

*The Vessels of Mercy, and the Vessels of  
Wrath, delineated, in a new, uncon-  
troverted, and practical Light.*

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A

S E R M O N

First preached in

*NEW-KENT, VIRGINIA,*  
AUGUST 22, 1756.

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By SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M.

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L O N D O N :

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To the Reverend  
Mt. *THOMAS GIBBONS*  
In L O N D O N \*.

*Reverend and dear SIR,*

**A**S a publick Monument of the deserved Friendship I still retain for you, tho' a wide-extended Ocean rolls between us, permit me to present to the Public the following plain popular Discourse through your Hands.

It was first preached to a crowded Auditory, a little after the opening of a Place of Worship, in a County where I was not wont to officiate; and where a Dissenter was gazed at, by some, as a curious, and  
by

\* For a Reason easy to be imagined the Editor has not given the Public the whole Dedication; but so much of it as relates to the Author's own Account of the Sermon, and his particular Views in its Publication, was very proper to attend the Discourse into the World; and the Editor acknowledges that he was unwilling to deny himself the Pleasure of its being known, wherever this Sermon may be read, that he is honoured with Mr. *Darvies's* intimate Friendship.

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by others, as an horrendous *Phænomēnon*. This will account for the *Caution* and *Apology* used in some Parts of it; which would be needless among my familiar Hearers.

The following Discourse was so acceptable to fundry of the Hearers, that I cannot but hope a gracious and sovereign God, who has sometimes condescended to snatch Souls as Brands out of the Burning, even by *my* feeble and unskilful Hands, was pleased to bless it to them; and that their Approbation was not an empty Applause, but founded upon the solid Advantage they received from it. With some Hopes, that the same Divine Blessing may follow it into the Hands of others, on both Sides the *Atlantic*, I now venture it into the World, in its original unornamented Simplicity.

In this Publication, Sir, I have a particular View to gratify those Friends of mine, in *Great-Britain*, and particularly

## *The Dedication.* v

particularly in your *Metropolis*, who were pleased to request the Publication of fundry of my Sermons, which they heard from my Lips. And among the first of these, I must place your dear Congregation; whose generous Partiality for an *American Stranger* rendered his occasional Ministrations so popular among them; and for whom he still retains so much of a *pastoral* Heart, when returned to his native Wilderness.

May your Labours among them, my worthy Friend, be extensively useful! May your Opportunities and Capacities for public Service be increased! May the Blessings of this Life, and the more refined Pleasures of Religion render your Pilgrimage thro' this World easy and delightful! And when you have long and successfully served your Divine Master, and your Generation, may your *Exit* be glorious and triumphant! --- These are the Prayers and  
Wishes

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Wishes of my Heart for you ; which I am not ashamed to avow in the Face of the World ; and with which, I hope often to meet you at the Throne of *Grace* ; which, in one of your Letters, you emphatically call “ *our common Center.*” Such let it still be, ’till we meet before the Throne of *Glory* ; the Center of universal Attraction to all the Children of God, that are scattered abroad over this guilty Globe ; whither they are all unanimously tending, notwithstanding those Party-Distinctions, and a thousand other Things, which would give, or seem to give, their Motion a contrary Direction.

*I am, S I R,*

*Your most affectionate Brother,*

*and humble Servant,*

SAMUEL DAVIES.

*Hanover in Virginia,*

*April 1, 1757.*



R O M. ix. 22, 23.

— *The Vessels of Wrath* FITTED to  
*Destruction.* And — *the Vessels of*  
*Mercy,* which HE HAD AFORE PRE-  
PARED *unto Glory.*

 HE true Notion of the present  
World is, that it is a *State of*  
*Preparation* for another, and  
therefore, such as we habitually  
are here, such shall we be for  
ever. Mankind are now form-  
ing, like Clay in the Potter's Hands, some for  
Honour, and some for Dishonour; some for  
Wrath, and some for Glory. And as the Pot-  
ter does not put his Vessels to their respective  
Uses, 'till they are finished, and prepared for  
them; so neither are Men removed from the  
present State, and fixed in their respective Re-  
sidences in the eternal World, 'till they are  
*prepared, finished, and compleatly fitted* for them.  
The Vessels of Mercy are *prepared* before-  
hand for that Glory, with which they shall  
be filled. And, on the other Hand, the Vessels  
fels

sels of Wrath are *fitted* to Destruction, and ~~fit~~ for nothing else, before they are dashed to Pieces by the iron Rod of Divine Justice.

It is a Criticism worthy to be mentioned, even in this solemn Place, where I never chuse to make a Parade of useless Learning, that the Apostle uses a different Form of Expression, when speaking of these different Sorts of Persons. The Preparation of the Vessels of Mercy for Glory, he ascribes to God, as *his* Work. Hence he uses an *active* † Verb, referring expressly to God as the Agent---“ the “ Vessels of Mercy, which HE had afore “ *prepared* unto Glory.” But the fitting or preparing the Vessels of Wrath for Destruction, he does not ascribe to God, but intimates, that it is *their own* Work. Hence he uses a *passive* ‡ Participle--- “ the Vessels of “ Wrath *fitted* to Destruction”---*fitted* by *their own* wilful Sin and Impenitence, during the Long-suffering of God towards them, which had a Tendency to lead them to Repentance.

---“ *Vessels of Wrath*” !--- how terribly emphatical is this Phrase? Vessels dreadfully *capacious* of divine Wrath! to be *filled* to the Brim with that burning Liquid! But how beautifully significant is the Metaphor,--- “ *Vessels of Mercy*” ! Vessels formed, prepared, finished, adorned by the gentle and skillful  
Hand

† *ὑποτοιμασεν*

‡ *καθηρτισμένα.*

*Hand of Divine Mercy!* Vessels *capacious* of Mercy; and to be *filled*, to *overflow*, with Glory!

The gracious and sovereign God, who might justly have dashed these Vessels of Wrath to Pieces, as soon as ever they became *marred Clay* in his plastic Hands, endures or bears with them, *with much Long-suffering*, as well as with the Vessels of Mercy: bears with them, as He has with you, for Days, for Months, and Years, notwithstanding their daring Provocations, and ungrateful Abuse of his Patience; which nothing but divine Patience could bear with so long. But all this Time, they contracted more and more Filth and Pollution; they became every Day less fit for their Master's Use; and rendered themselves more and more fit for Destruction, and fit for nothing else.

And shall these Vessels of Wrath answer no valuable Use in the great House of the Universe? Will they serve to *furnish* out no Apartment of this vast Building? Will they be of no Use in this numerous Family of reasonable Creatures? Yes; they will furnish out the Regions of Hell; a Place as necessary and useful in the Universe, as it is now constituted, as Prisons and Bedlams upon Earth. They will serve as publick and terribly illustrious Monuments of the Divine Power and Justice, and the righteous Resentments of Heaven against Sin. They will serve as loud Warnings to all Worlds, to deter them from that destructive Evil. And thus they will

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answer

answer a valuable, and even a *benevolent* End, in the Creation, and contribute to the Public Good; as the Execution of Criminals tends to guard the Laws from Violation, and so promote the *Good* of Society. They will serve, as my Text informs you, "to *shew* the *Wrath*, and *make known* the Power," of God. Their Destruction will illustriously display the *Glory* of these Perfections. The Flames of *Hell* will burn dreadfully bright, to reflect a terrible, and yet *amiable*, Splendour upon them. And it is for this terrible, but righteous End, among others, that God now endures them with so much long-suffering, that his Perfections, and the Honour of his Government, may be the more illustriously displayed, in the Execution of deserved Punishment upon them.

But the Vessels of Mercy are intended and prepared for nobler Uses. On them God intends to display the *Glory*, the *Riches* of the *Glory* of his more gentle Attributes, his Love and Grace. With them He intends to furnish out the many Mansions of his heavenly House. By them He intends to let all Worlds see, what glorious Vessels He can form, not only of the Dust, but of the shattered and polluted Fragments of human Nature, broken and polluted by the Fall of *Adam*, and by their own.

The View in which I now consider my Text leads me to confine myself to this practical Enquiry.

*Wherein does Preparation for Glory, and wherein does Fitness for Destruction, consist?*

Some

Some of you, perhaps, when you heard the Text, were struck with Horror, and ready to bless yourselves at the Sound: for "now, you tho't within yourselves, we shall have a Sermon upon the horrendous Doctrine of Predestination." But you see, I propose to consider the Text entirely in a *practical* View; and therefore your Fears are imaginary. Nor do I chuse to consider it in this View, to let you see with what Dexterity I can evade the genuine Sense of it, and make a mental Reservation of a Doctrine so unpopular: but because, whatever else the Text in its Connection may mean, it does naturally lead me to this grand Enquiry; and because my present Design is to speak to your Hearts about an Affair which you are all concerned and capable to know; and not to perplex your Minds with a Controversy, of which not many of you are competent Judges. I must own, indeed, I am not altogether a Sceptic in that Doctrine. It is not an entire *Blank* in my Creed. Nor am I ashamed to declare my Sentiments in a proper Time and Place. At present I shall only tell you that I cannot be persuaded God has made such a World as this, without *first drawing the Plan* of it in his own omniscient Mind. I cannot think He would produce such a numerous Race of reasonable and immortal Creatures, without first determining what to do with them. I cannot think the Events of Time, or the judicial Process of the last Day will furnish Him with any new In-

telligence to enable Him to determine the final States of Men more justly than He could from Eternity.—But away with all controversial Tho'ts at present; and let an Object of more Importance engross all your Attention: for you will find, I am not now going to plunge and drown you in this unfathomable Depth. This you may be sure of, that, if you have not made *yourselves* fit for Destruction, and fit for nothing else, by *your own wilful Sin*, you shall never be doomed to it by Virtue of any Decree of God. And on the other Hand you may be equally sure that He never decreed to admit you into Heaven, unless you are *prepared* for it; nor to exclude you, if you are so—I now proceed to the grand Enquiry,

Wherein does *Preparation for Glory*, and wherein does *Fitness for Destruction* consist? --- This will naturally lead me to enquire into your habitual Dispositions and Behaviour: for it is by comparing these to the Nature and Quality of the Regions of Heaven and Hell that you can discover *which* you are fit for. If your Temper and Dispositions be *heavenly* and *divine*, you may be sure you shall be admitted into those blessed Mansions. But if, on the other hand, your Temper and Dispositions be *infernal* and *diabolical*, if they be such as are prevalent and universal in Hell, you may be equally sure, that, unless they are changed, you will be doomed forever to that dismal Region. This must, methinks, appear evident  
to

to common Sense. The righteous Judge of all the Earth will always invariably do that which is *fit*. If you are *fit* for the Enjoyments and Services of Heaven, you need not fear but he will admit you. Never yet has such a Soul been excluded. And what can you reasonably desire more? Would you have Heaven *encumbered* with such, as could not be happy, even in the very Regions of Happiness, for Want of a proper Relish for the Enjoyments there? But if you are *fit* only for the infernal Prison, is there not a *Propriety*, as well as Justice, in your being confined there? the same Propriety, as that Madmen should be shut up in Bedlam, or notorious Criminals in a Dungeon?--- Therefore,

1. *Are you fit for Heaven?*---Do you love and delight in God, in a God of infinite Purity? If not, the Enjoyment of his Presence, and the beatific Vision of his Face, which is the principal Ingredient of heavenly Happiness, could afford no Happiness to you. Do you delight in the Service of God, in contemplating his Glories, in celebrating his Praises, and in the humble Forms of Worship in his Church on Earth? Do these afford you the most exalted Pleasure? if not, Heaven is no Place for you: for these are the eternal Exercises there: and to such of you as have no Pleasure in them, the heavenly State would be an eternal *Drudgery*. Do you delight in Holiness? if not, what would you do in the Region of Holiness? Alas! to you it would  
be

be an unnatural Element. Are the *Saints*, those whom the World perhaps calls so with a *Sneer*, because they make it their great *Business* to be holy in all Manner of *Conversation*, are these your favourite *Companions*? is their *Society* peculiarly delightful to you? And are they the more agreeable to you, by how much the more holy they are? If not, what would you do among the holy *Inhabitants* of *Heaven*? With what *Pleasure* could you mingle in *Society* with them, while your *Temper* and theirs are so directly contrary? Are your *Hearts* full of ardent *Love* and *Benevolence* to *Mankind*? if not, how would you breathe in the pure *Element* of perfect *Love*? --- Without such *Dispositions* as these, you are no more fit for *Heaven*, than a sick *Man* for a *Feast*, a *Swine* for a *Palace*, or a blind *Man* to view the *Splendours* of the *Sun*: and therefore, you may be sure, that *God*, who will never do any *Thing* that is unfit, will not admit you there, while you continue such as you now are.

You must also consider, that if you are fit for pure and blessed *Regions*, it is *GOD* that has made you so, by his own almighty *Power*; "He that hath wrought you for this self-same *Thing*, is *GOD*;" \* and you have been deeply sensible, that the *Work* was indeed *his*, was *Divine* and *Godlike*, and beyond the utmost *Efforts* of your degenerate *Nature*. *You* are able indeed to fit yourselves for *Destruction*: that you can easily do: and that, I am afraid,

\* 2 Cor. v. 5.

afraid, some of you have effectually done already. But it is *God* alone that can make you fit for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. And have you ever been the Subjects of this divine Operation? Have you ever felt the Power of almighty Grace opening your blinded Minds, breaking your stony Hearts, and melting them into Floods of ingenuous Sorrows, under the warm Beams of a Saviour's Love, like Snow before the Sun? Have you ever felt it subduing your favourite Sins, and making them more bitter to you than Death, and implanting and cherishing every Grace and Virtue in your Souls? Has the Holy Spirit turned the prevailing Bent of your Souls towards Holiness, so that you esteem it the principal Ornament of your Nature, and make it the Object of your eager Desires, and most vigorous Pursuit? Does Holiness appear to you amiable in *itself*, and not only a Pre-requisite to your Happiness, but the principal *Ingredient* of it? And is Heaven itself the more endeared to you by this Consideration, that it is *the Region of pure unmingled Holiness*; that no unclean Thing can enter there; and that even the *Way* that leads to it, is *holy*? If these Things are not Matters of Experience with you, you may be sure, you are not "*afore prepared for Glory.*"

Let us now take a View of the opposite Dispositions, and we shall make the same Discovery. --- Suppose your Hearts are set upon the Enjoyments of this Life, as your principal Happiness :

Happiness: Suppose you are chiefly solicitous and laborious to heap up Riches, or to indulge your sensual Lusts and Appetites; suppose this be the ruling Passion of your Souls; are you *fit* for Heaven? In Heaven, there are none of these low and sordid Enjoyments: and what Pleasure would you have there, who have a Taste only for these Things? You are indeed *fit* to dig in the Earth, like Moles, and steal the Serpent's Food: you are *fit* to scrape up Riches: *fit* to wallow in the Mire of guilty and debauched Pleasures: *fit* to live in this World, could you always make your Residence in it: this gross, impure, earthy Element suits your depraved Constitutions. But can you once imagine you are *fit* for *Heaven*; fit to breathe in that pure salubrious Air; fit to share in those refined and spiritual Enjoyments, fit to join in the exalted Employments of Seraphs, while this is your prevailing Temper? surely no; and what then will become of you? The impure and gross Region of this World, so agreeable to you, will not always last: and you will not probably live in it, as long as it does last: but Death, ere long, will tear you away from all that is dear to you under the Sun. And alas! whither then shall you go? where then shall you take up your eternal Residence?---I leave you to pause and think upon it.

Suppose the Service of God be a Weariness to you, and the Thoughts of Him unwelcome to your Minds: suppose your Hearts are full  
of

of angry malignant Passions: in short, suppose you love Sin more than Holiness, can you flatter yourselves you are fit for Heaven? Alas! it would be as unnatural an Element to you, as for a Fish to live out of Water, or you to live in it---But the farther Illustration of this will fall under the next Head. Therefore,

2. Enquire, *Whether your Temper and Disposition be not infernal and diabolical, and such as renders you fit for Destruction, and for nothing else.*---Are your Hearts destitute of the Love of God? "No, you answer, we thank God, we have never been so bad, as that comes to." But if you love God, whence is it that you have so few affectionate Thoughts of Him? that you do not study to please him in all Things, and delight in his Service? If you love God, how comes it that you do not keep his Commandments, which is the grand decisive Test of Love? Alas! instead of loving him are not your Hearts disaffected to him? As Evidences of this, may I not produce your Dislike to serious Thoughts of him, your Aversion to his Service, your Disregard to his Will, as the Rule of your Conduct, and your headlong Propensity to follow your own Pleasure? Do not the Murmurings and Insurrections of your Hearts against him and his Dispensations, your uneasy rebellious Spirit under his Providences, your Aversion to his Service, do not these shew, that you are really disaffected to him? Now this is the very Temper of Hell; this is the Constituent of a

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*Devil;*

*Devil*; the very worst Ingredient in that infernal Composition. And therefore, unless this Temper be changed, you must dwell with Devils for ever. It is fit all the Enemies of God should be shut up together in one vast Prison. It is unfit that Rebels and Traitors should always run at large, or mingle with loyal Subjects. Alas! Sirs, a Soul without the Love of God, is *devilized* already, ripe for Destruction, and fit for nothing else.

Again; are there not some of you, who have no Pleasure in Devotion, no Delight in conversing with God in his Ordinances? The Posture of humble Worshipers at the Throne of Grace is not easy and agreeable to you. And hence you have prayerless Families, and prayerless Closets, and, if you join in public Worship once a Week, it is a meer customary Formality. You cannot bear to wean your Thoughts and Tongues from temporal Affairs on the few Hours devoted to the Service of God, tho' they make up but one Day in seven. You do not delight in religious Conversation, but it strikes you dumb, like the Man without the Wedding-Garment. Well, in the infernal Regions you will have as little of this Exercise as you could wish. The Patient will then be hopeless and incurable, and therefore no farther Means will be used with him. Then you will be no more troubled with Prayers, Bibles, Sermons, religious Conversation, or the tedious Hours of the Lord's Day. And, since you have no Taste for such Exercises, is  
it

it not *fit* you should be sent into those unholy Regions, where you shall never be employed in them?

Again; are not the Minds of some of you defiled with all Manner of Sin, and moral Pollution? And do not these render you fit only for that Region of Corruption and Impurity? Do you not indulge an angry, contentious, unforgiving, malicious Temper? Well, that is the very Temper of Hell, and renders you fit for it. Nay, these outrageous Passions, when broke loose from Restraint, will create a Hell in your own Breasts; and not only *expose* you to Punishment, according to *Justice*, but become the *Ingredients* of your Punishment, according to the Course of *Nature*. Do not some of you indulge yourselves in Backbiting, and all the base malignant Arts of Defamation, and perhaps are Firebrands in the Neighbourhood where you live? Well, in Hell you shall have enough of this Work; and, while you indulge this Spirit, you are preparing yourselves for that Land of universal Hostility and Revenge. Is not Cursing and Swearing the familiar Language of some of you? Well, this is the Language of Hell; and you are now practising the infernal Dialect, and preparing to converse with the Ghosts below in their own Style in the Region of Imprecation and Blasphemy. Do not some of you live in the Practice of *the Works of the Devil*; i. e. of those Works, to which he tempts you, and in which he has persisted, who was a Sinner from the

Beginning? Are you not then fit for that everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels? Even the gentle Lips of Jesus Himself would tell you, as he did the Jews, that "*You are of your Father the Devil,*"\* since you habitually do his Works. And is it not fit you should be doomed to the Society of your infernal Father?

Do you not find your Hearts are habitually hard and insensible? or, if you have some Kind of Repentance, it is only a servile Horror, extorted Remorse, and involuntary Pangs of desperate Agony? This is the very Kind of Repentance in Hell, where they still love Sin, and yet cannot but upbraid and torment themselves, because they have ruined themselves by indulging it. Conscience tortures them with the keenest Reflections; but they feel no kindly ingenuous Relentings, no generous Sorrows, proceeding from a Sense of the intrinsic Vileness and Baseness of Sin, and from a sincere disinterested Love to God and Holiness. Hence their Repentance is only a Punishment, but has no Tendency to their Reformation. And is not this the very Nature of your Repentance at present?

But I need not dwell long upon this Enquiry. It is enough to tell you, in short, that if you are still in your *natural* State, if you still retain that Temper, which is *natural* to you, as the degenerate Sons of *Adam*, without any supernatural Change; that Estrangement from God; that Disaffection to him; that Carnality

\* John viii. 44.

Carnality and Earthly-mindedness; that Blindness and Insensibility about divine Things; that Presumption, Security, and Love of lawless Pleasure; I say, if this be still your prevailing Temper, you are not meet for the heavenly Inheritance; for, in Order to be Heirs of that, you must be born again of God. But you are fitted for Destruction; for by *Nature* you are *Children of Wrath*, † and, while you continue such, you must be *Vessels of Wrath*. Therefore bring the Matter to a short Issue, by this decisive Enquiry: “Have  
“ I ever been born again? Have I ever ex-  
“ perience such a mighty Change in the  
“ Temper of my Mind, as may, with Pro-  
“ priety, be called a *new Birth*, or a *new Cre-*  
“ *ation*? For if any Man be in Christ, he is a  
“ new Creature; old Things are passed away,  
“ and all Things are become new ‡. Have  
“ I thus been renewed in the Spirit of my  
“ Mind? or am I still the same *old Man*, with  
“ my old Affections and Lusts?”—This, my Brethren, is the grand decisive Enquiry: for if you have been begotten again, St. *Peter* tells you it is to an *Inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the Heavens for you*. But Jesus, the Friend of Sinners, Jesus, who never pronounced a harsh Sentence, and who never will exclude from Heaven one Soul that is fit for it, nor doom to Destruction one Soul that is fit for any Thing else, even Jesus himself has strongly assured you

† Eph. ii. 3.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 17.

• 1 Pet. i. 4.

you with his own gracious Lips, that *except you be born again*, born of the Spirit, as well as of Water, you cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven ||. For that which is born of the Flesh, is Flesh; carnal, corrupt, unholy, and utterly unfit for that spiritual, pure, and holy Kingdom.

Here I would enlarge a little upon an Observation, which I just hinted at before, *viz.* That these corrupt Dispositions are not only criminal, and therefore will bring upon you the Penalty of the Divine Law, according to Justice, but that they are, in their *own Nature*, destructive, and therefore, according to the *Course of Nature*, will be your Ruin. Suppose God had made no positive Constitution to exclude you from Heaven; yet, while you have no Relish for the Employments and Enjoyments of that State, it is impossible, in the Nature of Things, you should be happy there. As you must have animal Senses to render you capable of animal Pleasures, so you must have spiritual Senses to render you capable of the pure spiritual Pleasures of Paradise. And without these you can no more be happy there, than a Stone can enjoy the Pleasures of an Animal, or a Beast those of Reason. You would be miserable Wretches in *Paradise* itself. Do but consider in what Things the Bliss of Heaven consists; and methinks you will rather *fear*, than *hope* and *desire* Admission there. Is *Religion* so pleasing a Thing to you, that

|| 1 John iii. 3, 5, 6.

that you might expect you would be completely happy if it were but perfected in you? Alas! are there not a thousand Things more agreeable to some of you? But in Heaven there are none of these Things: and how do you expect to be happy there? There must be another Heaven created for you, a *Mabometan* Paradise of sensual Pleasures, or else your Temper must be changed. The Paradise of *Saints* and *Angels* does not suit your vitiated Taste.

Farther; suppose God should not inflict any positive Punishment upon you with his own immediate Hand, but only suffer the *Course of Nature to run on*, and let your corrupt Dispositions have full Scope, and rage without Restraint, would not these Dispositions alone create a Hell within you? Anger, Malice, Envy, and every wicked and turbulent Passion against God and his Creatures, will break out into outrageous Hurricanes, when the kind Restraints, under which they now lie, are taken off, and they will agitate and distract your Souls for ever, and render you incapable of all Peace, Serenity, and Joy. Then also, all temporal Enjoyments, the Objects of your Love and Desire, and the only Things you now have to allay your raging Thirst for Happiness, will be for ever torn from you, and leave you to famish in a dismal Void; and then you will pine away with eager, impatient, insatiable Desires, which will gnaw your Hearts, and prey upon your Spirits, like hungry Vultures.

Suppose

Suppose you were now stript naked of every Enjoyment, and nothing left you but *bare Being*, with your usual Capacity of Enjoyment; suppose you were deprived of the Light of the Sun, the Products of the Earth, the Comforts of Society, and every imaginable Blessing, and doomed to wander, forlorn and hungry, in some dismal Desert, how consummately miserable would this *Privation* alone render you? But this will be the Doom of the Ungodly, as soon as Death breaks their Connections with this World. They must leave all their Enjoyments behind them, and yet carry their eager Desires, their insatiable Avarice of Happiness, along with them; and these will make them capacious Vessels of Pain, for a Capacity of Enjoyment not satisfied is a dreadful Capacity of positive Misery. Thus, you see, your Destruction comes upon you according to the *Course of Nature*; and you will die eternally, tho' the Hand of the Executioner should never touch you, as the unavoidable Result of your present Temper, the deadly Disease under which you labour.

And hence you may see, by the Way, that it is no Act of *Cruelty* or *Injustice*, in the supreme Judge, to shut you up for ever in the Prison of Hell; for what else should he do with you, when you are fit for no other Place? Is it cruel to exclude the Sick from Entertainments, or Persons infected with the Plague from the Society of the Sound and Healthy? Is it cruel to confine Madmen in Bedlam, or Criminals  
in

in Prison? Certainly no. Therefore God and his Throne will be guiltless for ever.

And now, my dear Brethren, have any of you been convinced that this is really your Case? that your Temper and Conduct is such, as at once renders and proves you utterly unfit for Heaven; and, as it were, *naturalizes* and seasons you for the infernal Regions? Alas! this is a shocking and alarming Discovery indeed. But, blessed be God, you have made it in Time: you have made it while in *the Land of Hope*, and in a *State of Trial*. And therefore there is Reason to hope that if you now take the Alarm, and earnestly use the Means of Grace, your Condition, bad as it is, may be happily altered; and you, who are now fit for nothing but Destruction, may yet be made meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. It is because there is some Reason for this Hope that I have honestly exposed these alarming and unpopular Things to your View. You *must* know them sooner or later: and if you should not know them, till you fall into Destruction, alas! it will then be too late. Believe me, my Brethren, these Things do not proceed from a *morose malevolent* Heart, nor are they intended to drive you *into* Despair. I speak to you with melting Pity, and affectionate Benevolence; and instead of driving you *into* Despair, my Design is to save you *from* it for ever, and bring you to have a *good Hope* thro' Grace. And as the Evidence

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of what I have offered is so plain to common Sense, do not pretend you cannot understand me, and do not know what I would aim at. I am only inculcating upon you this *self-evident* Truth, that unless you are prepared for Heaven, you shall not be admitted; and that, if you are fit for nothing but Destruction, you must be destroyed. Can any mathematical Demonstration be more plain than this? And are any of you so void of Sense, Reason, and Faith, as not to understand and believe it?

I now presume, that such of you as have made this Discovery with Regard to yourselves, are also convinced, that you cannot possibly escape Destruction, unless your present Temper be changed, and quite a new Frame of Spirit given you.

And *who*, do you think, can work this happy Change in your Hears? If you are so vain and ignorant as to flatter yourselves that you can effect it in *your own* Strength, make the Trial, and you will soon be undeceived. It is *God* alone that can work in you both to will and to do. My Text tells you, it is *HE* that *prepares* the Vessels of Mercy for Glory. It is his Holy Spirit alone that is equal to the arduous Work.

But in *what Way* is his Influence to be expected? Is it in a Course of impenitent Sinning? of Presumption and Security? of Sloth and Negligence? No, to expect it in that Way, is to tempt the Lord your God.—But such of you

*and the Vessels of Wrath, delineated, &c.* 27

you as would escape the Damnation of Hell, such of you as have any Desire to be for ever happy, hear me, seriously hear me, and I will tell you, in a few plain Words, what you must do, if you would expect the Aids of divine Grace to prepare you for Glory.

*You must immediately think seriously of your Condition.* You must labour impartially to know the Truth of your Case. Pry into the dreadful Secrets of Wickedness in your Hearts. Review your sinful Lives. Reflect upon the Purity and Justice of God and his Law, and what you have deserved for a whole Life of unnatural Rebellion against Him. Read and hear the Word of Life with Solemnity and Attention, and use all proper Means to furnish your Minds with religious Knowledge. It may pain you at first to confine your Minds to such Objects. But it *must* be done; and there is no disputing against *Necessity*. Besides, the Pain is medicinal; it will contribute to the Recovery of your dying Souls.

Again: *You must accustom yourselves to frequent importunate Prayer.* If ever you be saved, or prepared for Salvation, it will be *in Answer to Prayer*. Therefore engage in it, persevere in it, and never give over till you obtain your Request.

Further: *You must guard against every Thing that tends to divert your Minds from this grand Concern*; as, excessive Hurries and Cares about

earthly Things, vain and vicious Company, and every avoidable Temptation.

Finally : *You must persevere in this Course*, if you hope to succeed ; and never rest till you feel the Dispositions of Heaven wrought in your Souls. A Pang of Remorse, a serious Fit, a transient Prayer, will not suffice, but you must *hold on your Way* to the last. You may expect Difficulties in this new Course, and you will probably meet with more than you can now foresee or expect. But YOU MUST BREAK THROUGH ALL, for your immortal Interest, your ALL is at Stake.

This is the Course I would advise you to, if ever you hope to be prepared for Glory: I cannot give you any the least Encouragement in any other Way. If any other can shew you a more easy, and yet safe Course, and produce sufficient Authority for it, you may take it. But, for my Part, if I teach you what I learn in my Bible, I can give you no other Directions. Nor do I expect to be saved in any easier Way myself. And therefore, if you will chuse another, *you* must be answerable for it. Remember I warn you against it, and would not be accessary to it for ten thousand Worlds.

Now, if this Course must be taken, *when*, do you think, must it be begun? Will you appoint To-morrow, or next Year, or old Age, or a Sick-Bed, for that Purpose? Alas! you may never live to see that Time. Before then you may drop into Destruction, as rotten Fruit  
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fall to the Ground by their own Weight. Therefore, now, this present fleeting now, is the only Time you are sure of; and consequently, *this* is the only proper Time to *begin* this Course. Now, then, now, while my Voice is sounding in your Ears, form the Resolution, and carry it into immediate Execution. Bear it home upon your Hearts to your Houses, and there let it dwell till the great Work is done. Oh! that you did but know its Importance and Necessity! then you could not delay it one Moment longer.

And now, if you have any Regard for the God that made you, for the Lord that bought you, or for your own everlasting Happiness, take this Course *immediately*.—If you have any Need of Excitements take the following.

1. *Consider your present dangerous Situation.* You hang over the Pit of Destruction by the slender Thread of Life, held up only by the Hand of an angry God, as we hold a Spider, or some poisonous Insect over a Fire ready to throw it in. You are ripe for Destruction, and therefore in Danger every Day, every Hour, every Moment, of falling into it. You are as fit for Destruction as a Murderer for the Gallows, or a mortified Limb to be cut off. Such polluted Vessels of Wrath must be thrown out of the Way in some dark Corner in Hell that they may no more encumber or disgrace the more honourable Apartments of the Universe. And is this a Situation in which it becomes

becomes you to be merry, and gay, and thoughtless, and eager after the Trifles of Time? Oh! does it not become you rather to be on your Knees at the Throne of Grace, and vigorously *pressing* into the Kingdom of God?

2. *Reflect with how much Long-suffering God has endured you*, notwithstanding all your audacious and repeated Provocations. One would think *one* Day's sinning against so holy and gracious a God, by a Creature so deeply obliged to him, would make your Case desperate, and that the Evening of such a Day would be the Hour of your Execution. But he has patiently borne with you for Days, for Months, for Years, perhaps for Scores of Years. And all this Time he has followed you with his Blessings every Moment, and granted you the Means of Preparation for Glory. And yet you have been thoughtless, disobedient, ungrateful, rebellious, still. How justly then may he inflict Punishment upon you? And how illustriously will his Goodness and Severity, his Mercy and Justice, be displayed in his Treatment of you? What could you have desired more, in Point of Time, Opportunity, Persuatives, than you have enjoyed? Will it not then appear evident, that your Destruction is entirely of your self, and that, as I told you before, God and his Throne will be guiltless for ever?

3. *Consider how dreadful will be your Punishment*, if you should perish at last, by your present  
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sent wilful Negligence. My Text tells you, what will be the Design of your Punishment; it will be to *shew the Wrath* of God, and *make his Power known*. Such will be your Punishment, as will be fit to shew, that it is *almighty* Power that inflicts it, and that it is an almighty God who is angry with you. It will be his professed Design, to display the dreadful Glory of his vindictive Attributes upon you; particularly his Justice, as the supreme Magistrate of the Universe. And even his Justice *deserves* to be displayed. For *Justice* is not that ugly, grim, horrible Thing, which Criminals imagine. In a Ruler, especially in the supreme and universal Ruler, Justice is not only a majestic and terrible, but it is a *lovely, amiable, ingratiating* Attribute, essential to his Character, and to the public Good: and so it *appears* to all competent Judges, that is, to all who are not self-flattering Criminals, and therefore *Parties*. The Display of this Attribute, therefore, upon proper Objects, is necessary to give a *full* View of the Deity to the World, to represent him as he is,

“ A God *all o'er*, consummate, absolute;  
“ *Full-orb'd*, in his *whole* Round of Rays  
“ *compleat.*” †

Now, whatever Attribute of his he intends to display in any of his Works, he always does  
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† Young's Night-Thoughts, No. 4.

it in a Manner *worthy of Himself*. When his Design was to display and glorify his creative Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, see! what a stately, well-furnished Universe he spoke into Being! What a magnificent, God-like Building! When his Design was to shew the Riches of his Grace towards our guilty Race, what Wonders did he perform! What inimitable Exploits of Condescension and Love! His only begotten Son must become a Man, must struggle with all the Calamities of Life for three and thirty long and painful Years, must expire in Torture upon an ignominious Cross, and redeem the Guilty with the Blood of his Heart. This was *God-like Love and Grace* indeed beyond all Example. Oh! “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth Iniquity?” † He is as much *distinguished* from all other Beings by the Wonders of his *Love and Grace*, as by the Eternity of his Existence, or by that Wisdom which planned the Universe, or that Power which produced it out of Nothing. When, in Prosecution of the same Design, he intends to give a farther Display of the Riches of his glorious Grace, upon the Vessels of Mercy, what God-like Provisions hath he made for them! Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive the Things he hath prepared for them. He hath prepared for them a City, such a glorious Residence,

† Mic. vii. 18.

fidence, that he is *not* ashamed to be called *their* God: He is not ashamed to own the Relation, because he has *acted up* to the Character, and worthy of himself †. And when his Design is to shew his avenging Wrath, and make his punitive Power known, when it is to shew what God-like Punishments he can inflict, such as may, by their Terror, declare him to be the Author, and serve as loud Warnings to all present, and, perhaps, future Creations, to deter them from the Breach of his sacred Laws; and when the Subjects of the Punishment are strong capacious Vessels of Wrath, fit for nothing but Destruction: I say, when this is the Case, what God-like Vengeance will he execute! what signal, unexampled Punishment will he inflict! The Design of the Punishment, which is not the Reformation of the Criminal, but the Benefit of others and the Display of his Perfections, requires, that he give a loose to all the Terrors of his Power. And what Miracles of Misery, what terribly illustrious Monuments of Vengeance will *that* perform and erect! as far surpassing all the Punishments inflicted by Mortals, as the Creation of the World out of Nothing exceeds all the Works of human Art.

And are you proof against the Energy of such Considerations as these? then you are dreadfully fitted for Destruction indeed! For

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† Heb. xi. 16.

the strongest Persuasives to deter you from it, which God himself can reveal, or the human Mind conceive, have no Weight upon you.

But may I hope, that I shall succeed at least with *some* of you this Day, to fly from this tremendous Destruction, into which you are this Moment ready to fall? Alas! it is hard, if even a *Stranger* cannot prevail with so much as *one* Soul, in so large an Assembly, and in a Point so reasonable, and so strongly enforced by your own Interest.—But I must leave this Warning with you; and if you do not remember it now, you will remember it Millions of Ages hence, when the Remembrance of it will torment you with intolerable Anguish.

There are sundry in this Assembly, I doubt not, who, by comparing their Dispositions with the Nature of heavenly Happiness, may make the welcome Discovery, that they are, in some Measure, *prepared* for it. To such happy Souls, I have Time only to say, that if this be your Character, you may be sure that immense Happiness shall be yours. Your present heavenly Temper is a certain Pledge and Earnest of it. You may be sure God would never make you fit for it, and then exclude you from it.

And, on the other Hand, if you find that the Dispositions of Hell are subdued in you, assure yourselves God will not doom you to it. Can you think he would gain your Hearts, and allure your Love, and then bid you depart from him, to languish and pine away with the  
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eager anxious Pantings of disappointed bereaved Love? Will he doom you to reside for ever among those whose Works you detest, and whose Society you abhor? No: he will thoroughly prepare you, and make you holy, and then advance you to dwell for ever in that Presence which you love, in the Element of Holiness, to breathe in that clear refined Air, to live in that wholesome Climate, so agreeable to your Constitution, to be employed in those Services in which you delight, to enjoy that sublime and delicate Happiness which you relish, and to converse in that Society which you affect, and which is of the same Temper and Spirit with you. — And for that blessed Region may we all be prepared; and there may we all meet at last, thro' JESUS CHRIST!  
*Amen,*

*The E N D.*



*Published by the same Author.*

1. **A** Sermon preached in Henrico, 29th April 1754. and at Cannongate, 26th May, 1754.

2. Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of a good Soldier. A Sermon preached to Capt. OVERTON'S Independent Company of Volunteers, raised in Hanover County, Virginia, August 17, 1755.

3. The Crisis: or, the uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at particular Times, consider'd, with Reference to Great-Britain and her Colonies in their present Circumstances. A Sermon preached in Hanover, Virginia, October 28, 1756. A Day appointed by the Synod of New York to be observed as a General Fast, on Account of the present War with France.

4. Little Children invited to Jesus Christ, a Sermon preached in Hanover County, Virginia, May 8, 1757. With a short Account of the late remarkable Religious Impressions among the Students in the College of New Jersey.

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