

## *Advise to the Unsaved*

J. C. Ryle

**There is no excuse.** Let me speak a word to those who do not pray. I dare not suppose that all who read these pages are praying people. If you are a prayerless person, suffer me to speak to you this day on God's behalf.

Prayerless reader, I can only warn you, but I do warn you most solemnly. I warn you that you are in a position of fearful danger. If you die in your present state, you are a lost soul. You will only rise again to be eternally miserable. I warn you that of all professing Christians you are most utterly without excuse. There is not a single good reason that you can show for living without prayer.

It is useless to say you know not how to pray. Prayer is the simplest act in all religion. It is simply speaking to God. It needs neither learning nor wisdom nor book knowledge to begin it. It needs nothing but heart and will. The weakest infant can cry when he is hungry. The poorest beggar can hold out his hand for alms, and does not wait to find fine words. The most ignorant man will find something to say to God, if he has only a mind.

It is useless to say you have no convenient place to pray in. Any man can find a place private enough, if he is disposed. Our Lord prayed on a mountain; Peter on the housetop; Isaac in the field; Nathaniel under the fig tree; Jonah in the whale's belly. Any place may become a closet, an oratory, and a Bethel, and be to us the presence of God.

It is useless to say you have no time. There is plenty of time, if men will employ it. Time may be short, but time is always long enough for prayer. Daniel had the affairs of a kingdom on his hands, and yet he prayed three times a day. David was ruler over a mighty nation, and yet he says, "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray" (Ps. 55:17). When time is really wanted, time can always be found.

It is useless to say you cannot pray till you have faith and a new heart, and that you must sit still and wait for them. This is to add sin to sin. It is bad enough to be unconverted and going to hell. It is even worse to say, "I know it, but will not cry for mercy." This is a kind of argument for which there is no warrant in Scripture. "Call ye upon the Lord," saith Isaiah, "while he is near" (Isa. 55:6). "Take with you words, and turn unto the Lord," says Hosea (Hos. 14:1). "Repent and pray," says Peter to Simon Magus (Acts 8:22). If you want faith and a new heart, go and cry to the Lord for them. The very attempt to pray has often been the quickening of a dead soul.

Oh, prayerless reader, **who and what are you that you will not ask anything of God?** Have you made a covenant with death and hell? Are you at peace with the worm and the fire? have you no sins to be pardoned? Have you no fear of eternal torment? Have you no desire after heaven? Oh that you would awake from your present folly. Oh that you would consider your latter end. Oh that you would arise and call upon God. Alas, there is a day coming when many shall pray loudly, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but all too late; when many shall cry to the rocks to fall on them and the hills to cover them, who would never cry to God. In all affection, I warn you, beware lest this be the end of your soul. Salvation is very near you. **Do not lose heaven for want of asking.**

**Do you desire salvation?** Let me speak to those who have real desires for salvation, but know not what steps to take, or where to begin. I cannot but hope that some readers may be in this state of mind, and if there be but one such I must offer him affectionate counsel.

In every journey there must be a first step. There must be a change from sitting still to moving forward. The journeyings of Israel from Egypt to Canaan were long and wearisome. Forty years pass away before they crossed Jordan. Yet there was some one who moved first when they marched from Ramah to Succoth. When does a man really take his first step in coming out from sin and the world? He does it in the day when he first prays with his heart.

In every building the first stone must be laid, and the first blow must be struck. The ark was one hundred and twenty years in building. Yet there was a day when Noah laid his axe to the first tree he cut down to form it. The temple of Solomon was a glorious building. But there was a day when the first huge stone was laid deep in mount Moriah. When does the building of the Spirit really begin to appear in a man's heart? It begins, so far as we can judge, when he first pours out his heart to God in prayer.

**What to do** – If you desire salvation, and want to know what to do, I advise you to go this very day to the Lord Jesus Christ, in the first private place you can find, and earnestly and heartily entreat him in prayer to save your soul.

Tell him that you have heard that he receives sinners, and has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Tell him that you are a poor vile sinner, and that you come to him on the faith of his own invitation. Tell him you put yourself wholly and entirely in his hands; that you feel vile and helpless, and hopeless in yourself: and that except he saves you, you have no hope of being saved at all. Beseech him to deliver you from the guilt, the power, and the consequences of sin. Beseech him to pardon you, and wash you in his own blood. Beseech him to give you a new heart, and plant the Holy Spirit in you soul. Beseech him to give you grace and faith and will and power to be his disciple and servant from this day for ever. Oh, reader, go this very day, and tell these things to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you really are sincere about your soul.

Tell him in your own words. If a doctor came to see you when sick you could tell him where you felt pain. If your soul feels its disease indeed, you can surely find something to tell Christ.

**Doubt not** – Doubt not his willingness to save you, because you are a sinner. It is Christ's office to save sinners. He says himself, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

Wait not because you feel unworthy. Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Waiting comes from the devil. Just as you are, go to Christ. The worse you are, the more need you have to apply to him. You will never mend yourself by staying away.

Fear not because your prayer is stammering, your words feeble, and your language poor. Jesus can understand you. Just as a mother understands the first lisps of her infant, so does the blessed Saviour understand sinners. He can read a sigh, and see a meaning in a groan.

Despair not because you do not get an answer immediately. While you are speaking, Jesus is listening. If he delays an answer, it is only for wise reasons, and to try if you are earnest. The answer will surely

come. Though it tarry, wait for it. It will surely come.

Oh, reader, if you have any desire to be saved, remember the advice I have given you this day. Act upon it honestly and heartily, and you shall be saved!