

“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”

*The Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards delivered this sermon at Enfield, Connecticut, on July 8, 1741, at the height of the Great Awakening—a revival of religious fervor throughout New England.*

The wrath of God is like great waters that are damned for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed  
5 hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the  
10 flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

15 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, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.

20 Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the  
25 house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction

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  
30 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. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night;  
35 that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn  
40 worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against  
45 many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

50 How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in the danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and

religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be  
young or old! There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now  
55 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. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much  
disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising  
themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one,  
60 in the whole congregation, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful  
thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be  
to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable  
and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember  
this discourse in hell? And it would be a wonder, if some that are now present should  
65 not be in hell in a very short time, even before this year is out. And it would be no  
wonder if some persons, that now sit here, in some seats of this meeting house, in  
health, quiet and secure, should be there before tomorrow morning.

Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the  
wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great  
70 part of this congregation: Let every one fly out of Sodom: "Haste and escape for your  
lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed

