

Grace
ABOUNDING

JOHN BUNYAN

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

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GRACE ABOUNDING

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CONTENTS

1. A Life Begun in Sin	7
2. Knowledge of Sin	11
3. A Tender Conscience	18
4. Desiring Salvation.....	26
5. Doubting Salvation.....	39
6. Temptation	49
7. Sins Compared	62
8. Continual Affirmation of Truth	75

9. The Cause and Advantage of Temptation.....	97
10. Preaching Begun	108
11. Imprisoned.....	124
Conclusions	133
Addendum.....	136
About the Author	140

ONE

A LIFE BEGUN IN SIN

In this my recounting of the merciful working of God upon my soul, it will not be amiss if in the first place I give you a hint of my pedigree and manner of upbringing in a few words. By this, the goodness and bounty of God toward me may be all the more promoted and magnified before the sons of men.

My ancestry was, as is well known by many, of a low and inconsiderable generation; my father's house was of that class that is lowest and most despised of all the families in the land. Thus I have not here, as others could, boasted of noble blood, or of any highborn state according to the flesh. Although, all things considered, I magnify the heavenly Majesty, for by this

door He brought me into this world to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the gospel. But notwithstanding the inferiority of my parents' humble position, it pleased God to put it into their hearts to send me to school to learn both to read and write. These I also attained according to the rate of other men's children. However, to my shame I confess I did soon lose that little I learned, even almost completely, and that loss was long before the Lord did work his gracious work of conversion upon my soul.

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 "*by nature the children of wrath*" (Ephesians 2:2–3). It was my delight to be "*taken captive by [the devil] at his will*" (2 Timothy 2:26), being filled with all unrighteousness, which did also so strongly work and put forth itself both in my heart and life, that from childhood I had few equals, especially considering my tender years, in the areas of cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God. Yes, so settled and rooted was I in these things that they became as a second nature to me, which, as I have also with soberness considered since, did so offend the Lord, that even in my childhood He did scare and frighten me with fearful dreams and did terrify me with fearful visions. For often, after I had spent the day in sin, I have been greatly afflicted, while asleep in my bed, with the apprehensions of devils and wicked spirits, who, as I then thought, labored to draw me away with them, and of which I could never be rid.

Also, I would during these years be greatly afflicted and troubled with the thoughts of the fearful torments of hellfire. I feared that it would be my lot to be found at last among those devils and hellish fiends who are there bound with the chains and bonds of darkness until the judgment of the great day. When I was but a child of nine or ten years old, these things did

so distress my soul that, then, in the midst of my many sports and childish vanities, amid my vain companions, I was often much cast down and afflicted in my mind with them. Yet I could not let go of my sins. I was also then so overcome with despair of life and heaven that I would often wish that there had been no hell. Or, knowing that there was a hell, I would wish that I had been a devil—supposing devils were only tormentors—that if it must be that I went there, I might be rather a tormentor than be tormented myself.

A while after, those terrible dreams left me, and I soon forgot—for my pleasures quickly cut off the remembrance of them, as if they had never been. Then with more greediness, according to the strength of nature, I still let loose the reins of my lust and delighted in all transgressions against the law of God. The result was 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. Yes, such control had the lusts and fruits of the flesh on this poor soul of mine that, had not a miracle of precious grace prevented, I would have not only perished by the stroke of eternal justice, but also laid myself open even to the stroke of those laws that bring some to disgrace and open shame before the face of the world.

SPIRIT TREMBLINGS

In those days the thoughts of religion were very grievous to me. I could neither endure it myself nor that anyone else should, to the extent that when I saw some text in those books concerned with 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). I was now void of all 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, You know my life, and my ways were not hidden from You.

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 in those who professed goodness, it would make my spirit tremble. One time stands out above all the rest. I was in the height of vanity, yet upon hearing one who was reckoned as a religious man swear, it had so great an impact upon my spirit that it made my heart ache.

God did not utterly leave me, but followed me still, not with convictions, but judgments, yet such were mixed with His mercy. Once I fell into a creek of the sea and hardly escaped drowning. Another time I fell out of a boat into the Bedford river, but mercy yet preserved me alive. Another time when I was in the field with one of my companions, it chanced that an adder passed over the highway. Having a stick in my hand, I 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 that act, had God not been merciful unto me, I might by my desperateness have brought myself to my end.

The following also I have taken notice of with thanksgiving. When I was a soldier, I with others was selected 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 stead. When I had consented, he took my place. Coming to the siege, as he stood sentinel, he was shot in the head by a musket ball and died. Here, as I said, were judgments and mercy, but neither of them did awaken my soul to righteousness. Therefore I sinned still, growing more and more rebellious against God and careless of my own salvation.