

They are now the objects of that very *same* anger and 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

they: Earlier in the sermon, Edwards refers to all "unconverted men," whom he considers God's enemies. Unconverted men are people who have not been "born again," meaning that they have not accepted Jesus Christ and consequently have not experienced a sense of God's grace and an assurance of salvation.
this congregation: Puritans attending the church service at which Edwards spoke
natural men: people who have not been "born again"
Mediator: Jesus Christ, who mediates, or is the means of bringing about, salvation
wrath: fierce anger, or punishment resulting from such anger
whet: sharpened
provoked: angered
appease: to bring peace, quiet, or calm to; soothe
abate: reduce in amount or intensity
fain: archaic word for "happily"

doesn'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....]^{1/2}

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,]³ 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

¹In this passage, how does Edwards **personify** Hell and its fires?

²What detail does he use to **personify** God?

³Note how Edwards uses **parallelism** in these lines. How does the parallel structure build a sense of horror?

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.]⁴

[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.]⁵ 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.

⁶*[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

constitution: physical condition
contrivance: scheme; plan

⁴Define *forbearance* and *incensed*.
Paraphrase Edwards' sentence in your own words.

⁵Whom does Edwards address in his sermon? What does he hope it will accomplish?

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 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....

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given, and the longer the stream is stop'd, the more

rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. [‘Tis true, that judgment against your evil works has not been **executed**⁷ 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**⁷ more wrath;] the waters are continually rising and 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.

inconceivable: unimaginable; beyond understanding
omnipotent: all-powerful
affections: feelings
closets: rooms for prayer & mediation

⁶*Page 2-4: Identify **three famous figures of speech** that Edwards develops in the starred paragraphs on pages 2-4. Explain the figures of speech (**metaphors/similes**) in your own words.

⁷Define *executed* and *treasuring up* as used in this passage; paraphrase Edwards’ idea.

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 never passed under a 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 and by you will be fully convinced of it.]⁸

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 depended on for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.]*⁶

[The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, **abhors**⁹ 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**⁹ in his eyes as the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours.]*¹⁰ You have offended him

ascribed: regarded as coming from a certain cause
suffer'd: permitted

⁸What main point does Edwards want his listeners to understand? Who or what does he say will convince them?

⁹Define *abhors* and *abominable*. How does Edwards describe "humans in their unconverted state" in the eyes of God?

¹⁰What two creatures does Edwards compare sinners to in this passage?

¹¹Here Edwards repeats one of his **main ideas**. What is it?

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 solemn 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.]*¹¹

[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...]^{12/13}

[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

asunder: into pieces
induce: persuade; force; cause

¹²How does Edwards use **repetition** to increase the **emotional effect** of his sermon?

¹³What do you think makes this paragraph especially **persuasive**?

¹⁴According to Edwards, how will God, in his anger, participate in the punishment of those in "an unconverted state" who end up in Hell?

you in your doleful case, or showing 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....]¹⁴

[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....]¹⁵

["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.

"who knows...anger": allusion to Psalm 90:11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?"
exquisite: sharply intense
deliverance: rescue from danger
mitigation: lessening of something that causes suffering
inconceivable: not able to be understood or imagined

¹⁵Who are the spectators of God's punishment of those in an "unconverted state"? Who/What is the Lamb? What image is Edwards suggesting in this paragraph?

¹⁶What details in Edwards' description help his listeners understand the concept of eternity?

¹⁷What distinction is Edwards making in this line, "But this...otherwise be."?

So that your 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?**¹⁶

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.]¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸We 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, 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 of this meeting-house in health, and quiet and 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 doesn't slumber; it will come swiftly, and in all probability very suddenly upon many of you. You have

"many people coming": Edwards is referring to the hundreds of people who were being converted during the **Great Awakening**

¹⁸What **logical argument** does Edwards use to persuade sinners to act now rather than put off repentance?

¹⁹In this passage, Edwards presents an image of Christ standing welcomingly in an open doorway. How might this **emotional appeal** have affected his audience?

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 extreme 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!]¹⁸

¹⁹[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**]¹⁹; **[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 from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing 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 rejoicing 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?..].²⁰

Therefore let everyone 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 everyone fly out of ***Sodom: Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.***

Sodom: in the Bible, a city so wicked that God destroyed it, sparing only one man, Lot, and his family
"Haste and escape...": from Genesis 19:17, the words spoken by an angel of God to Lot, warning him to flee Sodom and never look back

²⁰What comparison does Edwards make between those who have accepted Christ's love and those who have not?

21: Describe (listing details of) Edwards' description of Hell.

22: Describe (listing details of) Edwards' description of God.