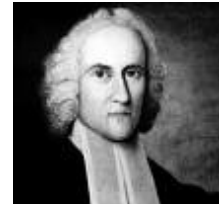


# HEROES OF THE CHURCH: Jonathan Edwards



## I. Modern-day views – True or False?

### A. In one corner, weighing in...!

“a ‘pathetic, befuddled, sickly, angry, Puritan’ who was ‘the most bitter hater of man the American pulpit ever had.’” (Charles Angoff, historian)

“a sadistic, self-tortured, ‘morbid introvert,’” and a “‘half-insane,’ emotionally defective ‘psychopath.’” (George Goodwin, writer)

#### 1. Evidence?

“The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours...and yet ‘tis nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment... Oh sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in.” (*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*; July 8, 1741)

### B. ...and in the other corner, weighing in...!

“The towering figure in American Colonial church history—arguably the greatest pastor, preacher, philosopher, theologian and author America has ever produced.” (Steve Lawson)

“...the one figure of real greatness in the intellectual life of colonial America.” (B.B. Warfield)

#### 1. Evidence?

“...And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners.” (*Sinners*)

“From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.” (Rev 19:15)

## II. Early Years

**A.** Born October 5, 1703, in East Windsor, CT. Only son of 11 children!

**B.** At 13, entered Yale; valedictorian after 4 years.

**C.** Breadth of Study – Studied Newton, Locke; wrote “Of Being”, “Of Insects”

**D.** Struggle with Divine Sovereignty! – “It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me.”

**E.** Conversion – “To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Tim 1:17)

“As I read the words, there came into my soul...a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; ... I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven; and be as it were swallowed up in him forever!”

**F.** Edwards’ *Resolutions* – written as 19-20 yr. old!

**III. Pastoral Ministry**

- A. In 1727, assistant minister to grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, in Northampton, MA. Later, sole minister.
- B. Major works written:
  - *God Glorified in the Work of Redemption, by the Greatness of Man's Dependence upon Him in the Whole of it* (1731)
  - *Divine and Supernatural Light, Immediately Imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God.* (1734)

**IV. Great Awakening**

- A. **Key Question = What does true Christian look like?**
  - *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737)
  - *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746)
- B. **The “Half-Way Covenant” Controversy**
  - *A Humble Inquiry into the Rules of and Qualifications for Communion* (1748)
- C. **Mission to Indians for 7 years**
  - *Freedom of the Will* (1754), his greatest literary accomplishment
  - *Concerning the End for Which God Created the World* (1750s)

**V. Final Years**

- A. In 1758, President of the College of New Jersey; gave opening sermon on Heb 13:8.
- B. Death of a scientist, theologian, philosopher, disciple of Christ.

*“Never did any mortal man more fully and clearly evidence the sincerity of all his professions, by one continued, universal, calm, cheerful resignation, and patient submission to the divine will, through every stage of his disease, than he.” -Edwards’ doctor*

**VI. My Favorite Things About Edwards**

- A. Edwards was unoriginal in his theology, yet zealous for preaching, revival, and missions.
- B. Edwards had a hunger to know the Bible.
- C. Edwards wanted you to have “an experiential, palpable, sensual, affectional, sense of Christ.”

The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows; but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams. But God is the ocean. (*Works*, II, 244).

**VII. Recommended Reading:**

- A. Sermons – “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”, “A Divine and Supernatural Light”
- B. Works – *Religious Affections*, *Freedom of the Will*, *The Life of David Brainerd*
- C. Biography – *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, by George Marsden