

Articles and Sermons :: Choice excerpts from Joseph Alleine's "An Alarm to the Unconverted" 1671

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But now the tune is changed

Conversion turns the bent of the affections. These all run in a new channel. Christ is now his hope. This is his prize. Here his eye is—here his heart. He is content to cast all overboard, as the merchant in the storm about to perish—so that 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 hidden 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 carnal, he said, 'O if I were but in great esteem, rolling in wealth, and swimming in pleasure—then I would be a happy man!' But now the tune is changed. 'Oh!' says the convert, 'if I had but my corruptions subdued, if I had such a measure of grace, and fellowship with God—though I were poor and despised, I would not care, I would account myself a blessed man!'

Reader, is this the language of your soul?

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The hypocrite's life

The hypocrite's life is 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 (Matt 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 and walk are sensual and carnal.

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It opens the eye of the mind

Conversion is a deep work, a heart 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.

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 who before saw no danger in his condition, now concludes himself lost and forever undone—except renewed by the power of grace. He who formerly thought there was little hurt in sin, now comes to see it to be the chief of evils. He sees the unreasonableness, 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 (Rom 7:15; Job 42:6; Ezek 36:31). He who 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.

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. 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!

Hitherto he saw no form nor loveliness in Christ, no beauty that he should desire Him; but now he finds the Hidden Treasure, and will sell all to buy this field. Christ is the Pearl he seeks.

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Like a splinter in his eye

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 which pierces him and wounds him; he feels it like a thorn in his side, like a splinter in his eye. 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 his 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 painning 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 plate, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a sweet 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 had hugged fast in his bosom—and thought it had been some pretty and harmless pet.

When a man is savingly 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 set open for him and for uncleanness. If he falls into sin, what a stir is there to get all clean again! He has no rest until 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.

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Satan may sometimes catch his foot in a trap

Before conversion, the devil could no sooner hold up his finger to the sinner to call him to his wicked company, sinful games, and filthy delights—than immediately he followed, 'like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life' (Prov 7:22-23). No sooner could Satan bid him to lie—but immediately he had it on his tongue. No sooner could Satan offer a filthy object—but he was overcome with lust.

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 and plots.

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His once-idolized righteousness

Before conversion, man seeks to cover himself with his own fig-leaves, and to make himself acceptable with God by his own duties. He trusts in himself, sets up his own righteousness—and does 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 is, 'I am 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; and would not for a thousand worlds be found in it! Now he begins to set a high price upon Christ's righteousness. He sets himself down for a lost undone man without Him. Before, the gospel of Christ was a stale and tasteless thing; but now—how sweet is Christ! In a word, the voice of the convert is, 'None but Christ!'

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They cannot leave the lap of Delilah

The unsound convert takes Christ by halves. He is all for the salvation of Christ—but he is not for sanctification. He divides the offices and benefits of Christ. Hypocrites 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 who rules—but and the Priest who saves. They desire salvation from suffering—but but they do not desire to be saved from sinning. They would have their souls saved—but still would have their lusts. They would be content to have some of their sins destroyed—but but they cannot leave the lap of Delilah, or divorce the beloved Herodias. They cannot be cruel to the right eye or right hand.

The sound convert takes a whole Christ, and takes Him for all intents and purposes, without exceptions, without limitations, without reserve. 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 will you have me to do?' Anything, Lord! He gives Christ the blank page—to write down His own conditions.

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What would you ask for?

That night God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!"
2 Chronicles 1:7

If God should give you your choice, as He did to Solomon, what would you ask for? 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—and become a man of renown. 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.

Converting grace turns the heart from its idols—to the living God. Before conversion, the man minded his farm, friends, pleasures—more than Christ. He found more sweetness in his merry company, wicked games, earthly delights—than in Christ. Now he says, 'But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ!' Philippians 3:7-8

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Certain signs of an unconverted sinner

"If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15

The predominant love of the world is a sure evidence of an unsanctified heart. But how often does this sin

lurk under the fair cover of profession. Yes, such a power of deceit is there in this sin that many times, when everybody else can see the man's worldliness and covetousness—he cannot see it himself! He has so many excuses and pretenses for his eagerness after the world, that he blinds his own eyes and perishes in his self-deceit! How many professing Christians are there, with whom the world has more of their hearts and affections than Christ, 'who mind earthly things', and thereby are evidently after the flesh, and likely to end in destruction (Rom 8:5; Phil 3:19).

Did they but carefully search their hearts, they would quickly see that their greatest satisfaction is in the world, and that their greatest care and main endeavor are to get and secure the world—which are the certain signs of an unconverted sinner.

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Death will knock off their fingers

"When the wicked die—their hopes all perish." Pr. 11:7

Wicked men are fixed in their carnal hope, and will not be beaten out of it; they hold it fast, they will not let it go; but death will knock off their fingers. Though we cannot undeceive them, death and judgment will. When death strikes his dart through the wicked man's heart, it will ruin both his soul and his hopes together.

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Your enemy!

"I myself, the Sovereign Lord, am now your enemy!"
Ezekiel 5:8

Unconverted sinner! You are not only against God—but God is against you! As there is no friend like Him—so there is no enemy like Him. As much as heaven is above the earth, omnipotence above impotence—so much more terrible is it to fall into the hands of the living God, than into the paws of bears and lions, yes, furies or devils! God Himself will be your tormentor! Who or what shall deliver you out of His hands? Sinner, I think this would go like a dagger to your heart—to know that God Himself is your enemy! Oh where will you go? Where will you shelter yourself?

The infinite God is engaged against you! He hates all workers of iniquity. Man, does not your heart tremble to think of your being an object of God's hatred? "As surely as I live, when I sharpen My flashing sword and begin to carry out justice, I will bring vengeance on My enemies and repay those who hate Me!" (Deuteronomy 32:40-41)

The power of God is mounted like a mighty cannon against

you. Sinner, the power of God's anger is against you—
and power and anger together make fearful work. There is no
escaping His hands—no breaking loose from His prison.

"O consider this, you who forget God, lest He tear you in
pieces, and there be none to deliver!" (Psalm 50:22)

Submit to mercy. Let not dust and stubble battle against
the Almighty. "Woe to him who strives with his Maker!"
(Isaiah 45:9)

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The Devil's trap

"Then they may come to their senses and escape
the Devil's trap, having been captured by him
to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:26

It is the common misery of all the unsaved—that the
devil is their god. His drudges they are, and his lusts
they do. However Satan may provide his slaves with
various pleasures—yet it is but to draw them into
endless perdition. O dreadful case!

The serpent comes with the fruit in his mouth, but,
like Eve—you do not see the deadly sting! He who is
now your tempter—will one day be your tormentor!
O that I could but make you see how bad a master
you serve, how merciless a tyrant you gratify; whose
pleasure is to make your perdition and damnation
sure, and to heat the furnace hotter and hotter in
which you must burn for millions and millions of ages!

Re: Choice excerpts from Joseph Alleine's "An Alarm to the Unconverted" - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2007/7/3 16:

This is a great book. I read it about a year ago.