

from *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* by Jonathan Edwards

Reading Strategy: Context Clues

When you come across an unfamiliar word in your reading, you can often determine its meaning from its **context**—the words, phrases, and sentences which surround it. For example, notice how the context provides clues to the meaning of *avail* in the sentence that follows:

But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would *avail* no more to keep you from falling than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it.

Since we know that “these things are nothing” and that “they would *avail* no more” than “thin air” to keep a person from falling, we can figure out that *avail* must mean “help.”

DIRECTIONS: As you read these sentences from *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, use context clues to determine the meaning of each italicized word. Write your definition on the lines provided, along with an explanation of how you used context clues to help determine the word’s meaning.

1. It is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up. You are probably not *sensible* of this; you find you are kept out of Hell, but do not see the hand of God in it.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. He will not *forbear* the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand: there shall be no moderation or mercy.

5. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a *boundless* duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts and amaze your soul.

6. To see so many *rejoicing* and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart.

