



INSTITUTE of CHRISTIAN GROWTH

A Ministry of New Directions International

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NOTICE!

On July 1, 2007 I will close down my practice. I have been practicing psychiatry for 56 years and I can no longer carry on the work I have done. I have lost my stamina. I am sure that God has something else for me to do and I am looking forward to discovering his will for me. I plan to keep on teaching, lecturing and consulting on ministry issues other than mental health for individuals. I know he has something else for me to do to occupy my time so I am asking him each day to point the way. I will be freely available for the activities listed above so if you have a need let me know.

THIS WILL BE THE LAST PRINTED NEWSLETTER WE WILL SEND OUT. I WILL CONTINUE TO WRITE AND PUBLISH THEM ON MY WEBSITE AS WE HAVE IN THE PAST YEAR. IF YOU WISH TO RECEIVE A PERSONAL ECOPY PLEASE SEND YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS TO wpwilson@netpath.net AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEND IT TO YOU.

Please put **NEWSLETTER** in the subject field if you e-mail us.

PERSONAL NOTES: N.B.

* On April 28th Mrs. Katherine Simpson of Greenville, SC died. She along with her late husband Henry have primarily been responsible for the support of this ministry. Through the years they made it possible for me to

sponsor conferences on Christian medicine at Duke University, to travel overseas, to teach in medical schools in 16 countries, to teach pastors in 31 countries, to publish this newsletter, and to continue to care for the battered and bruised children of the Lord.

Kate was a strong believer and lived a life that glorified the Lord, as did her husband. It was fitting that at her funeral pastor Stephen Crotts gave an altar call to the congregation who packed the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Both Kate and Henry would have been pleased.

Katherine Stackhouse, who died in December, was also a major contributor to my work. Katherine began to provide support several years after I began my ministry, and was a faithful supporter for the last 20 years. I shall be eternally grateful for her support as she too made it possible for me to serve the Lord wherever he sent me.

Elizabeth and I are doing well. I will speak of her healing in my commentary so I proceed to that now.

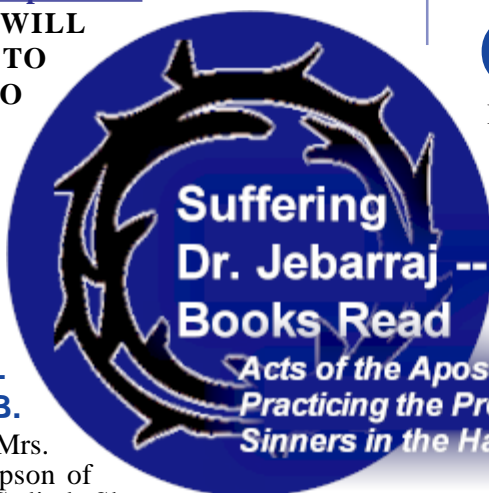


COMMENTARY

It is appropriate that I begin this essay on suffering. I promised this on Good Friday because it was the day Jesus

suffered and died for me, for you and for all mankind. You will probably not get this until late May. The message is, however, for any season.

Most of us do not understand what it cost God to send his sinless son to suffer and die for a world of lost sinners. Since the Trinity is one, it



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really means that God in Jesus came and died for our sins. Words cannot describe the pain he took upon himself for us. We know that Jesus suffered, so God suffered too. Can you imagine what it would be like to see your son who you knew had lived a life in which he was declaring your glory, healing people, transforming lives, resurrecting the dead, and showing what real love was all about die a horrible death on the cross? Can you imagine how hard it was to turn your face from the scene and take your Spirit away to let him take all the punishment that sinners deserve? We usually think that only the physical pain Jesus experienced was what made him suffer. Not so! The real suffering was the emotional pain he felt when God withdrew his Spirit and Jesus took our punishment. When it happened Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The above raises the question, how did he suffer emotionally?

Years ago at Duke University I was one of the founders of the second pain clinic established in America. There were three of us, a neurosurgeon, an anesthesiologist, and me. As soon as we opened the clinic we were overwhelmed with patients who had chronic pain and were suffering mightily. As I worked in the clinic I soon realized that their pain had two dimensions. First, there was the sensation of pain that elicited the emotion of pain. The sensation was a stimulus for the emotion. Then as we saw more and more patients, I came to realize that if I could control the suffering, the sensation of pain became more bearable. I used this understanding to write a paper on the emotion of pain. I got over 1,000 reprint requests. The most I ever got before or after for other papers was 200. I guess people had not thought about suffering being an emotion.

I personally had experienced what suffering was like early in my medical career. When I was an intern I was on the obstetrical service. Two of us were covering the service, but my colleague got sick and was out for ten days. During that time I was expected to carry on the work of the service by myself. For ten nights I only averaged two hours of sleep. On the 10th day I began to hallucinate and became profoundly depressed. I want to emphasize the fact that depression is archetypal suffering. I cannot describe in words the agony of severe depression. There is a kind of grayness that hangs over the depressed person. It is so painful that there develops an intense desire to escape the suffering. It is so great that people think of suicide. Some frequently commit it.

When I started in medicine no one knew about sleep deprivation so they did not know what to do to help me. There were no medicines, and where I was interning they did not have shock therapy, so the psychiatrist decided to put me to sleep for three days. After I was allowed to wake I was comforted during the ensuing week by a nurse who I had been dating. Her comfort lifted me up, but not out. I was still depressed and remained so for another 18 months. My depression did not impair my ability to work so I continued my career. Even so, I suffered even though I did not have physical pain.

In the pain clinic it took me some time to recognize that pain elicited empathy. It is the mechanism by which suffering is transmitted to those who love the one who is suffering. I had learned in medical school to turn down my emotions so that I would not feel my patients suffering at the same level they were experiencing it. I still felt some of their emotional pain even though it was muted. Several years after I became a Christian, I came to the point that I could not keep from intensely suffering with them. This increase in empathic suffering occurred because I myself experienced the sensation of pain that was severe, chronic and unremitting. This changed the level at which I empathized.

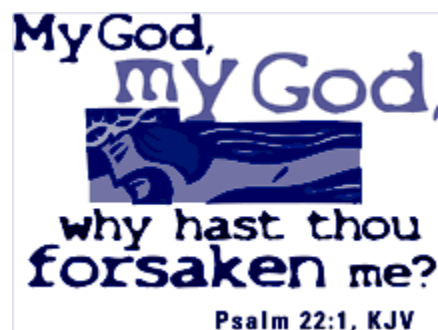
The episode that taught me more about suffering occurred when I developed fibromyositis in the muscles of my left scapular area. It was an unremitting, hot, burning excruciating pain. Nothing affected it. Neither injections of cortisone, medications, physiotherapy, or anything else made a difference.

At the time the pain occurred I had just finished reading Terry Law's book, *The Power of Praise and Worship*, so in desperation I thought why not try praising and worshiping God and thank him for the pain as Terry recommended. It seemed silly to do so, but why shouldn't I try it? I had nothing to lose and everything to gain. So at 2AM on a morning in the third week I was walking the floor when the pain had made sleep impossible, I began to praise the Lord and thank him for the pain. I did this for over an hour. At this point no one had comforted me. I don't remember if my wife ever really understood how I hurt. If she did, she did not know what to do.

I continued to thank God for the pain and lo and behold in two weeks it was gone! I learned something from the episode. I learned more about what suffering to the sensation of pain is really like.

I had one final experience that further showed me what suffering could be like. It occurred during the Christmas holiday of this year as I had been reading Jonathan Edward's sermon *A Sinner in the Hands of an Angry God*. When he preached this sermon it was said that people could feel the flames of hell licking around their ankles. As I read it I began to wonder if hell is really like the picture he painted. Was it really all fire and brimstone? As I usually do, I checked out the subject in the Bible, and afterwards asked God if what I found described there was what it is really like. The Bible paints it as a place where there **IS** fire and brimstone. Even Jesus in his story of Lazarus and Dives painted it as a place of fire. He always described it that way. John

described it as a place of eternal fire in Revelation. Since that is what it is, then the pain that the fire causes gives rise to endless suffering. However, there is more to make a person suffer in hell than fire. The Bible makes it clear that it has inhabitants other than the condemned. There are demons. In addition there is blackness and isolation. The inhabitants are alone and cannot communicate with anyone. Can you for a



moment think of what it would be like to be in unbearable heat, isolated in total darkness, having no one to talk to and tortured by Satan's demons? You cannot die to escape. It will just go on and on through eternity!

God did answer my prayer by allowing me to get a glimpse of hell. He placed before me a vision of a black wall that was slowly moving to the right. Finally a door appeared. It was brilliantly white and was colonial in design. I guess that was because I was in Boston at the time I had the vision. The wall stopped moving and the door slowly opened. On the other side all I saw was blackness. But it was different from the blackness of a dark room. It was as if the blackness was that of suffering. It was not really black, it was a grayness the likes of which people feel in depression. It was agonizing to look at it. Then slowly the door closed and the wall moved on. It may have been that God was confirming my often made statement that if I could design hell I would make everyone in it depressed and withdraw them from heroin once a week. God went much further in his design.

Later I got a book by Bill Wiese entitled *23 Minutes in Hell*. I reviewed it in my previous newsletter. In it he describes what he saw on a trip Jesus gave him to hell. What he saw is corroborated by scripture. His was an out of body experience and when he returned to his body he was horrified. He had not done a Bible study on the subject and had not read anything about hell, so his experience could not have been influenced by his previous exposure to descriptions of hell. It was not a bad dream for dreams are made up of fragments of past knowledge and experiences. His was a trip into the supernatural realm where we all will sooner or later go. He was one of the people who has been allowed a peek into the supernatural.

When he was tossed into hell he was naked. He landed in a bleak holding cell. The air was totally dry and hot. The description reminded me of the 115 degree heat my family and I once experienced camping in the Arizona desert. In his cell there were monsters that in time mutilated him without destroying him. He also experienced the total blackness that the Bible describes. Later he saw a fire filled pit in which the damned were screaming and crying out while clawing at the walls trying to escape. This was horrifying to him. From another view he saw individuals in smaller pits again enveloped in flames and suffering.

There were many other experiences that he had in hell and at the end he finally found out why he was taken there. Jesus told him that he wanted him to see what it was like so he could tell others about his experience and they would understand that it is a real place, and know that they should avoid going there at all costs. Sadly, even when he tells others many of them still will not believe. To illustrate this point the author related the story of a woman who he seriously warned, but she scoffed at his plea. "You cannot

tell me that a loving God would send people to such a place," she said. You see the world does not believe that Satan and hell really exist. George Gallup in a study found that 50% of pastors and almost 50% of parishioners do not believe in Satan and therefore, do not believe hell exists. This, of course, is

Satan's greatest weapon. Jesus, though, wants them to be warned of the wrath to come. Since they can avoid it by accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior, he expects us to warn people and offer them a chance to escape. Even if we do, many are going to refuse. No matter how many reject our plea, it is still our job to make the offer.

At this point you may wonder why I have written the

foregoing. Well the answer to your query is that my wife, who I love dearly, developed a ruptured intervertebral disc in January. We did not know what she had, but the pain was excruciating. Both of us thought it was a continuation of the back pain she had developed after she was in an accident 14 years ago. Nothing had been found to explain it and nothing had relieved her including an operation to remove a bone spur. The increased pain rapidly worsened. She was suffering so profoundly that I finally got some narcotics for her when we could not get her neurologist to see her. I could not stand to see her suffer. Her pain continued over the second weekend, so I finally got in touch with a Christian neurosurgeon we knew. He agreed to see her as soon as possible. She had an MRI on Thursday night. In it we could clearly see that she had ruptured a disc and a fragment had been extruded. It was pressing on her nerve root causing the pain. He saw her on Friday and operated on her on Tuesday. Post op all her pain was completely relieved. We praised God!

I had learned many years before that God heals in five ways. He heals miraculously, he heals through health professionals, he heals with time, he heals by giving us the ability to bear a thorn in the flesh and he heals us when we get our resurrection body.

We had any number of people to pray for her during the years she hurt. She had been anointed with oil and prayed for by well-known people who had a ministry of healing. We had waited 14 years for time to heal her. It didn't. She had learned to bear her thorn in the flesh, and it was not time to be healed in her resurrection body. Then in the fullness of time, a skilled Godly physician became the instrument of her healing.

Elizabeth and I learned a lot from this episode. I learned what it meant to suffer with someone I love dearly. God suffered with Jesus. Jesus suffered with the people he healed, for there were many who came to him suffering a variety of painful diseases. Some of them were in great physical pain.

Paul said that he was glad to suffer because it produced perseverance. He also felt that he wanted to share

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in Christ's sufferings. I have not figured out why he wanted to do that, except he realized that when we proclaim the gospel we will be persecuted and that will produce either emotional or physical suffering or both. Jesus warned us, "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me."

Now it is also true that we will have to suffer empathically with our loved ones when they are suffering. I know I did with Elizabeth. I was with her when she was having babies, and I did not suffer with her. I knew that the baby would be delivered and she would not suffer any more. Besides, when a woman has the pain of childbirth there is joy when it is over and she has a new baby in her arms. She had pain when she had the accident and when we found there were no broken bones I did not suffer with her. At no time in our 56 years of marriage did I ever suffer with her like I did this time.

Paul tells us we are to bear one another's burdens so I believe empathic suffering is a form of bearing a burden. I do not know when I have prayed so fervently as I did during the three weeks that she was in such acute pain. Rarely do I pray so fervently that tears flow, but I pled with God in tears to relieve her pain. When you love your mate as much as we love each other we are one, therefore, when she suffered I suffered too.

Another reason why we need to understand how much we made Christ suffer is that if we love him we will be sorry that we made him suffer on the cross. Just as I love Elizabeth and suffer with her, so I must realize that my sin makes him suffer and I will suffer with him. This is what the Apostle called godly sorrow. It is what we have to experience when we repent. Our worldly sorrow will not do it. It takes godly sorrow and a sincere desire to amend our ways. I believe that most Christians do not repent because they do not understand what Jesus went through.

I, like many Christians, went to see *The Passion of the Christ*. I was amazed at the reaction of the audience to Jesus' flagellation. Many women and some men sobbed as he made his way to the cross. They were suffering with him as he made his way to his crucifixion. They would shudder as the nails were driven into his hands and feet. There was no way that the producer could have shown us how he suffered emotionally, but his physical suffering was portrayed realistically enough to make people empathically suffer with him.

Paul the Apostle suffered just like Jesus. In response to his critics he said, "I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own people, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone

without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked" (2 Cor. 11:23-27). He certainly shared in Jesus' suffering, for at the end he died for his faith.

Recently, I read the story of a Chinese Christian named Brother Yun. He is called the "Heavenly Man." This brother became a Christian at age 16 and because he became a house church leader he automatically became an enemy of the state. He was imprisoned over ten times, beaten, tortured and humiliated by his guards. Finally, he was put in a maximum security prison where his legs were beaten so badly that the bones were broken. He could no longer walk. Then one day he heard a voice say, "Go now, the God of Peter is your God." He knew he was to walk out of the prison through gates that ordinarily were locked, walk by guards who would see him, and out to a waiting taxi that would ordinarily not be waiting for him. But how could he, his legs were broken? He did go though. He stood up and his legs were healed miraculously. Out he went through inner gates that were ordinarily locked, by guards who looked at him but did not see him, through an open main gate that was guarded, and into a taxi. He eventually ended up with a family that had been told in a dream he was coming. Finally, he escaped from China and has been free since then. He too shared in Jesus' suffering. The church in China had grown because of the persecution of people like him and their suffering. It will continue to do so. Just as the Roman Empire was eventually Christianized in spite of three hundred years of persecution, so will China be Christianized in the fullness of time.

We in the western world are not persecuted like our brothers and sisters either in China or in the Islamic world. We are being persecuted in a more subtle way. We are being legally persecuted by the humanists any time they can find a reason to file a lawsuit. The ACLU is the leader in this persecution. They resource the humanists, atheists, homosexual activists, the radical feminists and the greens whose causes they champion.

In spite of the fact that our persecutions are subtle, we still need to repent. We have sinned! The Lord reminded me again this morning that our nation is a nation of sinners. We have murdered 40,000,000 children with abortions, and we have produced two entire generations of illegitimate children. We commit adultery. Thirty-seven percent of men and 22 percent of women admit to having affairs. Ministers are not immune. They have a 20% incidence of adultery. One out of four children are sexually abused. Incest is so common that 29% of all women will have been molested by a close relative before they are 18. Alcoholism and drug addiction are common. There is an incidence of 4.38 persons per 1000 who are dependent on alcohol. They are major contributors to crime, child and wife abuse, auto accidents, and economic loss. We are addicted to pornography. 10% of people admit to visiting a pornographic website. 28% of these are women. Nine out of 10 children between the ages of nine and 16 have viewed pornography on the Internet. Children are having earlier and earlier sexual experiences. They frequently begin

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at age 11 and sometimes younger. I can go on, but you can see that we need to have someone call the nation to repentance, and we need to obey.

I once read that the great revival that occurred in 1859-60 was a result of our nation being called to prayer and repentance. 2,000,000 people out of 30,000,000 came to Christ during that revival. This preceded the Civil War and may have had a profound effect on the prosecution of the war by the Union forces. It also spread worldwide.

If ever a nation needed to repent we do. We have not kept God's commandments. I have listed some of our sins even though there are a lot more. In Deuteronomy 28, God told us what would happen if we did or did not obey them. We will be cursed if we are disobedient, and blessed if we are obedient. His advice in the 30th chapter is to choose to be obedient. We have not chosen to be obedient.

In researching this essay I read an account of the 1859 revival. The author, who was an Englishman, described the church of his day. He said, "To trace the origin and progress of this glorious work, however interesting as a development of the wondrous and gracious way in which the Divine Spirit effects his own designs, would occupy more time than I dare take; yet a glance at it may be necessary. The state of the Church of God, and I mean by the Church all sects, was very low. Its piety was feeble. Its success very limited. In its inner sanctuary, the spirit of the world was enthroned. Christian people were under its influence. Their love of dress, their anxiety for wealth, their speculating mania, their indifference to Christ, their neglect of religious ordinances, their worldly conformity, and the mass of depravity accumulating and shedding its malignant and pestiferous influence around them, threatening the weakening, if not the entire destruction, of social virtues, and yet untouched by them, gave fearful signs of this. The commercial crisis came (there was a major economic crisis that preceded the revival). It came with fearful force on the civilized world, laying prostrate in the dust many of our merchant princes, and threatening the stability of others. Upon the commercial community in the States, and New York especially, I believe it fell with terrible power. Many of its chief citizens were ruined. Families of the highest rank, who had enjoyed many of the concentrated joys of social and domestic life, were reduced to poverty and want. Christians felt this. It humbled them. The vanity of the world was experienced. The uncertainty of everything but Christ was seen. In the depth of their distress they returned to God. Many good men had felt the need of this before. A few were sighing and moaning over the weakness of the Church, and now met frequently for prayer. Their number now increased; and with increasing numbers the spirit of prayer was manifestly poured out, and the revival was begun. But I am anxious you should look at some of those characteristics, which everywhere mark it." (Evans 1859, The Revival Library)

In 1859 he described the church of our day and its members. We do not recognize our depravity so no one calls us to repentance. We are collectively like all the seven churches that John wrote about in Revelation. We have lost

our first love, we have accepted heresies, we have been led into sexual immorality, we have died spiritually and many have become lukewarm. God calls us to repent!! We, as individual Christians, as the church, as a community and as a nation need to ask the Holy Spirit to work repentance in us.

I do not know what it will take to bring us to our knees. Do we need another 9/11? Do we need another economic crisis? Do we need to fight another world war? Do we need another Katrina? Do we need a major earthquake that will destroy Los Angeles or San Francisco killing hundreds of thousands? Do we need Mt Ranier to erupt and kill hundreds of thousands in the state of Washington? Do we need a killer disease that will wipe out millions like the 1918-25 epidemic of flu did or like AIDS is doing now in the third world? What will it take to make us recognize the need to repent?

Jesus came saying "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near." He was more emphatic when he said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Why do we not listen? He calls us to repentance. We are all sinners and desperately need to repent. Repentance cleanses us and returns us to a righteous state. In the early church, believers repented every day. They did so in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit is still available today to help us in our weaknesses. Call on him and he will answer. Surely we do not want to make Jesus suffer in vain!

In the Anglican Church they pray a prayer of repentance in the course of celebrating the Eucharist. Still nothing happens in their church because they are not praying in the Spirit. They pray with a worldly sorrow not a Godly one. The words are, however, comprehensively and beautifully phrased. Read what they say. "Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, judge of all men; we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; And grant that we may ever hereafter Serve and please thee In newness of life, To the honour and glory of thy Name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

It is important that we acknowledge and confess each

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through e-mail!**

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(This is now the only option to receive this newsletter.)

Thank you!

of our sins to God each day. Being born again and possessing his Spirit we can then pray an effective prayer of repentance and be forgiven. The one from the book of Common Prayer says all we need to say.

Pray that God will raise up a prophet who will be able to call all men in our country to repentance. Pray that the clergy in our churches will define and issue calls for repentance to their congregations. When this happens we will have revival and God will bless us once again with freedom from persecution, protection from the enemy, restore morality to our society and heal our land.



EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Dr. Jebarraj and her husband have gone back to India. She is to report to her department about her experiences. Above all she is to tell them about the content of her instruction. I cannot wait to hear about their reaction. She told me that her colleagues are mostly Christians and psychiatrists. They do not integrate their faith. I did recently give Grand Rounds at Duke and gave a paper on Effective Mental Health Care in Rural Madagascar. It was a teachable moment when I mentioned that I saw demon possessed people and delivered them. They were interested in the fact that I could differentiate demon possession from psychiatric disease.



Books Read

Iwant to recommend to you a web site that has all kinds of classical e-books. It is called **Christian Classics Ethereal Library** (<http://www.ccel.org>). You will find some of the great classics of the Christian world that you would never buy, but they can be read there in their entirety. You



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can download them if you want to do so in several different formats.

I have recently read Ellen White's **Acts of the Apostles** there. I have done considerable teaching at the Seventh Day Adventist medical school in Loma Linda, CA, so I know something about their beliefs. I had also read Ellen White before, but that was long ago, and I was curious about her approach to the work and person of the Holy Spirit. The modern day SDA church does little to emphasize his work. She was very emphatic about the role that the Holy Spirit plays in the church. Her book was classic evangelical exegesis at its best. If the modern SDA church were to again recognize the necessity of entreating the Holy Spirit to work again, they would regain the vigor of their early years.

I also read Brother Lawrence's **Practicing the Presence of God**. I had not read it in a long time and had forgotten its content. It was as stimulating as before, and much of what I read in the past came alive again.

I mentioned in my commentary that I read Jonathan Edwards' sermon **Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God**. I found it in the library. All you have to do is to click on authors, then on "E," then on Edwards and a list of his writings will come down. Click on sermons and then on the first one which is *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. Read it!

You will love this web site!



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