

Excerpts from “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”

Jonathan Edwards

Paragraph 18

All wicked Men's *Pains* and *Contrivance* which 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.

Paragraph 19

But the foolish Children of Men miserably delude themselves in their own Schemes, and in Confidence in their own Strength and Wisdom; they trust to nothing but a Shadow. The bigger Part of those who 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 who are now alive: it was not because they did not lay out Matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could speak with them, and 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 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 well for myself -- 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. Oh, my cursed Foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain Dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying, Peace and Safety, then sudden Destruction came upon me."

Paragraph 20

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.

Paragraph 21

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.

Paragraph 22

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 mere arbitrary Will, and uncovenanted, unobliged Forbearance of an incensed God.

Paragraph 23

The Use may be of *Awakening* 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, nor any Thing to take hold of; there is nothing between you and Hell but the Air; 'tis only the Power and mere Pleasure of God that holds you up.

Paragraph 24

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of Hell, but do not 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.

Paragraph 25

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 and 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 for 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 willingly 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 spew 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.

Paragraph 27

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.

Paragraph 28

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, (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 mere Pleasure that keeps you from being this Moment swallowed up in everlasting Destruction.

Paragraph 29

However unconvinced you may now be of the Truth of what you hear, by and 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 on which they depended for Peace and Safety, were nothing but thin Air and empty Shadows.

Paragraph 30

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, 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 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; that you was 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 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.

Paragraph 35

How awful are those Words, Isa. 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.*" It is 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 showing you the least Regard or Favor, that instead of that, he will only tread you under Foot. And though he will know that you cannot bear the Weight of Omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his Feet without Mercy; he will 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.

Paragraph 42

And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to Hell, to bear the dreadful Wrath of that God, who 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?

Paragraph 44

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 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.*"

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