

The Vessels of Mercy and the Vessels of Wrath Delineated

by Samuel Davies

The sermon explores the concept of the vessels of mercy and the vessels of wrath, highlighting the importance of preparation for glory and the consequences of fitness for destruction.

Scripture: Micah 7:18, John 3:3, Romans 9:21, 2 Corinthians 5:5, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:3, Hebrews 11:16, 1 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Election And Predestination", "Heaven And Hell"

Description

Samuel Davies preaches about the distinction between the vessels of mercy and the vessels of wrath, illustrating how God prepares some for glory and others for destruction based on their dispositions and behaviors. He emphasizes the importance of being prepared for heaven by cultivating heavenly dispositions like love for God, delight in holiness, and fellowship with the saints. Davies warns about the dreadful consequences of being unfit for heaven and the inevitable misery that awaits those who persist in sinful and ungodly behaviors. He urges the listeners to reflect on their current state, seek divine grace for transformation, and take immediate steps towards spiritual renewal to avoid the wrath of God and secure a place in the heavenly inheritance.

Transcript

The Vessels of Mercy and the

Vessels of Wrath Delineated

by Samuel Davies

"Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the vessels of His wrath--prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the vessels of His mercy--whom He prepared in advance for glory--even us, whom He also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?" Romans 9:21-24

The true notion of the present world is--that it is a state of preparation for another, eternal world; and, therefore, such as we habitually are here, such shall we be forever. Mankind are now being formed, like clay in the potter's hands--some for honor and some for dishonor; some for wrath and some for glory. And

as the potter does not put his vessels to their respective uses until they are finished and prepared for them--so neither are men removed from the present state, and fixed in their respective residences in the eternal world, until they are prepared, finished, and completely fitted for them. The vessels of mercy are prepared beforehand for that glory with which they shall be filled. And, on the other hand, the vessels 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 choose to make a parade of useless learning, that the apostle uses a different form of expression, when speaking of these different sorts of people. 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, whom HE prepared in advance for 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 particle--the 'vessels of wrath prepared for destruction'--fitted by their own willful sin and impenitence, during the long-suffering of God towards them, which had a tendency to lead them to repentance.

Vessels of His wrath! How terribly emphatic 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 His mercy! vessels formed, prepared, finished, adorned by the gentle and skillful 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 they became marred clay in his omnipotent hands, endures or bears with them with much long-suffering; as well as with vessels of mercy! He bears with them, and he has with you--for days, and 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 the earth. They will serve as public and terribly illustrious monuments of the divine power and justice, and the righteous resentments of the righteous and holy God against sin. They will serve as loud warnings to all worlds, to deter them from that destructive evil.

And thus they will 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, "show God's wrath and make his power known!" Their destruction will illustriously display the glory of these perfections. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright--to reflect a dreadful--and yet amiable splendor upon them! And it is for this dreadful but righteous end, among others, that God now endures them with so much long-suffering: that his perfections, and the honor 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 sin as well.

The view in which I now consider my text leads me to confine myself to this practical inquiry:

Wherein does preparation for glory consist?

And wherein does fitness for destruction consist?

Some of you, perhaps, when you heard the text, were struck with horror, and ready to bless yourselves at the sound: for "Now," you thought within yourselves, "we shall have a sermon upon the solemn 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 choose 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 inquiry; 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 a skeptic of the doctrine of predestination. It is not an entire blank in my creed; nor am I at all 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 information to enable him to determine the final states of men more justly than he could from eternity.

But away with all controversial thoughts 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 of truth. This you may be sure of--that if you have not made yourselves fit for destruction, and fit for nothing else, by your own willful 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 inquiry: Wherein does preparation for glory--and wherein does fitness for destruction, consist?

This will naturally lead me to inquire into your habitual dispositions and behavior: for it is by comparing these to the nature and quality of the regions of heaven and hell--that you can discover which eternal destiny you are fit for. If your temper and dispositions are heavenly and divine--then you may be sure that you shall be admitted into those blessed mansions above! But if, on the other hand, your tempers and dispositions are infernal and diabolical; if they be such as are prevalent and universal in hell--then you may be equally sure, that, unless they are changed--you will be certainly doomed forever to that dismal region below!

This must, methinks, appear quite evident to common sense. The righteous Judge of all the earth will always invariably do that which is righteous, just and fit. If you are fit and prepared for the enjoyments and services of heaven--then you need not fear that he will admit you; never 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 lack of a proper fitness and 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? This is only the same propriety, as that madmen should be shut up in bedlam, or notorious criminals in a dungeon. Therefore,

1. Are you prepared and fit for HEAVEN? Do you love and delight in God--in a God of infinite purity? If not--then 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--then 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--then what would you do in the region of holiness? Alas! to you it would 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 of life--are these your favorite 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--then what would you do among the holy inhabitants of heaven? With what pleasure could you mingle in society with them--while your disposition and theirs are so directly contrary?

Are your hearts full of ardent love to God--and benevolence to mankind? If not--then 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; or a swine for a palace; or a blind man to view the splendors of the universe; and, therefore, you may be certain, that God, who will never do anything that is unjust or unfitting--will not admit you there, while you continue such as you now are!

You must also consider, that if you are fit for these pure and blessed regions--that it is God who has made you so, by his own almighty power! "It is God who has made us for this very purpose," 2 Corinthians 5:5, and you have been deeply sensible that the work was indeed his, was divine and god-like, 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, some of you have effectually done already. But it is God alone who 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 sincere sorrow, under the warm beams of a Savior's love--like snow before the sun? Have you ever felt it subduing your favorite sins, and making them more bitter to you than death, and implanting and nourishing 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 principle 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 to

you--then you may be sure you are not 'prepared in advance 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 present life, as your principal happiness; suppose you are chiefly solicitous and laborious to heap up riches, or to indulge your sensual lusts and appetites; supposing this to be the ruling passion of your souls--then are you fit and prepared 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 earthly things? You are indeed fit to dig in the earth, like moles, and steal the serpent's food; you are indeed fit to scrape up riches; you are indeed fit to wallow in the mire of guilty and debauched pleasures; you are indeed fit to live in this world, could you always make your residence in it. This gross, impure, earthly element, suits your depraved desires, tastes and constitutions.

But can you once imagine that you are fit for heaven; fit to breathe in that pure, healthful 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 not!

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 inexorable death, before long--will tear you away from all that is dear to you under the sun. And, alas! where 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 to be a weariness to you, and the thoughts of him unwelcome to your minds; suppose your hearts are full of angry, malignant passions; in short, suppose you love sin more than holiness--can you then flatter yourselves that you are prepared and 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. Inquire whether your tempers and dispositions are not infernal and diabolical, and such as render 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!" But if you love God, then why is it--that you have so few affectionate thoughts of him? Why is it--that you do not study to please him in all things, and delight in his service? If you love God, why is it that you do not strive to 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 painful dispensations; your uneasy, rebellious spirit under his providence; your aversion to his service--do not these show that you are really disaffected to him?

Now this is the very temper of hell! This is the constitution of a devil--the very worst ingredient in that infernal disposition; and, therefore, unless this temper is changed, you must dwell with devils forever! It is only just and fit--that 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 private 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 that you have prayerless families and prayerless closets; and if you join in public worship once a week, it is a mere customary formality. You cannot bear to wean your thoughts and tongues from temporal affairs--in the few hours devoted to the service of God, though they make up but one day in seven. You do not delight in pious 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 pious 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 no more be troubled with prayers, bibles, sermons, pious conversation, or the tedious hours of Sunday worship. And, since you have no taste for such exercises, is it not fit you should be sent into those ungodly regions, where you shall never again be employed in them?

Again, Are not the minds of some of you defiled with all manner of sin and moral pollutions? And do not those 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 hearts, 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 fire-brands in the neighborhood 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 practicing the infernal dialect, and preparing to converse with the fiends below in their own style, in the regions of imprecation and blasphemy!

Do not some of you live in the practice of the works of the devil; that is, of those works to which he tempts you, and in which he has persisted, who was a rebellious 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," John 8:44, since you habitually do his works! And is it not fit that you should be doomed to the society of your infernal father?

Do you not find that 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 loving sincere relentings; no godly sorrows, proceeding from a sense of the intrinsic vileness and baseness of sin--and from a sincere, unselfish 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 inquiry. 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 and earthly-mindedness; that blindness and insensibility about divine things; that carnal presumption, security, and love of lawless pleasure: I say, if this is still your prevailing temper--then you are not prepared or fit 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, Ephesians 2:3, and while you continue such, you must be vessels of wrath.

Therefore bring the matter to a short issue, by this decisive inquiry: "Have I ever been born again? Have I ever experienced such a mighty change in the temper of my mind, as may, with propriety, be called a new birth or a new creation? For 'if any man is in Christ--he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!' 2 Corinthians 5:17. 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 friends, is the grand, decisive inquiry; for if you have been begotten again, Peter tells you that "God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay!" 1 Peter 1:4. 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 anything else; even Jesus himself has strongly assured you with his own gracious lips, that "except a man is born again," born of the Spirit, as well as of water, "he cannot see the kingdom of heaven; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh," John 3:3, 5, 6--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, namely: 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 or desire 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 physical senses--to render you capable of physical 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 enjoy the pleasures of reason. You would be miserable wretches in paradise itself! Do but consider in what things the bliss of heaven consists of--and methinks that you will rather fear, than hope and desire admission there!

Is holiness so pleasing a thing to you, that you might expect you that would be completely happy--if holiness 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 earthly trifles--so how do you expect to be happy there? There must be another heaven created for you, a Mohammedan paradise of sensual pleasures--or else your temper must be changed before you are fit to enter the true heaven. The paradise of holy 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 allow the course of nature to run on, and let your corrupt dispositions have full scope and range 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 forever, 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 have now to allay your raging thirst for happiness--will be forever 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 you were now stripped naked of every enjoyment, and nothing left you--but bare being, with your usual capacity of enjoyments; 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--becomes a dreadful capacity of misery!

Thus, you see your destruction comes upon you according to the course of nature; and you will die eternally, though the hand of the executioner should never touch you--as the unavoidable result of your present temper, the deadly disease under which you labor!

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 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 people infected with the plague from the society of the sound and healthy? Certainly not! Is it cruel to confine madmen in bedlam, or criminals in prison? Certainly not! Therefore God and his throne will be guiltless forever.

And now, my dear friends, 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 of hell. Alas! this is a shocking and alarming discovery indeed! But, blessed be God, you have made this conviction 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--that your condition, as bad as it is--may be happily altered; and that you, who are now fit for nothing but destruction, may yet be made fit 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 and experience them sooner or later! And if you do not know them until you fall into the pit of destruction, alas! it will then be too late! Believe me, my friends, 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 and affectionate benevolence; and instead of driving you into despair--my design is to save you from it forever, and bring you to have a good hope through grace! And as the evidence of what I have offered is so plain to common sense--then do not pretend that you cannot understand me, and that you do not know what I am aiming at. I am only inculcating upon you this self-evident truth, that unless you are prepared for heaven--then you shall not be admitted! And that, if you are fit for nothing but destruction--then 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 hearts? If you are so vain and ignorant as to flatter yourselves that you can effect it in your own strength--then make the trial, and you will soon be undeceived. It is God alone who can work in you both to will and to do. My text tells you, it is he who

prepares the vessels of mercy for glory; it is his Holy Spirit alone who is equal to the arduous work.

But in what way is this 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 as would escape the damnation of hell; such of you as have any desire to be forever 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 labor impartially to know the truth of your case. You must pry into the dreadful secrets of wickedness in your hearts. You must review your sinful lives. You must reflect upon the purity and justice of God and his law, and what you have deserved for a whole life of wicked rebellion against him. You must 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 until you obtain your request.

Further, You must guard against everything that tends to divert your minds from this grand concern; as excessive hurries and cares about earthly things, vain and wicked company, and every avoidable temptation.

Finally, You must persevere in this course, if you hope to succeed; and never rest until you feel these heavenly dispositions wrought in your souls. A pang of remorse, a fit of seriousness, and 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 the least encouragement in any other way. If any other can show you a more easy way--and yet safe course, and produce sufficient authority for it--then you may take it. But, for my part, if I teach you what I learn in my Bible, I can give you no other direction; nor do I expect to be saved in any easier way myself. And, therefore, if you will choose another way--then you must be answerable for it. Remember, I warn you against it, and would not be accessory to it--for ten thousand worlds!

Now, if this course must be taken, I ask--when do you think it must be begun? Will you appoint tomorrow, 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 falls to the ground by their own weight. Therefore now, this present fleeting now--is the only time you are sure of; and, consequently, now 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--until 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 who made you, for the Lord who bought you, or for your own everlasting happiness; then 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--just as we hold a spider, or some poisonous insect, over a fire, ready to throw in it! 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 is fit for the gallows, or a gangrened limb is fit to be cut off. Such polluted vessels of wrath must be thrown out of the way into some dark corner in hell--that they may no more encumber or disgrace the more honorable apartments of the universe. And is this a situation in which it befits you to be merry, and mirthful, and thoughtless, and eager after the trifles of time? Oh does it not befit 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 that 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 industriously 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, persuasives--than you have enjoyed? Will it not then appear evident, that your destruction is entirely of yourself, and that, as I have told you before, God and his throne will be guiltless forever!

3. Consider how dreadful will be your punishment, if you should perish at last by your present willful negligence! My text tells you what will be the design of your punishment; it will be to show the wrath of God, and make his power known! Such will be your punishment, as will be fit to show that it is almighty power which 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! His justice deserves to be displayed; for divine 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 solemn--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 recipients of divine justice. The display of this attribute, therefore, upon proper objects, is necessary, to give a full view of God's nature to the world; to represent him as he is.

Now, whatever attribute of his that he intends to display in any of his works, he always does 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 show the riches of his grace towards our guilty race--see what wonders he performed! What inimitable exploits of condescension and love! His only begotten Son must become a man, must struggle with all the calamities of life for thirty-three long and painful years, must expire in torture upon an ignominious cross, and redeem the guilty sinner--with the blood of his heart! This was Godlike love and grace indeed, beyond all example. "Oh, who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to

show mercy." Micah 7:18. 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 Godlike provisions has he made for them. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man--the things which God has prepared for those who love him!" He has prepared for them a city, such a glorious residence, 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 so worthy of himself. Hebrews 11:16.

And when his design is to show his avenging wrath, and make his punitive power known; when it is to show what Godlike punishments he can inflict, such as may, by their terror, declare him to be their 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 Godlike vengeance will he execute, what signal, unexampled punishment will he inflict!

The design of divine punishment is not the reformation of the criminal--but the benefit of others, and the display of his perfections; requires that he let loose to all the terrors of his power. And what miracles of misery, what dreadful 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 armored against the force of such considerations as these? Then you are dreadfully fitted for destruction indeed--for 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 prevail at least with some of you this day to flee from this tremendous destruction, into which you are this moment ready to fall? Alas! Can I not 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 is your character, then 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 that God would never make you fit for eternal felicity--and then exclude you from it.

And, on the other hand, if you find that the dispositions of hell are subdued in you--then 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 eager, anxious pantings of disappointed, bereaved love? Will he doom you to reside forever among those whose works you detest, and whose society you abhor? No! He will thoroughly prepare you, and make you holy--and then he will advance you to dwell forever in his 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 soul's 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 delight, 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, to enjoy that endless felicity which awaits those who firmly put their confidence in God, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

"Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the vessels of His wrath--prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the vessels of His mercy--whom He prepared in advance for glory--even us, whom He also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?" Romans 9:21-24

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/samuel-davies/the-vessels-of-mercy-and-the-vessels-of-wrath-delineated/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net