

An Alarm to the Unconverted 1 of 5

by Joseph Alleine

Joseph Alleine's sermon calls unconverted sinners to recognize their dire need for true conversion and a relationship with God.

Duration: 1:21:51

Scripture: Psalm 2:12, Psalm 119:93, Proverbs 1:23, Proverbs 6:21-22, Titus 2:12, Hebrews 12:14, James 4:8

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the transformation that occurs in a person's heart when they become a true follower of Christ. The sermon highlights the change in desires and priorities that takes place, as the individual's love for worldly things is replaced with a love for God's ways. The preacher references the example of David, who once sought worldly goods but now praises God's laws and seeks His presence. The sermon also addresses the importance of conversion, explaining what it means and why it is necessary for salvation. The preacher warns against complacency and urges listeners to seek the Lord and embrace His mercy.

Transcript

An Alarm to the Unconverted Sinner By Joseph Alain Introduction An earnest invitation to sinners to turn to God. 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? Oh, 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.

Oh, how thankful should I be if they would be prevailed upon to repent and turn! How long I have 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. Oh, that I might now do it! Will you be yet 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 his heart is a 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, thou canst pierce the heart of the sinner. I can only draw the bow and adventure.

But do thou direct the arrow between the joints of the harness. Slay the sin and save the soul of the sinner that casts his eyes on these pages. There is no entering into heaven but by the straight passage of the second birth.

Without holiness you shall never see God. Hebrews 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 sun. Psalm 2.12 And embrace the tenders of mercy.

Touch a 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.

Romans 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. If I were to preach myself, I would steer another course. I could then tell you a smoother tale.

I would make pillows for you and speak peace, for how can Ahab love this Micaiah that 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 till the dart strike through the liver? Proverbs 7.21-23 and 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 steal 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 good will 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 Samuel 17.40-45 I come in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. 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. Ephesians 6.12 This day let the Lord smite the Philistine, 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, do thou 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 the 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 is 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. The devil has made many counterfeits of conversion, and cheats one with this and another with that. He has such craft and artifice in his mystery of deceits that, if it were possible, he would deceive the very elect.

Now that I make here the ruinous mistake of some who think that they are converted when they are not, as well as remove the troubles and fears of others who think they are not converted when they are, I shall show you the nature of conversion, both what it is not and what it is. We will begin with the negative. Conversion is not to take upon us a profession of Christianity.

Christianity is more than a name. If we will hear Paul, it is not lie in word, but in power. 1 Corinthians 4.20 2 Timothy 2.19 And will God receive these for true converts? What? Converts from sin? When they still live in sin? It is a visible contradiction.

Surely if the lamp of profession would have served a turn, the foolish virgins had never been shut out. Matthew 25.12 We find not only professing Christians, but preachers of Christ, and wonder workers rejected because they are evil workers. Matthew 7.22-23 Conversion is not putting on the badge of Christ in baptism.

Ananias and Sapphira and Sam and Magus were baptized as well as the rest. How many make a mistake here, deceiving and being deceived, dreaming that effectual grace is necessarily tied to the external administration of baptism, so that every baptized person is regenerated, not only sacramentally, but really improperly. Hence men fancy that because they were regenerated when baptized, they need no further work.

But if this were so, then all that have been baptized must necessarily be saved, because the promise of pardon and salvation is made to conversion and regeneration. Acts 3.19 Matthew 19.28 And indeed, were conversion and baptism the same, the men would do well to carry but a certificate of their baptism when they died, and upon sight of this there were no doubt of their admission into heaven. In short, if there is nothing more to conversion or regeneration than to be baptized, this will fly directly in the face of that scripture, Matthew 7.13-14, as well as multitudes of others.

If this is true, we shall no more say, Straight is the gate, and narrow is the way. For if all that are baptized are saved, the door is exceeding wide, and we shall henceforth say, Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to life. If this is true, thousands may go in abreast, and we will no more teach that the righteous are scarcely saved, or that there is need of such a stir in taking the kingdom of heaven by violence, in striving to enter in.

1 Peter 4.18 Matthew 11.12 Luke 13.24 Surely if the way be so easy as many suppose, that little more is necessary than to be baptized, and to cry out, Lord, have mercy, we need not put ourselves to such seeking, and knocking, and wrestling, as the word requires in order to salvation. Again, if this is true, we shall no more say, Few there be that find it, we will rather say, Few there be that miss it. We shall no more say that of the many that are called, only a few are chosen, Matthew 22.14 And that even of the professing Israel, but a remnant shall be saved.

Romans 9.27 If this doctrine is true, we shall no more say with the disciples, who then shall be saved, but rather who then shall not be saved. Then if a man be baptized, though he is a fornicator, or a reller, or a covetous man, or a drunkard, yet he shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 5.11 6, 9, 10 But some will reply, such as these, though they receive regenerating grace in baptism, are since fallen away, and must be renewed again, or else they cannot be saved.

I answer, 1. There is an infallible connection between regeneration and salvation, as we have already shown. 2. Then man must be again born again, which carries a great deal of absurdity in his face. We might as well expect men to be twice born in nature as twice born in grace.

3. And above all, this grants the thing I contend for, that whatever men do or pretend to receive in baptism, if they are found afterwards to be grossly ignorant, or profane, or formal, without the power of godliness, they must be born again, or else be shut out of the kingdom of God. 4. So then they must have more to plead for themselves in their baptismal regeneration. 5. Well, in this you see all are agreed, that, be it more or less that is received in baptism, if men are evidently unsanctified, they must be renewed by a thorough and powerful change, or else they cannot escape the damnation of hell.

6. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. 7. Whether it be your baptism, or whatever else you pretend, I tell you from the living God, that if any of you be a prayerless person, or a scoffer, or a lover of evil company, in a word, if you are not a wholly strict and self-denying Christian, you cannot be saved. 8. Conversion does not lie in moral righteousness.

This does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and therefore cannot bring us to the kingdom of God. 9. Paul, while unconverted, touching the righteousness which is in the law, was blameless. 10.

The Pharisee could say, I am no extortioner, adulterer, unjust, and so on. 11. You must have something more than all this to show, or else, however you may justify yourself, God will condemn you.

12. I do not condemn morality, but I warn you not to rest in it. 13.

Piety includes morality, as Christianity does humanity, and as grace does reason, but we must not divide the tables. 14. Conversion does not consist in an external conformity to the rules of piety.

15. It is manifest that men may have a form of godliness without the power. 16.

Men may pray long, Matthew 23, 14, and fast often, Luke 18, 12, and hear gladly, Mark 6, 20, and be very forward in the service of God, though costly and expensive, Isaiah 1, 11, and yet be strangers to conversion. 17. They must have more to plead for themselves than that they go to church, give alms, and make use of prayer to prove themselves sound converts.

18. There is no outward service, but a hypocrite may do it, even to the giving of all his goods to feed the poor and his body to be burned. 19.

Conversion is not the mere chaining up of corruption by education. Human laws are the force of affliction. 20.

It is too common and easy to mistake education for grace, but if this were enough, who a better man than Jehoshaphat? 21. While Jehoiada, his uncle, lived, he was very forward in God's service, and calls upon him to repair the house of the Lord, 2 Kings 12, 2 and 7. 22. But here was nothing more than good education all this while, for when his good tutor was taken away, he appears to have been but a wolf, chained up, and falls into idolatry.

23. In short, conversion does not consist in illuminating a conviction, or in a superficial change or partial reformation. 24.

An apostate may be an enlightened man, Hebrews 6, 4, and a Felix tremble under conviction, Acts 24, 25, and a Herod do many things, Mark 6, 20. 25. It is one thing to have sin alarmed only by convictions, and another to have it crucified by converting grace.

26. Many, because they have been troubled in conscience for their sins, think well of their case, miserably mistaking conviction for conversion. 27.

With these, Cain might have passed for a convert, who ran up and down the world like a man distracted under the rage of a guilty conscience, till he stifled it with building and business. 28. Other things, that because they have given up their riotous ways, and are broken off from evil company, or some particular lust, and are reduced to sobriety and civility, they are now real converts.

29. They forget that there is a vast difference between being sanctified and civilized. 30.

They forget that many seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and are not far from it, and arrive to the almost of Christianity, and yet fall short at last. 31. While conscience holds a whip over them, many will pray, hear, read, and forbear their delightful sins.

But no sooner is the lion asleep, than they are at their sins again. 32. Who more religious than the Jews, when God's hand was upon them? Yet no sooner was the affliction over, than they forgot God.

33. You may have forsaken a troublesome sin, and have escaped the gross pollutions of the world, and yet in all this not have changed your carnal nature. 34.

You may take a crude mass of lead, and mold it into the more comely proportion of a plant, and then into the shape of an animal, and then into the form and features of a man. But all the time it is still lead. 35.

So a man may pass through various transmutations, from ignorance to knowledge, from profanity to civility, then a form of a religion, and all this time he is still carnal and unregenerate. His nature remains unchanged. 36.

Hear then, O sinners, hear as you would live. Why should you willfully deceive yourselves, or build your hopes upon the sand? I know you will find hard work that goes to pluck away your hopes. It cannot but be an unpleasant to you, and truly it is not pleasing to me.

I said about it as a surgeon when about to cut off a mortified limb from his beloved friend, which of necessity he must do, though with an aching heart. 37. But understand me, beloved, I am only taken down to ruinous house, which otherwise will speedily fall of itself, and bury you in the ruins, that I may build it fair, strong, and firm for ever.

38. The hope of the wicked shall perish, and had you not better, O sinner, let the word convince you now in time, and let go your false and self-deluding hopes, and have death open your eyes too late, and find yourself in hell before you are aware. 39.

I should be a false and faithless shepherd if I should not tell you that you who have built your hopes upon no better grounds than these before mentioned are yet in your sins. 40. Let conscience speak.

What is it that you have to plead for yourselves? Is it that you wear Christ's livery, that you bear his name, that you are a member of the visible church, that you have knowledge in the points of religion, are civilized, perform religious duties, are just in your dealings, have been trouble in conscience for your sins? I tell you from the Lord these pleas will never be accepted at God's bar. 41. All this, though good in itself, will not prove you converted, and so will not suffice to your salvation.

O look to it, and resolve to turn speedily and entirely. Study your own hearts. Do not rest till God has made thorough work with you.

For you must be other men, or else you are lost men. 42. But if these persons come short of conversion, what shall I say of the profane person? It may be he will scarcely cast his eyes on, or lend his ear to this discourse.

But if there be any such reading, or within hearing, he must know from the Lord that made him, that he is far from the kingdom of God. May a man keep company with the wise virgins, and yet be shut out, and shall not a companion of fools, much more be destroyed? May a man be true in his dealings, and yet not be justified before God? What then will become of you, O wretched man, whose conscience tells you that you are false in your trade, and false to your word? If men may be enlightened, and brought to the external performance of holy duties, and yet go down to perdition for resting in them, and sitting down on this side of conversion? What will become of you, O miserable families that live without God in the world? What will become of you, O wretched sinners, with whom God is scarcely in all your thoughts, that are so ignorant that you cannot pray, or so careless that you will not? O repent and be converted, break off your sins by righteousness, away to Christ for pardoning and renewing grace. Give up yourselves to him, to walk with him in holiness, or you shall never see God.

O that you would heed the warnings of God! In his name I once more admonish you, turn ye at my reproof. Forsake the foolish and live. Be sober, righteous, and godly.

Wash your hands, ye sinners. Purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Cease to do evil, learn to do well.

Proverbs 1, 23, 9, 6, Titus 2, 12, James 4, 8, Isaiah 1, 16, 17. But if ye will go on, ye must die. An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners, Chapter 2. The Nature of Conversion.

I dare not leave you with your eyes half opened, like him that saw men as trees walking. The word is profitable for doctrine as well as reproof. And therefore, having thus far conducted you by the shells and rocks of so many dangerous mistakes, I would guide you at length into the haven of truth.

Conversion, then, in short, lies in the thorough change both of the heart and life. I shall briefly describe it in its nature and causes. First, the author of conversion is the Spirit of God, and therefore it is called the sanctification of the Spirit.

2 Thessalonians 2, 13, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost. Titus 3, 5. This does not exclude the other persons in the Trinity, for the apostle teaches us to bless the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope. 1 Peter 1, 3. And Christ is said to give repentance to Israel.

Acts 5, 31. And is called the everlasting Father. Isaiah 9, 6. And we his seed, and the children which God hath given him.

Hebrews 2, 13. Yet this work is principally ascribed to the Holy Ghost, and so we are said to be born of the Spirit. John 3, 5, and 6. So then conversion is a work above man's power.

We are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1, 13. Never think you can convert yourself.

If ever you would be savingly converted, you must despair of doing it in your own strength. It is a resurrection from the dead. Ephesians 2, 1. A new creation.

Galatians 6, 15. Ephesians 2, 10. A work of absolute omnipotence.

Ephesians 1, 19. Are not these out of the reach of human power? If you have no more than you have had by your first birth, a good nature, a meek and chaste temper, and so on, you are a stranger to true conversion. This is a supernatural work.

Number 2. The efficient cause of conversion is both internal and external. First, the internal cause is free grace alone. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he saved us, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Titus 3, 5. Of his own will begat he us. James 1, 18. We are chosen and called to sanctification.

Not for it. Ephesians 1, 4. God finds nothing in man to turn his heart, but enough to turn his stomach. He finds enough to provoke his loathing, but nothing to excite his love.

Look back upon yourself, O Christian. Reflect upon your swinish nature, your filthy swill, your once beloved mire, 2 Peter 2. Behold your slime and corruption. Do not your own clothes abhor you, Job 9.31. How then should holiness and purity love you? Be astonished, O heavens, at this! Be moved, O earth! Who but must needs cry, Grace, grace! Zechariah 4, 7. Hear and bless you children of the Most High.

O unthankful men, that free grace is no more in your mouths, in your thoughts, no more adored, admired, and commended by such as you. One would think you should be doing nothing but praising and admiring God wherever you are. How can you forget such grace or pass it over with a slight and formal mention? What but free grace could move God to love you unless enmity could do it, unless deformity could do it? How affectionately Peter lifts up his hands.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who of his abundant mercy hath begotten us again. How humanly does Paul magnify the free mercy of God in it, God who is rich in mercy for his great love, wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace are you saved.

Ephesians 2, 4, 5. 2. The external cause is a merit and intercession of the blessed Jesus. He has obtained gifts for the rebellious, and through him it is that God worketh in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight. Hebrews 13.21. Through him are all spiritual blessings bestowed upon us in heavenly places.

Ephesians 1.3. He intercedes for the elect that believe not. John 17.20. Every convert is a fruit of his travail. Never was an infant born into the world with that difficulty which Christ endured for us.

All the pains that he suffered on the cross were our birth pains. He has made sanctification to us. 1 Corinthians 1.30. He sanctified himself, that is, set apart himself as a sacrifice that we might be sanctified.

John 17.19. We are sanctified through the offering of his body once for all. Hebrews 10.10. It is nothing then but the merit and intercession of Christ that prevails with God to bestow on us converting grace. If you are a new creature, you know to whom you owe it, to Christ's pangs and prayers.

The foal does not more naturally run after the dam nor the suckling to the breast than a believer to Jesus Christ. And where else should you go? If any in the world can show for your heart what Christ can, let them do it. Does Satan claim you? Does the world court you? Does sin sue for your heart? Why? Were these crucified for you? O Christian, love and serve your Lord while you have a being.

Number three. The instrument of conversion is personal and real. First, the personal instrument is a ministry.

In Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel. 1 Corinthians 4.15. Christ's ministers are they that are sent to open men's eyes and to turn them to God. Acts 26.18. O unthankful world, little do you know what you were doing when you were persecuting the messengers of the Lord.

These are they whose business it is under Christ to save you. Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Isaiah 37.23. These are the servants of the Most High God that show unto you the way of salvation. Acts 16.17. And you requite them thus.

O foolish and unwise, O sons of ingratitude, against whom do you sport yourselves? These are the instruments that God uses to convert and save sinners. And do you revile your physicians and throw your pilots overboard? Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Number two.

The real instrument is the word. We are begotten by the word of truth. It is this that enlightens the eye, that converts the soul.

Psalms 19.7.8 That makes us wise to salvation. 2 Timothy 3.15 This is the incorruptible seed by which we are born again. 1 Peter 1.23 If we are washed, it is by the word.

Ephesians 5.26 If we are sanctified, it is through the truth. John 17.17 This generates faith and regenerates us. O ye saints, how should you love the word? For by this you have been converted.

You that have felt its renewing power, make much of it while you live. Be ever thankful for it. Tie it about your neck.

Write it upon your hand. Lay it in your bosom. When you go, let it lead you.

When you sleep, let it keep you. When you wake, let it talk with you. Proverbs 6.21-22 Say with the psalmist, I will never forget thy priests, as for by them thou hast quickened me.

Psalm 119.93 You that are unconverted, read the word with diligence. Flock to where it is powerfully preached. Pray for the coming of the Spirit in the word.

Come from your knees to the sermon, and come from the sermon to your knees. The sermon does not prosper, because it is not watered by prayers and tears, nor covered by meditation. The final cause or end of conversion is man's salvation and God's glory.

We are chosen through sanctification to salvation. 2 Thessalonians 2.13 Called that we might be glorified. Romans 8.30 But especially that God might be glorified.

That we should show forth His praises. 1 Peter 2.9 And be fruitful in good works. O Christian, do not forget the end of your calling.

Let your light shine. Let your lamp burn. Let your fruits be good in many and in season.

Let all your designs fall in with God's, that He may be magnified in you. 5 The subject of conversion is the elect sinner, and that in all his parts and powers, members, and mind. Whom God predestinates, them only He calls.

Romans 8.30 Men are drawn to Christ by their calling, nor come to Him by believing, but His sheep, those whom the Father has given Him. A factual calling runs parallel with eternal election. You begin at the wrong end if you first dispute about your election.

Prove your conversion, and then never doubt your election. If you cannot yet prove it, set upon a present and thorough turning. Whatever God's purposes be, which are secret, I am sure His promises are plain.

How desperately do rebels argue. If I am elected, I shall be saved, do what I will. If not, I shall be damned, do what I can.

Perverse sinner, will you begin where you should end? Is not the word before you, what saith it? Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. If you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live. Believe and be saved.

What can be plainer? Do not stand still, disputing about your election, but set to repenting and believing. Cry to God for converting grace. Reveal things belong to you, and these busy yourself.

It is just as one well said, that they who will not feed on the plain food of the word should be choked with the bones. Whatever God's purposes may be, I am sure His promises are true. Whatever the decrees of heaven may be, I am sure that if I repent in belief, I shall be saved, and that if I do not repent, I shall be damned.

Is not this plain ground for you? And will you yet run upon the rocks? More particularly, this change of conversion extends to the whole man. A carnal person may have some shreds of good morality, but he is never good throughout the whole cloth. Conversion is not a repairing of the old building, but it takes all down and erects a new structure.

It is not the sewing on a patch of holiness, but with the true convert, holiness is woven into all his powers, principles, and practice. The sincere Christian is quite a new fabric from the foundation to the top stone. He is a new man, a new creature.

All things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5.17 Conversion is a deep work, a hard work. It makes a new man in a new world.

It extends to the whole man, to the mind, to the members, to the motions of the whole life. Number one, the mind. Conversion turns the balance of the judgment so that God and His glory outweigh all carnal and worldly interests.

It opens the eye of the mind and makes the scales of its native ignorance fall off and turns men from darkness to light. The man that before saw no danger in his condition now concludes himself lost and forever undone. Acts 2.37 Except renewed by the power of grace, he that formerly thought there was little hurt in sin now comes to see it to be the chief of evils.

He sees the unreasonableness, the unrighteousness, the deformity and the filthiness of sin, so that he is affrighted with it, loathes it, dreads it, flees from it, and even abhors himself for it. Romans 7.15 Ezekiel 36.31 He that could see little sin in himself and could find no matter for confession now sees the rottenness of his heart, the desperate and deep pollution of his whole nature. He cries, unclean, unclean, Lord, purge me with hyssop, wash me thoroughly, create in me a clean heart.

He sees himself altogether filthy, corrupt, both root and branch. He writes unclean upon all his parts and powers and performances. He discovers the filthy corners that he was never aware of and sees the blasphemy and theft and murder and adultery that is in his heart of which before he was ignorant.

Hitherto he saw no form nor comeliness in Christ, no beauty that he should desire him, but now he finds a hidden treasure and will sell all to buy this field. Christ is the pearl he seeks. Now according to this new life the man is of another mind, another judgment than he was before.

Now God is all with him. He was none in heaven nor in earth like him. He truly prefers him before all the world.

His favor is his life. The light of his countenance is more than corn and wine and oil. The good did he formally inquire after and set his heart upon, Psalm 46.7.

A hypocrite may come to yield a general ascent, but God is a chief good, and indeed the wiser heathen, some few of them, have at least stumbled upon this. But no hypocrite comes so far as to look upon God as a most desirable and suitable good to him and thereupon to acquiesce in him. This is a convert's voice.

The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. Whom have I in heaven but thee? There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Lamentations 3.24 Conversion turns the bias of the will both as to means and end. The intentions of the will are altered. Now the man has new ends and designs.

He now intends God above all and desires and designs nothing in all the world so much as that Christ may be magnified in him. He counts himself more happy in this than in all that the earth could yield, that he may be serviceable to Christ and bring him glory. This is a mark he aims at, that the name of Jesus may be great in the world.

Reader, do you read this without asking yourself whether it be thus with you? Pause a while and examine yourself. The choice is also changed. He pitches upon God as his blessedness and upon Christ and

holiness as means to bring him to God.

He chooses Jesus for his Lord. He is not merely forced to Christ by the storm nor does he take Christ for bare necessity, but he comes freely. His choice is not made in a fright as with the terrified conscience or the dying sinner that will seemingly do anything for Christ, but only takes Christ rather than hell.

He deliberately resolves that Christ is his best choice and would rather have him than all the good of this world. Might he enjoy it while he would? Philippians 1.23 Again, he takes holiness for his path. He does not out of mere necessity submit to it, but he likes it and loves it.

I have chosen the way of thy precepts. Psalm 119.173 He takes God's testimonies not as his bondage, but his heritage, yea, heritage forever. He counts them not as burden, but as bliss, not as cords, but as cordials.

He does not only bear, but takes up Christ's yoke. He takes not holiness as the stomach does a loathed medicine, which a man will rather take than die, but as the hungry man does his beloved food. No time passes so sweetly with him when he is himself as that which he spends in the exercise of holiness.

These are both his element and element, the desire of his eyes and the joy of his heart. Put it to your conscience whether you are the man, O happy man, if this be your case, but see that you are thorough and impartial in the search. Conversion turns the bent of the affections.

These all run in a new channel. The Jordan is now driven back, and the water runs upwards against its natural course. Christ is his hope, this is his prize.

Here his eye is, here his heart. He is content to cast all overboard as a merchant in the storm about to perish, so he may but keep this jewel. The first of his desires is not after gold, but grace.

He hungers for it. He seeks it as silver. He digs for it as for hid treasure.

He had rather be gracious than great. He had rather be the holiest man on earth than the most learned, the most famous, the most prosperous. While carnally said, O if I were but in great esteem, rolling in wealth and swimming in pleasure, if my debts were paid and I and mine provided for, then I would be a happy man.

But now the tune is changed. O, says the convert, if I had but my corruption subdued, if I had such a measure of grace and fellowship with God, though I were a poor and despised creature, I should not care. I should account myself a blessed man.

Reader, is this the language of your soul? His joys are changed. He rejoices in the way of God's testimonies as much as in all riches. He delights in the law of the Lord, in which he once had little savor.

He has no such joy as in the thoughts of Christ, the enjoyment of his company, the prosperity of his people. His cares are quite altered. He was once set for the world, and any scrap of spare time was enough for his soul.

Now his cry is, What must I do to be saved? Acts 16.30 His great concern is how to secure his soul, and how he would bless you if you could but put him out of doubt concerning this. His fears are not so much of suffering as of sinning. Once he was afraid of nothing so much as a loss of his estate or reputation.

Nothing sounded so terrible to him as pain or poverty or disgrace. Now these are little to him in comparison with God's dishonor or displeasure. How early does he walk, lest he should tread upon a snare.

He looks in front and behind. He has his eye upon his heart, and is often casting it over his shoulder, lest he should be overtaken with sin. It kills his heart to think of losing God's favor.

This he dreads as his only undoing. No thought's paying him so much as to think of parting with Christ. His love runs in a new course.

My love was crucified, says Ignatius, that is, my Christ. This is my beloved, says the spouse. Pentecost 5.16 How often does Augustine pour his love upon Christ.

He can find no word sweet enough. Let me see thee, O light of mine eyes. Come, O thou joy of my spirit.

Let me behold thee, O gladness of my heart. Let me love thee, O life of my soul. Appear unto me, O my great delight, my sweet comfort, O my God, my life, and the whole glory of my soul.

Let me find thee, O desire of my heart. Let me hold thee, O love of my soul. Let me embrace thee, O heavenly bridegroom.

Let me possess thee. For the continuation of this book, please turn your tapes aside too. His sorrows have now a new vent.

2 Corinthians 7, 9, and 10. The view of his sins, the sight of Christ crucified, that could scarcely stir him before. Now how much do they affect his heart.

His hatred boils. His anger burns against sin. He has no patience with himself.

He calls himself fool and beast and thinks any name too good for himself when his indignation is stirred up against sin. Psalm 73, 22, Proverbs 30, verse 2. He could once wallow in it with much pleasure. Now he loathes the thought of returning to it as much as of licking up the filthiest vomit.

Commune then with your heart and attend to the general current of your affections, whether they be towards God and Christ above all other concerns. Indeed, sudden and strong motions of the affections are often found in hypocrites, especially where the natural temperament is warm. And contrarywise, the sanctified themselves are often without conscious stirring of the affections while the temperament is more slow, dry, and dull.

The great inquiry is whether the judgment and will are steadily determined for God above all other good, real or apparent. If so, and if the affections do sincerely follow their choice and conduct, though being not so strongly and feelingly as to be desired, there is no doubt that the change is saving. Number 2, The Members.

These that before were the instruments of sin are now become the holy utensils of Christ's living temple. He that before dishonored his body now possesses his soul in sanctification and honor, in temperance, chastity, sobriety, and dedicates it to the Lord. The eye that was once a wandering eye, a wanton eye, a haughty, a covetous eye, is now employed as Mary's in weeping over its sins, in beholding God in his works, in reading his word, or in looking for objects of mercy and opportunities for his service.

The ear that was once open to Satan's call and that did relish nothing so much as filthy or at least frothy talk, and a laughter of fools, is now bored to the door of Christ's house and open to his disciples. It says, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. It waits for his words as a rain and relishes them more than the appointed food, Job 23.12, more than the honey in the honeycomb.

The head that was full of worldly designs is now filled with other matters and set on the study of God's will, and the man employs his head not so much about his gain as about his duty. The thoughts and cares that fill his head are principally how he may please God and flee sin. His heart that was a sty of filthy lusts is now become an altar of incense, where the fire of divine love is ever kept burning, and from which the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise and the sweet incense of holy desires, ejaculations and prayers are continually ascending.

The mouth has become a well of life, his tongue is choice silver, and his lips feed many. Now the salt of grace has seasoned his speech, has eaten out the corruption, Colossians 4.6, and cleansed a man from his filthy conversation, flattery, boasting, railing, lying, swearing, backbiting, that once came like flashes proceeding from the hell that was in his heart, James 3.6. The throat that was once an open sepulcher now sends forth a sweet breath of prayer and holy discourse, and a man speaks in another tongue, in the language of Canaan, and is never so well as when talking of God and Christ in the matters of another world. His mouth brings forth wisdom, his tongue has become the silver trumpet of his Maker's praise, his glory in the best member that he has.

Now here you will find the hypocrite sadly deficient. He speaks, it may be like an angel, but he has a covetous eye, or the gain of unrighteousness is in his hand. His hand is white, but his heart is full of rottenness, Matthew 23.27, full of unmortified cares, a very oven of lust, a shop of pride, the seat of malice.

It may be with Nebuchadnezzar's image he has a golden head, a great deal of knowledge, but he has feet of clay. His affections are worldly, he minds earthly things, and his way is walker sensual and carnal. The work is not thorough with him.

Thirdly, the life in practice. The new man takes a new course, Ephesians 2, verses 2 and 3. His conversation is in heaven, Philippians 3.20. No sinner does Christ call by effectual grace, but he straightway becomes a follower of him. When God has given the new heart and written his law in his mind, he henceforth walks in his statutes and keeps his judgments.

Though sin may dwell in him, truly a weary summoned unwelcome guest, yet it has no more dominion over him. He has his fruit unto holiness, and though he makes many a blot, yet the law and life of Jesus is what he looks at as his pattern, and he has an unfeigned respect to all God's commandments. He makes conscience even of little sins and little duties.

His very infirmities which he cannot help, though he would, are his soul's burden and are like dust in a man's eye, which though but little is not little troublesome. O man, do you read this and never stop to examine yourself? The sincere convert is not one man at church and another at home. He is not a saint on his knees and a cheat in his shop.

He will not tithe, mint, incumbent, and neglect mercy and judgment in the weightier matters of the law. He does not pretend piety and neglect morality, but he turns from all his sins and keeps all God's statutes, though not perfectly, except in desire and endeavor, yet sincerely not allowing himself in the breach of

any. Now he delights in the word and sets himself to prayer and opens his hands and draws out a soul to the hungry.

He breaks off his sins by righteousness and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Daniel 4.27 He has a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly. Hebrews 13.18 And to keep without offense towards God and men.

Here again you find the unsoundness of many that take themselves for good Christians. They are partial in the law, Malachi 2.9, and take up the cheap and easy duties of religion, but they do not go through with the work. There is a cake half-baked and half-raw, and maybe you find them exact in their words, punctual in their dealings, but then they do not exercise themselves unto godliness.

And as for examining themselves and governing their hearts, to this they are strangers. You may see them duly at church, but follow them to their families, and there you shall see little but the world-minded. Or if they have family duties, follow them to their closets, and there you shall find their souls are little looked after.

It may be that they seem religious, but they do not bridle their tongues, and so all their religion is vain, James 1.26. It may be they come to closet in family prayer, but follow them to their shops, and there you find them in the habit of lying, or some fashionable way of deceit. Thus the hypocrite is not thorough, in his obedience. 6. The objects from which we turn in conversion are sin, Satan, the world, and our own righteousness.

First, we turn from sin. When a man is converted, he is forever at enmity with sin. Yes, with all sin, but most of all with his own sins, and especially with his bosom sin.

Sin is now the object of his indignation. His sin swells his sorrows. It is sin that pierces him and wounds him.

He feels it like a thorn in his side, like a prick in his eyes. He groans and struggles under it, and not formally, but feelingly cries out, O wretched man! He is not impatient of any burden so much as of his sin. If God should give him this choice, he would choose any affliction so he might be rid of sin.

He feels it like the cutting gravel in his shoes, pricking and paining him as he goes. Before conversion, he had light thoughts of sin. He cherished it in his bosom as Uriah his lamb.

He nourished it up, and it grew up together with him. It did eat, as it were, of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a daughter. But when God opens his eyes by conversion, he throws it away with abhorrence as a man would a loathsome toad, which in the dark he hugged fast in his bosom and thought it had been some purty and harmless bird.

When a man is savantly changed, he is deeply convinced not only of the danger, but the defilement of sin. And, O how earnest is he with God to be purified! He loathes himself for his sins. He runs to Christ and casts himself into the fountain and set open for him and for uncleanness.

If he fall, what asturious error to get all clean again! He has no rest till he flees to the word and washes and rubs and rinses in the infinite fountain, laboring to cleanse himself from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit. The sound convert is heartily engaged against sin. He struggles with it.

He wars against it. He is too often foiled, but he will never yield the cause nor lay down the weapons while he has breath in his body. He will make no peace.

He will give no quarter. He can forgive his other enemies. He can pity them and pray for them.

But here he is implacable. Here he is set upon their extermination. He hunts, as it were, for the precious life.

His eyes shall not pity. His hand shall not spare, though it be a right hand or a right eye. Be it a gainful sin, most delightful to his nature, or the support of his esteem with worldly friends, yet he will rather throw his gain down the gutter, see his credit fail, or the flower of his pleasure wither in his hand, than he will allow himself in any known way of sin.

He will grant no indulgence. He will give no toleration. He draws upon sin wherever he meets it and frowns upon it with the unwelcome salute.

Have I found thee, O mine enemy, reader? Has conscience been at work while you have been looking over these lines? Have you pondered these things in your heart? Have you searched the book within to see if these things be so? If not, read it again and make your conscience speak, whether it not be thus with you. Have you crucified your flesh with its affections and lusts, and not only confessed but forsaken your sins, all sin in your fervent desires and the ordinary practice of every deliberate and willful sin in your life? If not, you are yet unconverted. Does not conscience lie in your face as you read and tell you that you live in a way of lying for your advantage, that you use deceit in your calling, that there is some way of secret wantonness that you live in? Why, then, do not deceive yourself, thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

Does your unbridled tongue, your indulgence of appetite, your wicked company, your neglect of prayer, of reading, of hearing the word now witness against you and say, We are your works and we will follow you? Or if I have not teach you right, does not the monitor within tell you there is such and such a way that you know to be evil, that yet for some carnal respect you tolerate in yourself? If this be the case, you are to this day unregenerate and must be changed or condemned. Secondly, we turn from Satan. Conversion binds a strong man, spoils his armor, casts out his goods, turns men from the power of Satan to God.

Before the devil could no sooner hold up his finger to the sinner to call him to his wicked company, sinful games and filthy delights, but immediately he followed as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, as a bird that hasteth to the snare and knoweth not that it is for his life. Proverbs 7.22 and 23 No sooner could Satan bid him lie, but immediately he had it on his tongue. No sooner could Satan offer a wanton object, but he was stung with lust.

If the devil says away with these family duties, be sure they shall be rarely performed in his house. If the devil says away with this strictness, this preciseness, he will keep far enough from it. If he tells him there is no need of these secret duties, he will go from day to day and scarcely perform them.

But after he is converted, he serves another master and takes quite another course. He goes and comes at Christ's bidding. Satan may sometimes catch his foot in a trap, but he will no longer be a willing captive.

He watches against the snares and baits of Satan and studies to be acquainted with his devices. He is very suspicious of his plots and is very jealous in what comes across him, lest Satan should have some design upon him. He wrestles against principalities and powers.

He entertains a messenger of Satan as men do the messenger of death. He keeps his eye on his enemy and watches in his duties, lest Satan should get an advantage. Number three, we turn from the world.

Before a man has true faith, he is overcome by the world. He either bows down to mammon or idolizes his reputation or is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. Here is the root of man's misery by the fall.

He is turned aside to the creature and gives that esteem, confidence, and affection to the creature that is due to God alone. Oh, miserable man, what a deformed monster his sin made you. God made you a little lower than the angels.

Sin has made you a little better than the devils. A monster that has his head and his heart where his feet should be and his feet kicking against heaven and everything out of place. The world that was formed to serve you has come up to rule you.

The deceitful harlot has bewitched you with her enchantments and made you bow down and serve her. But converting grace sets all in order again and puts God on the throne and the world at his footstool, Christ in the heart and the world under the feet. I am crucified to the world and the world to me.

Galatians 6.14 Before this change, all the cry was, Who will show us any worldly good? But now he prays, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me and take the corn and wine whosoever will. Psalm 4, 6, and 7 Before his heart's delight and content were in the world, then the song was, So take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Thou hast much goods laid up for many years.

But now all this is withered and there is no comeliness that we should desire it. And he tunes up with the sweet psalmist of Israel, The Lord is a portion of my inheritance. The lines are fallen to me in a fair place and I have a goodly heritage.

Nothing else can make him content. He has written vanity and vexation upon all his worldly enjoyments and loss and dung. Upon all human excellencies, he has life and immortality now in pursuit.

He pants for grace and glory and has a crown incorruptible in view. His heart is set in him to seek the Lord. He first seeks the kingdom of God in his righteousness.

And religion is no longer a casual matter with him but his main care. Before the world had this way with him, he would do more for gain than godliness, more to please his friends or his flesh than the God that made him. And God must stand by till the world was first served.

But now all must stand by. He hates father and mother and life and all in comparison with Christ. Well, then, pause a little and look within.

Does not this concern you? You pretend to be for Christ but does not the world sway you? Do you not take more real delight and content in the world than in him? Do you not find yourself more at ease when the world is in your mind and you are surrounded with carnal delight than when retired to prayer and meditation in your room and attending upon God's word and worship? There is no surer evidence of an unconverted state than to have the things of the world uppermost in our aim, love, and estimation. With the sound convert, Christ has a supremacy. How dear is his name to him! How precious is his favor! The name of Jesus is engraved on his heart.

Honor is but air, and laughter is but madness, and mammon is fallen like dagon before the ark, with hands and head broken off on the threshold, when once Christ is savingly revealed. Here is a pearl of great price to the true convert. Here is his treasure.

Here is his hope. This is his glory. My beloved is mine, and I am his.

Oh, it is sweeter to him to be able to say, Christ is mine, than if he could say, the kingdom is mine, the Indies are mine. Fourthly, we turn from our own righteousness. Before conversion, man seeks to cover himself with his own fig leaves and to make himself whole with his own duties.

He is apt to trust in himself and set up his own righteousness and to reckon his counters for gold and not to submit to the righteousness of God. But conversion changes his mind. Now he counts his own righteousness as filthy rags.

He casts it off as a man would the verminous tatters of a nasty beggar. Now he is brought to poverty of spirit, complains of, and condemns himself and all his inventory. He is poor and miserable and wretched and blind and naked.

He sees a world of iniquity in his holy things and calls his once idolized righteousness but filth and loss. It would not for a thousand worlds be found in it. Now he begins to set a high price upon Christ's righteousness.

He sees the need of Christ in every duty. To justify his person and sanctify his performances, he cannot live without him. He cannot pray without him.

Christ must go with him or else he cannot come into the presence of God. He leans upon Christ and so bows himself in the house of his God. He sets himself down for a lost undone man without him.

His life is hidden Christ as a root of a tree spreads in the earth for stability and nourishment. Before the news of Christ was he stale and a tasteless thing. But now how sweet is Christ! Augustine could not relish his once admired Cicero because he could not find in his writings the name of Christ.

How emphatically he cries, O most sweet, most loving, most kind, most dear, most precious, most desired, most lovely, most fair, all in a breath, when he speaks of and to Christ, and a word the voice of the convert is with the martyr, none but Christ. Number 7 The object to which we turn in conversion is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whom the true convert takes as his all-sufficient and eternal blessedness. A man is never truly sanctified till his heart be truly set upon God and above all things as his portion and chief good.

These are the natural breathings of a believer's heart. Thou art my portion. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.

My expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation and my glory. The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God.

Psalm 119 57 Psalm 34 2 Would you be certain whether you are converted or not? Now let your soul and all that is within you attend. Have you taken God for your happiness? Where does the desire of your heart lie? What is the source of your greatest satisfaction? Come then, and with Abraham lift up your eyes eastward and westward and northward and southward, and look around you. What is it that you have in heaven or on earth to make you happy? If God should give you your choice as He did to Solomon, or

should He say to you as He has to Esther, what is thy petition and what is thy request? And it shall be granted thee.

What would you ask? Go into the gardens of pleasure and gather all the fragrant flowers there. Would these satisfy you? Go to the treasures of Mammon. Suppose you may carry away as much as you desire.

Go to the towers, to the trophies of honor. What do you think of being a man of renown and having a name like the name of the great men of the earth? Would any of these, would all of these satisfy you and make you to count yourself happy? If so, then certainly you are carnal and unconverted. If not, go further.

Wade into the divine excellencies, the store of His mercies, the hiding of His power, the depths unfathomable of His all-sufficiency. Does this suit you best and please you most? Do you say, It is good to be here. Here will I pitch.

Here will I live and die. Will you let all the world go rather than this? Then it is well between God and you. Happy art thou, O man.

Happy art thou that ever thou wast born. If God can make you happy, you must be happy. For you have taken the Lord to be your God.

Do you say to Christ, Is He to us? Thy Father shall be my Father and thy God my God. Here is the turning point. An unsound convert takes up his rest in God, but converting grace does the work and so cures the fatal misery of the fall by turning the heart from its idol to the living God.

Now the soul says, Lord, whither shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. Here he centers. Here he settles.

It is the entrance of heaven to him. He sees his interest in God. When he discovers this, he says, Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

Psalms 116 verse 7 And he is even ready to breathe out Simeon's song. Lord, now letteth thou thy servant depart in peace. And says with Jacob, When his old heart revived at the welcome tidings, it is enough.

When he sees he has a God and covenant to go to, this is all his salvation and all his desire. Is this the case with you? Have you experienced this? If so, then blessed are thou of the Lord. God has been at work with you.

He has laid hold of your heart by the power of converting grace, or else you could never have done this. More particularly in conversion, first we turn to Christ, the only mediator between God and man. 1 Timothy 2.5 His work is to bring us to God.

1 Peter 3.18 He is the way to the Father. John 14.6 The only plank on which we may escape. The only door by which we may enter.

John 10.9 Conversion brings the soul to Christ, to accept Him as the only means of life, as the only way, the only name given under heaven. He does not look for salvation in any other but Him. He throws himself on Christ alone.

Here, says he convinced sinner, I will venture, and if I perish, I perish. If I die, I will die here. But Lord, do not let me perish under the eye of Thy mercy.

Entreat me not to leave Thee, or to return from following after Thee. Here I will throw myself. If Thou slay me, I will not go from Thy door.

Thus supports all ventures on Christ, and humbly adheres to Him. Before conversion, the man made light of Christ, minded his farm, friends, merchandise, more than Christ. Now Christ is to him as his necessary food, his daily bread, the life of his heart, the staff of his life.

His great desire is that Christ may be magnified in him. His heart once said, as they to the spouse, What is thy beloved more than another? Cantic 5.9 He found more sweetness in his merry company, wicked gains, earthly delights, than in Christ. He took religion for a fancy, and the talk of great enjoyments for an idle dream.

But now to him to live is Christ. He sets light by all that he accounted precious for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. All of Christ is accepted by the sincere convert.

He loves not only the wages, but the work of Christ. Not only the benefits, but the burden of Christ. He is willing not only to tread out the corn, but to draw under the yoke.

He takes up the commands of Christ, yea, the cross of Christ. The unsound convert takes Christ by halves. He is all for the salvation of Christ, but he is not for sanctification.

He is for the privileges, but does not appropriate the person of Christ. He divides the offices and benefits of Christ. This is an error in the foundation.

Whoso loves life, let him beware here. It is an undoing mistake, of which you have often been warned, and yet none is more common. Jesus is a sweet name, but men do not love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

They will not have him as God offers, to be a prince and a savior, Acts 5 31. They divide what God has joined, the king and the priest. They will not accept the salvation of Christ as he intends it.

They divide it here. Every man's vote is for salvation from suffering, but they do not desire to be saved from sinning. They would have their lives saved, but still would have their lusts.

Indeed, many divide here again. They would be content to have some of their sins destroyed, but they cannot leave the lap of Delilah or divorce a beloved Herodias. They cannot be cruel to the right eye or right hand.

Oh, be infinitely careful here. Your soul depends on it. The sound convert takes a whole Christ and takes him for all intents and purposes without exceptions, without limitations, without reserves.

He is willing to have Christ upon any terms. He is willing to have the dominion of Christ as well as deliverance by Christ. He says with Paul, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Anything, Lord.

He sends the blank for Christ to set down his own conditions. Secondly, we turn to the laws, ordinances, and ways of Christ. The heart that was once set against these and could not endure the strictness of these bonds, the severity of these ways, now falls in love with them and chooses them as its ruling guide forever.

For things, I observe, God works in every sound convert with reference to the laws and ways of Christ, that which you may come to know your state if you will be faithful to your own souls. Therefore keep your

eyes upon your hearts as you go along. The judgment is brought to approve of them and to subscribe to them as most righteous and most reasonable.

The mind is brought to like the ways of God and the corrupt prejudices that were once against them as unreasonable and intolerable are now removed. The understanding ascends to them all is holy, just, and good. Romans 7.12 How is David taken up with the excellencies of God's laws? How does he expatiate on their praises both from their inherent qualities and admirable effects? Psalm 19.8-10 and so on.

There is a twofold judgment of the understanding, the absolute and the comparative. The absolute judgment is when a man thinks such a course best in general but not for him or not under his present circumstances. Now a godly man's judgment is for the ways of God, and that not only the absolute but comparative judgment.

He thinks them not only the best in general but best for him. He looks upon the rules of religion not only as tolerable but desirable, yea, more desirable than gold, fine gold, yea, much fine gold. His judgment is fully determined that it is best to be holy, that it is best to be strict, that it is in itself the most eligible course, and that it is for him the wisest and most rational and desirable choice.

Hear the godly man's judgment. I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.

I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way. Psalm 119, 127, and 128. Mark, he approves of all that God requires and disapproves of all that he forbids.

Righteous, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful. Thy word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever.

Psalm 119. See how readily and fully he subscribes. He declares his assent and consent to it, and all and everything contained therein.

Also, the desire of the heart is to know of the whole mind of Christ. He would not have one sin undiscovered, nor be ignorant of one duty required. It is the natural and earnest breathing of a sanctified heart.

Lord, if there be any way of wickedness in me, do thou reveal it. What I know not, teach thou me, and if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more. The unsound convert is willingly ignorant.

He does not love to come to the light. He is willing to keep such and such a sin, and therefore is loath to know it to be a sin, and will not let in the light the window. Now the gracious heart is willing to know of the whole latitude and compass of its Maker's law.

He receives with all acceptance the word which convinces him of any duty that he knew not or minded not before, or which uncovers any sins that lay hid before. The free and resolved choice of the will is for the ways of Christ, before all the pleasures of sin and prosperities of the world. His consent is not extorted by some extremity of anguish, nor is it only a sudden and hasty resolve, but he is deliberately purposed and comes freely to the choice.

True, the flesh will rebel, yet the prevailing part of the will is for Christ's laws and government, so that he takes them up not as his toil or burden, but as his bliss. While the unsanctified goes in Christ's ways as in chains and fetters, the true convert does it heartily and counts Christ's laws his liberty. He delights in the beauties of holiness and has this inescapable mark.

He had rather, if he might have his choice, live a strict and holy life than the most prosperous and flourishing worldly life. There went with Saul a band of men whose hearts God had touched. 1 Samuel 10.26 When God touches the hearts of his chosen, they presently follow Christ and though drawn, do freely run after him and willingly devote themselves to the service of the Lord, seeking him with their whole desire.

Fear has its uses, but this is not the mainspring of motion with a sanctified heart. Christ does not control his subjects by force, but he is king of a willing people. They are through his grace freely devoted to his service.

They serve out of choice, not as slaves, but as a son or spouse from a spring of love and a loyal mind. In a word, the laws of Christ are the converse love, delight, and continual study. The bent of his course is directed to keep God's statutes.

It is a daily care of his life to walk with God. He seeks great things. He has noble designs, though he fall too short.

He aims at nothing less than perfection. He desires it. He reaches after it.

He would not rest in any degree of grace till he were quite rid of sin and perfected in holiness. Philippians 3, 11-14 Here the hypocrite's rottenness may be discovered. He desires holiness as one well said, only as a bridge to heaven, and inquires earnestly what is the least that will serve his turn.

And if he can get but so much as may bring him to heaven, this is all he cares for. But the sound convert desires holiness for holiness' sake, and not merrily for heaven's sake. He would not be satisfied with so much as might save him from hell, but desires the highest degree.

Yet desires are not enough. What is your way and your course? Are the drift and scope of your life altered? Is holiness your pursuit and religion your business? If not, you fall short of sound conversion. And is this which we have described the conversion that is of absolute necessity to salvation? Then be informed that straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, that there are few that find it, that there is need of divine power savingly to convert a sinner to Jesus Christ.

Again be exhorted, O man, to examine yourself. What does conscience say? Does it begin to accuse? Does it not pierce you as you go? Is this your judgment? Is this your choice? Is this your way that we have described? If so, then it is well. But does your heart condemn you and tell you of a certain sin you are living in against your conscience? Does it not tell you there is such and such a secret way of wickedness that you wish to pursue, such and such a duty that you make no conscience of? Does not conscience carry you to your closet and tell you how seldom prayer and reading are performed there? Does it not carry you to your family and show you the charge of God and the souls of your children that are neglected there? Does not conscience lead you to your shop, your trade, and tell you of some iniquity there? Does it not carry you to the public house or the private club and blame you for the loose company you keep there, the precious time which you misspend there, the talents which you waste there? Does it not carry you into

your secret chamber and revere your condemnation? O conscience, do your duty in the name of the living God I commend you.

Discharge your office. Lay hold upon this sinner. Foul upon him.

Arrest him. Apprehend him. Undeceive him.

What? Will you flatter and soothe him while he lives in his sins? Awake, O conscience! What meanest thou, O sleeper? What? Have you no reproof in your mouth? What? Shall this soul die in his careless neglect of God and of eternity? And you altogether hold your peace? What? Shall he go on stealing his trespasses and yet have peace? O arouse yourself and do your work. Now let the preacher in your bosom speak. Cry aloud and speak not.

Lift up thy voice like a trumpet. Let not the blood of this soul be required at your hands. For the continuation of Elaine's Alarm, please go to cassette number two at this time.

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