Rhetorical Overview

“Sinners in the Hands of an angry God”
By Jonathan Edwards
Ethos / Speaker

The speaker is Jonathan Edwards

- Entered Yale University at age 13
- Age 26 Pastor of Congregational Church in Northampton, Mass.
- Helped start the ‘Great Awakening’
Logos / Message

God is angry, and sinners need a mediator

Rhetorical Appeals
- Ethos
- Pathos
- Logos

Rhetorical Devices
- Imagery
- Figurative Language
- Repetition
- Allusion
- Syntax
- Diction
- Tone
Rhetorical Appeals - Ethos

The entire sermon is an appeal to Puritan ethics because the subject of the sermon is sinners, those who have or are violating God’s law.

Title: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”

“Wickedness”

“justice bends the arrow at your heart”

“You have offended Him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince”
Rhetorical Appeals - Pathos

Majority of appeals are intended to scare the audience and are focused on God’s power to punish the sinner.

“hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them”

“the glowing flames of the wrath of God”

“nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment”
Rhetorical Appeals - Logos

Logic is found in the sermon's organization, in the idea of a mediator, and in the example of God’s wrath.

Begins with the sinners “held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell” and ends with Jesus washing sinners “from their sins with his own blood.”

Jesus is the “Mediator” who intervenes between God and sinners. Edwards points out how illogical it is to have “no interest in any Mediator.”

Logic is found in the support used to describe God’s “wrath”
- “in the hand of God, over the pit of hell”
- “The wrath of God is like great waters”
- “The bow of God’s wrath is bent”
Rhetorical Devices

Figurative Language and Imagery are necessary to discuss the abstract ideas of God and hell.

**Figurative Language**
- Personification - “hand of God”
- Simile - God “holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider”
- Metaphor - Hell is “a great furnace of wrath”
- Symbolism - God’s “hands”

**Imagery**
- Visual - “hell’s wide gaping mouth”
- Visual - “lake of burning brimstone”
- Organic - “dreadfully provoked”
Rhetorical Devices

Repetition and Allusion are used to help stress the importance of ideas.

**Repetition**
- God’s hand - His control
- Wrath - God’s anger
- Mediator - Jesus Christ
- Hell - God’s punishment

**Allusion**
- Waters/flood - God’s anger that destroyed the world
- Sodom - God’s anger
- Prince/rebel - Puritans rebelled against King
Rhetorical Devices

Diction is used to relate to audience, while syntax is used to emphasize a point and evoke emotion.

**Diction**
- “Wrath” is related to Ares and the god of war and is more than anger.
- “mitigation” is repeated and used to reference Jesus.
- Lack of elevated language - vocabulary is common to aide comprehension.
- No contractions.

**Syntax**
- Parallelism - “waiting for them... gaping for them... gather and flash about them... lay hold on them”
- Parallelism - “your bodily constitution... your own life... your own preservation”
- Parallelism - nothing to lay hold of... nothing to keep off... nothing of your own, nothing you have ever done.
- Exclamation - “O sinner!”
There are two distinct tones taken by the speaker. The first is a tone of condemnation and the second is a tone of salvation.

**Tone - Condemnation**
- “they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it.”
- God “abhors you”
- “How dreadful is the state of those … in the danger of this great wrath”

**Tone - Salvation**
- “Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open”
- “hearts filled with love”
- “rejoicing and singing for joy of heart”
Pathos / Audience

The audience is meant to feel scared throughout most of the sermon; the end of the sermon invites the audience to feel hopeful.

Pathos - Scared
• “all of you… are in the hands of an angry God”
• “this is the dismal case of ever soul in this congregation”

Pathos - Hopeful
• “many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God”
• “Therefore, let everyone… awake and fly from the wrath to come”
SOAPSTone

Speaker: Jonathan Edwards
Occasion: Decline in religious belief
Audience: Puritans
Purpose: Convince audience to be reborn
Subject: God’s Anger
Tone: Condemnation and Hopefulness
In his sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Jonathan Edwards uses appeals to pathos, vivid imagery and figurative language, and two distinct tones to convince his parishioners that God’s anger can only be mediated through Jesus and baptism.

Include in Purpose Statement

- Author
- Genre
- Title
- Strong Verb - What is author is attempting
- Position on complex topic
- Dominant rhetorical appeals and devices