



*Distinguishing Grace
and
Nothing To Pay*



by
Alicia Hoblyn



**DIVINE LEADINGS WITH A CHILD
or
DISTINGUISHING GRACE**

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NOTHING TO PAY

**By
Alicia Hoblyn**

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PREFACE

Alicia Hoblyn, by the grace of God, was a very remarkable woman. Her name is most often remembered for the prolific number of tracts which she wrote during her lifetime. These tracts, firmly based on the principles of free and sovereign grace, which the following pages show had been deeply burnt into her heart, have been greatly used of God in past generations, in awakening sinners, and pointing them to Christ. The most famous of these tracts is the one entitled “Nothing To Pay”, appended to this account.

None the less remarkable is the experience of Alicia herself, called Amy in the following pages. These tell of the work of the Holy Spirit in her soul when comparatively young. Related, originally for young readers, the simplicity and depth of her religion is a sacred example of the Truth expressed by Christ Himself: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, Thou hast perfected praise” (Matthew 21.16).

Divine Dealings With A Child, or, *Distinguishing Grace*, as it is also called, will warm the heart of all who have tasted that God is gracious and who desire to see His work appear in the hearts of both young and old.

Some of the language, being somewhat ‘dated’, has been amended, but these minimal alterations do not detract from the reality of the Holy Spirit’s undoubted leadings in the life of so young a child of God.

We are deeply indebted to Miss S.Cooke for typing out the original manuscript, and to her family for the kind loan of Mrs. Hoblyn’s writings. Also to Mr John Lee for his painstaking work in proofreading.

G.D.Buss, May 2001

PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL

THE first series of tracts having excited considerable attention, and obtained a wide circulation, it has been thought that a small collection of similar tracts by the same writer might not be unacceptable to the Lord's family. Were these tracts mere essays on certain points, they could well stand on their own merits, without any need of the sanction of a name; but, being narratives, it has been thought advisable, by the friends who urged on this publication, that someone should authenticate them to the public; and it is with the greatest pleasure and readiness that I express my thorough conviction of the unadulterated truth of the facts here recorded. To many readers there will be need for no such sanction, for they carry such internal evidence of their truthfulness, and such plain tokens of the *wonderful* working of the God of Israel, that the Lord's tried and afflicted people will delight in the testimony thus afforded of an increase to that cloud of witnesses that have preceded, and which are recorded, whether in the Word of God or in the records of Christian men, that this passage may have its fulfilment, "The works of the LORD *are* great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." While many, through love of science, occupy themselves in tracing out the works of creation; should not, and will not, the children of God, through (so to speak) the science of love, have far greater pleasure in beholding and searching into the works of the new creation of grace. I have heard of some persons who have termed these narratives, *fictitious*. Now, in the sense in which they use the word, I most completely deny the charge, and can vouch that what is here related is a true, faithful, and unvarnished statement of *facts*. We need not travel into the land of fancy and fiction in order to get what is marvellous, for the child of God is often a wonder to himself; as well as to those about him. We know that it is the practice of some visitors to have a regular series of subjects, which they successively bring before each person they visit; and no doubt, in this way, they may often succeed in raising a very pretty tower, which they hope will soar to heaven; but, alas! the Lord comes down and confounds their work, for "it *is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." The complete contrast to such kind of visiting is here to be found, for there was nothing studied, but a simple telling out of what the Lord gave at the very moment, without any squeamishness as to whether the carnal mind would relish it or not.

Salvation is of grace, from first to last; and that grace is at the entire disposal of Him who never takes man as His counsellor, to tell Him where that grace is to flow, and what it is to do. It is a great honour to be in any measure the channel in conveying the knowledge of so precious, full, and complete salvation, wrought out by Christ for His elect and chosen remnant! Man is not to be persuaded into the reception of the Truth, for this would suppose some remnant of good left in man as a fallen creature. The true partaker of Divine grace, who is taught, and knows, that he is not his own, but bought with a price, that he should glorify God in body and in spirit, which are His; such a one ever delights “to teach transgressors Thy ways,” looking unto the Lord to fulfil His own annexed promise, viz. that “sinners shall be converted unto Thee.” Whilst many of the Lord’s children have delighted in the truths here recorded, numbers of the carnally minded have shown their dislike, and many even their decided enmity against the sovereign work of the Lord, here displayed. This twofold result is a most convincing proof, to my own mind, that it was the will of the Lord that these things should not slumber in the dark; and, from the blessing that has already attended their circulation, I can safely recommend them as tending to the glory of God, and, therefore, most useful for distribution in this crooked and perverse religious generation; and may the lovers of free grace find, experimentally, the truth of the promise, “The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.”

J.W.GOWRING, B.A.,
Lecturer at St Giles, Cripplegate, London;
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The annexed narrative must speak for itself. It will be opposed by all but those who know the *plague of the heart*, and the *freeness, fulness, and preciousness* of *Jehovah’s grace* as bestowed upon the *vilest of the vile*, and that *without money and without price!*

D.A. DOUDNEY, D.D.,
Vicar of St. Luke’s, Bedminster, Bristol; and
Editor of the Gospel Magazine.

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DIVINE DEALINGS WITH A CHILD
or
DISTINGUISHING GRACE

This account is the conversion to God, at a very early age, of Mrs. A. B. Hoblyn of Bath, which was published during her lifetime, anonymously. She wrote more than 150 publications, including 'Tracts for the People', and 'Nothing to Pay'. She died at the age of 83 on the 26th June, 1896.

There lived, a long time ago, a little child named Amy, who had a kind father and mother, and a great many brothers and sisters. She was a very intelligent child, and could read very well when only five years old. She was also very fond of her doll, and soon found out the way to cut out and make pretty clothes for it, without troubling anybody. She was a good-tempered little girl, and loved to oblige, and this made her a favourite with her brothers and sisters; but Amy was born with a bad heart, and this bad heart showed itself in many ways, as you will see when I tell you more about her, for I began to know her when she was about five years old.

One day, Amy heard that her Uncle Richard was coming from a distant place to visit her father and mother. All the children were very much pleased at this news, and they wondered what kind of person Uncle Richard would be. One hoped for holidays all the time he stayed, and another hoped for a ride on his horse, and each child hoped for what each loved best. At last, Uncle Richard arrived, and great was their joy to find, though he was a tall, elderly man, he loved a game of romps as much as the youngest child in the house. But, before many days had passed, it was noticed by the children that he did not seem to please their parents; for Uncle Richard wanted to have family prayer, and to talk about God to the children, but their parents did not like this; so that every time Uncle said anything, it seemed to vex the whole family. Now I have told you that Amy was an intelligent little girl, and she soon saw that all her uncle said made her mother very cross, and she was anxious to know the reason; so she tried to make little opportunities to speak to her uncle, and this much pleased him.

Amy, very likely, did not mean to be deceitful, but when she saw her questions pleased her uncle, she asked more, and her uncle gave her leave to come into his room every morning while he shaved, and to read aloud a chapter in the Bible. Great was Amy's delight at this, and she

thought over a good many things she would ask her uncle to explain, every day.

The very first morning she went into her uncle's room, he gave her a nice little Testament, with her own name written in it, and this greatly delighted Amy, for she had only the use of a Bible in the schoolroom, (where she was taught at home), but never had a Bible or Testament of her own before. When she had thanked her uncle many times, and looked the book all over, inside and outside, he told her to find out the 3rd chapter of the Gospel by John, and to read it aloud. When she had finished, her uncle said:

“I suppose, Amy, you do not understand what you have been reading?”

“Not exactly this chapter, Uncle,” said Amy, “but I understand all about Adam and Eve.”

“Well, now, what about them?” said her uncle.

“Why,” said Amy, “God made them good, and put them in a large, lovely garden, and told them they might eat of all the fruit except one apple; and Satan came and advised Eve to eat it, and she listened to him instead of listening to God.”

“And what happened then?” asked her uncle.

“Oh, then Adam ate it too; and God was very angry with them both, and turned them out of the garden. And now, was it not very foolish, and very unkind of them, to behave so to God?”

“Yes,” said her uncle, “it was indeed—I suppose you would not have done so?”

“Well,” said Amy, “I have often thought, if I had been put into that nice garden, as Eve was, I would have stayed there, and not have been turned out for the sake of an apple.”

“Now stop a minute, Amy,” said her uncle, “I must tell you a little story about that: — There was once upon a time an old man and his wife, and they lived in a shabby cottage, as they were very poor. One day, the old man was grumbling because he had such a bad fire; and the old woman began to complain because they had so little to eat. ‘All our pain and our poverty we owe to that good-for-nothing woman Eve,’ said the old man. ‘She brought all the trouble upon us, by eating an apple.’ ‘I am sure,’ said his wife, ‘if I had been put into that nice garden, I would have been

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content, and not have lost everything for the sake of an apple.’ Now, it so happened that a lady, who used to visit these old people, was passing their door and heard all they said. So she made up a little plan in her mind, and went in to see them; and, after talking a while, she asked them to dine at her house the next day. The old couple were very much pleased, and at the proper hour, they were at the lady’s house. There they found a nice hot dinner ready, with covers on every dish; and when they had sat down, the servant came round, and took off all the covers but one, that stood in the middle of the table. ‘My lady,’ she said, ‘hopes you will eat and enjoy yourselves, but she does not wish that dish in the middle of the table to be touched, or looked into.’ The servant left the room, and the old people began to eat. Presently, as they got satisfied, they looked about them. ‘I wonder why the lady would not let us eat some of that dish?’ said the old woman. ‘It was very kind of her to give us such a good dinner,’ said the old man, ‘but I think she might as well have let us take some of everything when she went about it.’ ‘So do I,’ said the old woman, ‘but if she tells us not to eat it, there can be no harm to look at what it is, for she will never find that out at any rate.’ So saying, the old woman lifted the cover, and out jumped a mouse! With a loud scream she let the cover fall, the door opened and in walked the lady. ‘I see what you have been doing,’ said she, ‘and a pretty way you have rewarded my kindness. I told you not to have anything to do with that dish, on purpose to try you; because I overhead yesterday what you said, that if you had been put into that nice garden, as Adam and Eve were, you would not have lost it for an apple. Now, can you say you would have done any better, after what you have done today?’”

“Oh, dear,” said Amy, “how ashamed the old woman must have been.”

“But if my little niece, Amy, were tried in the same way, or any other way, do you think she would do better than Eve?” said her uncle.

“Oh! Uncle, Eve was good to begin with, you know,” said Amy, “but I am wicked.”

“Amy does not think herself wicked, though she says so,” said her uncle.

“Tell me how you know that, Uncle Richard,” said Amy.

“Because you told me just now you often thought, if you had been put into that nice garden, as Eve was, you would have stayed there, and not have lost it for the sake of an apple. Did you not say this?”

Amy was silent.

“This just tells me,” said her uncle, “you do not yet know what a wicked heart you have got; because, if you felt you were a sinful child, you would never think you could do better than other people.”

Her uncle told her to put by her Testament, and tell her mother he would soon be ready for breakfast.

The next morning, Amy was waiting on the stairs, when her uncle called her into his room. After she had read a chapter, Amy said, “Uncle Richard, may I ask you a question?” He nodded to her to go on.

“What was that long word you said to Mother last evening that made her so angry?”

Uncle thought for a moment, and then said, “I told her that everyone who went to heaven, and lived with Jesus Christ there, must be regenerated here on earth.”

“And what in the world is that, Uncle?” said Amy.

“Just what you read to me yesterday in the 3rd of John,” said her uncle, “It is to be born again, to have another heart, to be made new.”

“Has this been done for my mother, Uncle, then?” asked Amy.

“Has it been done for you, my dear?” said her uncle.

“Oh, Uncle,” said Amy, “my mother is old, you know, and may want to be born again; but I have not been so very long born, so I don’t think”—Here Amy stopped; she did not like to say anything foolish, but she was puzzled, and could not explain herself.

“I see,” said her uncle, “what you mean. You think old people are greater sinners than young people; and the old may need to be made new, but the young do not.”

“Well, Uncle,” said Amy, “I think I did mean that.”

“But, my dear,” said her uncle, “little children are sinners before God quite as much as old people, for they are born in sin. Ever since Adam and Eve ate that apple, every child that comes into this world is full of sin, and they soon shew this by naughty ways and words.”

“I don’t exactly know that, Uncle,” said Amy, “for I try to be a good little girl, and when I am naughty, I am very sorry.”

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“And yet, with all your trying, Amy, you do a great many naughty things,” said her uncle. “You were punished by your mother for telling a story the very day I came here, and you broke a pane of glass but yesterday.”

“Oh, Uncle, what a good memory you have,” said Amy, “but then, Uncle, you know I shall grow wiser and better by and by. I hope I shan’t be always naughty.”

“Amy, would you like to die?” asked her uncle.

“No indeed, Uncle, I would not,” said Amy.

“And why not Amy?” said her uncle.

“Because, I am very young, and because I love my parents, and my brothers and sisters; and I love you, too, Uncle.”

“Then I see you do not love God; because, if you did, you would wish to live with Him, and you would be glad to go to Him,” said her uncle; “but however amiable you may grow up, and however kind and well-behaved you may be now, as a little child, if you die without a new heart, God will send you to hell. It is very plain to me that you do not love God, for you do not wish to be with Him, and this is quite enough to show me you are a sinner, however good you might be in other things.”

Amy looked unhappy for a minute, and said: “Uncle, are you born again, then?”

“Yes, truly I am,” said her Uncle.

“Do tell me how it happened, uncle,” said Amy, “and what was done to you.”

“Some years ago,” said her uncle, “God put a feeling into my heart that I was a sinner.”

“Oh, Uncle,” said Amy, “is it possible that you were wicked?”

“Yes,” said her uncle, with a heavy sigh, “I was very wicked indeed.”

“And what did you do?”

Her uncle put down his razor that was in his hand, and, looking full at Amy, said: “I did not love God.”

“And was that all?” asked Amy.

“All?” said her uncle. “All? Why, what greater wickedness could you have than that, Amy? The devil was turned out of heaven because he

did not love God, and not a soul will be let into heaven but those who have the love of God in their hearts.”

“Oh, Uncle,” said Amy, “I thought perhaps you cursed and swore, and did not keep Sunday, and you were a naughty boy to your parents.”

“Well, I was all that, and a million of things more; but it all came from this, I did not love God.”

“And then how did you get so changed, and love God so dearly as you now do?” asked Amy.

“Day by day I felt myself worse and worse,” said her uncle. “I tried hard to make myself better, and love God, and feel that God loved me, but I could not. At last the Spirit of God showed me I wanted a Saviour to stand my Friend, to go between God and me; some one to plead for me — you know, just as I did for you the day after I arrived, when your mother was so angry with you, and would not speak to you, and I took you in my arms, and said: “Forgive this little girl for my sake.” Now this is what Jesus Christ does for His dear people, and this was what Jesus did for me. He reconciled me with God the Father, by dying on the cross; and one day, when I was reading my Bible, I came to the 25th verse of the 3rd of Romans, and as I read these words, “sins that are past,” God showed me that, by the work of Jesus Christ, He had forgiven me all I had ever done against Him. It was just like any one opening the window shutters, and letting light into a dark room; and then I was quite happy, for God and I were friends; and I felt, as I suppose you did when your mother took you on her lap, and said: “Well, Richard, for your sake I forgive Amy everything she has done; and I will forget her bad behaviour.” And now, Amy,” said her uncle, “run down-stairs and see if breakfast is ready.”

A few days after this, Amy ran into the dining-room where her mother and uncle were sitting together, and she soon found out, by the voice of her mother, that she was very angry with her uncle. Her mother moved her hand to let Amy know she wished her to leave the room, but Amy was like most little children, very curious, and she wished much to find out why her mother was so angry; and her uncle, not seeing the movement of her mother’s hand, called Amy over to him, and, placing her on his knee, stroked her hair, and looked at her kindly; and then, kissing her forehead, said: “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” Now Amy had no idea what these words meant, but she knew her uncle was thinking

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about her, and her little vain mind was puffed up with pride and pleasure at her uncle taking such notice of her; but her mother ordered her out of the room with an angry frown, which made Amy creep off, lest something worse should follow.

The next morning, when she went in to read to her uncle, she said to him:

“Please, Uncle, tell me what a ‘brand’ means?”

“It means a ‘burning stick’,” said her uncle.

“A stick!” said Amy. “Uncle, did you mean that I was a burning stick when you said that word to me yesterday?”

Her uncle told her to fetch his little Bible and find out the 3rd chapter of Zechariah and read it to him.

“That’s a very pretty chapter, I think,” said Amy when she had finished.

“But do you know what it means?” said her uncle.

“Why,” said Amy, “it means all about Joshua and his clothes were all filthy, and God gave him clean clothes, and this was very kind of God; but, you know, He gives us everything we have got and He is just as good to us as He was to Joshua.”

“Now, shall I tell you what I think this chapter means?” said her uncle.

“Oh, yes; do,” said Amy.

“Well now, I think this chapter is a sort of picture to explain to us what God does for the souls of His people. He finds them covered all over with sin, like filthy clothes, and He bids Jesus Christ take them off the soul and wash it clean in His precious blood, and then dress it up, not in any works of their own, but, in the good works of Jesus, who is here called the **BRANCH**.”

“But,” said Amy, “what is meant, by a brand plucked out of the fire?”

“It means”, said her uncle, “that all God’s people, as they are born into this world, are like sticks half in the fire, because they live to please and serve the devil, whose place is hell; but God comes, by His Spirit, and gives them a new heart, and makes them love and obey Him, and plucks them out of the devil’s hands, so that they shall not go to hell when they