



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 37
Issue 924

"The God of All Comfort"

Part 2

by — Hannah Whitall Smith (1832–1911)

Key Points:

Our discomfort arises from anxiety as to our relationship to God, and doubts as to His love. 7809
God's comfort enfolds life's trials and pains in an all-embracing peace. 7810
God brings trials and tribulations into our lives so that we can experience the joy of being comforted. 7812
The consolations of God mean the substituting of a far higher

and better thing for what we lose. 7513
It may seem impossible, when things look bad, to believe that God is caring. But it is true, no matter how it looks. 7814
Christ's gospel is always good news, and never bad news. 7814
The only gospel that can rightly be called a "gospel" is one that says, "fear not." 7814

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God (II Corinthians 1:3-4).



Among all of the names that reveal God, this, the "God of all comfort," seems to me one of the loveliest and the most absolutely comforting. The words "**ALL** comfort" admit of no limitation and no deductions; and one would suppose that, however full of discomforts the outward life of the followers of such a God might be, their inward life must necessarily be always and under all circumstances a comfortable life. But, as a fact, it often seems as if exactly the opposite were the case, and the lives of large numbers of the children of God are full, not of comfort, but of the utmost discomfort.

This discomfort arises from anxiety as to their relationship to God, and doubts as to His love. They torment themselves with the thought that they are too good-for-nothing to be worthy of His care, and they suspect Him of being indifferent to their trials and of

forsaking them in times of need. They are anxious and troubled about everything in their life, about their disposition and feelings, their indifference to the Bible, their want of fervency in prayer, their coldness of heart.

They are tormented with unavailing regrets over their past, and with devouring anxieties for their future. They feel unworthy to enter God's presence, and dare not believe that they belong to Him. They can be happy and comfortable with their earthly friends, but they cannot be happy or comfortable with God. And although He declares Himself to be "*the God of all comfort*," they continually complain that they cannot find comfort anywhere; and their sorrowful looks and the doleful tones of their voice show that they are speaking the truth.

Such, although they profess to be the followers of "*the God of all comfort*," spread gloom and discomfort around them wherever they go; and it is out of the question for them to hope that they can induce anyone else to believe that this beautiful name, by

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which He has announced Himself, is anything more than a pious phrase, which in reality means nothing at all.

It is easy enough to say a great many beautiful things about God being “*the God of all comfort*”; but unless we know what it is to be really and truly comforted ourselves, we might as well talk to the winds.

But what is the comfort that God gives? Is it a sort of pious grace, that may perhaps fit us for Heaven, but that is somehow unfit to bear the brunt of our everyday life with its trials and its pains? Or is it an honest and genuine comfort, as we understand **comfort, that enfolds life's trials and pains in an all-embracing peace?** It is the latter.

Comfort, whether human or divine, is pure and simple comfort, and is nothing else. None of us care for pious phrases, we want realities; and the reality of being comforted seems to me almost more delightful than any other thing in life. We all know what it is. When as little children we have cuddled up into our mother's lap after a fall or a misfortune, and have felt

her dear arms around us, and her soft kisses on our hair, we have had comfort.

Yet what more could He have said about it than He has said to Israel:

*As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted.*¹

Notice the “as” and “so” in this passage: “*As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.*” It is real comforting that is meant here; the sort of comforting that a child feels when embraced by its mother; and yet how many of us have really believed that God's comforting is actually as tender and true as a mother's comforting, or even half or quarter so real.

Instead of thinking of ourselves as being embraced and hugged to His heart, as mothers hug, have we not rather been inclined to look upon Him as a stern, unbending Judge, holding us at a distance, and demanding our respectful homage, and critical of our slightest faults?

1. Isaiah 66:13

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls “my gospel” (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13:28; Acts 20:24);
- the “*preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past*” (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any “church,” “denomination,” “movement,” “organization,” “mission,” “creed,” “meeting,” “school,” “conference” or “fellowship.”

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneider

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see the [online key](#).

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Is it any wonder that such a view of God, instead of making us comfortable, has made us thoroughly uncomfortable? Who could help being uncomfortable in the presence of such a Judge?

But I rejoice to say that that stern Judge is not there. He does not exist. The God Who does exist is a God Who is like a mother, a God Who says to us as plainly as words can say it, “*As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.*” So, likewise He says to the poor, frightened children of Israel, “*I, even I, am He that comforteth you.*”²

The God Who exists is the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God Who so loved the world that He sent His Son, not to judge the world, but to save it.³ He is the God Who “anointed” the Lord Jesus Christ “*to bind up the brokenhearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and to comfort ALL that mourn.*”⁴

Please notice that “*all*.” Not a few select ones only, but “*all*.” Every captive of sin, every prisoner in infirmity, every mourning heart throughout the whole world must be included in this “*all*.” It would not be “*all*” if there should be a single one left out, no matter how insignificant, or unworthy, or even how feeble-minded that one might be. I have always been thankful that the feeble-minded are especially mentioned by Paul in his exhortations to the Thessalonians, when he is urging them to comfort one another.⁵ In effect he says, “Do not scold the feeble-minded, but comfort them. The very ones who need comfort most are

the ones that our God, Who is like a mother, wants to comfort – not the strong-minded ones, but the feeble-minded.”

The Lord Jesus Christ was anointed to comfort “*all that mourn.*” The “*God of all comfort*” sent His Son to be the comforter of a mourning world. So, when His disciples asked Him to call down fire from Heaven to consume some people who refused to receive Him, He turned and rebuked them, and said, “*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.*”⁶

The One anointed to comfort “*all that mourn*” received sinners and ate with them. He welcomed Mary Magdalene when all men turned from her. He refused even to condemn the woman who was taken in the very act of sin, but said to the scribes and Pharisees who had brought her before Him, “*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her;*”⁷ and when, convicted by their own consciences, they all went out one by one without condemning her, He said to her, “*Neither do I condemn thee.*”⁸

Always and everywhere He was on the side of sinners. That was what He was for. He came to save sinners. He had no other mission.

The Apostle Paul tells us that He is the “*God that comforteth those that are cast down.*”⁹ Our Comforter is not far off; He is close at hand. He abides with us. Even when Christ was going away from this Earth, He told His disciples that He would not leave them comfortless, but would send “*another Comforter*”

2. Isaiah 51:12.

3. John 3:16-17.

4. Isaiah 61:1-2.

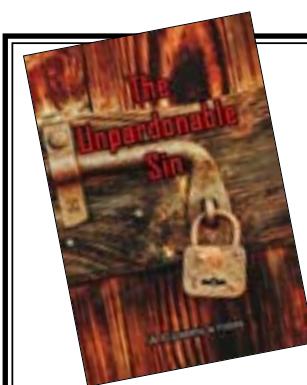
5. I Thessalonians 5:14.

6. Luke 9:56.

7. John 8:7.

8. John 8:11.

9. II Corinthians 7:6.



The Unpardonable Sin

A Compilation

Is there really such a thing as an “Unpardonable Sin?” Is there any sin that will never be forgiven? This is a compilation work of liberation and right division from five authors: A.E. Knoch, H.W. Martin, M. Jaegle, J.W. Williams and Phillip Garrison.

70 pp., PB

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Who would abide with them.¹⁰ This Comforter, He said, would teach them all things, and would bring all things to their remembrance.¹¹ And then He declared, as though it were the necessary result of the coming of this divine Comforter: “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart [therefore] be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*”¹² Oh, how can we, in the face of these tender and loving words, go about with troubled and frightened hearts?

“*Comforter*”—what a word of bliss, if we only could realize it. Let us repeat it over and over to ourselves, until its meaning sinks into the very depths of our being. And an “*abiding*” Comforter, too, not one who comes and goes, and is never on hand when most needed, but one Who is always present, and always ready to give us “*joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*”¹³

The very thought of an *abiding Comforter* is an amazing revelation. Try to comprehend it. If we can have a human comforter to stay with us for only a few days when we are in trouble, we think ourselves fortunate; but here is a divine Comforter who is always stay-

ing with us, and whose power to comfort is infinite. Never, never ought we for a single minute to be without comfort.

God declared to Israel that He would comfort all their “*waste places,*”¹⁴ for He is the One Who will make their “*wildernesses like Eden,*” and their “*deserts like the garden of the LORD.*”¹⁵

You may object, perhaps, because you are not worthy of His comforts. I do not suppose you are. No one ever is. But you need His comforting, and because you are not worthy you need it all the more. Christ came into the world to save sinners, not good people, and *your unworthiness is your greatest claim for His salvation.*

The avenue to the comfortings of the divine Comforter lies through the *need of comfort*. This explains to me better than anything else the reason why the Lord so often has sorrow and trial to be our portion. As He said of Israel, “*Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.*”¹⁶

10. John 14:16.

11. John 14:26.

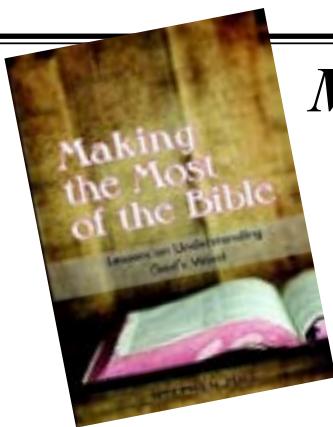
12. John 14:27.

13. Isaiah 61:3.

14. Isaiah 51:3.

15. Isaiah 51:3.

16. Hosea 2:14.



100 pp, PB

See [order form](#)
under “Hill.”

for every serious Bible student who is eager to do just what the title says – “make the most of the Bible.” The book’s chapters review the Bible’s history and organization, the common translation methods used in Bible translation, the importance of language, context and figures of speech, and dispensations. It provides a step-by-step practical guide for approaching Bible study in the most effective way.

Making the Most of the Bible is a “must have” for every serious Bible student, and will make a perfect gift. Even if you feel confident in your own method for study, you likely know several people who are greatly in need of this book.

We too find ourselves, it may be, in a "wilderness" of disappointment and of suffering, and we wonder why the God Who loves us should have to "allure" us there. But He knows that it is only in that very wilderness that we can hear and receive the *comforting words* He has poured out upon us.

We must feel the need of comfort before we can listen to the words of comfort. And God knows that it is infinitely better and happier for us to *need His comforts* and receive them, than ever it could be not to need them and so be without them. The consolations of God mean the substituting of a far higher and better thing for what we lose. The things we lose are earthly things, those He substitutes are heavenly. And who of us would but thankfully be "allured" by our God into any earthly wilderness, if only there we might find the unspeakable joys of union with Himself? Paul could say he "*counted all things but loss*"¹⁷ if he might but "*win Christ*"; and, if we have even the faintest glimpse of what winning Christ means, *we will say so too.*

But strangely enough, while it is easy for us when we are happy and do not need comforting to believe that our God is the "*God of all comfort*," but as soon as we are in trouble and need it, it seems impossible to believe that there can be any comfort for us anywhere. It would almost seem as if, in our reading of the Bible, we had reversed its meaning, and made it say, not "*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*,"¹⁸ but "*Blessed are they that rejoice, for they shall be comforted*."

Let us take those beautiful words, "*God that comforteth those that are cast down*,"¹⁹ and ask ourselves whether we have never been tempted to make it read in our secret hearts, "*God who forsaketh those who are cast down*," or, "*God who overlooks those who are cast down*," or, "*God who will comfort those who are cast down if they show themselves worthy of comfort*"; and whether, consequently, instead of being comforted, we have not been plunged into misery and despair.

The psalmist declares that God will "*comfort me on*

every side,"²⁰ and what an all-embracing bit of comfort this is. "*On every side*," no aching spot to be left uncomforted. Yet, in times of special trial, how many secretly read this as though it said, "*God will comfort us on every side except just the side where our trials lie*." But God says "*every side*."

It is with too many, alas, just as it was with Israel of old. On one side God said to Zion, "*Sing, O Heavens, and be joyful, O Earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the LORD hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted*,"²¹ and on the other side Zion said, "*The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me*."²² Then God's answer came in those wonderful words, full of comfort enough to meet the needs of all of the sorrows of all humanity, "*Forget thee! Can a mother forget? Yea, perhaps a mother may forget, but I cannot.*"²³

Yet, a great many actually think it is wrong to be comforted. They feel too unworthy; and if any rays of comfort steal into their hearts, they sternly shut them out. Like Rachel and Jacob, and the psalmist, their souls "*refuse to be comforted*."

The Apostle Paul tells us that whatsoever things are written beforehand in the Scriptures are for our learning, in order that we "*through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope*."²⁴ But if we are to be comforted by the Scriptures, we must first believe them. Nothing that God has said can possibly comfort a person who does not believe it to be really true. Always and in everything comfort must follow faith, and can never precede it.

When we are overwhelmed with cares and anxieties, as it often happens in this world, we are told that we need not be anxious about anything,²⁵ but may commit all our cares to Him, for He cares for us.²⁶

We are all familiar with the passages where He tells us to "*behold the fowls of the air*,"²⁷ and to "*consider*

20. Psalm 71:21.

21. Isaiah 49:13.

22. Isaiah 49:14.

23. Isaiah 49:15.

24. Romans 15:4.

25. Philippians 4:6.

26. 1 Peter 5:7.

27. Matthew 6:26.

17. Philippians 3:8.

18. Matthew 5:4.

19. II Corinthians 7:6.

the lilies of the field”²⁸ and assures us that we are of much more value than they,²⁹ and that, if He cares for them, He will much more care for us.³⁰

There is enough comfort in these passages for every care or sorrow all the wide world over. To have God assume our cares and our burdens, and carry them for us; the Almighty God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, Who controls everything, and foresees everything, and consequently manages everything in the very best possible way, to have Him make such declarations; what could possibly be a greater comfort?

Some look upon these as beautiful things, but they do not think they can be true in their own special case unless they can have an inward feeling that they are; and if they should speak out honestly, they would confess that, since they have no such inward feeling, His words do not apply to them; and as a consequence they are not comforted by them. Yet one need not wait to have an inward feeling that these words are true.

It may seem impossible, when things look all wrong and uncared for, to believe that God is caring for us as a mother cares for her children. But God says it, and it is true, no matter how it looks.

Christ’s gospel is always good news, and never bad news. Man’s gospel is generally a mixture of a little good news and a great deal of bad news; and even where it tries to be good news, it is so hampered with “ifs” and “buts,” and with all sorts of man-made conditions, that it utterly fails to bring any lasting joy or

28. Matthew 6:28.

29. Matthew 10:31.

30. Luke 12:24, 28.

comfort.

Even the leaders of Israel were commissioned in Isaiah 40:1 to “*Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.*” Thus, “*Comfort ye My people*” is the divine command; they are not to be scolded. Christ comforts, man scolds.

The only gospel that can rightly be called a “gospel” is one that, like the proclamation by the angel to the frightened shepherds, says “*fear not.*”

*Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.*³¹

Never were more comforting words preached.

*Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.*³²

(edited abridgement)

(to be continued)

For a short biographical sketch of Hannah Whitall Smith, see:

– Editor’s Desk, [Bible Student’s Notebook #921](#).

TOPICS:

Major: Comfort; God; Love; Peace

Minor: Gospel; Salvation; Trials

31. Luke 2:10-11

32. II Thessalonians 2:17

Just and the Justifier

by — Charles H. Welch (1880-1967)

The author takes a look at both the Doctrinal and Dispensational aspects of Paul’s foundational epistle to the Romans.

352 pp., PB

See [order form](#) under “Welch.”

John the Baptist & Elijah

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

Though John the Baptist was not Elijah ... he came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17), and could have performed his mission if the people had been ready to receive him. ...

John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, but without his mighty deeds. ...

The prophetic testimony closes with the prediction that he [Elijah] must reappear “*before the great and fearful day of Jehovah comes*” (Malachi 4:5). ...

John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and would have done his work had the people repented. ... So Elijah must come again, before the Kingdom is established. ...

The last of the prophets promised that Elijah should return (Malachi 4:5-6).

Lo! I send you Elijah the prophet before the



great and fearful day of Jehovah comes and he restores the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I should come and smite the Earth to its doom.

John the Baptist was not Elijah, but came with the same spirit and power. He was capable of performing the same work. When the scribes objected, saying that Elijah must come first, the Lord acknowledged the fact (Matthew 17:10). ... Meanwhile, had the nation been able to receive it, his work could have been done by John the Baptist. **BSN**

— *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament* (Matthew 17:10, 12; Mark 9:11; Luke 1:17)

TOPICS:

Major: Elijah; John the Baptist

Minor: Prophecy



OUR BLOGS

blog: Pronunciation: \ˈblög, 'bläg\

Function: noun

Etymology: short for Weblog: a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer; also: the contents of such a site.

— Webster’s Dictionary

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- (2) It allows interaction, as readers can post their own comments.
- (3) It increases results on search engines.

Stop by and check out our extensive list at:

<http://www.studyshelf.com/ourblogs.htm>



I just wanted to write to you and tell you how much I appreciate your ministry. I read your book *The Salvation of ALL* – what an amazing book!

I grew up on a mountain in the country and went to a Southern Baptist church. I grew up helping with Bible school, working as a youth leader, Sunday school teacher, and I finally became a Southern Baptist preacher.

I never had the opportunity to go to Bible college or seminary, I worked a 40-hour-a-week job and pastored small churches for free. I did this for about 15 years. I would then fill in at churches off and on until I eventually got out of the religious system.

After I retired about two years ago, I decided to get back into the Bible and really study. I prayed to God that I wanted to know the truth of the Bible and not what man or religions would teach. I wanted to know what He wanted to teach me! I really was serious about that too!

I have always been a loner, even when I preached in the Southern Baptist system. Preachers never liked talking with me because I asked a lot of hard questions and they all seemed like they were just caught up in their careers. Religious people hurt me more than anyone else. I was sincere about teaching people about Christ, and it seemed like religion always was fighting against that.

Anyway, after I retired, I started studying the Bible more and was watching sermons on you tube. I came across right division and that was amazing! I started to see so

many things come together like the revelation of the mystery! It was so great! ... By this time, I was watching your videos too! ... I went from dispensational Southern Baptist to Right division, to salvation of all. ...

So now I have learned even more, thanks to your ministry ... It has been such a blessing to me!

I am now trying to share the salvation of ALL with everyone I can, but you know how difficult it is to get this across to Bible teachers that already think they know it all or are in a religious system box that they cannot get out of. ...

It is amazing how God has opened my eyes in the last two years! Your ministry has helped me to put all the Scriptures together to be able now to share it better with people.

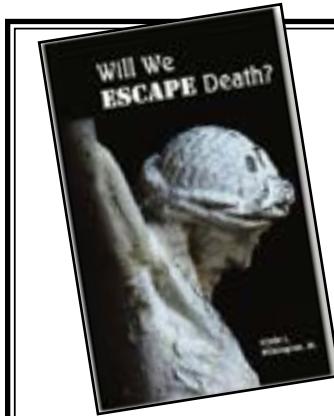
Of course, when you would tell someone about total grace they then would say, "you think you have a license to sin." We know that's not what we think, but we try to help them see God's amazing total grace.

What is sad is that, when you get into the grace movement... and you ... begin to explain to them about Universal reconciliation and God's amazing "total" grace, they want to revert to the old works performance line, "you think everyone has a license to sin and then be saved."

It's all about pride and someone thinking that, in some way, their performance alters God's love to their favor. Oh, the joy, when a person see's and understands God's pure and total love! The Total love of Almighty God Who reconciles the world to Himself!

... I am ordering more of your resources this month and I thank you for your ministry. ...

Once again, I want to thank you for standing up for the truth and having resources that can help people to see God's wonderful love and grace! – *Email* **BSN**



Will We Escape Death?

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The plight of humanity is mortality and death. In every age the believer's hope has always been resurrection from the dead and the glory which lays beyond. It was Satan who first introduced the idea, "*Thou shalt not surely die.*" So, what makes anyone think that Satan was right – that we are actually not going to die? What makes someone expect that, of all of the people who have ever lived before them, they will somehow be the ones who will *escape* death? The answer, in one word: tradition.

62 pp, PB

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