

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-44075-3 - John Bunyan: Grace Abounding and the Pilgrim's Progress

Edited by John Brown

Excerpt

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Grace Abounding

TO THE
CHIEF
OF

SINNERS:

OR,

A Brief and Faithful Relation of the exceeding
Mercy of God in Christ, to His poor Servant

JOHN BUNYAN.

NAMELY,

In his Taking of him out of the Dunghil, and
Converting of him to the Faith of his
Blessed Son, Jesus Christ.

HERE

Is also particularly shewed, what Sight of, and what Trouble
he had for Sin; and also, what various Temptations he
hath met with, and how God hath carried him through
them.

Corrected, and much Enlarged now by the
Author, for the Benefit of the Tempted
and Dejected Christian.

The Sixth Edition, Corrected.

*Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what
be hath done for my soul, Psal. 66. 16.*

LONDON, Printed for *Nath. Ponder*, at the *Pea-cock* in
the *Poultry*, over against the *Stocks-Market*, 1688.

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A
P R E F A C E :

OR,

Brief Account

OF THE

PUBLISHING this WORK.

WRITTEN

By the Author thereof, and dedicated to those
whom God hath counted him worthy to
beget to Faith, by his Ministry in the
Word.

*C*Hildren, Grace be with you, Amen. I being taken from you
in presence, and so tied up, that I cannot perform that duty,
that from God doth lie upon me, to you-ward, for your further
edifying and building up in Faith and Holiness, &c. yet that you
may see my Soul hath fatherly care and desire after your spiritual
and everlasting welfare, I now once again, as before from the top of
Shenir and Hermon, so now from the Lions Dens, and from the
Mountains of the Leopards (Song 4. 8.) do look yet after you all,
greatly longing to see your safe Arrival into THE desired Haven.

I thank God upon every Remembrance of you, and rejoice even
while I stick between the Teeth of the Lions in the Wilderness, at
the Grace, and Mercy, and Knowledge of Christ our Saviour,

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which God hath bestowed upon you, with abundance of Faith and Love. Your Hungrings and Thirstings also after further Acquaintance with the Father, in his Son; your Tenderness of Heart, your Trembling at Sin, your sober and holy Deportment also before both God and Men, is great Refreshment to me; for you are my Glory and Joy, 1 Thes. 2. 20.

I have sent you here inclosed, a drop of that Honey that I have taken out of the Carcase of a Lion, Judg. 14. 5, 6, 7, 8. I have eaten thereof my self also, and am much refreshed thereby. (Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the Lion that roared upon Sampson; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them, we shall find a Nest of Honey within them.) The Philistines understand me not. It is something a Relation of the Work of God upon my Soul, even from the very first, till now; wherein you may perceive my Castings down, and Risings up; for he woundeth, and his hands make whole. It is written in the Scripture, Isa. 38, 19. The father to the children shall make known the truth of God. Yea, it was for this Reason I lay so long at Sinai, (Lev. 4. 10, 11.) to see the Fire, and the Cloud, and the Darkness, that I might fear the Lord all the days of my Life upon Earth, and tell of his wondrous Works to my Children, Psal. 78. 3, 4, 5.

Moses, Numb. 33. 1, 2. writ of the Journeyings of the Children of Israel, from Egypt, to the Land of Canaan; and commanded also, that they did remember their forty Years Travel in the Wilderness: Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the Wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no, Deut. 8. 2, 3. Wherefore this I have endeavoured to do; and not only so, but to publish it also; that, if God will, others may be put in remembrance of what he hath done for their Souls, by reading his Work upon me.

It is profitable for Christians to be often calling to mind the very Beginnings of Grace with their Souls. It is a night to be much observed to the Lord, for bringing them out from the Land of Egypt. This is that Night of the Lord, to be observed of all the Children of Israel, in their Generations, Exod. 12. 42. My God, saith David, Psal. 42. 6. My Soul is cast down within me; but I will remember thee from the Land of

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Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar. He remembred also the Lion and the Bear, when he went to fight with the Giant of Gath, 1 Sam. 17. 36, 37.

It was Paul's accustomed manner, Act. 22. and that, when tried for his Life, Act. 24. even to open before his Judges the manner of his Conversion: He would think of that Day, and that Hour, in which he first did meet with Grace; for he found it supported him. When God had brought the Children of Israel out of the Red-Sea, far into the Wilderness; yet they must turn quite about thither again, to remember the drowning of their Enemies there, Numb. 14. 25. for though they sang his Praise before, yet they soon forgot his Works, Psal. 106. 11, 12.

In this Discourse of mine, you may see much; much, I say, of the Grace of God towards me: I thank God, I can count it much; for it was above my Sins, and Satan's Temptations too. I can remember my Fears, and Doubts, and sad Months with comfort; they are as the head of Goliath in my Hand: There was nothing to David like Goliath's Sword, even that Sword that should have been sheathed in his Bowels; for the very sight and remembrance of that did preach forth God's Deliverance to him. Oh, the Remembrance of my great Sins, of my great Temptations, and of my great Fears of perishing for ever! They bring fresh into my Mind the Remembrance of my great Help, my great Support from Heaven, and the great Grace that God extended to such a Wretch as I.

My dear Children, call to mind the former Days, and Years of ancient Times: Remember also your Songs in the Night, and commune with your own Hearts, Psal. 73. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Yea, look diligently, and leave no Corner therein unsearched; for that is Treasure hid, even the Treasure of your first and second Experience of the Grace of God toward you. Remember, I say, the Word that first laid hold upon you: Remember your Terrors of Conscience, and Fear of Death and Hell: Remember also your Tears and Prayers to God; yea, how you sighed under every Hedge of Mercy. Have you never an Hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the Close, the Milk-house, the Stable, the Barn, and the like, where God did visit your Souls? Remember also the Word; the Word, I say, upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope: If you have sinned against Light, if you are tempted to blaspheme, if you are down in Despair, if you think God fights

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against you, or if Heaven is hid from your Eyes ; remember, it was thus with your Father ; but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

I could have enlarged much in this my Discourse of my Temptations and Troubles for Sin ; as also, of the merciful Kindness, and Working of God with my Soul : I could also have stepped into a Stile much higher than this, in which I have here discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than here I have seemed to do ; but I dare not : God did not play in tempting of me ; neither did I play, when I sunk as into a bottomless Pit, when the Pangs of Hell caught hold upon me ; wherefore I may not play in relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was : He that liketh it, let him receive it ; and he that does not, let him produce a better. Farewel.

My dear Children,

The Milk and Honey is beyond this Wilderness : God be merciful to you, and grant you be not slothful to go in to possess the Land.

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OR,

A brief Relation of the exceeding Mercy
of God in Christ, to his poor Servant,
John Bunyan.

IN this my relation of the merciful working of God upon my Soul, it will not be amiss, if in the first place, I do, in a few words, give you an hint of my Pedigree, and manner of bringing up; that thereby the goodness and bounty of God towards me, may be the more advanced and magnified before the sons of men.

2. For my Descent then, it was, as is well known by many, of a low and inconsiderable generation; my father's house being of that rank that is meanest, and most despised of all the families in the Land. Wherefore I have not here, as others, to boast of Noble Blood, or of an high-born state according to the flesh; though, all things considered, I magnifie the heavenly Majesty, for that by this door he brought me into this World, to partake of the Grace and Life that is in Christ by the Gospel.

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3. But yet, notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my Parents, it pleased God to put it into their hearts, to put me to School, to learn both to read and write; the which I also attained, according to the rate of other poor men's children; though to my shame, I confess, I did soon lose that little I learnt, even almost utterly, and that long before the Lord did work his gracious work of Conversion upon my Soul.

4. As for my own natural life, for the time that I was without God in the world, it was, indeed, *according to the course of this world, and the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*, Eph. 2. 2, 3. It was my delight, to be taken captive by the Devil, *at his will*, 2 Tim. 2. 26. being filled with all unrighteousness: The which did also so strongly work, and put forth it self, both in my heart and life, and that from a child, that I had but few Equals (especially considering my years, which were tender, being few) both for cursing, swearing, lying and blaspheming the holy Name of God.

5. Yea, so settled and rooted was I in these things, that they became as a second Nature to me; the which, as I also have with soberness considered since, did so offend the Lord, that even in my childhood he did scare and affright me with fearful dreams, and did terrifie me with dreadful visions: For often, after I had spent this and the other day in sin, I have in my bed been greatly afflicted, while asleep, with the apprehensions of Devils, and wicked Spirits, who still, as I then thought, laboured to draw [m]e away with them; of which I could never be rid.

6. Also I should, at these years, be greatly afflicted and troubled with the thoughts of the fearful torments of Hell-fire; still fearing that it would be my lot to be found, at last, among those Devils, and hellish Fiends, who are there bound down with the chains and bonds of darkness, unto the judgment of the great Day.

7. These things, I say, when I was but a child, about nine or ten years old, did so distress my Soul, that then, in the midst of my many sports, and childish vanities, amidst my vain companions, I was often much cast down and afflicted in my mind therewith; yet could I not let go my sins: Yea, I was also then so overcome with despair of Life and Heaven, that I

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should often wish, either that there had been no Hell, *or that I had been a Devil*; supposing they were only tormentors, that if it must needs be, that I indeed went thither, I might be rather a tormentor, than be tormented my self.

8. A while after, these terrible dreams did leave me, which I also soon forgot; for my pleasures did quickly cut off the remembrance of them, as if they had never been: Wherefore with more greediness, according to the strength of nature, I did still let loose the reins to my lust, and delighted in all transgression against the Law of God: So that until I came to the state of Marriage, I was the very ringleader of all the Youth that kept me company, in all manner of vice and ungodliness.

9. Yea, such prevalency had the lusts and fruits of the flesh, in this poor Soul of mine, that had not a miracle of precious Grace prevented, I had not only perished by the stroak of Eternal Justice, but had also laid my self open, even to the stroak of those Laws, which bring some to disgrace, and open shame, before the face of the world.

10. In these days the thoughts of Religion were very grievous to me; I could neither endure it my self, nor that any other should: So that when I have seen some read in those books that concerned Christian Piety, it would be as it were a prison to me. *Then I said unto God, Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, Job 21. 14, 15. I was now void of all good consideration; Heaven and Hell were both out of sight and mind; and as for Saving and Damning, they were least in my thoughts. *O Lord, thou knowest my life; and my ways were not hid from thee.*

11. But this I well remember, That though I could my self sin with the greatest delight and ease, and also take pleasure in the vileness of my companions; yet even then, if I have at any time seen wicked things by those who professed goodness, it would make my spirit tremble. As once, above all the rest, when I was in my height of vanity, yet hearing one to swear, that was reckoned for a religious man, it had so great a stroak upon my spirit, that it made my heart ake.

12. But God did not utterly leave me, but followed me still; not now with convictions, but judgments; yet such as were mixed with mercy. For once I fell into a crick of the

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Sea, and hardly escaped drowning: Another time I fell out of a Boat, into *Bedford-River*, but Mercy yet preserved me alive: Besides, another time, being in the field with one of my companions, it chanced that an Adder passed over the highway; so I having a stick in mine hand, struck her over the back; and having stunned her, I forced open her mouth with my stick, and plucked her sting out with my fingers; by which act, had not God been merciful to me, I might, by my desperateness, have brought my self to mine end.

13. This also I have taken notice of, with thanksgiving; When I was a Soldier, I, with others, were drawn out to go to such a place to besiege it; but when I was just ready to go, one of the Company desired to go in my room; to which, when I had consented, he took my place; and coming to the Siege, as he stood Sentinel, he was shot into the head with a Musket-bullet, and died.

14. Here, as I said, were Judgments and Mercy, but neither of them did awaken my Soul to Righteousness; wherefore I sinned still, and grew more and more rebellious against God, and careless of mine own Salvation.

15. Presently after this, I changed my condition into a married state; and my mercy was, to light upon a wife, whose father was counted godly: This woman and I, though we came together as poor as poor might be, (not having so much house-hold-stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both) yet this she had for her part, *The Plain Man's Path-way to Heaven*, and *The Practice of Piety*, which her father had left her, when he died. In these two books I should sometimes read with her, wherein I also found some things that were somewhat pleasing to me; (but all this while I met with no conviction.) She also would be often telling of me, *what a godly man her father was, and how he would reprove and correct vice, both in his house, and amongst his neighbours; what a strict and holy life he lived in his day, both in word and deed.*

16. Wherefore these books, with this relation, though they did not reach my heart, to awaken it about my sad and sinful state, yet they did beget within me some desires to Religion: So that, because I knew no better, I fell in very eagerly with the Religion of the times; to wit, to go to Church twice a day, and that too with the foremost; and there should very devoutly,