphasis on them would take away from the spirit's work in pointing men and women to Christ, and that people might get taken up with the physical phenomena instead of the spiritual Lord Jesus. And I think historically, where these things have taken place, and they already took place in this revival, they took place in Ireland in the 1858-1859 revival, the Welsh revival, I think, in 1904, but definitely in the 1858-1859 revival, they took place in Cambridge, Kentucky, 1801-1802, so there have been other times when these things have happened.

The danger can be that they become the focus, in Europe and here. The problem of answering a question like that, and it's a good question, and it's an important question, is that the West is made up of very different parts. Northern Ireland, for instance, there are probably, I don't know percentage, but it's one of the, in terms of evangelical witness and vitality, is still very strong, and maybe because of the troubles.

The Scottish Highlands, one thinks of Lewis and Skye and Harris, I remember being in Inverness about 12 years ago, and we went to church on the Sunday morning, and the streets, they weren't jammed with people, but there were tons of people going to church. You could tell they were going to church. They either had Bibles, or they were all dressed up in Sunday suits and so on.

It was quite a remarkable experience. There are places in the southern United States, the Bible belt, where things are still very strong evangelically. There are places, on the other hand, in the west, one thinks of France, which is a graveyard for missionaries, where people practicing the cult and psychics and so on, far outnumber the numbers of even Roman Catholic priests, or even the Roman Catholic Churches declared France to be a mission field.

In Canada, again, if you take it from coast to coast, places like Quebec are in dire spiritual straits. If you take the term evangelical, in Quebec, you're looking at 0.5% of the population is evangelical. The Roman Catholic Church, the power of the church, has been completely smashed in the last 40 years.

The main seminary to train priests, for instance, in downtown Quebec City, we're just talking very broadly, you've got a building that could house probably four or five hundred. It's got maybe a dozen men floating around in it, maybe another dozen, but it's hardly any more than that. And yet there are parts of Canada, one thinks of Alberta, where there's still a strong Christian presence.

But by and large, I think the West is in serious trouble. America is the outstanding exception. Despite the fact that America is the exporter of, I think, significant amount of secularization and the underminer of morals, if you look at the recent rash of movies that were up for Oscars at the Academy Awards, I had not heard of any of the movies until they were actually mentioned, and then when they were briefly described,

felt revulsion that most of these movies were being touted for what they were being given.

Despite that, there is still a strong Christian presence. So much so that all of the presidential candidates regularly have to indicate their relationship to the truth, even when you've got men like Nixon or Reagan, who you would have serious questions about. At least I would.

But by and large, I think the emphasis has swung from the West, and there are places like Zambia, Zimbabwe, or China, where a Christian presence is growing by leaps and bounds. Since the Communist Revolution in China in 1949, there were about a million professing Christians. That's gone from there to about 60 million in 50 years.

I remember speaking to a missionary, actually a pastor from Zambia, who was here in Quebec, a teaching session in Montreal, and was coming back and speaking in a church in Ottawa. And I was to speak that night, and this man was to give a missionary presentation. He gave the missionary presentation, and I didn't say anything to him afterwards, but I asked him, how large a percentage of Christians you think are in Zambia? And he said, oh, 20-25%.

And I'm thinking, where's the mission field? It's not Zambia. I was just in the mission field in Quebec. 0.5% evangelical.

So I think our situation, although we have, in the struggle against Communism, the West is one. There's no doubt for the immediate, short-term, Socialism and Marxism as an alternative worldview has been shattered. And the free market economy of the West is one.

But the question is, do we in the Western countries have the spiritual resources to keep our societies together? And I think we don't. I think we're running on the interest of our great grandparents, maybe our grandparents. That's definitely since the 1950s, 1960s, has been here in Canada, a great turning away from the Gospel.

financially and economically, it's boom time. But if there's not the spiritual soul, and that, I think, I understand to be the Gospel, that keeps society together, there's going to be a great falling apart. It's inevitable.

And that's why I think we need to take to heart, when we read about revival, we need to long for it, we need to work for it. It's not a question of putting our feet up and saying, well, God, bring it. We need to long and pray for it and work for it.

And there are ways of that, prayer. We need to be serious about the fact that our society is not what it should be. And we should be meeting together in prayer, as people of God, crying out to God, asking Him to intervene and change things.

We need to be praying that God would raise up Christian politicians, men and women who could count the cost of being in the public sphere and maintaining their Christian faith. Men like Aristotle all day, and people like that. It's not easy to be a Christian and to be in the political sphere.

We need to ask God to raise up the whole realm of the judiciary. It strikes me one of the disturbing facts of Canadian society is the Supreme Court is making the laws. And that has shifted, the judiciary powers have shifted from the Commons, the House of Commons, to the Court.

That's a very disturbing trend, I think. And we need to ask God to raise up men and women who will be Christian judges. Media.

I mean, I watch a fair amount of movies. I enjoy movies. But one of the things that strikes me when I watch a movie, a video rental place, is how many movies are glorifying evil.

And one of the things, I'm not always consistent in this, but I would like to be more consistent, asking God to raise up Christian filmmakers who can approach a subject from a Christian worldview and a Christian standpoint. Because media today is so influential. But I think at the heart of it is prayer.

We don't have time to go into that tonight. Forgive me, that's a long answer to a question. But it's a very important question.

Very important question. Well, I think, and I would want to say, in times of any genuine spiritual renewal that comes from the spirit of God, there are certain things that take place. And ones that we noted with Edwards, I think, are indicative of that.

There is a love for Christ. I have problems personally with somebody who claims, who gives a significant amount of that love that should go to Christ to, say, the Virgin Mary. It raises questions in my mind.

Our Lord Jesus, he is a God. I mean, that doesn't make sense. Well, I think God calls our authority as scripture, and that scripture shows the shape of how the spirit works.

I think we need to love all who love the Lord Jesus Christ with sincerity. And that love crosses boundaries, denominational boundaries. One more, maybe a couple more questions, and then we'll close.

I think Piper is probably one individual today whose writing and preaching is very similar to Edwards. And when I first came across Piper's writing, I read a lot of it and thought, gee, this sounds a lot like John Edwards. And then I found out he had made a commitment, probably in his twenties, to specialize outside of his own public ministry in reading Edwards.

And I think an excellent way into the heart of Jonathan Edwards's spiritual thinking is by reading some of John Piper's works, A Hunger for God, The Pleasures of God, Desiring God, those are three of his books. And especially Desiring God is probably a very good avenue into the heart of where Piper is at. And I have great admiration for Piper.

I've heard him publicly. It was a day I would never forget. It was one of those days where his public presence initially doesn't strike you, but I remember about halfway through the third session I remember I just wanted to go out and weep.

It was so powerful. And then chatting with him after, I remember a number of us went out for dinner with him, and he's a very humble man. He was quite remarkable.

But a man who's preaching definitely brings a rich sense of the public presence. So I have great admiration for him. Well, if there are no further questions, we'll close at this point with prayer.

There will be no meeting next week. It will be two weeks from tonight. And on that occasion we want to look at a man named Andrew Fuller.

And we want to look at some of the ways in which Christians in the 18th century sought to defend their faith, defend the doctrine of the Trinity, defend the deity of Christ, and things like that. Let's close then in prayer. Our Father, we thank you for the great heritage we have as believers, and we do pray that as we have thought tonight about Jonathan Edwards, his ministry, the shape of it, and some of the experiences of his wife as well, Sarah, that you would use this material to challenge us how the long Father to see in our day what you did in their day, sovereignly bringing men and women to Christ, changing the fabric of society, exalting Jesus, spreading holiness and purity over the land.

Lord, we pray for that in our day. Give us the desire and the strength to labor for it, to work for it, and to long for it. And this week to come, enable us to be witnesses in our families, in the workplace, and among our friends, and may Christ be glorified in our lives.

We ask for his sake.

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