From “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”

Directions: On separate paper, describe what each passage says about the Puritan’s feelings about God, sin, the Devil, and/or humankind:

1. By the mere pleasure of God, I mean His sovereign pleasure, His arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty any more than if nothing else but God’s mere will had in the last degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.

2. [Men] deserve to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way; it makes no objection against God’s using His power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins.

3. [Men] are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell.

4. The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods.

5. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God’s restraints, whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or furnace of fire and brimstone.

6. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand. It is no security to a natural man. . . . The unseen, unthought-of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable.

7. God has laid Himself under no obligation, by any promise to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen.

8. 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 those that are actually suffering the execution 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 them up for one moment. The devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own heart is struggling to break out.