

## J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short "Helmingham Series" tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you these three exactly word for word as they were first published about the middle of the last century, while J. C. Ryle was a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk.

# ARE YOU READY?

READER,

I ASK you a plain question at the beginning of a new year: *Are you ready?*

It is a solemn thing to part company with the old year. It is a still more solemn thing to begin a new one. It is like entering a dark passage: we know not what we may meet before the end. All before us is uncertain: we know not what a day may bring forth, much less what may happen in a year. Reader, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for *sickness*? You cannot expect to be always well. You have a body fearfully and wonderfully made: it is awful to think how many diseases may assail it.

"Strange that a harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long!"

Pain and weakness are a hard trial. They can bow down the strong man and make him like a child. They can weary the temper and exhaust the patience, and make men cry in the morning, "Would God it were evening," and in the evening, "Would God it were morning." All this may come to pass this very year. Your reason may be shattered,—your senses may be weakened, your nerves may be unstrung: the very grasshopper may become a burden. Reader, if sickness comes upon you, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for *affliction*? "Man," says the Scripture, "is born to sorrow." This witness is true. Your property may be taken from you, your riches may make themselves wings and flee away, your friends may fail you, your children may disappoint you, your servants may deceive you; your character may be assailed, your conduct may be misrepresented: troubles, annoyances, vexations, anxieties, may surround you on every side, like a host of armed men; wave upon wave may burst over your head; you may feel worn and worried, and crushed to the dust. Reader, if affliction comes upon you, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for *bereavements*? No doubt there are those in the world that you love. There are those whose names are graven on your heart, and round whom your affections are entwined: there are those who are the light of your eyes, and the very sunshine of your existence. But they are all mortal: any one of them may die this year. Before the daisies blossom again, any one of them may be lying in the tomb. Your Rachel may be buried,—your Joseph may be taken from you,—your dearest idol may be broken: bitter tears and deep mourning may be your portion. Before December you may feel terribly alone. Reader, if bereavement comes upon you, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for *death*? It must come some day: it may come this year. You cannot live always. This very year may be your last. You have no freehold in this world,—you have not so much as a lease: you are nothing better than a tenant at God's will. Your last sickness may come upon you, and give you notice to quit,—the doctor may visit you, and exhaust his skill over your case,—your friends may sit by your bedside, and look graver and graver every day: you may feel your own strength gradually wasting, and find something saying within, "I shall not come down from this bed, but die." You may see the world slipping from beneath your feet, and all your schemes and plans suddenly stopped short. You may feel yourself drawing near to the coffin, and the grave, and the worm, and an unseen world, and eternity, and God. Reader, if death should come upon you, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for the *Second Coming of Christ*? He will come again to this world one day. As surely as He came the first time, 1800 years ago, so surely will He come the second time. He will come to reward all His saints, who have believed in Him and confessed Him upon earth. He will come to punish all His enemies,—the careless, the ungodly, the impenitent, and the unbelieving. He will come very suddenly, at an hour when no man thinketh: as a thief in the night. He will come in terrible majesty, in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels. A flaming fire shall go before Him. The dead shall be raised,—the judgment shall be set,—the books shall be opened! Some shall be exalted into heaven: many, very many, shall be cast down to hell. The time for repentance shall be past. Many shall cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" but find the door of mercy closed forever. After this there will be no change. Reader, if Christ should come the second time this year, *are you ready?*

O reader, these are solemn questions! They ought to make you examine yourself. They ought to make you think. It would be a terrible thing to be taken by surprise. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But shall I leave you here? I will not do so. Shall I raise searchings of heart, and not set before you the way of life? I will not do so. Hear me for a few moments, while I try to show you the man that is ready.

He that is ready has *a ready Saviour*. He has Jesus ever ready to help him. He lives the life of faith in the Son of God. He has found out his own sinfulness, and fled to Christ for peace. He has committed his soul and all its concerns to Christ's keeping. If he has bitter cups of affliction to drink, he knows they are mixed by the hand that was nailed to the cross for his sins. If he is called to die, he knows that the grave is the place where the Lord lay. If those whom he loves are taken away, he remembers that Jesus is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and a husband who never dies. If the Lord should come again, he knows that he has nothing to fear. The Judge of all will be that very Jesus who has washed his sins away. Happy is that man who can say, with Hezekiah, "The Lord was ready to save me" (Isaiah xxxviii. 20).

He that is ready has *a ready heart*. He has been born again, and renewed in the spirit of his mind. The Holy Ghost has shown him the true value of all here below, and taught him to set his affections on things above. The Holy Ghost has shown him his own deserts, and made him feel that he ought to be thankful for everything;

and satisfied with any condition. If affliction comes upon him, his heart whispers, "There must be a needs be. I deserve correction. It is meant to teach me some useful lesson." If bereavement comes upon him, his heart reminds him that the Lord gave and the Lord must take away, whenever He sees fit. If death draws near, his heart says, "My times are in Thy hand: as Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, and where Thou wilt." If the Lord should come, his heart would cry, "This is the day I have long prayed for: the kingdom of God is come at last." Blessed is he who has a ready heart.

He that is ready has a *home ready for him in heaven*. The Lord Jesus Christ has told him that He is gone "to prepare a place" for him. A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, awaits him. He is not yet come to his full inheritance: his best things are yet to come. He can bear sickness, for yet a little time he shall have a glorious body. He can bear losses and crosses, for his choicest treasures are far beyond the reach of harm. He can bear disappointments, for the springs of his greatest happiness can never be made dry. He can think calmly of death: it will open a door for him from the lower house to the upper chamber,—even the presence of the King. He is immortal till his work is done. He can look forward to the coming of the Lord without alarm. He knows that they who are ready will enter in with Him to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Happy is that man whose lodging is prepared for him in the kingdom of Christ.

Reader, do you know anything of the things I have just spoken of? Do you know anything of a ready Saviour, a ready heart, and a ready home in heaven? Examine yourself honestly. How does the matter stand?

Oh, be merciful to your own soul! Have compassion on that immortal part of you. Do not neglect its interest, for the sake of mere worldly objects. Business, pleasure, money, politics, will soon be done with forever. Do not refuse to consider the question I ask you,—ARE YOU READY? ARE YOU READY?

Reader, if you are not ready, I beseech you to *make ready without delay*. I tell you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all things are ready on God's part for your salvation. The Father is ready to receive you,—the Lord Jesus is ready to wash your sins away,—the Spirit is ready to renew and sanctify you,—angels are ready to rejoice over you,—saints are ready to hold out the right hand to you. Oh, why not make ready this very year?

Reader, if you have reason to hope you are ready, I advise you *to make sure*. Walk more closely with God,—get nearer to Christ,—seek to exchange hope for assurance. Seek to feel the witness of the Spirit more closely and distinctly every year. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets you. Press towards the mark more earnestly. Fight a better fight, and war a better warfare every year you live. Pray more,—read more,—mortify self more,—love the brethren more. Oh that you may endeavour so to grow in grace every year, that your last things may be far more than your first, and the end of your Christian course far better than the beginning!

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