

fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (*Luke 12:4,5*).

THE FIERCENESS OF GOD'S WRATH

It is the **fierceness of God's wrath** that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God—"According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries" (*Isaiah 59:18*); "For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire" (*Isaiah 66:15*). And so also in many other places. Thus we read of "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (*Rev 19:15*). The words are exceedingly terrible. If it had only said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is unspeakably dreadful; but it says, "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 expressions carry in them? It is "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." As though there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict; as though Omnipotence should be, as it were, enraged and exerted, as men are wont to exert 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 can endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk, who shall be the subject of this!

GOD WILL HAVE NO PITY UPON THE SINNER

Consider this, you 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 disproportioned 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 in the execution 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 withheld because it is too hard for you to bear. "Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (*Ezek 8:18*).

Now, God stands ready to pity you; this is the day of mercy; you may now cry with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is passed, your most lamentable 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 for you, but to suffer misery. For you will be a "vessel of wrath fitted to destruction" (*Rom 9:22*); and there will be no other use for this vessel, but only to be filled with wrath.

God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only "laugh and mock." "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof" (*Prov 1:24-30*).

How awful are those words of the great God. "I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment" (*Isaiah 63:3*). It is, perhaps, impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, namely, contempt, 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 show-

ing 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 it, 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 (*Psalms 5:5; 11:5*), 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.

THE MISERY THE SINNER IS EXPOSED TO

The misery you are exposed to is that which Jehovah will inflict, to the end that he might show what his wrath is. God hath had it on his heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent his love is, and also how terrible his wrath is.

Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that provoked them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to show his wrath, when enraged with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and accordingly gave order that the burning fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it.

But the great God is also willing to show his wrath, and magnify his awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme suffering of his enemies. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (*Rom 9:22*). And seeing this is his design, and what he has determined, even to show how terrible the unmixed, unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it. Something will be accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadfully witnessed.

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 the awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime; as thorns cut up shall they be burned 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 surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (*Isaiah 33:12-14*).

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terrible-ness 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 his great power and majesty. "And it shall come to pass...that all flesh shall 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" (*Isaiah 66:23,24*).

THE WRATH OF GOD IS EVERLASTING

It is **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 souls; 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 and millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when many

ages have actually been spent on you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh what can express the state of a soul in such circumstances! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable—"Who knoweth the power of God's anger?" (*Psalm 90:11*).

The wrath of God is like great waters that are restrained for the present; but 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 hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; and nothing but the mere pleasure of God 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.

How dreadful is the state of those who are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul 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 fear that there are many who are hearing this message, or have heard the gospel time and again, who will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, 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, of those that we know, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing it would be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might every Christian lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But alas! Instead of one, how many is it likely will remember these solemn reflections in hell! And some may be in hell in a very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some of you, who are now in health, and quiet and secure, may be there before the sun rises tomorrow.

LAY HOLD OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO ESCAPE

Those of you who finally continue in a natural condition who may keep out of hell the longest, will be there in a little time! Your damnation does not 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. It is doubtless the case of some whom 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 "torments" and extreme misery and perfect despair (*Luke 16:23,24*); but here you are in the land of the living, blessed with God's word, 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?

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 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 have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

But you now have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands calling, and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (*John 7:37*); 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 now in a happy state with their hearts filled with love to him who 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 and 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 to howl for vexation of spirit. How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Is not your soul as precious as the souls of those who are flocking from day to day to Christ?

Let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of great mercy 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. Never was there a period when so many means were employed for the salvation of souls, and if you entirely neglect them, you will eternally curse the day of your birth. Now, undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is laid to the root of the trees, and every tree which brings not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire (*Matt 3:10*). Therefore let every unsaved soul now awake and "escape for your lives," and "flee from the wrath to come" (*Gen 19:17; Matt 3:7*). □

—A sermon by Jonathan Edwards
Enfield, Connecticut, July 8, 1741

THE WRATH OF GOD

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"—Rom 2:5

THE WRATH OF AN INFINITE GOD

Sinners who refuse to heed God's call to come to the Lord Jesus Christ are treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath! And what a day that will be! This wrath of which the Bible speaks clearly is **the wrath of an infinite God**. If it were only the wrath of man, though 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, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion; whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul" (*Prov 20:2*). The subject who very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict.

But the greatest earthly potentates, in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison with 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 (*Isaiah 40:15,17,22,23*); both their love and their hatred are to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater. "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 you shall