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VENTURE ALL
FOR *God*

PIETY IN THE WRITINGS
OF JOHN BUNYAN

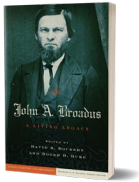
About the Author

Dr. Roger D. Duke is an author, theologian, educator, itinerant preacher, published scholar, and professor at several institutions of higher learning including: Union University, Baptist College of Health Sciences, Liberty University, Memphis Theological Seminary, and Columbia Evangelical Seminary.

He earned his D.Min from The University of the South (Sewanee) School of Theology, performed post-graduate Ph.D studies at the University of Memphis, completed his M.A. at Harding University, and attained a M.Div at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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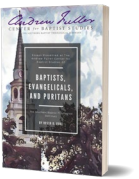
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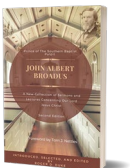
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Biggest Sinners Have the Most Need of Mercy^{1 2}

He that has most need, reason says, should be helped first. I mean, when a helping hand is offered, and now it is; for the gospel of the grace of God is sent to help the world (Act 16:9). But the biggest sinner has most need. Therefore . . . when mercy is sent down from heaven to men, the worst of men should have the first offer of it. ‘Begin at Jerusalem.’ This is the reason which the Lord Christ himself renders, why, in his lifetime, he left the best, and turned him to the worst; why he sat so loose from the righteous, and stuck so close to the wicked. ‘The whole,’ saith he, ‘have no need of the physician, but the sick. I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance’ (Mark 2:15-17). . . .

¹ John Bunyan, *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved* (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 17-20. This is a reprint of what was “First Published in London, 1691.”

² In the “Preface to Offor Edition, 1854 there is an explanatory footnote. It states: “The present edition is based on the text in the 3-volume edition of Bunyan’s works published in Glasgow in 1854 and edited by George Offor (reprinted Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1191; ISBN 0 85151 598 3, the set of three volumes). For the present edition, some of the language and grammar have slightly modifies to make the work more accessible to present-day readers.” [vii].

Men that are at the point to die, have more need of the physician than they that are but now and then troubled with a heart-fainting qualm. The publicans and sinners were, as it were, in the mouth of death; death was swallowing of them down: and, therefore, the Lord Jesus receives them first; offers them mercy first. 'The whole have no need of the physician, but the sick. I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance.' The sick, as I said, is the biggest sinner, whether he sees his disease or not. He is stained from head to foot, from heart to life and conversation. . . . This . . . is the man that has need, most need; and, therefore, in reason, should be helped in the first place. . . . Jerusalem sinners³ . . . [are] of the biggest size; and, therefore, such as had the greatest need; wherefore they must have mercy offered to them, before it be offered to anywhere else in the world. 'Begin at Jerusalem,' offer mercy first to a Jerusalem sinner. This man has most need, he is furthest from God, nearest to hell, and so one that has most need. This man's sins are in number the most, in cry the

³Bunyan seems to say expressly throughout the text of *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved* that the place for salvation and mercy is the place where true worship should be—at Jerusalem. But in his understanding, this true worship has been tainted, abused, and even turned to idolatry. Here he is implying that the mercy and grace of God must begin where the true worshippers have turned away from the plan God had originally instituted for Israel. Hence, the title of the work: *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*.

loudest, in weight the heaviest, and, consequently, will sink him soonest; wherefore he has most need of mercy. This man is shut up in Satan's hand, fastest bound in the cords of his sins: one that justice is whetting his sword to cut off; and, therefore, has most need, not only of mercy, but that it should be extended to him in the first place. .

..

Now, where pity and compassion is, there is yearning of bowels; and where there is that, there is a readiness to help. And, I say again, the more deplorable and dreadful the condition is, the more directly doth bowels and compassion turn themselves to such, and offer help and deliverance. All this flows from our first scripture proof, I came to call them that have need; to call them first, while the rest look on and murmur.

'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?' Ephraim was a revolter from God, a man that had given himself up to devilism; a company of men, the ten tribes that worshipped devils, while Judah kept with his God. But 'how shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *How* shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? *How* shall I set thee as Zeboim? and yet thou art worse than they, nor has Samaria committed half thy sins (Eze 16:46-51) Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together' (Hosea 11:8).

But where do you find that ever the Lord did thus rowl in his bowels for and after any self-

righteous man? No, no; they are the publicans and harlots, idolaters and Jerusalem sinners, for whom his bowels thus yearn and tumble about within him: for, alas! poor worms, they have most need of mercy.

Had not the good Samaritan more compassion for that man that fell among thieves (though that fall was occasioned by his going from the place where they worshipped God, to Jericho, the cursed city), than we read he had for any other besides? His wine was for him, his oil was for him, his beast for him; his penny, his care, and his swaddling bands for him; for, alas! wretch, he had most need (Luke 10:30-35).

Zaccheus the publican, the chief of the publicans, one that had made himself the richer by wronging of others; the Lord at that time singled him out from all the rest of his brother publicans, and that in the face of many Pharisees, and proclaimed in the audience of them all, that that day salvation was come to his house (Luke 19:1-8).

The woman, also, that had been bound down by Satan for eighteen years together, his compassions putting him upon it, he loosed her, though those that stood by snarled at him for so doing (Luke 13:11-13). . . .

Mercy seems to be out of its proper channel when it deals with self- righteous men; but then it runs with a full stream when it extends itself to the biggest sinners. As God's mercy is not regulated by

man's goodness, nor obtained by man's worthiness, so not much set out by saving of any such. . . .

And here let me ask my reader a question: Suppose that, as thou art walking by some pond side, thou shouldst espy in it four or five children, all in danger of drowning, and one in more danger than all the rest; judge which has most need to be helped out first? I know thou wilt say, he that is nearest drowning. Why, this is the case; the bigger sinner, the nearer drowning; therefore, the bigger sinner, the more need of mercy; yea, of help, by mercy, in the first place. And to this our text agrees, when it saith, 'Beginning at Jerusalem.' Let the Jerusalem sinner, says Christ, have the first offer, the first invitation, the first tender of my grace and mercy; for he is the biggest sinner, and so has most need thereof.

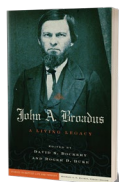
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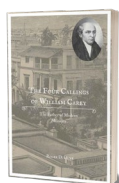
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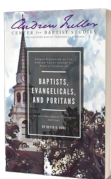
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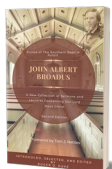
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