

Alarm to the Unconverted

The Motives to Conversion

By [Joseph Alleine](#)

1671

Though what has already been said of the necessity of conversion and of the miseries of the unconverted might be sufficient to induce any considerate mind to resolve upon a present turning to God; yet, knowing *what a piece of desperate obstinacy and untractableness the heart of man naturally is*, I have thought it necessary to add some motives to persuade you to be reconciled to God.

'O Lord, do not fail me now, at my last attempts. If any soul has read hitherto, and is yet untouched, Lord, fasten on him now, and do Your work. *Take him by the heart*, overcome him, persuade him, until he says, "You have prevailed, for You are stronger than I." Lord, did not You make me a fisher of men, and have I toiled all this while and caught nothing? Alas, that I should have spent my strength for nothing! and now I am casting my last net. Lord Jesus, stand upon the shore, and direct how and where I shall spread my net; and let me so with arguments, enclose the souls I seek, that they may not be able to get out. Now, Lord, for a multitude of souls; now for a full draught. O Lord God, remember me, I pray You, and strengthen me this once, O God.'

Men and brethren, heaven and earth call upon you; yes, hell itself preaches the doctrine of repentance unto you. The ministers of the churches labor for you. The angels of heaven wait for you, for your repenting and turning unto God. O sinner, why should devils laugh at your destruction, and deride your misery, and sport themselves with your folly? This will be your case, except you turn. And were it not better you should be a joy to angels—than a laughingstock and sport for devils. Truly, if you would but come in, the heavenly hosts would take up their anthems and sing, 'Glory to God in the highest'; the morning stars would sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy, and celebrate this new creation as they did the first. Your repentance would, as it were, make a holiday in heaven, and the glorious spirits would rejoice, in that there is a new brother added to their society, another heir born to the Lord, and a lost son received safe and sound. *The true penitent's tears are indeed the wine that makes glad both God and man.*

If it be little that men and angels would rejoice at your conversion, know also that God Himself would rejoice over you, even with singing (Luke 15:9; Isa 62:5). Never did Jacob with such joy weep over the neck of his Joseph, as your

heavenly Father would rejoice over you upon your coming to Him. Look over the story of the Prodigal Son. I think I see how the aged father lays aside his state and forgets his years; behold, how he runs. O the haste that mercy makes: the sinner makes not half that speed. I think I see how his heart moves, how his compassions yearn. How quick-sighted is love! Mercy spies him a great way off; forgets his riotous course, unnatural rebellion, horrid unthankfulness—not a word of these—and receives him with open arms, clasps him about his neck, kisses him; calls for the fattened calf, the best robe, the ring, the shoes—the best cheer in heaven's store, the best attire in heaven's wardrobe. Yes, the joy cannot be held in his own bosom. Others must be called to participate. The friends sympathize; but none know the joy the father has in his newborn son, whom he has received from the dead. I think I hear the music at a distance. O the melody of the heavenly choristers! I cannot learn the song (Rev 14:3) but I think I overhear the theme at which all the harmonious choir with one consent strike sweetly in: 'For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' [Luke 15:24] I need not explain the parable further. God is the father: Christ is the provision, His righteousness the robe, His grace the ornaments, ministers, saints and angels, the friends and servants, and you that read, if you will but sincerely repent and turn, the welcome prodigal, the happy instance of this grace, the blessed subject of this joy and love.

O rock! O adamant! What! not moved yet? Not yet resolved to turn and to close with mercy? I will try yet once again. If one were sent to you from the dead, would you be persuaded? Why, hear the voice from the dead, from the damned, crying to you, that you should repent: 'I pray you that you would send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment; if one went to them from the dead, they will repent' (Luke 16:27-28). Hear, O man; your predecessors in impenitence preach to you from the infernal flames, that you should repent. O look down into the bottomless pit. Do you see how the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever? What do you think of those chains of darkness? Can you be content to burn? Do you see how the worm gnaws, how the fire rages? What do you say to that gulf of perdition? Will you take up your habitation there? O lay your ear to the door of hell. Do you hear the curses and blasphemies, the weepings and wailings, how they lament their follies and curse their day? How do they roar and gnash their teeth! how deep their groans! how inconceivable their miseries! If the shrieks of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were so terrible when the earth clave asunder and opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and all that appertained to them, that all Israel fled at the cry of them (Num 16:33-34), O how fearful would the cry be, if God would take off the covering from the mouth of hell, and let the cry of the damned ascend in all its terror among the children of men! And of their moans and miseries this is the piercing, killing emphasis and burden, 'Forever! forever!'

As God lives—who made your soul, you are but a few hours away from all this—unless you be converted.

O! I am even lost and swallowed up in the abundance of those arguments that I might suggest. If there be any point of wisdom in all the world, it is to repent and come in. If there be anything righteous, anything reasonable—this is it. If there be anything that may be called madness and folly, and anything that may be counted sottish, absurd, brutish, and unreasonable, it is this, to go on in your unconverted state. Let me beg of you, as you would not willingly destroy yourself, sit down and weigh, besides what has been said, these following motives, and let conscience say if it be not most reasonable that you should repent and turn.

1. The God who made you, most graciously invites you.

His most sweet and merciful nature invites you. O the kindness of God, His boundless compassion, His tender mercies! As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts. 'He is full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy' (Psalm 86:15). This is a great argument to persuade sinners to come. 'Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.' [Joel 2:13]

If there were no hope of mercy, it would be no wonder that rebels should stand out; but never had subjects such a gracious prince, such pity, patience, and clemency to deal with, as you have. 'Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity?' (Mic 7:18). O sinners, see what a God you have to deal with. If you will but turn, 'He will have compassion on you; He will subdue your iniquities, and cast all your sins into the depths of the sea!' 'Return unto me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return unto you' (Mal 3:7).

Sinners do not fail in that they have too high thoughts of God's mercies—but in that they overlook His justice—or they promise themselves mercy outside of God's way. His mercies are beyond all imagination; great mercies, manifold mercies (Neh 9:19), tender mercies, sure mercies, everlasting mercies—and all is yours, if you will but turn. Are you willing to come in? The Lord has laid aside His terror and erected a throne of grace. He holds forth the golden scepter: touch and live! Would a merciful man slay his enemy when prostrate at his feet, acknowledging his wrong, begging pardon, and offering to enter with him into a covenant of peace? Much less will the merciful God. Study His name (Exod 34:7), 'Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' Also read experience, Neh 9:17.

God's soul-encouraging calls and promises invite you. Ah, what an earnest suitor is mercy to you! How lovingly, how instantly, it calls after you! How earnestly it woos you! 'Return O backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever; only acknowledge your iniquity. Turn, O backsliding children, says the

Lord; return, and I will heal your backslidings. You have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return unto me, says the Lord' (Jer 3:12-13). 'As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked—but that he turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezek 33:11). 'If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keeps all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All the transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he has done, he shall live [Ezek 18:21-22]. ... Repent, and turn you from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will you die, O Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies, says the Lord God, therefore turn yourselves, and live!' (Ezek 18:30-32).

O melting, gracious words: the voice of God, and not of a man! This is not the manner of men, for the offended sovereign to sue to the offending, traitorous rebel. O how does mercy follow you, and plead with you! Is not your heart broken yet? O that today you would hear His voice!

2. The doors of heaven are thrown open to you.

The everlasting gates are set wide open for you, and an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven is administered to you.

Christ now addresses you, and calls upon you to arise and take possession of this good land. View the glory of the other world, as set forth in the map of the gospel. Get up into the Pisgah of the promises, and lift up your eyes northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, and that goodly mountain. Behold the Paradise of God, watered with the streams of glory. Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for the land which you see, the Lord will give it to you forever, if you will but return. Let me say to you, as Paul to Agrippa, 'Do you believe the prophets?' [Acts 26:27] If you believe indeed, view what glorious things are spoken of the city of God, and know that all this is here offered in the name of God to you. As truly as God is true, it shall be forever yours, if you will but thoroughly turn.

Behold the city of pure transparent gold, whose foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, whose gates are pearls, whose light is glory, whose temple is God. Do you believe this? If you do, are you not beside yourself, that will not take possession when the gates are thrown open to you, and you are bidden to enter? O you sons of folly, will you embrace the ash-heap and refuse the kingdom? Behold, the Lord takes you up into the mountain, shows you the kingdom of heaven and all the glory thereof, and tells you, 'All this I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me; if you will submit to mercy, accept my Son,

and serve me in righteousness and holiness.' 'O fools and slow of heart to believe!' [Luke 24:25] Will you seek and serve the world, and neglect eternal glory? What! not enter into paradise when the flaming sword, which was once set to keep you out, is now used to drive you in? But you will say I am uncharitable to think you infidels and unbelievers. What, then, shall I think of you? Either you are desperate unbelievers that do not believe it; or that you are beside yourselves, that you know and believe the excellence and eternity of this glory, and yet do so fearfully neglect it.

Do but attend to what is offered you: a blessed kingdom, a kingdom of glory, a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of peace, and an everlasting kingdom. Here you shall dwell, here you shall reign forever, and the Lord shall seat you on a throne of glory, and with His own hand shall set the royal diadem upon your head, and give you a crown—not of thorns, for there shall be no sinning nor suffering there: not of gold, for this shall be viler than the dirt in that day; but a crown of life, a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory, yes, you shall put on glory as a robe, and shall shine like the sun in the firmament of your Father.

Look now on your worthless flesh. This flesh, which is mere dust and ashes, shall be brighter than the stars. In short, you shall be made like unto the angels of God and behold His face in righteousness. Look now and tell me, do you not yet believe? If not, conscience must pronounce you an infidel; for it is the very word of God that I speak.

But if you say you believe, let me next know your resolution. Will you embrace this for your happiness? Will you forgo your sinful gains, your forbidden pleasures? Will you trample on the world's esteem, and stop your ears to its flatteries, and wrest yourself out of its embraces? Will you be content to take up with reproach and poverty, if they lie in the way to heaven, and follow the Lord with humble self-denial, in a mortified and flesh-displeasing life? If so, all is yours—and that forever!

And is not the offer a fair one? Is it not just that he should be damned, who will go on and perish, when all this may be had by taking it? Will you not take God at His word? Will you not let go your hold of the world, and lay hold on eternal life? If not, let conscience tell you whether you are not beside yourself, that you should neglect so happy a choice, by which you might be made happy forever.

3. God will give you unspeakable privileges in this life.

Though the fullness of your blessedness shall be reserved until hereafter—yet God will give you no little things in hand. He will redeem you from your thralldom. He will pluck you from the paw of the lion. The serpent shall bruise your heel—but you shall bruise his head. He shall deliver you from this present evil world. Prosperity shall not destroy you; adversity shall not separate Him and you. He

will redeem you from the power of the grave, and make the king of terrors to be a messenger of peace to you. He will take out the curse from the cross, and make affliction the refining-pot to purify the metal, the fan to blow off the chaff, the medicine to cure the mind. He will save you from the arrest of the law, and turn the curse into a blessing to you. He has the keys of hell and of death, and shuts and no man opens, and He will shut its mouth, as once He did the lions', that you shall not be hurt of the second death.

Besides, He will not only save from misery—but install you into unspeakable prerogatives. He will bestow Himself upon you; He will be a Friend and a Father unto you. He will be a Sun and a Shield to you. In a word, He will be a God to you. And what more can be said? What may you expect that God should do for you, and be to you? That He will be, that He will do. She who marries a prince expects he should do for her like a prince—that she may live in suitable state, and have an answerable dowry. He who has a king for his father or a friend, expects he should do for him like a king. Alas, the kings and monarchs of the earth, so much above you, are but like the painted butterflies among the rest of their kind—or the fair colored palmerworm among the rest of the worms, if compared with God. As He infinitely exceeds the glory and power of His glittering dust, so He will, beyond all proportion, exceed in doing for His favorites whatever princes can do for theirs. He will give you grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from you. He will take you for His sons and daughters, and make you heirs of His promises, and establish His everlasting covenant with you. He will justify you from all that law, conscience and Satan can charge upon you. He will give you free access into His presence, and accept your person, and receive your prayers. He will abide in you, and hold a constant and friendly communion with you. His ear shall be open, His door open, His store open, at all times to you. His blessing shall rest upon you, and He will make your enemies serve you, and work out all things for good unto you.

4. The terms of mercy are brought as low as possible to you.

God has stooped as low to sinners as with honor He can. He will not be the author of sin, nor stain the glory of His holiness; and how could He come lower than He has, unless He should do this?

God does not impose anything unreasonable or impossible, as a condition of life, upon you. Two things were necessary to be done, according to the tenor of the first covenant. 1. That we should fully satisfy the demands of justice for past offences. 2. That we should perform personally, perfectly, and perpetually, the whole law for the time to come. By our sins we render salvation through either of these ways impossible. But behold God's gracious provision in both. He is content to take of the Surety, and He of His own providing too, what He might have exacted from you. 'All things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation: namely, that

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18-19). He declares Himself to have received a ransom, and that He expects nothing but that you should accept His Son, and He shall be righteousness and redemption to you. If you come in His Christ, and set your heart to please Him, making this your chief concern, He will graciously accept you.

O consider the condescension of your God! Let me say to you, as Naaman's servant to him, 'My father, if the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather when he says to you, Wash and be clean!' [2 Kings 5:13] If God demanded some great, some severe and rigorous thing of you, to escape eternal damnation, would you not have done it? Suppose it had been to spend all your days in sorrow in some howling wilderness—or pine with famine, would you not have thankfully accepted eternal redemption, though these had been the conditions? Nay, farther, if God had told you that you should burn in the fire for millions of ages—or be so long tormented in hell, would you not have accepted it? Alas, all these are not so much as one grain of sand in the glass of eternity. If your offended Creator should have held you but one year upon the rack, and then bid you come and forsake your sins, accept Christ, and serve him a few years in self-denial or lie in this case forever and ever; do you think you would have hesitated at the offer, and disputed the terms, and have been unresolved whether to accept the proposal? O sinner, return and live; why should you die when life is to be had for the taking, when mercy entreats you to be saved? Could you say, 'Lord, I knew you, that you were a hard man', [Matt 25:24] even then you would have no excuse; but when the God of Heaven has stooped so low, and condescended so far, if still you stand off, who shall plead for you?

Objection: Notwithstanding all the advantages of the new covenant, I am unable to repent and believe, and so comply with its conditions.

Answer: These you may perform by God's grace enabling; but let the next consideration serve for a fuller answer.

5. God offers all needed grace to enable you.

'I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded' (Prov 1:24). What though you are plunged into the ditch of that misery from which you can never get out? Christ offers to help you out; He reaches out His hand to you; and if you perish, it is for refusing His help. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man open to me, I will come in.' (Rev 3:20). What though you are poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked? Christ offers a cure for your blindness, a covering for your nakedness, riches for your poverty. He offers you His righteousness, His grace: 'I counsel you to buy of me gold, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you

may be clothed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.' [Rev 3:18] Do you say, 'The condition is impossible; for I have nothing with which to buy?' You must know that this buying is 'without money and without price.' [Isa 55:1] This buying is by begging and seeking with your whole heart. God commands you to know Him, and to fear Him. Do you say, 'Yes—but my mind is blinded, and my heart is hardened from His fear?' I answer that God offers to enlighten your mind, and to teach you His fear. So that now, if men live in ignorance and estrangement from the Lord, it is because they will not understand, and do not desire the knowledge of His ways. 'If you cry after knowledge, if you Seek her as silver, then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.' (Prov 2:3-5). Is not this a fair offer? 'Turn at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you' (Prov 1:23). Though of yourselves you can do nothing—yet you may do all through His Spirit enabling you, and He offers assistance to you. God bids you 'wash and be made clean' [Isa 1:16]. You say you are unable, as much as the leopard to wash out his spots. Yes—but the Lord offers to cleanse you; so that if you are filthy still, it is through your own wilfulness: 'I have purged you, and you were not purged' (Ezek 24:13). 'O Jerusalem, will you not be made clean: when shall it once be?' (Jer 13:27). God invites you to be made clean, and entreats you to yield to Him. O accept His offers, and let Him do for you, and in you, what you cannot do for yourselves!

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