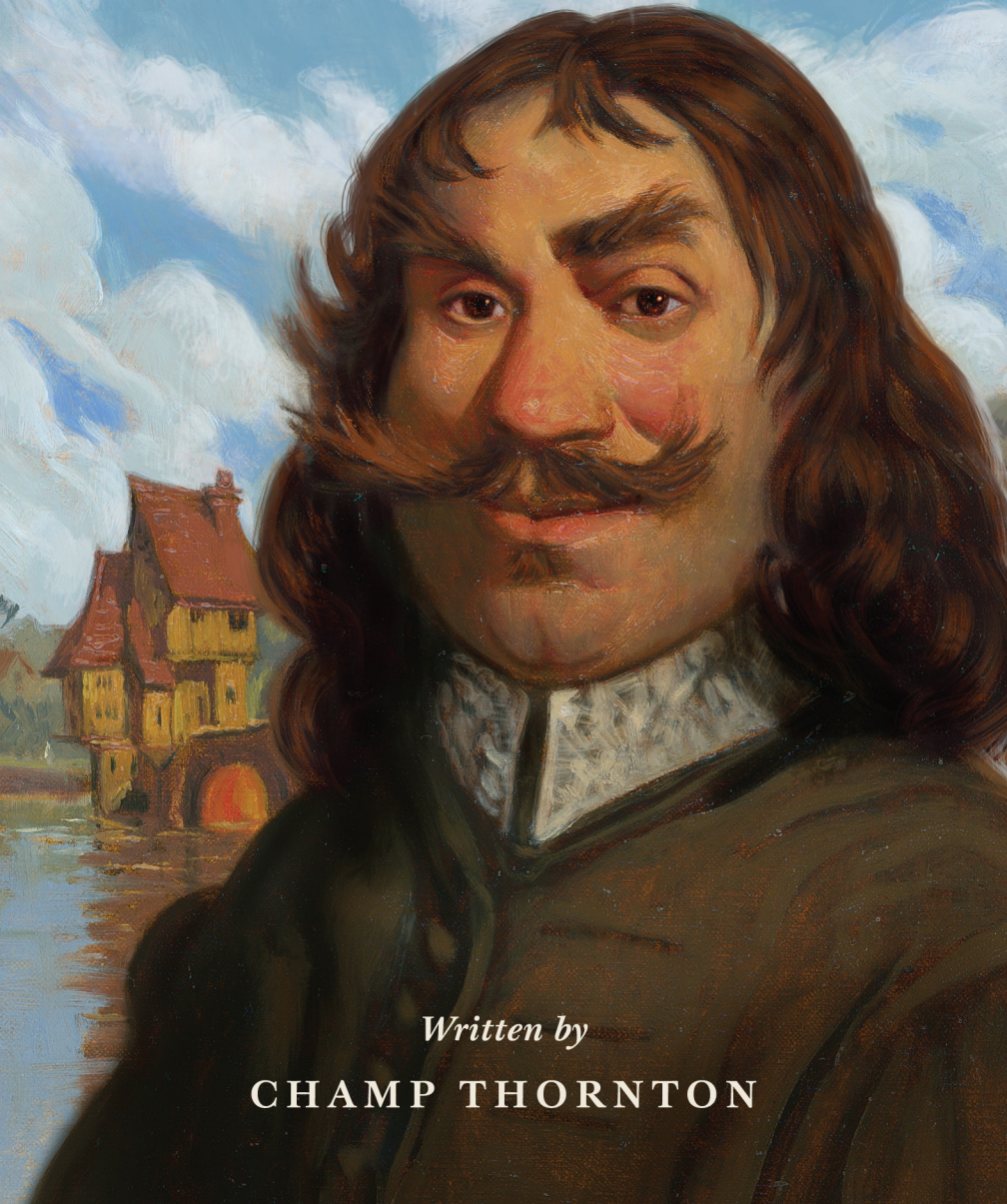


THE STORY OF
John Bunyan

— The Prisoner Who Wrote Pilgrim's Progress —



Written by

CHAMP THORNTON

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The Story of John Bunyan

Lives of Faith and Grace

Edited by Champ Thornton

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Lives of Faith and Grace

The Story of John Bunyan

The Prisoner Who Wrote Pilgrim's Progress

Champ Thornton

 **CROSSWAY®**
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*For friends and brothers,
faithful storytellers and teachers,
who, like Bunyan, use creative minds and pens
to point young hearts to Jesus.*

Josh Cooley

Scott James

Jared Kennedy

Carl Laferton

Marty Machowski

Chris Morphew

Jeremy Patenaude

*“Imagination is such a strong force that,
when it crafts and presents an idea to the soul
—whether it’s good or bad—
the rest of our faculties cannot resist its power.”*

JOHN BUNYAN

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1

Swirling Storms

1688

AS THE SUN ROSE OVER the town of Bedford, England, one man who should've been asleep was already hard at work. Fifty-nine-year-old John Bunyan sat at a wooden table inside his small house on St. Cuthbert's Street. Dipping his pen in the inkpot again and again, he scribbled furiously across the

page. He was in a hurry.

For days he had been sick with a fever, so ill he couldn't leave his bed. But now the fever had broken, and although he was weak, he had forced himself to get up. His mind was whirring with thoughts to express, with truths to communicate. He had to get back to his writing.

His wife, Elizabeth, knew he needed more rest to fully recover for the challenges that lay before him. But John insisted, "I have a manuscript I must finish." He was writing another book: *The Excellency of a Broken Heart*.

In just a few days, on August 19, 1688, he was supposed to preach at a friend's church in Whitechapel, 60 miles away in central London. And while in the capital city, he also needed to hand off his manuscript to the printer. But first he had to finish writing, and time was short.

Travelling to London by horse usually took two full days over washed-out and unpaved roads. But

this was no ordinary time in history. Threats of another civil war were looming, and the roads could be dangerous. Travelers had to be cautious.

And then, one of John's neighbors had asked a favor. He wanted to know if John could help with his father. There'd been a terrible argument between the son and his dad. And the relationship was now broken and so was the son's heart.

Could Mr. Bunyan, the famous author and pastor who had helped so many people, also do something to help him? The father lived in the town of Reading, far outside London on its west side. When Mr. Bunyan was in London, could he visit his father with him, and together try to reconcile the broken relationship?

John immediately agreed.

He didn't have to think about the choice. Helping broken hearts was the topic he'd just been writing about. He'd be glad to help. Yet that also meant John had to leave a few days earlier, for the town of Reading was 45 miles away from his destination in

London. That meant he had to finish his manuscript even faster. But he didn't mind; he'd always had a busy mind and a busy schedule.

This was his fifty-seventh book. He had been writing and preaching God's word for thirty-two years. Through the most chaotic years in the history of England, John had loved and served God. Yet it hadn't always been that way.

For the first two decades of his life, John had been godless, following his own wild imagination. He had lived for himself and done what he wanted. He was reckless, almost drowned twice, and more than once thought he would truly lose his mind. And through it all, God had protected him.

In time, God saved John's soul and transformed his life. And his vivid imagination was used for good, filling pages with stories and characters that thrilled and helped countless hearts and minds. His most famous book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, is one of the best-selling books of all time. John Bunyan eventually became one of the best-known

preachers in all England. Thousands gathered to hear him speak.

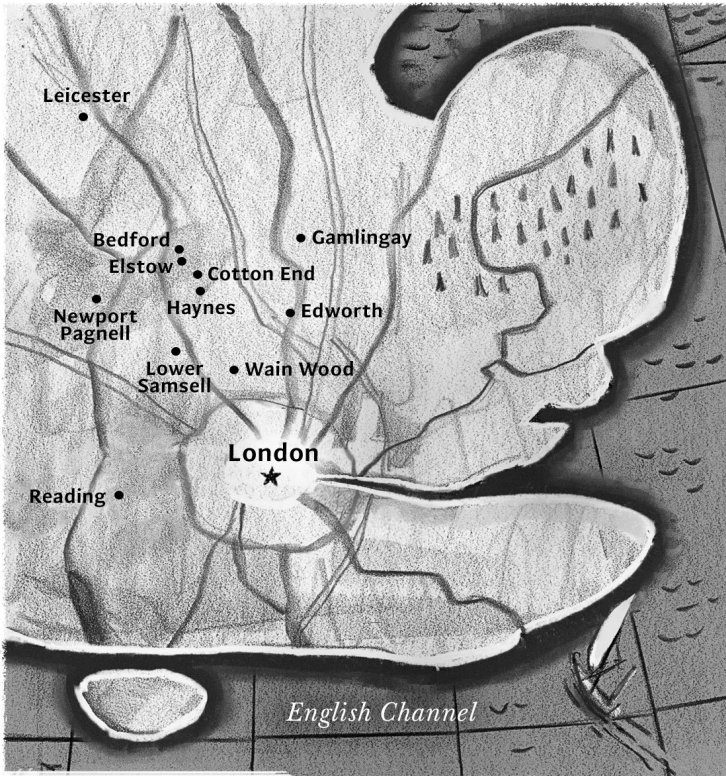
And now, as John nudged his horse along the path toward the town of Reading, he knew that many were waiting to hear him in London. But first, he had important work today with just two men—a father and a son. And so under darkening skies that threatened rain, John and the son finally entered Reading.

John prayed for this reconciliation. But he hadn't needed to prepare. He already knew what he'd say to the father and the son. He'd gently warn them about the dangers of anger and holding a grudge. He'd remind them about the blessings of family love and of relationships restored.

In his heart, John knew what he'd say to such an angry father and wayward son because he remembered.

As storm clouds loomed overhead, John remembered the broken relationship, the rising frustration, and the growing distance. He could remember the arguments, the anger, the bitter words.

He remembered. Because he had lived it.



— PRONUNCIATION AID —

Elstow: ELL-stoe
Leicester: LESS-ter

Newport Pagnell: NEW-port PAG-nell
Reading: REDD-ing

This map of England shows some of the places that John Bunyan lived or visited during his life.