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AWE-INSPIRING SERMON Lessons from the Recent Earthquake by Samuel Davies (1756) - posted by ArthurRosh, on: 2

Lessons from the Recent Earthquake by Samuel Davies.

Preached in Hanover county, Virginia, June 19, 1756.

(Note: In this sermon, Davies is referring to the Great Lisbon Earthquake which took place on November 1, 1755. Contemporary reports state that the earthquake lasted nearly six minutes, causing gigantic fissures 15 feet wide. Approximately forty minutes after the earthquake, an enormous tsunami engulfed the harbor and downtown. It was followed by two more waves. In the areas unaffected by the tsunami, fire quickly broke out, and flames raged for five days! Tsunamis as tall as 66 feet swept the coast of North Africa, and struck Martinique and Barbados across the Atlantic.)

"Those who flee in terror will fall into a trap, and those who escape the trap will step into a snare. Destruction falls on you from the heavens. The earth is shaken beneath you. The earth has broken down and has utterly collapsed. Everything is lost, abandoned, and confused. The earth staggers like a drunkard. It trembles like a tent in a storm. It falls and will not rise again, for its sins are very great!" Isaiah 24:18-20

The works of Creation and Providence were undoubtedly intended for the notice and contemplation of mankind, especially when God comes out of his place, that is, departs from the usual and stated course of his providence— to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities; then it befits us to observe the operation of his hands with fear and reverence. To this the Psalmist repeatedly calls us: "Come, see the glorious works of the LORD: See how he brings destruction upon the earth!" Psalm 46:8. "Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf!" Psalm 66:5. To assist you in this, I shall cheerfully devote an hour today.

This world is a state of discipline for the eternal world; and therefore, chastisements of various kinds and degrees are to be enumerated among the ordinary works of Providence. Pain, sickness, losses, bereavements, disappointments; these are the usual scourges of the divine hand, which our heavenly father uses every day, to chastise some or other of his wayward children. But when these are found too weak and ineffectual for their reformation; or when, from their being so frequent and common, that people begin to think them things of course, and not to acknowledge the divine hand in them; then the universal Ruler departs from his usual methods of chastisements, and uses such signal and extraordinary executioners of his vengeance, as cannot but rouse a slumbering world, and render it sensible of his agency.

At such times, God throws his world into a ferment; and either controls its established laws, or carries such into execution, as were formed only for extraordinary occasions. The extraordinary executioners of his vengeance, are generally these four:

1. Famine
2. Sword
3. Pestilence
4. Earthquakes

A FAMINE in this land of plenty, would be an unusual judgment indeed; and yet sundry parts of our country have been reduced to the borders of it, by the severity of last year's drought.

The SWORD has been a harmless weapon to us, until of late; but now it is brandished over our heads, and pierces our country in a thousand veins.

The PESTILENCE is a mischief that has not spread desolation among us; though there is not perhaps one year, in which it is not walking through some country or other upon our globe.

As for EARTHQUAKES, we have had such shakes, as may convince us, that we are not beyond the reach of that desolating judgment, even on this solid continent; though they have not as yet done us any injury. But perhaps there never was, since the earthquake at the deluge, that broke up the fountains of the great deep, so extensive a desolation of this kind— as has lately happened in Europe and Africa. And though, blessed be God, it did not immediately affect us; yet the very fame of so dreadful a judgment ought to be improved for our advantage.

To this event I may accommodate the words of my text, "The earth is shaken beneath you. The earth has broken down and has utterly collapsed. Everything is lost, abandoned, and confused. The earth staggers like a drunkard. It trembles like a tent in a storm!" And the reason of all is, "For its sins are very great!"

Such of you as have read the public papers, need not be informed of that wide-spreading earthquake, which began on the first of November, and has since been felt at different times, through most parts of Europe. For the sake of those that have only had some imperfect hints of it, I would give you this short history:

The city of Lisbon, Portugal, is now no more! Its vast riches, and by all accounts, between fifty and a hundred thousand people, have been buried or burnt in its ruins! Sundry other towns in Portugal, Spain, and along the European coasts of the Mediterranean, have been damaged, overthrown, or sunk, like Sodom and Gomorrah. The earthquake also extended across that sea, and has ruined a great part of Africa, particularly in the empire of Morocco, where the large and populous cities have been demolished, with many thousands of the inhabitants. It has likewise been felt in sundry parts of Italy, Germany, France, Bohemia, and even in Great Britain and Ireland. Nay, the tremor has reached our continent; and has been very sensibly felt in Boston and other parts of New England.

Though much harm has not been done in those parts—yet a loud warning has been given; and oh! that it may not be given in vain. It would certainly be an instance of inexcusable stupidity, for us to take no notice of so dreadful a dispensation. Such devastations are at once, judgments upon the places where they happen, and warnings to others.

For what end were the Israelites punished with so many miraculous judgments? Paul will tell you, it was not only for their sins—but "all these things happened to them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Corinthians 10:11.

For what end were the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah turned into ashes? Peter will tell you: God "made them an example unto those who should after live ungodly." 2 Peter 2:6.

And shall not we regard such examples, even in our own age? Shall others perish for our admonition? and shall we receive no profit by their destruction? This would be stupid and inexcusable indeed. Therefore my present design is, to direct you to such meditations as this alarming event naturally suggests; and which may be sufficient to the right improvement of it.

But before I enter upon this design, I would once more inculcate upon you a doctrine, which I have often proved in your hearing; and that is: that this world is a little territory of Jehovah's government, and under the management of his providence. And particularly, that all the blessings of life are the gifts of his bounty; and all its calamities are the chastisements or judgments of his hand. This I would have you to apply to the event now under consideration.

It is the providence of God that has impregnated the bowels of the earth with these dreadful materials, that tear and shatter its frame. It is his providence which strikes the spark, which sets this dreadful train in a flame, and causes the terrible explosion!

There is a set of conceited, smattering philosophers risen among us, who think they disprove all this, by alleging that earthquakes proceed from natural causes; and therefore, it is superstitious to ascribe them to the agency of Providence. But there is no more reason or philosophy in this, than if they should deny that a man writes, because he makes use of a pen; or that kings exercise government, because they employ servants under them. I grant, that natural causes concur toward the production of earthquakes: but what are these natural causes? Are they independent, self-moved causes? No! they were first formed, and are still directed, by the Divine hand. The shortest and plainest view I can give of the case is this:

When God formed this globe, he saw what would be the conduct of its inhabitants, in all the periods of time; and particularly, he knew at what particular time a kingdom or city would be ripe for his judgments; and he adjusted matters accordingly. He set the train of events with so much exactness, that it will spring just in the critical moment, when everything is ripe for it. And thus, by a preconcerted plan, he answers all the occasional exigencies of the world, and suits himself to particular cases, without a miraculous and direct working of his own hand.

Or, perhaps, he may sometimes think it necessary to work with his own immediate hand, and to suspend or counteract the usual and stated laws of creation, that his interference may be more conspicuous. Let this truth, then, my friends, be I

aid deep in your minds, as a foundation: that earthquakes are the effects of divine Providence, and produced to answer some of its important ends in the world. And hence I naturally proceed, according to promise, to direct you to such meditations as are suitable to this shocking event.

Now you may hence take occasion to reflect upon:
the majesty and power of God;
the dreadfulness of God's anger;
the sinfulness of our world;
the distinguishing kindness of Providence towards us;
the destruction of this globe at the final judgment.

First, Let the majestic and terrible phenomenon of earthquakes put you in mind of the majesty and power of God, and the dreadfulness of his displeasure. He can toss and convulse this huge globe, and shake its foundations down to the center! Trembling continents, burning or sinking mountains, wide-yawning gulfs in solid ground, explosions of subterranean mines sufficient to shiver a world, are but hints of his indignation. But my language does but sink this exalted subject; I shall therefore give you the inimitable descriptions of the sacred writers.

"His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed? He moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in his anger. He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble. He speaks to the sun and it does not shine; he seals off the light of the stars. He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted." Job 9:4-10

"For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the lowest hell. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap calamities upon them and spend my arrows against them!" Deuteronomy 32:22-23

But the most striking and lively description, methinks, which the language of inspiration itself has given us, is in the prophecy of Nahum, "The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it. Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him!" Nahum 1:2-6

And is this the Being who is so little thought of in our world? Is this he—
whose Name passes for the lightest trifle,
whose Word can hardly engage men's attention,
whose Authority is ridiculed,
whose Wrath is scorned,
whose Laws are audaciously violated,
whose Threatenings are despised!

Is this he, who is complimented with empty, spiritless formalities, under the name of religion! Oh! is this he, whom we are met this day to worship! What! and shall there be no more attention and solemnity among us? Can anything be more unnatural, more impious, or more shocking! Indeed, sirs, it strikes me with horror to think how contemptuously this glorious, almighty, and awesome God is treated in our world. Angels do not treat him so; nay, even devils, in the height of their malice, dare not thus trifle with him— they tremble at his very name. Oh! "Why does the wicked man revile God? Why does he say to himself-He won't call me to account"? Psalm 10:13.

See here is your antagonist: "His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?" Job 9:4. This earth is as nothing in his hands. "Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust!" Isaiah 40:15. He who can shake this huge globe to the center; he who can bury proud cities, with all their inhabitants, in the bowels of the earth; he who can toss the ocean into a ferment, and cause it to overwhelm the guilty land; he who can hurl the tallest mountains from their everlasting foundations into the sea, or sink them into the valleys, or pools of water; he who has stored the bowels of the earth, as with magazines of gunpowder, and can set it all in blaze, or burst it into ten thousand fragments; he who can arm the tinies

t creature, a gnat or a worm, to be your executioner, and has an absolute power over the most mighty and ungovernable elements: oh! what will he make of you, when he takes you in hand!

Can you rest easy one moment, while you have reason to fear that the supreme Lord of the universe is your enemy Â— for your willful provocations! In his name (in his glorious and fearful name has any weight with you) I charge you to seek his favor; make him your friend, and dare to rebel against him no more! Dare you continue a rebel against him, or care less about pleasing him Â—

while you walk on his ground,
while you breathe in his air,
while you feed upon his provisions,
while you live in his territories, and within the reach of his arm!

Why, he can make that earth you pollute with your sins Â— open its dreadful jaws and swallow you up alive, like Korah and his company. Numbers 16:32.

Oh! my friends, it may break our hearts to think there should be any people so mad as to incur his displeasure, and be careless about his favor. But, alas! are there not some such among us? Well; they will soon find that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" unless they speedily repent. Hebrews 10:31

Secondly, This desolating judgment may justly lead you to reflect upon the sinfulness of our world. Alas! we live upon a guilty globe; and much has it suffered for the sins of its inhabitants. Once it was all drowned in an universal deluge; and many parts of it have since sunk under the load of guilt. If sin had never defiled it Â— then it would never have been thus torn and shattered. We have seen that these judgments are at the disposal of Divine Providence: and we are sure, a righteous Providence would never inflict them needlessly. It is SIN, my friends, which is the source of all the calamities that oppress our world from age to age! It is sin which has so often convulsed it with earthquakes!

Do but observe the language of my text on this head, "The earth is shaken beneath you. The earth has broken down and has utterly collapsed. Everything is lost, abandoned, and confused. The earth staggers like a drunkard. It trembles like a tent in a storm. It falls and will not rise again, for its sins are very great!" This, sirs, this, is the burden under which it totters; this is the evil, at which it trembles; this is a load, which men, which the earth itself, nay, which angels, and the whole creation, cannot bear up under!

Why was the old world destroyed by a deluge? It was because all flesh had corrupted their way: "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." Genesis 6:5.

Why was Sodom consumed with lightning from heaven, and sunk into a dead sea by an earthquake? It was because "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Genesis 13:13.

In short, SIN is the cause of all the calamities under which our world has groaned, from the fall of Adam to this day. Heaven has been testifying its displeasure against the sins of men by the most terrible judgments, from age to age, for nearly six thousand years. The destruction of one nation Â— is intended not only for their punishment Â— but for a warning to others, that they may "hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again." Deuteronomy 13:11

But men will still obstinately persist, unalarmed by the loudest warnings, and unreformed by the severest chastisements. Let the sword of war slay its thousands; let the pestilence walk about in all its desolating terrors; let the earth shake and tremble under its guilty inhabitants; let these judgments be repeated from generation to generation, from country to country Â— and still they will sin on; and the chastisements of six thousand years have not been able to reform them.

Oh! what a rebellious province of Jehovah's empire, is this guilty globe! And probably it has been seldom more so, than in the present age; and therefore it is no wonder that the judgments of God are in the earth. The greatest part of it is over-run with all the idolatry and ignorance, vice and barbarity of heathenism. A great part of it worships the impostor Mahomet, instead of the Son of God, and groan under his yoke.

This is the character of the empire of Morocco, and those African territories that have been ravaged by the late earthquake. They are either superstitious heathens or deluded Mohammedans, and the knowledge of God is not to be found among them.

The greatest part of Europe is corrupted with the idolatry, superstition, and debaucheries of the church of ROME, and groans under its tyranny. There the most foolish theatrical farces are devoutly performed under the name of religion! There the freeborn mind is enslaved, and dare not think for itself in matters in which it must answer for itself. There the homage due to the true God, and the only Mediator— is sacrilegiously given to senseless idols, and a rabble of imaginary saints! There the infernal court of the inquisition imitates the tortures of hell, and makes the man who would discover the truth— a monument of misery! There a market for indulgences and pardons is held; and men, for a little money, may buy a license to commit the most atrocious crimes, or they make atonement for them by the penance of bodily austerities! And can pure and undefiled religion, can good morals grow and flourish in such a soil? No! Religion has degenerated into priest-craft and a mercenary superstition, and the most enormous vices and debaucheries must abound. Such, alas! was Lisbon, by universal character.

And though I would not repeat the censorious sins of the Jews, with regard to the Galileans, (Luke 13:2) nor suppose that Lisbon was more deeply guilty than all the cities upon the face of the earth; yet this I dare pronounce, that it was a very guilty spot of the globe, and that it was for this, that it was so severely punished.

If we take a survey of Protestant countries, where religion is to be found, if anywhere at all, alas! how melancholy is the prospect! The good old doctrines of the reformation, which were adapted to advance the honors of divine grace and mortify the pride of man, have been too generally abandoned; and a more easy system, agreeable to the vanity and self-flattery of depraved hearts, has been dressed up in their stead!

Nay, Christianity itself has been rejected, ridiculed, and exposed to public scorn, by the increasing club of deists; and where the Christian name and profession are retained, the life and spirit are too generally lost; and their practice is an open opposition to their professed faith. How are the ordinances of the gospel neglected or profaned? What a shocking variety of crimes are to be found everywhere, even in countries that profess to have renounced Popery for its corruptions? Drunkenness, swearing, perjury, lying, fraud, and injustice; pride, luxury, various forms of lewdness, and all manner of extravagances; and all these expressly forbidden, under the severest penalties, by that religion which they themselves profess and acknowledge to be divine!

And thus they continue, in spite of warnings and chastisements; in spite of mercies and instructions. They have sinned on, impenitent and incorrigible, for a length of many years. God is but little regarded in the world, which owes its existence and all its blessings to his power and goodness. Jesus is but little regarded, even in those countries that profess his name; and is it any wonder the earth trembles, when the iniquity thereof lies so heavy upon it? Is it not rather a wonder that it has not burst to pieces long ago, and buried its guilty inhabitants in its ruins?

Is there a supreme Ruler over the kingdoms of men— and shall he not testify his displeasure against their rebellion? Shall he always tamely submit to such contemptuous treatment? And shall he always look on, and see his government insulted, and his vengeance defied? No! At proper seasons he will come forth out of his place; he will depart from the standard course of his providence, to punish them for their iniquities. The convulsions of the earth, the inundations of the sea, and the sword of war shall at once proclaim and execute his displeasure! If our country has escaped the devastations of the earthquake, it is not owing to our innocence— but to the distinguishing mercy and patience of God! And, therefore,

Thirdly, This melancholy event may carry your minds gratefully to reflect upon the peculiar kindness of God towards our country, in that it was not involved in the same destruction.

I need not tell you that we are a guilty, obnoxious people; you may be convinced of it by more authentic evidence. The lives of the generality proclaim it aloud; the terrors of war that now surround us proclaim it; and do not your own consciences whisper the same thing? And why have we been spared? How has even this solid continent borne up under the load of guilt that burdens it? It has been owing entirely to the grace and patience of that God, who is so little regarded among us. And shall we not gratefully celebrate his praises? Shall not his goodness lead us to repentance? Shall all his kindness be thrown away upon us? Will we constrain him to pour out his judgments upon us also, at last?

Methinks I hear him expostulating over Virginia, in that compassionate language: "How shall I give you up, Virginia? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah and Zeboiim?" Cities that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. "My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows!" Hosea 11:8. Oh! must not such moving language melt us down at his feet, in the most sincere repentance, and engage us to his service for the future! Without a spirit of prophecy, I may safely pronounce, it will never be well with our country until we are brought to this. But,

Fourthly, That which I would particularly suggest to your thoughts from the devastations of the late earthquake, is the last universal destruction of our world at the final judgment. Of this, an earthquake is both a confirmation to human reason, and a lively representation.

1. It is a confirmation even to human reason, drawn from the constitution of our globe, that such a destruction is possible, and even probable, according to the course of nature. Our globe is stored with subterranean magazines of combustible materials, which need but a spark to produce a violent explosion, and rend and burst it to pieces! What huge quantities of these sulphurous and nitrous mines must there be!— when one discharge can spread a tremor over half the world, bury islands and cities, and shatter wide-extended continents! What an inexhaustible store of fire and brimstone has supplied Mount Etna, Mount Vesuvius, and other burning volcanoes, that have been belching out torrents of liquid fire for some thousands of years, and now rage as furiously as ever?

Let but the subterranean magazines, in every cave and cranny of the globe, be set in a blaze; let the central fire but break loose; let all the combustible materials near or upon the surface of the earth, be once inflamed!— turf, coal, trees, cities, houses, and all their furniture; this would produce a general conflagration, which nothing could resist.

In short, we may conjecture, from the construction of our world, that it was not intended for a perpetual existence in its present form!— but to be dissolved by the dreadful element of fire. And Revelation assures us of this universal desolation, when the heavens shall be shriveled up, like a parched scroll, and pass away with a great noise; and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, also, and the things that are therein, shall be burnt up! 2 Peter 3:10.

An earthquake is also a lively representation of the universal ruins of that day, and the horror and consternation of mankind. Let imagination form a lively idea of the destruction of Lisbon!— the ground trembling, and heaving, and roaring with subterranean thunders!— towers, palaces, and churches tottering and falling!— the flames bursting from the ruins, and setting all in a blaze!— the sea roaring, and rushing over its banks with resistless impetuosity!— the inhabitants running from place to place in wild consternation, in search of safety; or falling on their knees, and rending the air with their wild shrieks and cries!— flying to the strongest buildings for shelter!— but crushed in their ruins; or to the sea, and there swept away by the rushing waves. Walls falling upon thousands in their flight; or the earth opening her jaws, and swallowing them up. Can human imagination represent anything more shocking? In other calamities, whatever else we lose, we have still the earth to support us: but when that is gone, we are helpless indeed, and must sink into immediate destruction!

Such, my friends!— but infinitely more dreadful, will be the terrors of that last, that universal earthquake, which we shall all see:

Stars drop, rush lawless through the air, and dash one another to pieces! The sun is extinguished, and looks like a huge globe of solid darkness! The moon is turned into blood, and reflects a portentous, sanguinary light upon the earth. The clouds flash and blaze with sheets of lightning; and are rent with the horrid crash of thunder! This is echoed back by the subterranean thunders that murmur, rumble, and roar under ground.

The earth is tossed like a ball, and bursts asunder like a moldering clod! See, the yawning gulfs open! the flames bursting forth from the center; and a horrid confusion of fire and smoke rolling through the arch of heaven! See the works of nature and art perishing in one promiscuous ruin! Mountains sinking and bursting out into so many volcanoes, vomiting up seas of liquid fire! Rocks dissolving, and pouring their melted mass into the channels of the rivers! Pyramids, towers, palaces, cities, forests, and plains!— burning in one gigantic, indistinguishable blaze! The seas evaporating, and vanishing away, through the intenseness of the heat! a mixed, confused heap of sea and land! floods of water, and torrents of melted rocks! Now the earth is turned upside-down, inside-out, and reduced into one gigantic chaos!

And where, you hardy, presumptuous sinners, who can now despise the terrors of the Lord!— oh! where will you flee in this tremendous day? What shall support you when the ground on which you stand is gone? What rock or mountain shall you procure to shelter you, when rocks and mountains are sinking and disappearing, or melting away, like snow before the sun? How can you expect to escape hell!— when the earth itself is turned into a lake of fire and brimstone! Oh! how can you bear the thought of rolling and weltering there? What is now become of your lands and possessions on which you once set your hearts? Nay, where is the country, where the continent, in which you once dwelt? Alas! they are all reduced into ashes!

And is there no safety in this wreck of nature? Are all mankind involved in this general ruin? No! blessed be God, there are some who shall be safe and unhurt, while the frame of nature is dissolving around them. Those happy souls, who choose the Lord for their portion, and Jesus for their Savior, and who in this tottering world looked for a city that has foundations, firm, unshaken foundations; they shall be safe beyond the reach of this general desolation; their happiness lies secure in a "kingdom which cannot be moved" Hebrews 12:28. There is a new heaven and a new earth prepared for them!

Then, my friends, you will see the advantage of that despised, neglected thing, true religion, and the difference between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serves the Lord, and him that serves him not. Mal. 3:18. Then, those that are now so unfashionable as to make religion a serious business, will smile secure at a dissolving world. Then they will find the happy fruits of those hours they spent on their knees at the throne of grace; of those cries and tears they poured out after Jesus; of their honest struggles with sin and temptation; and in short, of a life devoted to God.

Therefore, let such of you, (for I trust there are such among you,) rejoice in the prospect of that glorious, dreadful day; and let it be more and more your serious business to prepare for it. You shall rest forever in a country that shall never be shaken with earthquakes, nor be subject to any of the calamities of this mortal state. Therefore, since this shall be your portion, do not be much disturbed with any of the judgments that may befall this land of your pilgrimage and exile. The sooner it is destroyed — the sooner you will get home to the region of eternal rest! Borrow the language of the triumphant Psalmist, "So we will not fear, even if earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!" Psalm 46:2, 3.

But, oh! where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Oh, where shall some of you, my dear people, appear in that dreadful day? I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, and am really afraid for some of you. Do you not know in your own consciences, that you are generally thoughtless and careless about the great concerns of your eternal state? Your hearts have never been thoroughly changed by divine grace; nor do you know by experience what it is to believe, to repent, and to love God with all your hearts. You do not make conscience of every duty; I mean, you neglect the worship of God, in your families, though under the strongest obligations to perform it, perhaps from your own solemn vows and promises. You indulge yourselves in some known sin or other; and if you feel some pangs of repentance, your repentance does not issue in reformation. Alas! my friends, is this the character of one soul within the hearing of my voice? Then I must tell you, that if you continue such, you will be fuel for the last universal fire! and must perish in the ruins of the world you have loved so well!

But who knows, that if you begin immediately, you may yet have time enough to work out your salvation. Therefore, now begin the work. There is no safety but in Jesus Christ. Away to him therefore; let me lay the hand of friendly violence upon you, and hurry you out of your present condition, as the angel did Lot out of Sodom. "Up, get out of this dreadful condition; for the Lord will destroy all who continue in it! Escape for your life, do not look back — escape to Jesus Christ, lest you be consumed!" Genesis 19:14-17.

I must tell you frankly, I studied this part of my discourse with an anxious heart; and I was almost discouraged from adding this exhortation to it. "For," thought I, "I have given such exhortations over and over — but they seem generally in vain. There is indeed a happy number among my hearers, who, I doubt not, have regarded the gospel preached by my lips. But, alas! as to the rest, I have been so often disappointed that I now hardly hope to succeed." These, my dear friends, are my discouragements in my retirements, when no eye sees me but God. And oh! sinners, will your future conduct prove, that there was good reason for my fears? Alas! is the ministry of the gospel, a useless institution with regard to you? Have such exhortations as these, no weight with you? Will you resist my benevolent hand — when I would stretch it forth to pluck you out of the burning!

Well, my friends, I cannot help it. If you will perish, if you are obstinately set upon it, I have only this to say — that your poor minister will weep in secret for you, and drop his tears upon you as you are falling into ruin from between his hands!

Yes, sinners, God forbid that I should cease to pray for you and pity you! While my tongue is capable of pronouncing a word, and you think it worth your while to hear me — I will send the calls of the gospel after you; and if you perish after all, you shall drop into hell with the offers of heaven in your ears!

Gladly would I clear myself and say, "Your blood be upon your own heads — I am clean!" Acts 18:6. But, alas! my heart recoils and fails. I have no doubt at all — but the gospel I have preached to you is indeed the gospel of Christ, and I cheerfully venture my own soul upon it. But in dispensing it among you, I am conscious of so much weakness, coldness, and unskillfulness, that I am at times shocked at myself, lest I should be accessory to your ruin!

However, this is certain, great guilt will fall somewhere. I desire to take my own share of shame and guilt upon myself, and to humble myself for it before God. And I ask you do the same. Oh, humble yourselves before God, for your past conduct; and prepare, prepare to meet him, in the midst of a burning world!

Or, if you continue obstinately impenitent still, prepare to make your defense against your poor minister there, when he will be obliged to appear as a swift witness against you, and say, "Lord, I can appeal to yourself, that I warned them to prepare for this day, though with so many guilty infirmities, as nothing but your mercies can forgive. But they would not regard my warnings, though given in your solemn Name, and sometimes enforced with my own compassionate tears."

There, sirs, at the supreme tribunal, prepare to meet me; and there I dare appeal for the truth and importance of the things I have inculcated upon you.

(The following hymn is by Samuel Davies)

How great, how terrible that God,
Who shakes creation with his nod!
He frowns, and earth's foundations quake,
And all the wheels of nature break!

Crushed under guilt's oppressive weight,
This globe now totters to its fate:
Trembles beneath her guilty sons,
And for deliverance heaves and groans!

And see! the glorious, dreadful day,
That takes the enormous load away!
See skies, and stars, and earth, and seas,
Sink in one universal blaze!

Where, now — ah! where shall sinners seek
For shelter in the general wreck?
Can falling rocks conceal them now,
When rocks dissolve like melting snow?

In vain for pity now the cry,
In lakes of liquid fire they lie!
There on the burning billows tossed,
Forever, ever, ever, lost!

But saints, undaunted and serene,
Your eyes shall view the dreadful scene!
Your Savior lives, though worlds expire,
And earth and skies dissolve in fire!

JESUS! the helpless creature's friend!
To you my all I dare commend:
You can preserve my feeble soul,
When lightnings blaze from pole to pole!

<http://gracegems.org/Davies/EARTHQUAKE.htm>

Samuel Davies

1724 — 1761

"He spoke as on the borders of eternity, and as viewing the glories and terrors of an unseen world!"

<http://www.puritansermons.com/banner/sdavies1.htm>