

# PASTORAL LETTERS:

ADDRESSED TO SEVERAL MEMBERS  
OF THE CHURCH OF BEDFORD.

BY JOHN BUNYAN,

*Written by the Appointment, and Subscribed in the Name and With  
the Consent of the Church.*

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# PASTORAL LETTERS

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## LETTER 1.

TO MR. ANTHONY HARRINGTON, OF BEDFORD.  
(1669-1672.)

Mr. Harrington, prior to 1650, was a leading man among the Dissenters of Bedford. His zeal so provoked John Gifford, (in his ungodliness,) that he thought often of killing him. Mr. Harrington was driven from his family by persecution in 1669; but returned in 1681. During the first part of this interval — from August 1668 to 1672 — Bunyan was allowed by his kind jailer to attend the church meetings, and was “regularly present.” J. N. B.

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DEARLY BELOVED BROTHER,

GRACE, mercy, and peace be with you always, by Jesus Christ our Lord, to the praise of God the Father, and your everlasting consolation and increase of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen. Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by him hath called us unto his kingdom in glory; to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace.

With length of days is understanding. Your long progress in the ways of God and our Father, hath given you rich experience of that grace that is not only laid up for us in Christ, but to be brought unto us when he shall be revealed from heaven with all his saints. Wherefore, brother, make it manifest that you are one of those scribes we read of, that is not only instructed *into*, but *unto* the kingdom of God. Let it be seen by all your ways that the secrets of God are with you, and that you have in store things new and old in your heart, as in God’s treasure house. Gravity becometh the ancients in the house of God. Fathers should be examples unto children.

We are comforted in the remembrance of thee, Brother, while we consider, that notwithstanding thy natural infirmity, yet thou prizest good conscience above thine own enjoyments. And since thou couldst not with quiet enjoy it at home, thou hast left thy concerns in this world, (though in much hazard and danger,) that thou mayest keep it abroad. But remember the good word of God; “No man shall desire thy land, when thou shalt go to appear before the Lord thy God, thrice in the year.” Wherefore, let neither the remembrance of

what thou hast left, nor thought of its being subject to casualty, either distract thee in thy communion with God, or prevail with thee to do aught against good conscience, or unworthy thy grey hairs; which are then the glory of old men, when found in the way of righteousness. John saith, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Having always a good conscience towards God, and towards men — this is armor of righteousness, both on the right hand, and on the left. You, brother Harrington, have lived to see the slippery and unstable nature that is in earthly things; wherefore we beseech you to expect no more therefrom than the word of God hath promised; which is as much in little as in much thereof, if not more in many respects. "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." While Israel sat by the flesh-pots in Egypt, they had no manna, they drank not the water out of the rock; these things were reserved for their wilderness condition — to support them in the waste howling wilderness. We speak this to encourage you, knowing you are subject to temptation with us. For we hope it is because God loveth you, that he hath driven you from your incumbrances, that you may have occasion before you die, therein to solace yourself with your God, and the Lord Jesus Christ; we mean, that you may do it with more leisure and less distraction, than when the lowing of the oxen had continual sound in your ears. Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth: wherefore, being denied a fullness here is no token of God's displeasure against our spiritual welfare, but rather, yea always the contrary. Let not these dispensations then discourage and distress your mind. Bless God for the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, whereof you have heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

God is wise, and doth all things for the best, for them that love him. You know not yet, but you may know afterward, what sins and temptations God hath prevented, by driving you thus from your habitation; and how hereby he hath made way for the exercise of some graces, that could not so well discover themselves in their virtues, when you was here. How subject we are to dote upon, and to be entangled with the snares, that lay couched and hid in this present world, you have great experience with us. Which, because God disliketh, (it being uncomely for the men of another world,) therefore often God plucketh down and pulleth up what we build and plant. It was customary with our Fathers to dwell in tents, and houses made with boughs; for they sought a city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. When we are desolate, then we trust in God, and make prayers and supplications to him night and day. God help you therefore, that you spend your vacant hours, not as they that wept for Tammuz, but as they who plainly confess to all that they are strangers and pilgrims in the earth.

Brother, we write not but by way of exhortation, beseeching you that you call to

remembrance your vows and tears, when you have been in distress; and that you would arm yourself with that mind you read of, Hebrews 12:2, 3, 9; that you may have your garments always white, and that your head may lack no ointment. You cannot be there, where no eyes are upon you; you are a spectacle to God, angels, and men; and being exalted to the profession of Christianity, and also to the communion of God and saints, you can neither stand nor fall by yourself, but the name, and cause, and people of God shall, in some sense, stand and fall with you. Yea, let us have joy in thee, brother; refresh our spirits in the Lord. We have confidence in thee, that thou wilt be circumspect to the adorning of the doctrine of God our Savior. Keep close to the words of faith and sound doctrine, wherein thou hast been instructed; and shun profane and vain babbling, not having to do with men of corrupt minds, that thy profession be not canker-eaten. Hear the word of God with diligence, and pray much for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And remember that God hath said, Though there were any of you cast out to the uttermost part of heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them into the place, that I have chosen to set my name there.

Finally, Brother, Farewell. Grace be with thee, Amen. Written by the appointment of the congregation to which you stand related in the faith of the Gospel, and subscribed with their consent by the hands of your brethren,

JOHN BUNYAN, ETC.

**LETTER 2.**  
**TO REV. JOHN WILSON.**  
**(1669.)**

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The Minister to whom the following Letter is addressed, Mr. Wilson of Hitchin, became the first pastor of the Baptist church there, in 1667. The letter of dismission from Bedford is signed by Bunyan. Mr. Wilson afterwards became joint Editor with Mr. Chandler of Bedford, of the folio edition of Bunyan's works, in 1692. See *Ivimey's Life of Bunyan*. J.N.B.

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OUR DEARLY BELOVED BROTHER WILSON,

GRACE, mercy, and peace be with thee, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Blessed be God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercy, and the God of all comfort, for the abundant grace bestowed on thee, brother; and for that thou art so called, so preserved in Christ Jesus; who, we trust, will preserve thee to his kingdom and glory: to whom be honor and power everlasting.

We are comforted in thee, our dearly beloved, when we remember that from a child, thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ; which faith was also in thy tender years fruitful and flourishing in thy gracious heart, to the great comfort of us thy brethren, and the glory of that grace that hath translated us out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

It is also joy to us to behold, that notwithstanding thy lot is cast in a place of high transgression; yet thou shovest out of a good conversation thy works with meekness of wisdom. God help thee, brother, to remember the days of thy youth; the first ways of David were best. There are but few can say as Caleb, "As my strength was forty years since, so it is now, both to go out and come in before the people of God."

'Tis also said of Moses at the day of his death, his natural force was not abated; neither did his eyes wax dim. Brother, be always looking into the perfect law of liberty: and *continue* therein. The customs of the people are vain; learn therefore of no man any of the deeds of darkness; we must give an account of ourselves to God. It argueth not only wisdom, but great grace, when the soul makes all lie level to the word and Spirit of God: when he scorneth and counteth that unworthy his affections, that hath not on it the stamp of the things of heaven. It is said of the children of Israel, "They saw God, and did eat and

drink." That is the right eating and drinking indeed. The glory of young men, is their strength to overcome the wicked one. "My son," says Solomon, "if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine."

Now, brother, God hath not only counted you worthy to believe in his Son, but also to profess him before the world. Wear his name in your forehead. They that Christ will own for his servants for ever, must say plainly, 'I love my Master:' they must declare plainly, they seek a country. The first note of the peril of the last times is, "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, proud," etc. "O man of God! Fly these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life; whereunto thou art also called, and hast witnessed a good profession before many witnesses."

'Tis said of Hananiah, "he feared God above many." God continue our joy of thee, brother. Our hope of thee is steadfast, through grace; trusting in the Lord, that he that hath begun a good work in thee, will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ. It is a strange sight to behold those who did feed delicately, to be desolate in the street; and they that were brought up in scarlet, to embrace dunghills. We speak not these things to shame thee, but as our beloved brother, we warn thee. "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust." Watch and be sober. And if thou be inclined to sleep, let that of Delilah rouse thee: "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!"

Grace be with thee. The Lord is at hand. Behold the Judge stands at the door. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.

Written by the appointment, and subscribed in the name and with the consent of the congregation.

JOHN BUNYAN, ETC.

## LETTER 3.

TO MRS. TILNEY, OF BEDFORD,  
AFTER HER REMOVAL TO LONDON.  
(1672.)

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The following Letter to Mrs. Tilney, (the benevolent widow whom Foster pillaged and the poor wept for,) Dr. Southey says, “interdicts her from communicating with a church of which her son-in-law, Mr. Blakey, was Minister, because he was not a Baptist.” This is certainly not the reason assigned in the letter; nor is it likely to be the true one, when we consider their views of communion. Mr. Philip, in his “Life and Times of Bunyan,” assigns the very opposite reason. But the letter speaks for itself. Mr. Ivimey justly says of it, that it is “an example of discipline worthy the imitation of all the churches of Christ.” J.N.B.

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OUR DEARLY BELOVED SISTER TILNEY,

GRACE, mercy, and peace be with you by Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I received your letter, and have presented it to the sight of the brethren, who, after due consideration of your motion, have jointly concluded to give you their answer.

This for yourself, (honored Sister,) you are of high esteem with the church of God in this place, both because his grace hath been bestowed richly upon you, and because of your fruitful fellowship with us; for you have been a daughter of Abraham while here, not being afraid with any amazement. Your holy and quiet behavior also, while with patience and meekness, and in the gentleness of Christ, you suffered yourself to be robbed for his sake, hath the more united our affections to you in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Yea, it hath begotten you reverence also in the hearts of them who were beholders of your meekness and innocency while you suffered; and a stinging conviction, as we are persuaded, in the consciences of those who made spoil for themselves: all which will redound to the praise of God our Father, and to your comfort and everlasting consolation by Christ in the day he shall come to take vengeance for his people, and to be glorified in them that believe.

Wherefore we cannot, (our honored Sister,) but care for your welfare and increase in all good in the faith and kingdom of Christ, whose servant you are, and whose name is written in your forehead; and do therefore pray God and

our Father that he would direct your way, and open a door into his temple for you, that you may eat his fat and be refreshed, and that you may drink the pure blood of the grape. And be you assured that with all readiness we will help and forward you what we can therein; for we are not ashamed to own you before all the churches of Christ.

But, our dearly beloved, you know that for our safety and for your profit, it is *behooffal* that we commit you to such, to be fed and governed in the word and doctrines, as we are sufficiently persuaded shall be able to deliver you with joy, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints: otherwise we (that we say not you) shall receive blushing and shame before him and you. Yea, and you also, our honored Sister, may justly charge us with want of love, and a due respect for your eternal condition, if for want of care and circumspection herein, we should commit you to any from whom you should receive damage; or by whom you should not be succored, and fed with the sincere milk of the incorruptible word of God, which is able to save your soul.

Wherefore we may not, neither dare, give our consent that you feed and fold with such whose principles and practices, in matters of faith and worship, we as yet are strangers to: and have not received commendations concerning, either from works of theirs, or epistles from others. Yourself indeed have declared that you are satisfied therein; but, elect Sister, seeing the act of delivering you up, is an act of ours, and not yours, it is convenient, yea, very expedient, that we as to so weighty a matter be well persuaded before.

Wherefore we beseech you, that for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, you give us leave to inform ourselves yet better before we grant your request ; and that you also forbear to sit down at the table with any, without the consent of our brethren. You were, while with us, obedient, and we trust you will not be unruly now. And for the more quick expedition of this matter, we will propound before you our farther thoughts.

- 1.** Either, we shall consent to your sitting down with brother Cockain, brother Griffith, brother Palmer, or others who of long continuance in the city, have showed forth their faith, their worship, or good conversation with the word.
- 2.** Or, if you can get a commendatory epistle from brother Owen, brother Cochin, brother Palmer, or brother Griffith, concerning the faith and principles of the person and people you mention, with desire to be guided and governed by; you shall see our readiness in the fear of God, to commit you to the direction and care of that congregation.

Choose you whether of these you will consent unto, and let us know of your resolution. And we beseech you for love's sake, you show with meekness your fear and reverence of Christ's institution, your love to the congregation, and

regard to your future good.

Finally, we commit you to God and the word of his grace; who is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. To God the only wise, be glory and power everlasting. Amen.

Your affectionate brethren, to serve you in the faith and fellowship of the gospel,

**JOHN BUNYAN, etc. etc.**

*Sent from Bedford, the 19th of the 4th month, 1672.*

## LETTER 4.

### TO MRS. HUSTWHAT.

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#### TO OUR BELOVED SISTER KATHERINE HUSTWHAT.

OUR dearly beloved Sister: — The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, and the God of all comfort, bless thee with abundance of grace and peace through the knowledge of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory evermore. Amen.

It is a comfort to us thy brothers and sisters (with whom grace hath made thee a member of the Lord Jesus) when we remember thy first faith and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ; being persuaded that those beginnings shall not end but in that kingdom and glory which God hath prepared for those that love him. In which persuasion we are the more confirmed, since we hear (to our increase of joy) how our God supporteth thee in all thy temptations and spiritual desertions thou meetest with in the world. The poor and afflicted people, God will save. To be distressed and tempted while here, is a manifestation of our predestination to the ease and peace of another world. Predestinated to be conformable, or (as in the old translation) predestinated “that we should be like-fashioned even to the shape of his Son.” A great part of which lieth in our being distressed, tempted, afflicted as he. And therefore it was, when he was departing hence to the Father, that he as it were looked back, as over his shoulder, to such, saying, “You are they that have continued with me in my temptations; and unto you I appoint a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.”

Sister, thy keeping low and being emptied from vessel to vessel, is that thou mightest be kept sweet and more clean in thy soul, than thou wouldest, or couldst otherwise be. The first ways of David were his best; and yet those ways were most accompanied with affliction. They that are naked and lodge without clothing, that have no covering in the cold, and that are wet with the showers of the mountains; these embrace the rock for want of a shelter. As outward distresses make us prize outward blessings; so temptations and afflictions of soul make us prize Jesus Christ. He suffereth us to hunger, and to wander in a bewildered condition, that we may taste and relish the words of God, and not live by bread alone. Temptations always provoke to spiritual appetite; and are therefore very necessary for us, yea, as needful as work and labor to the body, without which it would be overrun with diseases, and unfit for any employment. Therefore, our beloved Sister, stir up the grace of God that is in thee, and lay hold by faith on eternal life, to the which thou art also called ; and count when thou art tempted much, yet the end of that temptation will come; the end, and then the effect. And remember that even our dearest Lord could not break off

the temptation in the middle; but “when Satan had ended *all* the temptation, then he departed from him for a season.”

The gospel which thou hast received is no cunningly devised fable, but the very truth and verity of God, and will undoubtedly bring to those that believe, grace and glory, honor and immortality, eternal life, and a world to come. This is the true grace of God wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Wherefore be not shaken in mind, or troubled with unbelief or atheism. Look to the promise, look to Jesus, look to his blood, and what worth it hath with the justice of God for sinners. The Lord direct thy heart into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Jesus Christ, who at his coming will gather the saints together unto him, even those who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice.

Lastly, Sister, farewell. Watch and be sober; have patience to the coming of the Lord; and in the meanwhile look to thy lamp. The Lord pour of his golden oil into it, and also into the vessel of thy soul. Keep thy work before thee, and be renewed in the spirit of thy mind. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing. We commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith which is in Christ Jesus; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, one God, be glory and dominion now and for ever.

Written by the appointment of this congregation, and subscribed by their consent, by your dear brethren, who pray for you, and entreat your prayers for this despised handful of the Lord’s heritage.

JOHN BUNYAN, etc. etc.