

Published Sermon on Psalm 46:8 (BCP)¹

On February 8, 1750, London was hit by a noticeable, but not catastrophic, earthquake. John Wesley was in London and recorded the event in his *Journal*. He followed his account with the comment: “How gently does God deal with this nation! O that our repentance may prevent heavier marks of his displeasure!”² As this suggests, the Wesley brothers shared the common assumption of their time that earthquakes, major storms, disease epidemics, and similar events were more than just “accidents of nature.” They were considered providential acts—sometimes as expressions of divine protection (thwarting the French fleet) or punishment, but more often (particularly in mild cases like this) as portents to awaken complacent humanity to our spiritual failures and duties.

Exactly one month later, on March 8, Charles Wesley was taking his turn directing the work in London when a second earthquake hit—a stronger shock, but still not catastrophic. The event is noted in CW’s MS Journal in an unusual way. He gave the date, marked with an asterisk, then left a full page and a half blank. He obviously intended to insert more detail about the quake at some point, but he never returned to do so. He did, however, send a brief account in a letter to his brother, who was then in Bristol (printed in JW’s *Journal* entry for March 8³).

CW also rushed into print before the end of the month *Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8, 1750*. The hymns call for the British populace to acknowledge God’s gracious warning and repent of their sins. But the collection ends with a hymn of reassurance, affirming God’s power to protect God’s people.

And on April 4, 1750, after crafting a careful manuscript, CW preached a sermon that he titled “The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes” at West Street Chapel in London.⁴ The sermon was released shortly after in published form.⁵ It went through only one printing at the time.

This changed when, on November 1, 1755, Lisbon, Portugal was hit by a devastating earthquake. When news of this reached England, CW reprinted *Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake* (1750) in late December 1755, adding a new hymn focussed on Lisbon (on pp. 10–12). And he reprinted *The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes*.⁶

The transcription that follows is based upon (and notes the page transitions in, using red font) the first edition of this published sermon, annotating the minor corrections found in the 2nd edition.

¹This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: Sept. 27, 2024.

²JW, *Works*, 20:320.

³JW, *Works*, 20:323–24.

⁴See CW, MS Journal, Apr. 4, 1750.

⁵[CW,] *The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes; A Sermon Preached from Psalm xlvii. 8. Occasioned by the Earthquake on March 8, 1750* (London: [Strahan,] 1750).

⁶(London, n.p., 1756).

Psalm 46:8 [BCP]

“O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord,
what destruction he hath brought upon the earth!”

Of all the judgments which the righteous God inflicts on sinners here, the most dreadful and destructive is an earthquake. This he has lately brought on our part of the earth, and thereby alarmed our fears, and bid us “prepare to meet our God!”¹ The shocks which have been felt in diverse places since that which made this city tremble may convince us that the danger is not over; and ought to keep us still in awe, seeing “his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still” (Isa. 10:4).

That I may fall in with the design of providence at this awful crisis, I shall take occasion from the words of my text,

I. To show that earthquakes are the works of the Lord, and he only bringeth this destruction upon the earth. [p. 4]

II. Call you to behold the works of the Lord in two or three terrible instances. And,

III. Give you some directions suitable to the occasion.

I. I am to show you that earthquakes are the works of the Lord, and he only bringeth this destruction upon the earth.

[1.] Now that God is himself the author, and sin the *moral* cause of earthquakes (whatever the natural cause may be) cannot be denied by any who believe the Scriptures. For these are they which testify of him, that “it is God who removeth the mountains, and overturneth them” in his anger; “who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble” (Job 9:5–6). “He looketh on the earth and it trembleth, he toucheth the hills and they smoke” (Ps. 104:32). “The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth” (Ps. 97:5). “The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him” (Nah. 1:5–6).

[2.] Earthquakes are set forth by the inspired writers as God’s proper judicial act, or the punishment of sin. Sin is the cause, earthquakes the effect of his anger. So the Psalmist, “The earth trembled and quaked, the very foundations also of the hills shook and were removed, because he was wroth” (Ps. 18:7). So the prophet Isaiah, [p. 5] “I will punish the world for their evil ... and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible, ... therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger” (Isa. 13:11–13). And again, “Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down,” (in the original, perverteth the face thereof) “and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof; ... for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and be removed like a cottage, and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall and not rise again” (Isa. 24:1, 18–20). “Tremble thou earth at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of

¹Cf. Amos 4:12.

Jacob” (Ps. 114:7). “Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise” (Isa. 29:6).

[3.] Nothing can be more express than these Scripture testimonies, which determine both the cause and author of this terrible calamity. But reason as well as faith do² sufficiently assure us, it must be the punishment of sin, and the effect of that curse which was brought upon the earth by the original transgression. Steadfastness must be no longer looked for in the world, since innocency is banished thence: but we cannot conceive that the universe would have been disturbed by these furious accidents during the [p. 6] state of original righteousness. Wherefore should God’s anger have armed the elements against his faithful subjects? Wherefore should he have overthrown all his works to destroy innocent men? Or why overwhelmed the inhabitants of the earth with the ruins thereof, if they had not been sinful? Why buried those in the bowels of the earth who were not to die? Let us then conclude, both from scripture and reason, that earthquakes are God’s *strange works* of judgment, the proper effect and punishment of sin. I proceed,

II. To set before you these works of the Lord in two or three terrible instances.

[1.] In the year 1692 there happened in Sicily one of the most dreadful earthquakes in all history. It shook the whole island, and not only that, but Naples and Malta shared in the shock. It was impossible for any one to keep on their legs on the dancing earth. Nay, those who lay on the ground were tossed from side to side, as on a rolling billow. High walls leaped from their foundations several paces.

The mischief it did is amazing. Fifty-four cities and towns, besides an incredible number of villages, were almost entirely destroyed. Catania, one of the most famous, ancient, and flourishing cities in the kingdom, the residence of several monarchs and an university, had the greatest share in the judgment. Father Anthon. Serrvoita being on his way thither, a few miles from the city, observed a black cloud like night hovering over it; and there arose from [p. 7] the mouth of Aetna great spires of flame, which spread all around. The sea all on a sudden began to roar and rise in billows. The birds flew about astonished. The cattle ran crying in the fields. And there was a blow as if all the artillery in the world had been discharged at once.

His and his companions’ horses stopped short, trembling, so that they were forced to alight. They were no sooner off but they were lifted from the ground above two palms. When casting his eyes towards Catania, he was astonished to see nothing but a thick cloud of dust in the air. This was the scene of their calamity, for of the magnificent Catania there is not the least footstep to be seen. Of eighteen thousand, nine hundred and fourteen inhabitants, eighteen thousand perished therein. In the several cities and towns sixty thousand were destroyed out of two hundred and fifty-four thousand, nine hundred.³

²Orig., in 1st edn., “doth.”

³The original description of this earthquake in Sicily was published by Vincentius Bonajutus in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, No. 207 (Jan. 1694). CW almost certainly relies on an abridgement published in a letter to the editor in *The Penny London Post* (Mar. 25–27, 1745), p. 1.

[2.] In the same year, 1692, on June 7, was the earthquake in Jamaica.⁴ It threw down most of the houses, churches, sugar-works, mills, and bridges throughout the island; tore the rocks and mountains, reducing some of them to plains; destroyed whole plantations, and threw them into the sea; and in two minutes time shook down and destroyed nine-tenths of the town of Port Royal—the houses sunk outright thirty or forty fathom deep.

The earth opening swallowed up people, and they rose in other streets, some in the midst of the harbour (being driven up again by the sea [p. 8] which rose in those breaches), and so wonderfully escaped.

Of all wells, from one fathom to six or seven, the water flew out of the top with a vehement motion. While the houses on one side of the street were swallowed up, on the other they were thrown into heaps. The sand in the street rose like waves of the sea, lifting up every body that stood on it, and immediately dropping down into pits. And at the same instant a flood of water, breaking in, rolled them over and over, while catching hold of beams and rafters to save themselves.

Ships and sloops in the harbour were overset and lost. A vessel, by the motion of the sea and sinking of the wharf, was driven over the tops of many houses and sunk there.

The earthquake was attended with a hollow rumbling sound like that of thunder. In less than a minute three quarters of the houses and the ground they stood on, with the inhabitants, were quite sunk under water. And the little part left behind was no better than an heap of rubbish.

The shock was so violent that it threw people down on their knees or their faces as they were running about for shelter. The ground heaved and swelled like a rolling sea, and several houses still standing were shuffled and moved some yards out of their places. A whole street is said to be twice as broad now as before.

In many places the earth would crack, and open and shut quick and fast. Of which openings two or three hundred might be seen at a time, in some whereof the people were swallowed up. [p. 9] Others the closing earth caught by the middle and squeezed to death, and in that manner they were left buried with only their heads above ground. Some heads the dogs eat.

The minister of the place in his account saith that such was the desperate wickedness of the people that he was afraid to continue among them. That on the day of the earthquake some sailors and others fell to breaking open and rifling warehouses and houses deserted, while the earth trembled under them, and the houses fell upon them in the act. That he met many swearing and blaspheming. And that the common harlots who remained still upon the place were as drunken and impudent as ever.

While he was running towards the fort, a wide open place, to save himself, he saw the earth open and swallow up a multitude of people. And the sea mounting in upon them over the fortifications, it likewise destroyed their large burying-place, and washed away the carcasses out of their graves, dashing their tombs to pieces. The whole harbour was covered with dead bodies, floating up and down without burial.

⁴The original description of the earthquake in Jamaica was by Hans Sloane, MD, again in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, No. 207 (Jan. 1694). And again, CW appears to have drawn on a distillation of Sloane's account in a letter to the editor in *The Penny London Post* (Mar. 22–25, 1745), p. 1, and (Mar. 25–27, 1745), p. 1; supplemented by Rev. Emmanuel Heath, *A Full Account of the late dreadful Earthquake at Port Royal in Jamaica, written in two letters from the minister of that place* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1692).

As soon as the violent shock was over he desired all people to join with him in prayer. Among them were several Jews, who kneeled and answered as they did, and were heard even to call upon Jesus Christ. After he had spent an hour and an half with them in prayer and exhortations to repentance, he was desired to retire to some ship in the harbour and, passing over the tops of some houses which lay level [p. 10] with the water, got first into a canoe and then into a long-boat, which put him on board a ship.

The larger openings swallowed up houses. And out of some would issue whole rivers of water, spouted up a great height into the air, and threatening a deluge to that part which the earthquake spared. The whole was attended with offensive smells and the noise of falling mountains. The sky in a minute's time was turned dull and red, like a glowing oven. Scarce a planting-house or sugar-work was left standing in all Jamaica. A great part of them was swallowed up, houses, trees, people, and all at one gape; in the place of which afterwards appeared great pools of water, which when dried up left nothing but sand, without any mark that ever tree or plant had been thereon.

About twelve miles from the sea the earth gaped and spouted out with a prodigious force vast quantities of water into the air. But the greatest violence was among the mountains and rocks. Most of the rivers were stopped for 24 hours by the falling of the mountains, till swelling up they made themselves new channels, tearing up trees and all they met with in their passage.

A great mountain split and fell into the level ground, and covered several settlements, and destroyed the people there. Another mountain, having made several leaps or moves, overwhelmed great part of a plantation lying a mile off. Another large high mountain, near a day's journey over, was quite swallowed up; and [p. 11] where it stood is now a great lake some leagues over.

After the great shake, those who escaped got on board ships in the harbour, where many continued above two months. The shakes all that time being so violent, and coming so thick, sometimes two or three in an hour, accompanied with frightful noises like a ruffling wind or an hollow rumbling thunder, with brimstone blasts, that they durst not come ashore. The consequence of the earthquake was a general sickness, from the noisome vapours, which swept away above three thousand persons.

[3.] On the 28th of October, 1746, half an hour past 10:00 at night, Lima, the capital city of Peru, was destroyed by an earthquake, which extended an hundred leagues northward and as many more to the south, all along the sea-coast.⁵ The destruction did not so much as give time for fright. For at one and the same instant the noise, the shock, and the ruin were perceived. In the space of four minutes, during which the greatest force of the earthquake lasted, some found themselves buried under the ruins of the falling houses, and others crushed to death in the streets by the tumbling of the walls, which fell upon them as they ran here and there.

Nevertheless the greater part of the inhabitants (who were computed near sixty thousand) were providentially preserved, either in the hollow places which the ruins left or on the top of the

⁵CW's account of the earthquake in Lima and Callao follows closely the account published in Mar. 1750 in *The Ladies Magazine, or Universal Entertainer*, Vol. 1, pp. 156–57, 184–85; which in turn was likely drawn from "Philotheus," *A True and Particular History of Earthquakes; Containing a relations of that Dreadful Earthquake which happened at Lima and Callao, in Peru, October 28, 1746* (London: for the author, 1748), 30ff. It is possible that CW was drawing directly from this source.

very ruins themselves, without knowing how they got up thither. For no person, at such a season, had time for deliberation. And supposing he had, there was no place of retreat. [p. 12] For the parts which seemed most firm sometimes proved the weakest. On the contrary, the weakest, at intervals, made the greatest resistance. And the consternation was such that no one thought himself secure till he had made his escape out of the city.

The earth struck against the buildings with such violence that every shock beat down the greatest part of them. And these tearing along with them vast weights in their fall (especially the churches and high houses) completed the destruction of everything they encountered with, even of what the earthquake had spared. The shocks, although instantaneous, were yet successive; and at intervals men were transported from one place to another, which was the means of safety to some, while the utter impossibility of moving preserved others.

There were seventy-four churches, besides chapels, and fourteen monasteries, with as many more hospitals and infirmaries, which were in an instant reduced to a ruinous heap and their immense riches buried in the earth. But though scarce twenty houses were left standing, yet it does not appear that the number of the dead amounted to much more than one thousand, one hundred and forty-one persons—seventy of whom were patients in an hospital who were buried by the roof's falling upon them as they lay in their beds, no person being able to give them any assistance.

Callao, a seaport town two leagues distant from Lima, was swallowed up by the sea in the same earthquake. It vanished out of sight [p. 13] in a moment, so that not the least sight of it now appears.

Some few towers indeed, and the strength of its walls, for a time endured the whole force of the earthquake. But scarcely had its poor inhabitants begun to recover their first fright which the dreadful ruin had occasioned, when suddenly the sea began to swell, and rising to a prodigious height, rushed furiously forward and overflowed, with so vast a deluge of water, its ancient bounds that, foundering most of the ships which were at anchor in the port and lifting the rest above the height of the walls and towers, it drove them on and left them on dry ground far beyond the town. At the same time it tore up from the foundations everything therein of houses and buildings, excepting the two gates and here and there some small fragments of the walls themselves, which, as registers of the calamity, are still to be seen among the ruins and the waters—a dreadful monument of what they were!

In this raging flood were drowned all the inhabitants of the place, about five thousand persons. Such as could lay hold on any pieces of timber floated about for a considerable time. But those fragments, for want of room, were continually striking against each other, and so beat off those who had clung to them.

About two hundred, mostly fishermen and sailors, saved themselves. They declared that the waves in their retreat surrounded the whole town, without leaving any means for preservation; and that in the intervals, when the violence of the inundation was a little abated, [p. 14] they heard the most mournful cries and shrieks of those who perished. Those likewise who were on board the ships, which by the elevation of the sea were carried quite over the town, had the opportunity of escaping. Of twenty-three ships in the port at the time of the earthquake, four were stranded and all the rest foundered. The few persons who saved themselves upon planks were several times driven about, as far as the island of St. Lawrence, more than two leagues from the port. At last some of them were cast upon the seashore, others upon the island, and so were preserved.

[4.] In these instances we may behold and see the works of the Lord, and how “terrible he

is in his doings towards the children of men” (Ps. 66:5). Indeed nothing can be so affecting as this judgment of earthquakes, when it comes unexpectedly, as a thief in the night.⁶ “When hell enlarges itself and opens her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth descends into it” (Isa. 5:14). When there is no time to flee, or method to escape, or possibility to resist. When no sanctuary or refuge remains, no shelter is to be found in the highest towers or lowest caverns. When the earth opens on a sudden, and becomes the grave of whole families, streets, and cities. And effects this in less time than you are able to tell the story of it: either sending out a flood of waters to drown, or vomiting out flames of fire to consume them; or closing again upon them that they die by suffocation or famine, if not by the [p. 15] ruins of their own dwelling. When parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, magistrates, ministers, and people, without distinction, in the midst of health, and peace, and business, are buried in a common ruin, and pass all together into the eternal world. And there is only the difference of a few hours, or minutes, between a famous city and none at all.

Now if war be a terrible evil, how much more an earthquake, which in the midst of peace brings a worse evil than the extremity of war. If a raging pestilence be dreadful, which sweeps away thousands in a day, and ten thousands in a night; if a consuming fire be an amazing judgment; how much more astonishing is this, whereby houses and inhabitants, towns, and cities, and countries, are all destroyed at one stroke in a few minutes! Death is the only presage of such a judgment, without giving leisure to prepare for another world or opportunity to look for any shelter in this.

For a man to feel the earth, which hangeth upon nothing⁷ (but as some vast ball in the midst of a thin yielding air), totter under him must fill him with secret fright and confusion. History informs us of the fearful effects of earthquakes in all ages, where you may see rocks torn in pieces, mountains not cast down only but removed, hills raised not out of valleys only but out of seas, fires breaking out of waters, stones and cinders belched up, rivers changed, seas dislodged, earth opening, towns swallowed up, and many such-like hideous events. [p. 16]

Of all divine animadversions there is none more horrid, more inevitable than this. For where can we think to escape danger, if the most solid thing in all the world shakes? If that which sustains all other things, threatens⁸ us with sinking under our feet, what sanctuary shall we find from an evil that encompasses us about? And whither can we withdraw, if the gulfs which open themselves shut up our passages on every side?

With what horror are men struck when they hear the earth groan, when her trembling succeeds her complaints, when houses are loosened from their foundations, when the roofs fall upon their heads, and the pavement sinks under their feet! What hope, when fear cannot be fenced by flight! In other evils there is some way to escape. But an earthquake incloses what it overthrows, and wages war with whole provinces; and sometimes leaves nothing behind it to inform posterity of its outrages. More insolent than fire, which spares rocks. More cruel than the conqueror, who leaves walls. More greedy than the sea, which vomits up shipwrecks. It swallows and devours whatsoever it overturns. The sea itself is subject to its empire, and the most dangerous storms are those occasioned by earthquakes.

⁶See 1 Thess. 5:2.

⁷See Job 26:7.

⁸Orig., “threaten”; corrected in 2nd edn.

[III.] I come in the third and last place, to give you some directions suitable to the occasion. And this is the more needful because ye know not how soon the late earthquake wherewith God hath visited us may return, or whether he may not enlarge, as well as repeat, its commission. Once, yea twice, hath the Lord warned [p. 17] us,⁹ that he is arisen to shake terribly the earth.¹⁰ Wherefore,

1. *Fear God*, even that God who can in a moment cast both body and soul into hell.¹¹ “Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty” (Isa. 2:10). Ought we not all to cry out, “Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name, for thy judgments are made manifest!” (Rev. 15:3–4).¹²

God speaks to your hearts as in subterranean thunder. “The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city, ... Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it” (Mic. 6:9). He commands you to take notice of his power and justice. “Come and see!” (Rev. 6:5) while a fresh seal is opening. Yea, “Come and see the works of God, he is terrible in his doings towards the children of men” (Ps. 66:5).

When he makes the mountains tremble, and the earth shake, shall not our hearts be moved? “Fear ye not me, saith the Lord, and will ye not tremble at my presence?” (Jer. 5:22). Will ye not fear me, who can open the windows of heaven above, or break up the fountains of the great deep below, and pour forth whole floods of vengeance when I please! Who can rain upon the wicked “snares, fire, and brimstone, storm and tempest” (Ps. 11:6)! Or kindle those streams and exhalations in the bowels and caverns of the earth, and make them force their way to the destruction of towns, cities, and countries! Who can thus suddenly turn a [p. 18] fruitful land into a barren wilderness, an amazing spectacle of desolation and ruin!

“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? ... The lion hath roared, who will not fear?” (Amos 3:6–8). “With God is terrible majesty. [...] Men do therefore fear him.”¹³ Some *do*; and all *ought*. O that his fear might this moment fall upon all you who hear these words, constraining everyone of you to cry out, “My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments!” (Ps. 119:120). O that all might see, now his hand is lifted up, as in act to strike, is stretched out still, and shakes his rod over a guilty land, a people fitted for destruction. For is not this the nation to be visited? “And shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” (Jer. 5:9). What but national repentance can prevent national destruction.

[2.] “O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you” (Ps. 50:22). That iniquity may not be your ruin, repent! This is the second advice I would offer you; or rather the first enforced upon you farther and explained. Fear God and depart

⁹See Job 33:14.

¹⁰See Isa. 2:21.

¹¹See Luke 12:5.

¹²CW provided references for this and the following Scripture quotations, but several of them contain printer errors (not corrected in the 2nd edn.). We give the correct references.

¹³Job 37:22–24.

from evil.¹⁴ Repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.¹⁵ Break off your sins this moment.¹⁶ “Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes,” saith the Lord, “cease to do evil, learn to do well” (Isa. 1:16–17).

“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). “Therefore now, saith the Lord,” (who is not willing [p. 19] any should perish¹⁷) “turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rent your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him” (Joel 2:12–14).

“Who knoweth?” A question which should make you tremble. God is weighing you in the balance,¹⁸ and as it were considering whether to save or to destroy. “Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people. I will come up into the midst of thee, and consume thee. Therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee” (Exod. 33:5).

God waits to see what effect his warnings will have upon you. He pauses on the point of executing judgment, and cries, “How shall I give thee up?” (Hosea 11:8). Or, “Why should ye be stricken any more” (Isa. 1:5). He hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.¹⁹ He would not bring to pass his *strange act*, unless your obstinate impenitence compel him.

“Why will you die, O house of Israel?”²⁰ God warns you of the approaching judgment, that you may take warning and escape it by timely repentance. He lifts up his hand, and shakes it over you, that ye may see it, and prevent the stroke. He tells you, “Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree” (Matt. 3:10), therefore repent, bring forth good fruit, and ye shall not be hewn down, and [p. 20] cast into the fire. *O do not despise the riches of his mercy, but let it lead you to repentance.*²¹ “Account that the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation” (2 Pet. 3:15). Harden not your hearts, but turn to him that smites you, or rather threatens to smite, that ye may turn and be spared.

How slow is the Lord to anger!²² How unwilling to punish! By what leisurely steps does he come to take vengeance! How many lighter afflictions before the final blow!

¹⁴See Job 28:28; Prov. 3:7, 16:6.

¹⁵See Matt. 3:8.

¹⁶See Dan. 4:27.

¹⁷See 2 Pet. 3:9.

¹⁸See Dan. 5:27.

¹⁹See Ezek. 18:32.

²⁰Ezek. 18:31.

²¹See Rom. 2:4.

²²See Exod. 34:6, etc.

Should he beckon the man on the red horse to return,²³ and say “Sword, go through this land,”²⁴ can we complain he gave us no warning? Did not the sword first bereave abroad?²⁵ And did we not then see it within our borders? Yet the merciful God said, “Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.”²⁶ He stopped the invaders in the midst of our land, and turned them back again, and destroyed them.

Should he send the man on the pale horse, whose name is Death,²⁷ and the pestilence destroy thousands and ten thousands of us,²⁸ can we deny that first he warned us by the raging mortality among our cattle?²⁹

So if we provoke him to lay waste our earth, and turn it upside down and overthrow us, as he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,³⁰ shall we not have procured this unto ourselves? Had we no reason to expect any such calamity? No previous notice? No trembling of the earth before it clave? No shock before it opened its mouth? Did he set no examples of so terrible a judgment before our eyes? Had we never heard of the destruction of Jamaica? Or Catania? Or [p. 21] that of Lima, which happened but yesterday? If we perish at last, we perish without excuse. For what could have been done more to save us?

Yes, thou hast now another call to repentance, another offer of mercy, whosoever thou art that hearest these words! In the name of the Lord Jesus I warn thee once more, as a watchman over the house of Israel,³¹ to flee from the wrath to come.³² I put thee in remembrance (if thou hast so soon forgotten it) of the late awful judgment, whereby God shook thee over the mouth of hell. Thy body he probably awoke by it, but did he awake thy soul? The Lord was in the earthquake,³³ and put a solemn question to thy conscience: Art thou ready to die? Is thy peace made with God? Was the earth just now to open its mouth and swallow thee up, what would become of thee? Where wouldst thou be? In Abraham’s bosom, or lifting up thine eyes in torment?³⁴ Hadst thou perished by the late earthquake, wouldst thou not have died in thy sins,³⁵ or rather gone down quick into hell?³⁶ Who prevented thy damnation? It was the Son of God! O

²³See Rev. 6:4.

²⁴Ezek. 14:17.

²⁵See Lam. 1:20.

²⁶Job 38:11.

²⁷See Rev. 6:8.

²⁸See Ps. 91:6–8.

²⁹Since mid-1748 herds of cattle in England had been hit with a wave of distemper; see, *London Magazine* 17 (1748), 233, 474, etc.

³⁰See Gen. 19.

³¹See Ezek. 3:17, 33:7.

³²See Matt. 3:7.

³³Cf. 1 Kings 19:11.

³⁴See Luke 16:22–23.

³⁵See John 8:24.

³⁶See Ps. 55:15.

fall down, and worship him!³⁷ Give him the glory of thy deliverance, and devote the residue of thy days to his service.

[3.] This is the third advice I would give you, repent *and* believe the gospel. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and ye shall yet be saved.³⁸ Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish.³⁹ Repentance *alone* will profit you nothing. Neither do ye repent, unless ye confess with broken hearts the most damnable of all your sins, [p. 22] your unbelief; your having rejected, or not accepted, Jesus Christ as your *only* Saviour. Neither *can* ye repent unless he himself gives the power; unless his Spirit convince you of sin, because ye believe not in him.

Till ye repent of your unbelief, all your good desires and promises are vain, and will pass away as a morning cloud.⁴⁰ The vows which ye make in the time of trouble,⁴¹ ye will forget and break as soon as the trouble is over and the danger past.

But shall ye escape for your wickedness, suppose the earthquake should not return? God will never want ways and means to punish impenitent sinners. He hath a thousand other judgments in reserve. And if the earth should not open its mouth, yet ye shall surely at last be swallowed up in the bottomless pit of hell.⁴²

Wouldst thou yet escape that eternal death? Then receive the sentence of death in thyself, thou miserable self-destroyed sinner. Know thy want of living, saving, divine faith. Groan under thy burden of unbelief, and refuse to be comforted till thou hear him of his own mouth say, “Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.”⁴³

I cannot take it for granted that all men have faith, or speak to the sinners of this land as to believers in Jesus Christ. For where are the fruits of faith? Faith worketh by love.⁴⁴ Faith overcometh the world.⁴⁵ Faith purifieth the heart.⁴⁶ Faith, in the smallest measure, removeth mountains.⁴⁷ If thou canst believe, all things are possible to thee.⁴⁸ If thou art justified by faith, thou hast peace with God, and rejoicest in hope of his glorious appearing.⁴⁹ [p. 23]

³⁷See Rev. 19:10.

³⁸See Acts 16:31.

³⁹See Ps. 2:12.

⁴⁰See Hosea 6:4, 13:3.

⁴¹See Ps. 66:14.

⁴²See Rev. 9:1–11.

⁴³Matt. 9:2.

⁴⁴See Gal. 5:6.

⁴⁵See 1 John 5:4.

⁴⁶See 1 John 3:3.

⁴⁷See Matt. 17:20.

⁴⁸See Mark 9:23.

⁴⁹See Rom. 5:1, Titus 2:13.

He that believeth hath the witness in himself,⁵⁰ hath the earnest of heaven in his heart,⁵¹ hath love stronger than death.⁵² Death to a believer has lost its sting.⁵³ “Therefore will he not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea” (Ps. 46:2). For he knows in whom he has believed,⁵⁴ and that neither life nor death shall be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus his Lord.⁵⁵

Dost thou *so* believe? Prove thy own self by the infallible word of God. If thou hast not the fruits, effects, or inseparable properties of faith, thou hast not faith. Come then to the Author and Finisher of faith,⁵⁶ confessing thy sins, and the root of all thy unbelief, till he forgive thee thy sins, and cleanse thee from all unrighteousness.⁵⁷ Come to the friend of sinners, weary, and heavy laden, and he will give thee pardon.⁵⁸ Cast thy poor desperate soul on his dying love. Enter into the rock—the ark—the city of refuge. Ask and thou shalt receive faith and forgiveness together.⁵⁹ He waited to be gracious. He hath spared thee for this very thing, that thine eyes might see his salvation.⁶⁰ Whatever judgments come in these latter days, yet whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord Jesus, shall be delivered.⁶¹

Call upon him now, O sinner, and continue instant in prayer,⁶² till he answer thee in peace and power. Wrestle for the blessing.⁶³ Thy life, thy soul is at stake. Cry mightily unto him: Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy [p. 24] upon me.⁶⁴ God be merciful unto me a sinner.⁶⁵ Lord help me, help my unbelief.⁶⁶ Save, or I perish.⁶⁷ Sprinkle my troubled heart.⁶⁸ Wash me thoroughly in the fountain of thy blood.⁶⁹ Guide me by thy Spirit, sanctify me throughout, and receive me up

⁵⁰See 1 John 5:10.

⁵¹See 2 Cor. 1:22.

⁵²See Song of Sol. 8:6.

⁵³See 1 Cor. 15:5.

⁵⁴See 2 Tim. 1:12.

⁵⁵See Rom. 8:38.

⁵⁶See Heb. 12:2.

⁵⁷See 1 John 1:9.

⁵⁸See Matt. 11:28.

⁵⁹See Matt. 7:7.

⁶⁰See Luke 2:30.

⁶¹See Joel 2:32.

⁶²See Rom. 12:12.

⁶³See Gen. 32:24–26.

⁶⁴See Matt. 9:27, etc.

⁶⁵See Luke 18:13.

⁶⁶See Mark 9:24.

⁶⁷See Matt. 8:25.

⁶⁸See John 14:27.

⁶⁹See Ps. 51:2, Zech. 13:1, Rev. 7:14.

into glory.⁷⁰

“Now to God the Father,”

Source: [CW,] *The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes; A Sermon Preached from Psalm xlv. 8. Occasioned by the Earthquake on March 8, 1750* (London: [Strahan,] 1750).

⁷⁰See Ps. 73:24, 1 Thess. 5:23.