

## Praying For The Unsaved By J. G. McClure

### Classic Christian Writings:

Intelligent prayer for the unsaved should bear in mind that they need to be saved from their unconcern.

Many, many are going the way of death heedlessly. They eat, drink and play; they labor, they sleep--and all the while secondary things are the end and aim of their living. Many a man is like Jonah--not a profligate, but simply a deserter from duty. Jonah slept on that storm tossed vessel--disloyal as he was to himself, to his fellows and to his God. Above the storm the shipmaster's cry was needed: "What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise and call upon thy God if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not." Jonah's safety was dependent upon an awakening.

The first thing we must ask God to do is to make them think. In answer to Stephen's prayer God stopped Saul on his way to Damascus and forced him to realize his position. Thus God aroused him from his unconcern.

Prayer for the unsaved should bear in mind that they need to be saved from their error.

This thought was especially prominent in Paul's mind when he prayed for his own kinsmen. Their views of religion were wrong. They thought it impossible that a penitent so soon as he came to God could be forgiven and welcomed. They held that through prayers, tithes and sacrifices the sinner must work out his own perfection and thus make himself worthy of God's blessing. They were in error. No one, though he lives a thousand years of effort, can ever, of himself, become perfect. For acceptance God does not require perfection, but penitence. God simply asks the soul to see in Jesus Christ the righteousness which God freely offers, and then to appropriate that righteousness.

There is widespread need of the prayer, "Save them from error." Missionaries in lands of idolatry need to have it on their lips daily. The people around them misconceive the nature of God and misconceive the methods of reconciling with Him. As the missionaries realize the superstitions of the heathen they exclaim again and again, "Come, Lord, in Thy power and deliver the people from their blindness."

The prayer is equally needed in Gospel lands. Many persons hear the truth all their days and still remain ignorant of its meaning. Satan is a jealous jailer. He holds fast many souls in such beliefs as that the faults of others are an excuse for their own deficiency; that ideals of conduct adopted without reference to divine revelation are all that are required; that cherished grudges are of small import; and that postponement of obedience to God is safe. All such beliefs keep people back from salvation. They darken the eyes of the understanding and often lead lives into immorality.

Prayer for the unsaved should bear in mind that they need to be saved from their sin.

To be saved from sin is to be saved from its guilt, its power and its corruption. Sin is the violation of God's law. To violate human law renders the violator guilty.

It is fearful to be guilty before God. Guilt is cruelty toward God and peril toward ourselves. Cruelty toward God because it means willful resistance to the most tender of all tender hearts, peril toward ourselves, because were final judgment to be pronounced immediately, our guilt would be our condemnation. He who loves a soul that is in sin will pray that it be saved from sin's guilt.

He will pray too that it be saved from sin's power. The power of sin is seen in the drunkard. His drunkenness is his master. In the morning he wishes always to be sober; in the evening he is again a captive to his drunkenness. So too with the habitual thief, or slanderer, or backslider; they are held prisoners by their sins. Many a sweet spirited person when asked to be a Christian replies, "I cannot. My will breaks down every time I try."

Then there is the corruption of sin. Sin is a malaria in the soul: it vitiates taste, it weakens strength, it spoils appetite for good. Sin crazes reason: it causes Barabbas to seem preferable to Christ. Under the corruption of sin men take "naturally" to evil. Unless that corruption is checked, it, like leprosy with the body, pollutes the whole system. No one can check it but God. Even He can check it only by making of man a new creature--with a new disposition and a new purpose. This God is glad to do. "A new heart will I give you" (Ezek. 36:26). This promise God has fulfilled thousands and thousands of times.

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Prayer for the unsaved should bear in mind that they need to be saved from their alienation.

The prodigal boy in the far country is away from home and fellowship. The prayer that he may be saved involves more than deliverance from wrong: it involves also adoption of right. It asks that the boy may receive his Father's kiss and welcome, that the sense of God's love may flow in on his soul, that peace may be established between him and God, and that fellowship with his Father may be forever his. To be saved is to be delivered out of the life of evil and brought into the life of God, so that the sunlight seems brighter than ever before and the feast of the Lord is the strength of the soul.

-- From Intercessory Prayer.