

from *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (KJV)

In the gospel attributed to Matthew, Jesus wanders the rural districts of Galilee. At this time he was known primarily as a traveling healer, and people flocked to him primarily for free medicine. Now he wants to establish a claim for himself as a preacher and as a moral authority. He is surrounded by crowds, but surrounded more immediately by his disciples. He speaks directly to his disciples, but at the same time speaking in the presence of the crowds. This speech has been called "The Sermon on the Mount." In the first section he sets out his interpretation of Jewish law (most of chapter 5) and then he discusses how he thinks one should behave himself in regards to daily activities. While the whole selection has been very influential (you may find many a familiar saying), I would like you to pay close attention to the concluding sections. The King James authorized text of 1611 is presented here.

Chapter 5

[1] And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

[2] And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, [3] Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [4] Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. [5] Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. [6] Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. [7] Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. [8] Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. [9] Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. [10] Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

[12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

[13] Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

[14] Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. [15] Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. [16] Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

[17] Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. [18] For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. [19] Who-

soever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [20] For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

[21] Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: [22] But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. [23] Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; [24] Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

[25] Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. [26] Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no

means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. [27] Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: [28] But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

[29] And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. [30] And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

[31] It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: [32] But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

[33] Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: [34] But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: [35] Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. [36] Neither

shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. [37] But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

[38] Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: [39] But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. [40] And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. [41] And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. [42] Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

[43] Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; [45] That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. [46] For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? [47] And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

[48] Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Chapter 6

[1] Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. [2] Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [3] But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: [4] That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

[5] And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [6] But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. [7] But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. [8] Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need

of, before ye ask him. [9] After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. [10] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. [11] Give us this day our daily bread. [12] And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. [13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

[14] For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: [15] But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

[16] Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [17] But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; [18] That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

[19] Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: [20] But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not

break through nor steal: [21] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

[22] The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. [23] But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

[24] No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

[25] Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? [26] Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? [27] Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

[28] And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: [29] And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. [30] Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he

not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? [31] Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? [32] (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. [33] But seek ye first the kingdom of

God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. [34] Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

(1611)

Journal Writing

How much of our time do we spend worrying? It seems we're always thinking about the future or the past, but rarely are we concerned with right now. What would we gain from letting go our worries? What would we lose? Should we forget our concerns for clothing and food and shelter?

Words

array
countenance
fowl

mammon
morrow
raiment

stature
verily

Questions (focus on 6:19-34)

1. In section 6:19, What is Matthew's purpose in referring to "moth," "rust," and "thieves"? Explain.
2. Matthew employs more than one method for arguing against serving two masters. What are they? Why might he use more than one technique?
3. Matthew talks about food, clothing, and drink. Why?
4. Explain the examples that are used to illustrate the main idea about food, clothing, and drink.
5. Taken as a whole how can we describe Matthew's main argument in 6:19-34? What is your evidence?

St. Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 13 (KJV)

Paul was not one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus, and in fact he was a Jewish official in the Roman administration who regulated and tried to suppress the early religious practices of those who followed Jesus. However, he had a vision and conversion experience, he says, on the road to Damascus. Although he never met Jesus he took it upon himself to promulgate the word through his travels across the Mediterranean world. Apparently one of the congregations he helped established in Corinth had fallen to discord. In this letter he attempts to reestablish his basic teachings and restore order to the congregation. Corinth had a major temple to Aphrodite, the pagan goddess of love, and here Paul attempts to offer an early Christian teaching on the topic. In the Latin translation, love is *caritas*. The translators for the King James Version kept the original word by translating it as *charity*.

[1] Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. [2] And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. [3] And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

[4] Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, [5] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; [6] Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; [7] Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

[8] Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

[9] For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. [10] But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. [11] When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. [12] For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

[13] And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

(1611)

Journal Writing

“All you need is love,” sing the Beatles. Pop music is filled to the brim with songs of love—just count how many a “baby, baby, baby” peppers lyrics. Is this really true? Does love really conquer all? Write a response in which you either praise love as the most important value or show how it is not as important as we might think. Use examples from your own experience, history, or literature.

Words

Abide (abideth)
Bestow

Cymbal
Iniquity

Vaunt (vaunteth)

Questions

1. In the opening three paragraphs of Paul's selection, he describes a series of powers or abilities that a person might have. Be able to explain these abilities and why Paul mentions them.
2. Explain the chief characteristics of charity according to Paul. Can you think of any examples from ordinary life and/or key moments in history, literature, or movies that might explain what Paul means by saying, "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth"?
3. Paul talks about the qualities of a child and then refers to a "glass, darkly." Why? How are these two ideas relevant to the entire passage about charity?

“Meditation XVII,” John Donne

John Donne (1572-1631), English poet and priest, was a master of wit and devotion. Ben Jonson called him “the first poet in the world in some things.” Donne’s early career was threatened by constant poverty, until he became dean of St. Paul’s in 1621. He wrote richly complex poetry and sermons. Most of his works were published after his death by his son. Collections of his sermons appeared in 1640, 1649, and 1661; a collection of his poetry appeared in 1633. Donne was a superb inventor of metaphors, as the following essay indicates.

During a serious illness in 1623, Donne, then Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral, kept careful notes on the symptoms and progress of his disease. In his convalescence he fashioned these notes into a book of *Devotions*, from which “Meditation XVII” is taken.

[1] Perchance he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me and see my state may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that. [2] The church is catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. [3] When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that head which is my head too, and ingrafted into the body whereof I am a member. [4] And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one author and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. [5] God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library

where every book shall lie open to one another. [6] As therefore the bell that rings a sermon calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all; but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness. [7] There was a contention as far as a suit (in which piety and dignity, religion and estimation, were mingled) which of the religious orders should ring to prayers first in the morning; and it was determined that they should ring first that rose earliest. [8] If we understand aright the dignity of this bell that tolls for our evening prayer, we would be glad to make it ours by rising early, in that application, that it might be ours as well as his whose indeed it is. [9] The bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit again, yet from that minute that that occasion wrought upon him, he is united to God. [10] Who casts not up his eye to the sun when it rises? but who takes off his eye from a comet

when that breaks out? Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world? [11] No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. [12] If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were. [13] Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. [14] Neither can we call this a begging of misery or a borrowing of misery, as though we are not miserable enough of ourselves but must fetch in more from the next house, in taking upon us the misery of our neighbors. [15] Truly it were an excusable covetousness if we did; for affliction is a treasure, and scarce any man

hath enough of it. [16] No man hath affliction enough that is not matured and ripened by it, and made fit for God by that affliction. [17] If a man carry treasure in bullion, or in a wedge of gold, and have none coined into current moneys, his treasure will not defray him as he travels. [18] Tribulation is treasure in the nature of it, but it is not current money in the use of it, except we get nearer and nearer our home, heaven, by it. [19] Another man may be sick too, and sick to death, and this affliction may lie in his bowels as gold in a mine and be of no use to him; but this bell that tells me of his affliction digs out and applies that gold to me, if by this consideration of another's dangers I take mine own into contemplation and so secure myself by making my recourse to my God, who is our only security.

(1623)

Journal Writing

Sometimes humans are drawn together by suffering instead of jubilation. There is the old saying that “misery loves company.” Write of an experience, it can be yours or another’s, when suffering brought humans together.

Words

affliction
catholic
contention
covetous

defray
engraft (ingraft)
intermit
promontory

suit
tribulation

Questions

1. In the first few lines of the meditation, Donne talks about a body and a head. What does he mean? Explain.
2. In an extended metaphor, Donne talks about a chapter, a book, an author, translation and leaves. Explain the metaphor and how it contributes to Donne's purpose in this meditation.
3. In the middle of the meditation, Donne asks some rhetorical questions. What is his purpose at this point in the meditation?
4. The most powerful part of the meditation occurs with the passage that begins, "No man is an island." Explain this sentence as well as the next that begins, "If a clod be washed away." How does this passage contribute to Donne's theme in the meditation?
5. Next, Donne speaks of misery and affliction. What is his point in doing so? Doesn't he seem to be answering his critics at this point? How so?
6. Finally, Donne talks about bullion, money, treasure, and gold. Why? What is his purpose?

RELIGIO MEDICI, SIR THOMAS BROWNE

Sir Thomas Browne (1605 –1682) was an English author of varied works which disclose his wide learning in diverse fields including medicine, religion, science and the esoteric. Browne's writings display a deep curiosity towards the natural world, influenced by the Scientific Revolution of Baconian enquiry. A consummate literary craftsman, Browne's works are permeated by frequent reference to Classical and Biblical sources and to his own highly idiosyncratic personality. His literary style varies according to genre resulting in a rich, unusual prose that ranges from rough notebook observations to the highest baroque eloquence.

His first well-known work bore the Latin title *Religio Medici* (The Religion of a Physician). This work was circulated in manuscript among his friends, and it caused Browne some surprise and embarrassment when an unauthorized edition appeared in 1642, since the work contained a number of religious speculations that might be considered unorthodox. An authorized text with some of the controversial matter removed appeared in 1643. Our selection from the 1643 edition deals with Browne's fascination with nature, especially as a revelation of the divine.

Sect. 16— [1] Thus there are two books from whence I collect my divinity. Besides that written one of God, another of his servant, nature, that universal and publick manuscript, that lies expanded unto the eyes of all. [2] Those that never saw him in the one have discovered him in the other; this was the scripture and theology of the heathens;¹ the natural motion of the sun made them more admire Him than its supernatural station² did the children of Israel. [3] The ordinary effects of nature wrought more admiration in them than, in the other, all his miracles. Surely the heathens knew better how to join and read these mystical letters than we Christians, who cast a more careless eye on these common hieroglyphics, and disdain to suck divinity from the flowers of nature.

[4] Nor do I so forget God as to adore the name of nature; which I define not, with the schools, to be the principle of motion and rest, but that straight and regular line, that settled and constant course the wisdom of God hath ordained the actions of his creatures, according to their several kinds. [5] To make a revolution every day is the nature of the sun, because of that necessary course which God hath ordained it, from which it cannot swerve but by a faculty from that voice which first did give it motion. [6] Now this course of nature God seldom alters or perverts; but, like an excellent artist, hath so contrived his work, that, with the self-same instrument, without a new creation, he may effect his obscurest designs. [7] Thus he

¹ Ancient peoples

² God made the sun stand still while Joshua conducted a battle. (Joshua 10:12-13)

sweeteneth the water with a wood,³ preserveth the creatures in the ark, which the blest of his mouth might have as easily created; for God is like a skilful geometrician, who, when more easily, and with one stroke of his compass, he might describe or divide a right line, had yet rather do this in a circle or longer way, according to the constituted and forelaid principles of his art: yet this rule of his he doth sometimes pervert, to acquaint the world with his prerogative, lest the arrogancy of our reason should question his power, and conclude he could not. [8] And thus I call the effects of nature the works of God, whose hand and instrument she only is; and therefore, to ascribe his actions unto her is to devolve the honour of the principal agent upon the instrument; which if with reason we may do, then let our hammers rise up and boast they have built our houses, and our pens receive the honour of our writing. [9] I hold there is a general beauty in the works of God, and therefore no deformity in any kind of species of creature whatsoever. [10] I cannot tell by what logick we call a toad, a bear, or an elephant ugly; they being created in those outward shapes and figures which best express the actions of their inward forms; and

³ Moses was instructed by God to turn a bitter pool into drinkable water by placing a tree in it. (Exodus 15:25)

having passed that general visitation of God, who saw that all that he had made was good, that is, conformable to his will, which abhors deformity, and is the rule of order and beauty. [11] There is no deformity but in monstrosity; wherein, notwithstanding, there is a kind of beauty; nature so ingeniously contriving the irregular part, as they become sometimes more remarkable than the principal fabrick. [12] To speak yet more narrowly, there was never any thing ugly or misshapen, but the chaos; wherein, notwithstanding, to speak strictly, there was no deformity, because no form; nor was it yet impregnant by the voice of God. [13] Now nature is not at variance with art, nor art with nature; they being both the servants of his providence. [14] Art is the perfection of nature. Were the world now as it was the sixth day,⁴ there were yet a chaos. Nature hath made one world, and art another. In brief, all things are artificial; for nature is the art of God.

(1643)

⁴ The sixth day was the last day of creation and saw the arrival of land animals and humans (Genesis 1:24-31)

Journal Writing

Reading nature has an old and venerable history. From Roman readings of birds to readings of Hurricane Katrina, humans have yearned to find answers in the riddle of nature. What do you find in nature? Your inspiration could be something as simple as the flowers outside your window, a barren field in the depths of Winter, a majestic and sublime mountain, or a mere pebble of sand. What does it say to you?

Words

arrogancy (arrogance)
disdain
faculty

impregnant
mystical
obscure

pervert (v)
prerogative

Questions

1. In the opening sections (1-3) Browne seems to be praising ancient peoples who never had the privilege of reading scripture. How does he do this? What are “heathen” virtues? What is praiseworthy in them? Is he criticizing his contemporaries?
2. Browne then discusses the characteristics of nature’s relationship to God. How does God use nature? What can God do to nature? Why do you think Browne offers this argument here?
3. In 8 Browne sums up his argument to this point. What is the main idea of this sentence? What is his argument? What method does he use to illustrate his point?
4. Sections 9-13 put forth another position regarding nature. What is that position? Is Browne answering critics at this point? How can we tell? What would their position be?
5. What is his final assertion? How does it proceed logically from the previous arguments he has laid out? Do you agree? Why or why not?

“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Jonathan Edwards

For better or worse, the sermon for which Edwards is probably most famous—or infamous—is the one preached to the congregation of Enfield, Massachusetts (later Connecticut) in July 1741. Anthologized in high school and college textbooks, *Sinners* represents in many persons’ minds the bleak, cruel, and hell-bent outlook of Edwards and his Puritan predecessors. But of course such a representation is only a caricature, for *Sinners*, if it represents anything, stands for only a small part of Edwards’s view of the relationship between humankind and God. As a specially crafted awakening sermon, *Sinners* was aimed at a particularly hard-hearted congregation. But, at the same time, the awakening sermon and all it expressed—the awful weight of sin, the wrath of an infinitely holy God, and the unexpectedness of the moment when God will execute justice—were integral to Edwards’s theology. This sermon, therefore, deserves to be studied and meditated on for its own sake, but also as part of a larger vision of the spiritual life.

All over Massachusetts congregations were being struck with the Holy Spirit; some writhing on the floor, some speaking in tongues—magnificent displays, so people reported. The congregation of Enfield had not had any reports of this. Edwards was determined to awaken that spirit. We pick up his sermon about a third of the way through after he has established the groundwork of his argument. Now he has turned to those in the congregation who have not yet had the “revival” experience.

[1] Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly. [2] The sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the

earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with, and do not willingly subserve to any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of him who hath subjected it in hope. [3] There are black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you.

The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.

[4] The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward.[5] If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the

stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

[6] The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. [7] Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls. All you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. [8] However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. [9] However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they

were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

[10] The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. He is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. [11] It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night - that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has

held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

[12] O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: 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. 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. And you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

(1741)

Journal Writing

Have you ever or have you ever known anyone who has been convinced to not do something from a description of the horrible effects that may follow? What was it? Do you consider this method of persuasion effective? Why or why not?

Words

prudence
sovereign

subserve
spew

loathsome
asunder

Questions

1. In the first paragraph Edwards refers to various aspects of nature. Why? Explain.
2. What idea about God's wrath does Edwards convey near the end of the first paragraph?
3. Explain the use of the extended metaphor in the second paragraph. What is Edwards' purpose here?
4. Explain the use of the extended metaphor in the third paragraph. What is Edwards' purpose here? Does he shift his main point here or continue the idea that he is developing in the second paragraph?
5. What effect on the audience do you think that Edwards creates by introducing the concept of a spider? Explain.
6. Discuss Edwards' purpose in this sermon. Consider the tone of the sermon.