

Alarm to the Unconverted

An Earnest Invitation to Sinners to Turn to God

By **Joseph Alleine**

1671

Introduction

Dearly Beloved,

I gladly acknowledge myself a debtor to you, and am concerned, as I would be found a good steward of the household of God, to give to everyone his portion. But the physician is most concerned for those patients whose case is most doubtful and hazardous; and the father's pity is especially turned towards his dying child. So unconverted souls call for earnest compassion and prompt diligence to pluck them as brands from the burning (Jude 23). Therefore it is to them I shall first apply myself in these pages.

But from where shall I fetch my argument? With what shall I win them? O that I could tell! I would write to them in tears, I would weep out every argument, I would empty my veins for ink, I would petition them on my knees. O how thankful should I be if they would be prevailed with to repent and turn.

How long have I labored for you! How often would I have gathered you! This is what I have prayed for and studied for these many years, that I might bring you to God. O that I might now do it! Will you yet be entreated?

'But, O Lord, how insufficient I am for this work. Alas, with what shall I pierce the scales of Leviathan, or make the heart feel that is hard as the nether millstone? Shall I go and speak to the grave, and expect the dead will obey me and come forth? Shall I make an oration to the rocks, or declaim to the mountains, and think to move them with arguments? Shall I make the blind to see? From the beginning of the world was it not heard that a man opened the eyes of the blind (John 9:32). But, O Lord, You can pierce the heart of the sinner. I can only draw the bow at a venture—but may You direct the arrow between the joints of the harness. Slay the sin, and save the soul of the sinner who casts his eyes on these pages.

There is no entering into heaven but by the strait passage of the second birth; without holiness you shall never see God (Heb 12:14). Therefore give yourselves unto the Lord now. Set yourselves to seek Him now. Set up the Lord Jesus in

your hearts, and set Him up in your houses. Kiss the Son (Psalm 2:12) and embrace the offers of mercy; touch His scepter and live; for why will you die? I do not beg for myself—but would have you happy: this is the prize I run for. My soul's desire and prayer for you is, that you may be saved (Rom 10:1).

I beseech you to permit a friendly plainness and freedom with you in your deepest concern. I am not playing the orator to make a learned speech to you, nor dressing the dish with eloquence in order to please you. These lines are upon a weighty errand indeed—to convince, and convert, and save you. I am not baiting my hook with rhetoric, nor fishing for your applause—but for your souls. My work is not to please you—but to save you; nor is my business with your fancies—but with your hearts. If I have not your hearts, I have nothing. If I were to please your ears, I would sing another song. I could then tell you a smoother tale; I would make pillows for you and speak peace, for how can Ahab love this Micaiah, who always prophesies evil concerning him? (1 Kings 22:8). But how much better are the wounds of a friend, than the fair speeches of the harlot, who flatters with her lips, until the darts strike through the liver? (Prov 7:21-23 and Prov 6:26). If I were to quiet a crying infant, I might sing him into a happier mood, or rock him asleep; but when the child is fallen into the fire, the parent takes another course; he will not try to still him with a song or trifle. I know, if we succeed not with you, you are lost; if we cannot get your consent to arise and come away, you will perish forever. No conversion—no salvation! I must get your goodwill, or leave you miserable.

But here the difficulty of my work again occurs to me. 'O Lord, choose my stones out of the brook (1 Sam 17:40,45). I come in the name of the Lord Almighty. I come forth, like the stripling David against Goliath, to wrestle, not with flesh and blood—but with principalities and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph 6:12). This day let the Lord smite the Philistines, spoil the strong man of his armor, and give me the captives out of his hand. Lord, choose my words, choose my weapons for me; and when I put my hand into the bag, and take out a stone and sling it, may You carry it to the mark, and make it sink, not into the forehead—but into the heart of the unconverted sinner, and smite him to the ground like Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:4).'

Some of you do not know what I mean by conversion, and in vain shall I attempt to persuade you to that which you do not understand. Therefore for your sakes I will show what conversion is.

Others cherish secret hopes of mercy, though they continue as they are. For them I must show the necessity of conversion.

Others are likely to harden themselves with a vain conceit that they are converted already. To them I must show the marks of the unconverted.

Others, because they feel no harm, fear none, and so sleep as upon the top of a

mast. To them I shall show the misery of the unconverted.

Others sit still, because they do not see the way of escape. To them I shall show the means of conversion.

And finally, for the quickening of all, I shall close with the motives to conversion.

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