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# Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. A Sermon Preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741.

Jonathan Edwards
*Church of Christ in Northampton*

Reiner Smolinski , Editor
*Georgia State University*, rsmolinski@gsu.edu

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# Mr. *Edwards*'s

# SERMON

## On the Danger of the

# UNCONVERTED.

# SINNERS

In the Hands of an

# Angry GOD.

# A SERMON

Preached at *Enfield, July* 8th 1741.

At a Time of great Awakenings; and attended with remarkable Impreſſions on many of the Hearers.

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By *Jonathan Edwards*, A.M.

Paſtor of the Church of CHRIST in *Northampton.*

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Amos ix. 2, 3. *Though they dig into Hell, thence ſhall mine Hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themſelves in the Top of Carmel, I will ſearch and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my Sight in the Bottom of the Sea, thence I will command the Serpent, and he ſhall bite them.*

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# Sinners in the Hands of an angry GOD.

DEUT. XXXII. 35.

——*Their Foot ſhall ſlide in due Time* ——

IN this Verse is threatned the Vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, that were God's visible People, and lived under Means of Grace; and that, notwithstanding all God's wonderful Works that he had wrought towards that People, yet remained, as is expressed, *ver.* 28. void of Counsel, having no Understanding in them; and that, under all the Cultivations of Heaven, brought forth bitter and poisonous Fruit; as in the two Verses next preceeding the Text.

The Expression that I have chosen for my Text, *Their Foot shall slide in due Time*; seems to imply the following Things, relating to the Punishment and Destruction that these wicked Israelites were exposed to.

1. That they were *always* exposed to Destruction, as one that stands or walks in slippery Places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the Manner of their Destruction's coming upon them, being represented by their Foot's sliding. The same is express'd, Psal. 73. 18. *Surely thou didst set them in slippery Places; thou castedst them down into Destruction.*

2. It implies that they were always exposed to *sudden* unexpected Destruction. As he that walks in slippery Places is every Moment liable to fall; he can't foresee one Moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once, without Warning. Which is also expressed in that, Psal. 73. 18, 19. *Surely thou didst set them in slippery Places; thou castedst them down into Destruction. How are they brought into Desolation as in a Moment?*

3. Another Thing implied is that they are liable to fall *of themselves*, without being thrown down by the Hand of another. As he that stands or walks on slippery Ground, needs nothing but his own Weight to throw him down.

4. That the Reason why they are not fallen already, and don't fall now, is only that God's appointed Time is not come. For it is said, that when that due Time, or appointed Time comes, *their Foot shall slide*. Then they shall be left to fall as they are inclined by their own Weight. God won't hold them up in these slippery Places any longer, but will let them go; and then, at that very Instant, they shall fall into Destruction; as he that stands in such slippery declining Ground on the Edge of a Pit that he can't stand alone, when he is let go he immediately falls and is lost.

The Observation from the Words that I would now insist upon is this,

*There is nothing that keeps wicked Men at any one Moment, out of Hell, but the meer Pleasure of GOD.*

By the meer Pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign Pleasure, his arbitrary Will, restrained by no Obligation, hinder'd by no manner of Difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's meer Will had in the least Degree, or in any Respect whatsoever, any Hand in the Preservation of wicked Men one Moment.

The Truth of this Observation may appear by the following Considerations.

1. There is no Want of *Power* in God to cast wicked Men into Hell at any Moment. Mens Hands can't be strong when God rises up: The strongest have no Power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his Hands.

He is not only able to cast wicked Men into Hell, but he can most *easily* do it. Sometimes an earthly Prince meets with a great deal of Difficulty to subdue a Rebel, that has found Means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the Numbers of his Followers. But it is not so with God. There is no Fortress that is any Defence from the Power of God. Tho' Hand join in Hand, and vast Multitudes of God's Enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in Pieces: They are as great Heaps of light Chaff before the Whirlwind; or large Quantities of dry Stubble before devouring Flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a Worm that we see crawling on the Earth; so 'tis easy for us to cut or singe a slender Thread that any Thing hangs by; thus easy is it for God when he pleases to cast his Enemies down to Hell. What are we, that we should think to stand

before him, at whose Rebuke the Earth trembles, and before whom the Rocks are thrown down?

2. They *deserve* to be cast into Hell; so that divine Justice never stands in the Way, it makes no Objection against God's using his Power at any Moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, Justice calls aloud for an infinite Punishment of their Sins. Divine Justice says of the Tree that brings forth such Grapes of Sodom, *Cut it down, why cumbreth it the Ground,* Luk. 13. 7. The Sword of divine Justice is every Moment brandished over their Heads, and 'tis nothing but the Hand of arbitrary Mercy, and God's meer Will, that holds it back.

3. They are *already* under a Sentence of Condemnation to Hell. They don't only justly deserve to be cast down thither; but the Sentence of the Law of God, that eternal and immutable Rule of Righteousness that God has fixed between him and Mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to Hell. Joh. 3. 18. *He that believeth not is condemned already.* So that every unconverted Man properly belongs to Hell; that is his Place; from thence he is. Joh. 8. 23. *Ye are from beneath.* And thither he is bound; 'tis the Place that Justice, and God's Word, and the Sentence of his unchangeable Law assigns to him.

4. They are now the Objects of that very *same* Anger & Wrath of God that is expressed in the Torments of Hell: and the Reason why they don't go down to Hell at each Moment, is not because God, in whose Power they are, is not then very angry with them; as angry as he is with many of those miserable Creatures that he is now tormenting in Hell, and do there feel and bear the fierceness of his Wrath. Yea God is a great deal more angry with

great Numbers that are now on Earth, yea doubtless with many that are now in this Congregation, that it may be are at Ease and Quiet, than he is with many of those that are now in the Flames of Hell.

So that it is not because God is unmindful of their Wickedness, and don't resent it, that he don't let loose his Hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such an one as themselves, tho' they may imagine him to be so. The Wrath of God burns against them, their Damnation don't 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 her Mouth under them.

5. The *Devil* stands ready to fall upon them and seize them as his own, at what Moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their Souls in his Possession, and under his Dominion. The Scripture represents them as his *Goods*, Luk. 11. 21. The Devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right Hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry Lions that see their Prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back; if God should withdraw his Hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one Moment fly upon their poor Souls. The old Serpent is gaping for them; Hell opens his Mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the Souls of wicked Men those hellish *Principles* reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into Hell Fire, if it were not for God's Restraints. There is laid in the very Nature of carnal Men a Foundation for the Torments of Hell: There are those corrupt Principles, in reigning Power in them, and in full Possession of them, that are Seeds of

Hell Fire. These Principles are active and powerful, and exceeding violent in their Nature, and if it were not for the restraining Hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same Manner as the same Corruptions, the same Enmity does in the Hearts of damned Souls, and would beget the same Torments in 'em as they do in them. The Souls of the Wicked are in Scripture compared to the troubled Sea, *Isai.* 57. 20. For the present God restrains their Wickedness by his mighty Power, as he does the raging Waves of the troubled Sea, saying, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further*; but if God should withdraw that restraining Power, it would soon carry all afore it. Sin is the Ruin and Misery of the Soul; it is destructive in it's Nature; and if God should leave it without Restraint, there would need nothing else to make the Soul perfectly miserable. The Corruption of the Heart of Man is a Thing that is immoderate and boundless in its Fury; and while wicked Men live here, it is like Fire pent up by God's Restraints, whereas if it were let loose it would set on Fire the Course of Nature; and as the Heart is now a Sink of Sin, so, if Sin was not restrain'd, it would immediately turn the Soul into a fiery Oven, or a Furnace of Fire and Brimstone.

7. It is no Security to wicked Men for one Moment, that there are no *visible Means* of *Death* at Hand. 'Tis no Security to a natural Man, that he is now in Health, and that he don't see which Way he should now immediately go out of the World by any Accident, and that there is no visible Danger in any Respect in his Circumstances. The manifold and continual Experience of the World in all Ages, shews that this is no Evidence that a Man is not on the very Brink of Eternity, and that the next Step won't be into an-

other World. The unseen, unthought of Ways and Means of Persons going suddenly out of the World are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted Men walk over the Pit of Hell on a rotten Covering, and there are innumerable Places in this Covering so weak that they won't bear their Weight, and these Places are not seen. The Arrows of Death fly unseen at Noon-Day; the sharpest Sight can't discern them, God has so many different unsearchable Ways of taking wicked Men out of the World and sending 'em to Hell, that there is nothing to make it appear that God had need to be at the Expence of a Miracle, or go out of the ordinary Course of his Providence, to destroy any wicked Man, at any Moment. All the Means that there are of Sinners going out of the World, are so in God's Hands, and so universally absolutely subject to his Power and Determination, that it don't depend at all less on the meer Will of God, whether Sinners shall at any Moment go to Hell, than if Means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the Case.

8. Natural Men's *Prudence* and *Care* to preserve their own *Lives*, or the Care of others to preserve them, don't secure 'em a Moment. This divine Providence and universal Experience does also bear Testimony to. There is this clear Evidence that Men's own Wisdom is no Security to them from Death; That if it were otherwise we should see some Difference between the wise and politick Men of the World, and others, with Regard to their Liableness to early and unexpected Death; but how is it in Fact? Eccles. 2. 16. *How dieth the wise Man? as the Fool.*

9. All wicked Men's *Pains* and *Contrivance* they use to escape *Hell*, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked Men, don't secure 'em from Hell one Moment. Almost every natural Man that

hears of Hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own Security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do; every one lays out Matters in his own Mind how he shall avoid Damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his Schemes won't fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the bigger Part of Men that have died heretofore are gone to Hell; but each one imagines that he lays out Matters better for his own escape than others have done: He don't intend to come to that Place of Torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take Care that shall be effectual, and to order Matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish Children of Men do miserably delude themselves in their own Schemes, and in their Confidence in their own Strength and Wisdom; they trust to nothing but a Shadow. The bigger Part of those that heretofore have lived under the same Means of Grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to Hell: and it was not because they were not as wise as those that are now alive: it was not because they did not lay out Matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If it were so, that we could come to speak with them, and could inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected when alive, and when they used to hear about Hell, ever to be the Subjects of that Misery, we doubtless should hear one and another reply, 'No, I never intended to come here; I had laid out 'Matters otherwise in my Mind; I thought I should 'contrive as well for my self; I thought my Scheme 'good; I intended to take effectual Care; but it came 'upon me unexpected; I did not look for it at that

'Time, and in that Manner; it came as a Thief; Death 'outwitted me; God's Wrath was too quick for me; O 'my cursed Foolishness! I was flattering my self, and 'pleasing my self with vain Dreams of what I would 'do hereafter, and when I was saying Peace and Safety, 'then sudden Destruction came upon me.

10. God has laid himself under *no Obligation* by any Promises to keep any natural Man out of Hell one Moment. God certainly has made no Promises either of eternal Life, or of any Deliverance or Preservation from eternal Death, but what are contained in the Covenant of Grace, the Promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the Promises are Yea and Amen. But surely they have no Interest in the Promises of the Covenant of Grace that are not the Children of the Covenant, and that don't believe in any of the Promises of the Covenant, and have no Interest in the *Mediator* of the Covenant.

So that whatever some have imagined and pretended about Promises made to natural Men's earnest seeking and knocking, 'tis plain and manifest that whatever Pains a natural Man takes in Religion, whatever Prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of Obligation to keep him a *Moment* from eternal Destruction.

So that 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 as to those that are actually suffering the Executions of the fierceness of his Wrath in Hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that Anger, neither is God in the least bound by any Promise to hold 'em up one moment; the Devil is waiting for them, Hell is gaping

for them, the Flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the Fire pent up in their own Hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no Interest in any Mediator, there are no Means within Reach that can be any Security to them. In short, they have no Refuge, nothing to take hold of, all that preserves them every Moment is the meer arbitrary Will, and uncovenanted unobliged Forbearance of an incensed God.

## APPLICATION.

The Use may be of *Awakening* to unconverted Persons in this Congregation. This that you have heard is the Case of every one of you that are out of Christ. That World of Misery, that Lake of burning Brimstone is extended abroad under you. *There* is the dreadful Pit of the glowing Flames of the Wrath of God; there is Hell's wide gaping Mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, not any Thing to take hold of: there is nothing between you and Hell but the Air; 'tis only the Power and meer Pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of Hell, but don't see the Hand of God in it, but look at other Things, as the good State of your bodily Constitution, your Care of your own Life, and the Means you use for your own Preservation. But indeed these Things are nothing; if God should withdraw his Hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin Air to hold up a Person that is suspended in it.

Your Wickedness makes you as it were heavy as Lead, and to tend downwards with great Weight and Pressure towards Hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend &

plunge into the bottomless Gulf, and your healthy Constitution, and your own Care and Prudence, and best Contrivance, and all your Righteousness, would have no more Influence to uphold you and keep you out of Hell, than a Spider's Web would have to stop a falling Rock. Were it not that so is the sovereign Pleasure of God, the Earth would not bear you one Moment; for you are a Burden to it; the Creation groans with you; the Creation is made Subject to the Bondage of your Corruption, not willingly; the Sun don't willingly shine upon you to give you Light to serve Sin and Satan; the Earth don't willingly yield her Increase to satisfy your Lusts; nor is it willingly a Stage for your Wickedness to be acted upon; the Air don't willing serve you for Breath to maintain the Flame of Life in your Vitals, while you spend your Life in the Service of God's Enemies. God's Creatures are Good, and were made for Men to serve God with, and don't willingly subserve to any other Purpose, and groan when they are abused to Purposes so directly contrary to their Nature and End. And the World would spue you out, were it not for the sovereign Hand of him who hath subjected it in Hope. There are the black Clouds of God's Wrath now hanging directly over your Heads, full of the dreadful Storm, and big with Thunder; and were it not for the restraining Hand of God it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign Pleasure of God for the present stays his rough Wind; otherwise it would come with Fury, and your Destruction would come like a Whirlwind, and you would be like the Chaff of the Summer threshing Floor.

The Wrath of God is like great Waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, & rise higher and higher, till an Outlet is

given, and the longer the Stream is stop'd, the more rapid and mighty is it's Course, when once it is let loose. 'Tis true, that Judgment against your evil Works has not been executed hitherto; the Floods of God's Vengeance have been with-held; but your Guilt in the mean Time is constantly increasing, and you are every Day treasuring up more Wrath; the Waters are continually rising an waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the meer 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 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.

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 meer 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.

Thus are all you that are never passed under the great Change of Heart, by the mighty Power of the SPIRIT of GOD upon your Souls; all 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, (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 House of God, and may be strict in it,) you are thus in the Hands of an angry God; 'tis nothing but his meer Pleasure that keeps you from being this Moment swallowed up in everlasting Destruction.

However unconvinced you may now be of the Truth of what you hear, by & by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like Circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for Destruction came suddenly upon most of them, when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, *Peace and Safety:* Now they see, that those Things that they depend on for Peace and Safety, were nothing but thin Air and empty Shadows.

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 so abominable in his Eyes as the most hateful venomous Serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn Rebel did his Prince: and yet 'tis nothing but his Hand that holds you from falling into the Fire every Moment: 'Tis to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to Hell the last Night; that you was suffer'd 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 han't 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 sol-

emn Worship: Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a Reason why you don't this very Moment drop down into Hell.

O Sinner! Consider the fearful Danger you are in: 'Tis 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 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.

And consider here more particularly several Things concerning that Wrath that you are in such Danger of.

1. *Whose* Wrath it is. It is the Wrath of the infinite GOD. If it were only the Wrath of Man, tho' it were of the most potent Prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The Wrath of Kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute Monarchs, that have the Possessions and Lives of their Subjects wholly in their Power, to be disposed of at their meer Will. Prov. 20. 2. *The Fear of a King is as the Roaring of a Lion: whoso provoketh him to Anger, sinneth against his own Soul.* The Subject that very much enrages an arbitrary Prince, is liable to suffer the most extream Torments, that human Art can invent or human Power can inflict. But the greatest earthly Potentates, in their Majesty and Strength, and when cloathed in their greatest Terrors, are but feeble despicable Worms of the Dust, in Comparison of the

great and almighty Creator and King of Heaven and Earth: It is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their Fury. All the Kings of the Earth before GOD are as Grasshoppers, they are nothing and less than nothing: Both their Love and their Hatred is to be despised. The Wrath of the great King of Kings is as much more terrible than their's, as his Majesty is greater. Luke 12. 4,5. *And I say unto you my Friends, be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do: But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him, which after he hath killed, hath Power to cast into Hell; yea I say unto you, fear him.*

2. 'Tis the *Fierceness* of his Wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the *Fury* of God; as in Isai. 59. 18. *According to their Deeds, accordingly he will repay Fury to his Adversaries.* So Isai. 66. 15. *For behold, the Lord will come with Fire, and with Chariots like a Whirlwind, to render his Anger with Fury, and his Rebukes with Flames of Fire.* And so in many other Places. So we read of God's *Fierceness.* Rev. 19. 15. There we read of *the Winepress of the Fierceness and Wrath of Almighty God.* The Words are exceeding terrible: if it had only been said, *the Wrath of God,* the Words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: But 'tis not only said so, but *the Fierceness and Wrath of God:* the Fury of God! the Fierceness of Jehovah! Oh how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such Expressions carry in them! But it is not only said so, but *the Fierceness and Wrath of ALMIGHTY GOD.* As tho' there would be a very great Manifestation of his almighty Power, in what the fierceness of his Wrath should inflict, as tho' Omnipotence should be as it were enraged, and excited, as Men are wont to ex-

ert their Strength in the fierceness of their Wrath. Oh! then what will be the Consequence! What will become of the poor Worm that shall suffer it! Whose Hands can be strong? and whose Heart endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable Depth of Misery must the poor Creature be sunk, who shall be the Subject of this!

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 beholds the ineffable Extremity of your Case, and sees your Torment to be so vastly disproportion'd to your Strength, and sees how your poor Soul is crushed and sinks down, as it were into an infinite Gloom, he will have no Compassion upon you, he will not forbear the Executions of his Wrath, or in the least lighten his Hand; there shall be no Moderation or Mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough Wind; he will have no Regard to your Welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much, in any other Sense than only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict Justice requires: nothing shall be with-held, because it's so hard for you to bear. Ezek. 8. 18. *Therefore will I also deal in Fury; mine Eye shall not spare, neither will I have Pity; and tho' they cry in mine Ears with a loud Voice, yet I will not hear them.* Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a Day of Mercy; you may cry now with some Encouragement of obtaining Mercy: but when once the Day of Mercy is past, your most lamentable and dolorous Cries and Shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God as to any Regard to your Welfare; God will have no other Use to put you to but only to suffer Misery;

you shall be continued in Being to no other End; for you will be a Vessel of Wrath fitted to Destruction; and there will be no other Use of this Vessel but only to be filled full of Wrath: God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that 'tis said he will only *Laugh and Mock*, Prov. 1. 25, 26, &c.

How awful are those Words, Isai. 63. 3. Which are the Words of the great God, *I will tread them in mine Anger, and will trample them in my Fury, and their Blood shall be sprinkled upon my Garments, and I will stain all my Raiment.* 'Tis perhaps impossible to conceive of Words that carry in them greater Manifestations of these three Things, *viz.* Contempt, and Hatred, and fierceness of Indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful Case, or shewing you the least Regard or Favour, that instead of that he'll only tread you under Foot: And tho' he will know that you can't bear the Weight of Omnipotence treading upon you, yet he won't regard that, but he will crush you under his Feet without Mercy; he'll crush out your Blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his Garments, so as to stain all his Raiment. 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.

3. The Misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict to that End, that he might *shew* what that *Wrath* of JEHOVAH is. God hath had it on his Heart to shew to Angels and Men, both how excellent his Love is, and also how terrible his Wrath is. Sometimes earthly Kings have a Mind to shew how terrible *their* Wrath is, by the extream Punishments they would execute on those that provoke 'em. *Nebuchadnezzar*, that mighty and

haughty Monarch of the *Chaldean* Empire, was willing to shew *his* Wrath, when enraged with *Shadrach, Meshech,* and *Abednego*; and accordingly gave Order that the burning fiery Furnace should be hot seven Times hotter than it was before; doubtless it was raised to the utmost Degree of Fierceness that humane Art could raise it: But the great GOD is also willing to shew *his Wrath*, and magnify his awful Majesty and mighty Power in the extream Sufferings of his Enemies. Rom. 9. 22. *What if God willing to shew HIS Wrath, and to make his Power known, endured with much Long-suffering the Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction?* And seeing this is his Design, and what he has determined, to shew how terrible the unmixed, unrestrained Wrath, the Fury and Fierceness of JEHOVAH is, he will do it to Effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass, that will be dreadful with a Witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful Vengeance on the poor Sinner; and the Wretch is actually suffering the infinite Weight and Power of his Indignation, then will God call upon the whole Universe to behold that awful Majesty, and mighty Power that is to be seen in it. Isai. 33. 12, 13, 14. *And the People shall be as the burning of Lime, as Thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the Fire. Hear ye that are far off what I have done; and ye that are near acknowledge my Might. The Sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the Hypocrites &c.*

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted State, if you continue in it; the infinite Might, and Majesty and Terribleness of the OMNIPOTENT GOD shall be magnified upon you, in the ineffable Strength of your Torments: You shall be tormented in the Presence of the holy Angels,

and in the Presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this State of Suffering, the glorious Inhabitants of Heaven shall go forth and look on the awful Spectacle, that they may see what the Wrath and Fierceness of the Almighty is, and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great Power and Majesty. Isai. *66. 23, 24. And it shall come to pass, that from one new Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all Flesh come to Worship before me, saith the Lord; and they shall go forth and look upon the Carcasses of the Men that have transgressed against me; for their Worm shall not die, neither shall their Fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all Flesh.*

4. 'Tis *everlasting* Wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this Fierceness and Wrath of Almighty God one Moment; but you must suffer it to all Eternity: there will be no End to this exquisite horrible Misery: When you look forward, you shall see a long Forever, a boundless Duration before you, which will swallow up your Thoughts, and amaze your Soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any Deliverance, any End, any Mitigation, any Rest at all; you will know certainly that you must wear out long Ages, Millions of Millions of Ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless Vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many Ages have actually been spent by you in this Manner, you will know that all is but a Point to what remains. So that our Punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh who can express what the State of a Soul in such Circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble faint Representation of it; 'tis inexpressible and inconceivable: for *who knows the Power of God's Anger?*

How dreadful is the State of those that are daily and hourly in 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 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 Seat 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, 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 not be in Hell in a very short Time, before this Year is out. And it would be no Wonder if some Person that now sits here in some Seat at this Meeting-House in Health, and quiet & secure, should be there before to morrow Morning. Those of you that finally continue in a natural Condition, that shall keep out of Hell longest, will be there in a little Time! your Damnation don't slumber; it will come swiftly, and in all probability very suddenly upon many of you. You

have Reason to wonder, that you are not already in Hell. 'Tis doubtless the Case of some that heretofore you have seen and known, that never deserved Hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you: Their Case is past all Hope; they are crying in extream Misery and perfect Despair; 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 such Opportunity as you now enjoy!

And now you have an extraordinary Opportunity, a Day wherein CHRIST has flung the Door of Mercy wide open, and stands in the Door calling and crying with a loud Voice to poor Sinners; a Day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the Kingdom of God; many are daily coming from the East, West, North and South; many that were very lately in the same miserable Condition that you are in, are in now an happy State, with their Hearts filled with Love to Him that has loved them and washed them for their Sins in his own Blood, and rejoycing in Hope of the Glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a Day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoycing and singing for Joy of Heart, while you have Cause to mourn for Sorrow of Heart, and howl for Vexation of Spirit! How can you rest one Moment in such a Condition? Are not your Souls as precious as the Souls of the People at **Suffield*, where they are flocking from Day to Day to Christ?

Are there not many here that have lived *long* in the World, that are not to this Day born again, and so are Aliens from the Common-wealth of Israel, and

* The next neighbour Town.

have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up Wrath against the Day of Wrath? Oh Sirs, your Case in an especial Manner is extreamly dangerous; your Guilt and Hardness of Heart is extreamly great. Don't you see how generally Persons of your Years are pass'd over and left, in the present remarkable & wonderful Dispensation of God's Mercy? You had need to consider your selves, and wake throughly out of Sleep; you cannot bear the Fierceness and Wrath of the infinite GOD.

And you that are *young Men*, and *young Women*, will you neglect this precious Season that you now enjoy, when so many others of your Age are renouncing all youthful Vanities, and flocking to CHRIST? You especially have now an extraordinary Opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as it is with those Persons that spent away all the precious Days of Youth in Sin, and are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness.

And you *Children* that are unconverted, don't you know that you are going down to Hell, to bear the dreadful Wrath of that God that is now angry with you every Day, and every Night? Will you be content to be the Children of the Devil, when so many other Children in the Land are converted, and are become the holy and happy Children of the King of Kings?

And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the Pit of Hell, whether they be old Men and Women, or middle Aged, or young People, or little Children, now hearken to the loud Calls of God's Word and Providence. This acceptable Year of the LORD, that is a Day of such great Favour to some, will doubtless be a Day of as remarkable Vengeance to others. Men's Hearts harden, and their

Guilt increases apace at such a Day as this, if they neglect their Souls: and never was there so great Danger of such Persons being given up to hardness of Heart, and blindness of Mind. God seems now to be hastily gathering in his Elect in all Parts of the Land; and probably the bigger Part of adult Persons that ever shall be saved, will be brought in now in a little Time, and that it will be as it was on that great out-pouring of the SPIRIT upon the *Jews* in the Apostles Days, the Election will obtain, and the rest will be blinded. If this should be the Case with you, you will eternally curse this Day, and will curse the Day that ever you was born, to see such a Season of the pouring out of God's Spirit; and will wish that you had died and gone to Hell before you had seen it. Now undoubtedly it is, as it was in the Days of *John the Baptist*, the Ax is in an extraordinary Manner laid at the Root of the Trees, that every Tree that brings not forth good Fruit, may be hewen down, and cast into the Fire.

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 great 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, least you be consumed.*

FINIS.

JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703-1758), colonial America's greatest thinker, theologian of the first order, and congregational clergyman, was born in Northampton, Massachusetts. Not quite 13, Jonathan Edwards entered Yale in 1716, graduated four years later, and continued his study of theology until he received a call to a Presbyterian church in New York in 1722. Two years later, Edwards was appointed as tutor at Yale, but poor health forced him to resign from his position there. In 1726, he returned to his place of birth to become an assistant to his grandfather Solomon Stoddard. Edwards married Sarah Pierpont in 1727 and after Stoddard's death in 1729 became teacher at his Northampton congregation.

Among Edwards' published works of the period is the tract *God Glorified in the Work of Redemption by the Greatness of Man's Dependence* (1731). As if to rekindle the Preparationist debate of a century earlier, Edwards tried to undo what his maternal grandfather Solomon Stoddard had long established as a received practice in the Connecticut Valley: church membership based on "moral uprightness" rather than conversion process and test of faith. *God Glorified* stresses man's passivity in the process of regeneration, the certainty of which could only be measured in spiritual joy arising from the soul's overwhelming attraction to God's holiness and beauty. His sermons during the 1730s stressed the process of regeneration and struck a responsive cord among his parishioners, many of whom spontaneously assembled in prayer meetings. These early stirrings of the Great Awakening were intensified by Edwards' famous sermon *A Divine and Supernatural Light, Immediately Imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God* (1734). Through a fascinating process of canceling out his opponents' positions, Edwards clearly defines the workings of God's grace in the hu-

man soul. He distinguishes between "Common Grace" (intrinsic to virtually all unregenerate), which acts *upon* the mind of natural man and assists the faculties of the soul in their natural course; and "Special Grace" (intrinsic to true saints only), which acts *in* the human heart and unites with the mind of the saint as a new supernatural principle of life and action that restores human faculties to their proper place. God's spiritual light therefore does *not* consist of making impressions on the Imagination nor does it teach any new dogmas; it only gives a due apprehension of God's beauty. Hence a saint with indwelling grace does not merely believe rationally that God is glorious, but has a due sense of God's glory in his own heart. Whereas the head can merely sustain a speculative or notional knowledge of beauty, the heart delights in the idea of it, and the will prompted by the affections for the highest good embraces the virtuous act. In Edwards' illustration, the unregenerate can rationally attain a sense of God's beauty, but only the sanctified can attain full conviction and immediate evidence of God's grace: one can have a rational sense of the sweetness of honey, but the true sense of its taste can only be attained through experience. Edwards' distinction is echoed in what Samuel Taylor Coleridge would call primary and secondary beauty.

The surprising awakenings of 1730s brought large numbers of new members to the communion table. Edwards describes the events in his *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737), which helped pave the way for George Whitefield's revival, the Great Awakening of 1740-1745. In 1739 Edwards preached a long series of sermons on redemption, laying the foundation for his posthumous publication *A History of the Work of Redemption* (Edinburgh, 1774). This millenarian work outlines God's providentialism in the history of the church from Old Testament times to the Second Coming. Edwards' preaching of the redemption cycle contributed to massive awakenings and so drew biting criticism from

his Old Light colleagues. In his *Distinguishing Marks of the Work of the Spirit of God* (1741), *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England* (1743), and his *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746), Edwards defends the Awakening against those who objected that these mass conversions were little more than enthusiasm—dangerous delusions of the senses—rather than a true outpouring of God's grace. Among Edwards' millenarian works is his *Humble Attempt to Promote Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion* (1747)—a concerted effort between Edwards and his Scottish colleagues William McCulloch and John Erskine to unite all Christians the world over to usher in the Second Coming.

If Edwards' fervent belief in the imminence of the millennium governed the writing of *An Humble Attempt*, his *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746) tried to combat the inroads of Arminianism in New England. Several earlier defections from the orthodox cause, including that of Timothy Cutler, president of Yale, and of members of Edwards' own family, called for an all-out attack on Jacob Arminius. In many respects, Solomon Stoddard, had inadvertently contributed to the rise of Arminianism in Northampton. In further relaxing the Half-Way Covenant (1662), which admitted to the Lord's Supper the unconverted offspring of full members, Stoddard had seemingly flung open the church doors for anyone willing to abide by his minimalist principles of sincere moral conduct. Thus he had reduced the Lord's Supper to little more than a means of regeneration, where it had once stood as as a seal of God's covenant and symbol of His union with all true saints. Hence Edwards' *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746) and his later opus *Freedom of the Will* (1754) tried to undo his grandfather's liberal admissions policy by distinguished between the true and saving principles of religious affections, and mere enthusiasm or feelings of momentary elevation. His subsequent *Account of*

*the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd* (1749) in a sense is an elucidation of these principles embedded in the exemplary history of a true saint.

Because of the divisiveness of the Great Awakening coupled with his return to admission tests, Edwards faced considerable resistance from a congregation long used to Stoddard's open-door policy. When the struggle for supremacy came to a climax, Edwards was summarily dismissed from his Northampton pulpit in 1750. His *Farewell Sermon* (1750) is a testimony to his convictions and a reprimand of his three principal opponents whose namesakes (Peter, John, and James) were similarly reproached by Christ for their spiritual sleep. Ousted from his pulpit, Edwards moved to the hamlet of Stockbridge (1751), an Indian mission in western Massachusetts. In 1757, he was offered the presidency of Princeton, vacated by the sudden death of Aaron Burr, Edwards' son-in-law. Edwards assumed his duties at Princeton, in January of 1758. Within three months, he died of a botched smallpox inoculation. His wife, Esther, met with a similar fate in October of the same year.

During his time in Stockbridge, Edwards wrote two of his greatest philosophical works against the spread of Arminianism, demonstrating the adaptability of Calvinism to the needs of a new age: *Freedom of the Will* (1754) and *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* (1758). Both works employ Ramist logic in the context of Lockean faculty psychology to demonstrate that the faculty of human will is not totally free but conditioned by existing inclinations or circumstances. Prelapsarian Adam, according to Jonathan Edwards, was endowed with the two principles: Self-Love and Disinterested Benevolence. Together they maintained Adam's freedom to choose the highest Good. Yet when Adam deliberately resisted the divine injunction, God removed the principle of benevolence and so the balancing element in Adam's nature. Henceforth principally controlled by self-love, Adam's faculty of volition was gov-

erned by his fall from grace. Forever after, his memory, imagination, understanding, affection, and volition, were incapable of loving God unconditionally. Ruled by self-love, Adam's affections necessarily inclined toward inferior ends, and his will and actions were thus determined by his inability to choose absolute Good. Through imputation of Adam's sin in his offspring, choice and culpability were thus conditioned by human inclination toward selfish ends. In singling out the Episcopalian John Taylor, Edwards argued that his Arminian colleague failed to realize that man's a priori condition inevitable limited his choices to the parameters of his fallen nature. Free will was therefore an illusion. Edwards' posthumous work *Nature of True Virtue* (1765) can be seen as an amplification of his *Divine and Supernatural Light* (1734) and as his final word on Arminianism. True love of God and union with the deity can only be achieved through grace.

The work reprinted here (courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society) is a representative examples of Edwards' incisive logic employed in the work of salvation: his famous Enfield sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741), which awakened many of his hearers to the danger of their unregenerate condition.

Reiner Smolenski
Georgia State University

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