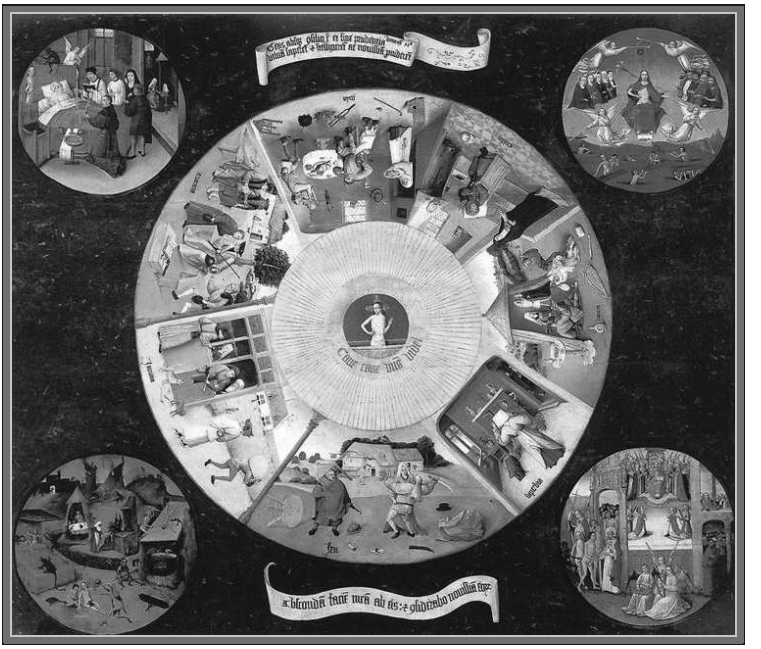
GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

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By

John Bunyan

Illustrated by Harold Copping

ILLUSTRATED &

PUBLISHED BY

E-KİTAP PROJESİ & CHEAPEST BOOKS



www.cheapestboooks.com

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Istanbul

ISBN: 978-605-7566-55-3

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Come and hear all ye that fear

God, and I will declare what He hath

Done for my soul.

—Psalm lxvi. 16.

PREFATORY NOTE

The text in this edition is as nearly as possible that of the eighth, which was corrected by Bunyan himself a few weeks before his death. The text of 'A Relation' is that of the first edition of 1765. A few minor changes have been introduced for the convenience of the reader. The use of capital letters has been considerably modified, and the orthography has been in places modernized. In some few instances the Scripture references have been added to quotations where they did not appear in the original. It must be remembered that Bunyan often quoted Scripture inexactly, and it has not been deemed necessary to make all his quotations follow the text of the Authorized Version.

The marginal summary is not part of the original, but has been prepared for this edition in order that it may correspond with the Society's editions of the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'

The illustrations have been prepared for this work by Mr. Harold Copping, whose illustrations to the 'Pilgrim's Progress' have justly attracted much attention.

A PREFACE

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

Children, 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 farther edifying and building up in faith and holiness, etc., 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*, *from the mountains of the leopards* (Song iv. 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 lion in the wilderness, that the grace and mercy, and knowledge of Christ our Saviour, which God hath bestowed upon you, with abundance of faith and love; your hungerings and thirstings after farther acquaintance with the Father, in the Son; your tenderness of heart, your trembling at sin, your sober and holy deportment also, before both God and men, is a great refreshment to me; *For ye are our glory and joy*. 1 Thess. ii. 20.

I have sent you here enclosed, a drop of that honey that I have taken out of the carcase of a lion. Judg. xiv. 5–8. I have eaten thereof myself, and am much refreshed thereby. (Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon *Samson*; 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 of 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. xxxviii. 19, *The father to the children shall make known Thy truth*. Yea, it was for this reason I lay so long at Sinai, Lev. iv. 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*. Psalm lxxviii. 3–5.

Moses, Numb. xxxiii. 1, 2, writ of the journeys 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 wouldst keep His commandments*, *or no*. Deut. viii. 2. 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 unto 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. xii. 42. *O my God* (saith *David*), Ps. xlii. 6, *my soul is cast down within me*; *therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan*, *and of the Hermonites*, *from the hill Mizar*. He remembered also the lion and the bear, when he went to fight with the giant of *Gath*. 1 Sam. xvii. 36, 37.

It was *Paul's* accustomed manner, Acts xxii., and that, when tried for his life, Acts xxiv., 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. xiv. 25, for though they sang his praise before, yet they soon forgat his works. Psalm cvi. 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 *Goliah* in my hand: there was nothing to *David* like *Goliah'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 fear of perishing for ever! They bring afresh into my mind, the remembrance of my great help,

my great supports 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, Ps. lxxiii. 5–12. Yea, look diligently, and leave no corner therein unsearched for that treasure hid, even the treasure of your first and second experience of the grace of God towards 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 for mercy. Have you never a 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 drowned in despair, if you think God fights 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 style 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 the 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 doth not, let him produce a better. Farewell.

My dear Children,

The milk and honey are beyond this wilderness. *God be merciful to you*, *and grant that you be not slothful to go in to possess the land*.

JOHN BUNYAN.

GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

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 a 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 any high-born state, according to the flesh; though, all things considered, I magnify the heavenly Majesty, for that by this door He brought me into the world, to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the gospel.

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 I had learned, 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. ii. 2, 3. It was my delight to be 'taken captive by the devil *at his will*,' 2 Tim. ii. 26; being filled with all unrighteousness; the which did also so strongly work, and put forth itself, 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 but 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 have also with soberness considered since, did so offend the Lord, that even in my childhood he did scare and affrighten me with fearful dreams, and did terrify me with fearful visions. For often, after I have 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 me 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, but 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 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 went thither, I might be rather a tormentor, than be tormented myself.

8. A while after those terrible dreams did leave me, which also I 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 of my lust, and delighted in all transgressions 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 stroke of eternal justice, but had also laid myself open, even to the stroke 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 myself, 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 xxi. 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 myself sin with the greatest delight and ease, and also take pleasure in the vileness of my companions; yet, even then, if I had 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 the height of vanity, yet hearing one to swear, that was reckoned for a religious man, it had so great a stroke upon my spirit, that it made my heart ache.

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 creek of the 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 a field, with one of my companions, it chanced that an adder passed over the highway, so I having a stick in my 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 unto me, I might by my desperateness, have brought myself to my 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 in 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 my 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 household stuff as a dish or a spoon betwixt us both), yet this she had for her part: *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*; which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I would 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 among his neighbours; what a strict and holy life he lived in his days, 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, both say and sing, as others did, yet retaining my wicked life; but withal, I was so over-run with the spirit of superstition, that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things (both the

high-place, priest, clerk, vestment, service, and what else) belonging to the church; counting all things holy that were therein contained, and especially, the priest and clerk most happy, and without doubt, greatly blessed, because they were the servants, as I then thought, of God, and were principal in the holy temple, to do His work therein.

17. This conceit grew so strong in a little time upon my spirit, that had I but seen a priest (though never so sordid and debauched in his life), I should find my spirit fall under him, reverence him, and knit unto him; yea, I thought, for the love I did bear unto them (supposing them the ministers of God), I could have laid down at their feet, and have been trampled upon by them; their name, their garb, and work did so intoxicate and bewitch me.

18. After I had been thus for some considerable time, another thought came in my mind; and that was, whether we were of the *Israelites* or no? For finding in the scripture that they were once the peculiar people of God, thought I, if I were one of this race, my soul must needs be happy. Now again, I found within me a great longing to be resolved about this question, but could not tell how I should: at last I asked my father of it; who told me, *No*, *we were not*. Wherefore then I fell in my spirit, as to the hopes of that, and so remained.

19. But all this while, I was not sensible of the danger and evil of sin; I was kept from considering that sin would damn me, what religion soever I followed, unless I was found in Christ: nay, I never thought of Him, or whether there was such a One, or no. *Thus man*, *while blind*, *doth wander*, *but wearieth*

himself with vanity, *for he knoweth not the way to the city of God*. Eccles. x. 15.

20. But one day (amongst all the sermons our parson made) his subject was, to treat of the Sabbath day, and of the evil of breaking that, either with labour, sports or otherwise. (Now, I was, notwithstanding my religion, one that took much delight in all manner of vice, and especially that was the day that I did solace myself therewith): wherefore I fell in my conscience under his sermon, thinking and believing that he made that sermon on purpose to show me my evil doing. And at that time I felt what guilt was, though never before, that I can remember; but then I was, for the present, greatly loaden therewith, and so went home when the sermon was ended, with a great burthen upon my spirit.

21. This, for that instant did benumb the sinews of my best delights, and did imbitter my former pleasures to me; but hold, it lasted not, for before I had well dined, the trouble began to go off my mind, and my heart returned to its old course: but oh! how glad was I, that this trouble was gone from me, and that the fire was put out, that I might sin again without control! Wherefore, when I had satisfied nature with my food, I shook the sermon out of my mind, and to my old custom of sports and gaming, I returned with great delight.

22. But the same day, as I was in the midst of a game of Cat, and having struck it one blow from the hole, just as I was about to strike it the second time, a voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, *Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven*, *or have thy sins and go to hell*? At this I was put to an exceeding maze; wherefore leaving my cat upon the ground,

I looked up to heaven, and was, as if I had, with the eyes of my understanding, seen the Lord Jesus looking down upon me, as being very hotly displeased with me, and as if He did severely threaten me with some grievous punishment for these and other ungodly practices.



23. I had no sooner thus conceived in my mind, but, suddenly, this conclusion was fastened on my spirit (for the former hint did set my sins again before my face), *That I had*