

Jonathan Edwards "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,"

(Sermon delivered at Enfield, Connecticut; July 8, 1741)

... "There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God." ... his arbitrary will ... There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment ... The strongest have no power to resist him ... There is no fortress that is any defense from the power of God ...

... justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins ... The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back. . . They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. . . They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell ...

... their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them. The devil stands ready to fall upon them ... The devils watch them. . . The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them ...

... Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature ... if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

... Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering ... The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight cannot discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to hell ... [and] to destroy any wicked man, at any moment ... Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives ... do not secure them a moment ... the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves ...

... thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them. . . they have no refuge

... there is nothing between you and hell but the air . . . You probably are not sensible of this. . . if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling . . . Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead. . . There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder . . . it [will] come with fury, and your destruction [will] come like a whirlwind . . .

. . . you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty . . . If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury . . .

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God . . . that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood . . .

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 . . . there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God . . . You hang by a slender thread . . . and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath . . .

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without any pity. When God . . . sees your torment . . . how your poor soul is crushed . . . into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you . . . there shall be no moderation or mercy . . . he will have no regard to your welfare . . .

. . . He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt: no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet to be trodden down as the mire of the streets . . . It is everlasting wrath.

But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again . . . There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have . . . [but they] are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape.

. . . but here you are in the land of the living and in the house of God, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy!