



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

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

Volume 38  
Issue 931

# *"The God of All Comfort"*

## Part 4

by — Hannah Whitall Smith (1832–1911)

### Key Points:

That God is good means that He will never neglect any of His duties toward us.....	7865
The good Shepherd does not cast off the sheep that is lost, but goes out to seek for it. ....	7868
All that God does is good, no matter how it looks. ....	7869

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Only through the wreckage of the world can His glorious purposes come to pass. ....	7872

### ***"The Lord Is Good"***

Have you ever asked yourself what you honestly think of God down at the bottom of your heart, whether you believe Him to be a good God or a bad God?



I dare say the question will shock you, and you will be horrified at the suggestion that you could by any possibility think that God is a bad God. But before you have finished this chapter, I suspect some of you will be forced to acknowledge that, unconsciously perhaps, but nonetheless truly, you have, by doubts, attributed to Him a character that you would be horrified to have attributed to yourself.

I shall never forget when I first discovered that God was *really* good. The expression, "*The goodness of God*,"<sup>1</sup> had seemed to me nothing more than a sort of heavenly statement, which I could not be expected to understand. And then one day I came in my reading of the Bible across the words, "*O taste and see that the Lord is good*,"<sup>2</sup> and suddenly they meant something. "*The Lord is good*," I repeated to myself. What does it mean to be good? What but this, the living up to the best and highest that one knows?

To be good is exactly the opposite of being bad. To be bad is to know the right and not to do it, but to be good is to do the best we know. And I saw that, since God is omniscient, He must know what is the best and highest good of all, and that therefore His goodness must necessarily be beyond question. I can never express what this meant to me. I had such a view of the real actual goodness of God that I saw nothing could possibly go awry under His care, and it seemed to me that I should never *need* be anxious again. And over and over, when appearances have been against Him, and when I have been tempted to question whether He had not been unkind, or neglectful, or indifferent, I have been brought up short by the words, "*The Lord is good*."

**That He is good means that He will not neglect any of His duties toward us**, and that He will always treat us in the best possible way. This may sound like a platitude, and you may exclaim, "Why tell us this, for it is what we all believe?" But do you? If you did, would it be possible for you ever to think He was neglectful, or indifferent, or unkind, or self-absorbed, or inconsiderate? Do not put on a righteous air, and say, "Oh,

*(continued on page 7867)*

1. Psalm 52:1; Romans 2:4.  
2. Psalm 34:8.

<b>"The God of All Comfort" (part 4) .....</b>	<b>7865</b>
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## Bible Student's Notebook™

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

ISSN: 1936-9360

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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 Sneidar

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Clyde L. Pilkington, III, Nathan H. Pilkington, Stephen Hill

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but I never do accuse Him of any such things. I would not dare to." Do you not? Have you never laid to His charge things you would scorn to do yourselves? How was it when that last grievous disappointment came? Did you not feel as if the Lord had been unkind in "permitting" such a thing to come upon you, when you were trying so hard to serve Him? Do you never look upon His will as a tyrannical and arbitrary will, that must be submitted to, of course, but that could not by any possibility be loved? Does it never seem to you a hard thing to say, "*Thy will be done*"? But could it seem hard if you really believed that the Lord is good, and that He always does that which is good?

The Lord Jesus took great care to tell His disciples that He was the *Good Shepherd*, because He knew how often appearances would be against Him, and how tempted they would be to question His goodness. "*I am the Good Shepherd*."<sup>3</sup> His ideal of goodness in a shepherd was that the shepherd must protect the sheep entrusted to His care, even at the cost of His own life; and He came up to this ideal. Now, can we not see that if we really believed that He is good we shall be brought out into a large place of peace and comfort at once?

Let us be honest with ourselves. It is easy to get into a habit of wrong thoughts about God, thoughts which will lead to insensibly question Him, and separate our hearts from Him by a wide gulf of doubt and unbelief. Yet, the God Who makes circumstances can surely control circumstances.

Many such questions of unbelief are posed in the Bible, each one throwing doubts upon the goodness of God, and each one, I am afraid, is a duplicate of

3. John 10:11, 14.

questions asked by many of us even now.

"*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*"

"*Hath God in anger shut up His tender mercies?*"

"*Is His mercy clean gone forever?*"

"*Doth His promise fail for evermore?*"

"*O God, why hast thou cast us off forever?*"

"*Why hast thou made me thus?*"

Let us consider these questions for a little, and see whether we can find any counterparts to them in our own secret questionings.

"*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*"<sup>4</sup>

To ask this question is to "speak against" Him as grievously as it would be to ask a good mother if she had forgotten her child. And yet the Lord Himself says to Israel, "*Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.*"<sup>5</sup>

"*Hath God in anger shut up His tender mercies?*"<sup>6</sup>

To ask this question of a good God is to insult Him. It would be as impossible for His tender mercies to be shut up toward us, or for His mercy to go from us, as it would be for the tender mercies of a mother to come to an end. The psalmist says, "*The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.*"<sup>7</sup> In the very nature of things this must be, because He is a good God, and cannot do otherwise.

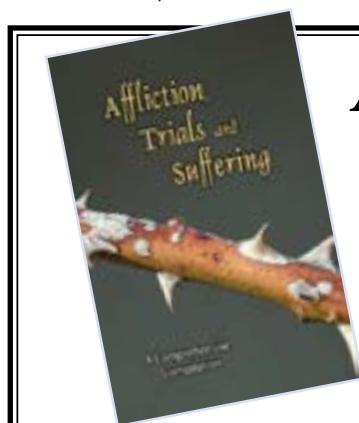


4. Psalm 77:9.

5. Isaiah 49:15.

6. Psalm 77:9.

7. Psalm 145:9.



## Affliction, Trials and Suffering

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“Is His mercy clean gone forever?  
Doth His promise fail for evermore?”<sup>8</sup>

There come times in everyone’s life when we are tempted to ask these questions. Everything seems to be going wrong, and all of God’s promises seem to have failed. But if we remember that the Lord is good, we shall see that He would cease to be good if such a thing could be. A man who breaks his promises is looked upon as a dishonorable and untrustworthy man; and a God who could break His, if one could imagine such a thing, would be dishonorable and untrustworthy also. And to ask such questions is to cast a stigma on His goodness, that may well be characterized as “*speaking against God*.” No matter how affairs may look, we may be sure of this, that because God is good no promise of His has ever failed, or can ever fail. Heaven and Earth may pass away, but His Word never.<sup>9</sup>

“O God, why hast Thou cast us off forever?”<sup>10</sup>

It will be impossible for a good God to cast us off as it would be for a good mother to cast off her child. We may be in trouble and darkness, and may *feel* as if we were cast off and forsaken, but our feelings have *nothing* to do with the facts, and the fact is that God is good, and could not do it. **The good Shepherd does not cast off the sheep that is lost, and take no further care of it, but He goes out to seek for it, and He seeks until He finds it.** To suspect Him of casting us off for-

8. Psalm 77:8.

9. Matthew 24:35.

10. Psalm 74:1.

ever is to wound and grieve His faithful love, just as it would wound a good mother’s heart if she should be supposed capable of casting off her child, let that child have wandered as far as it may. The thing is impossible in either case, but far more impossible in the case of God than even in the case of the best mother that ever lived.

“Why hast Thou made me thus?”<sup>11</sup>

This is a question we are very apt to ask. There is, I imagine, hardly one of us who has not been tempted at one time or another to “*reply against God*” in reference to the matter of our own personal make-up. We do not like our peculiar temperaments or characteristics, and we long to be like someone else who has, we think, greater gifts of appearance or of talent. We are discontented with our make-up, both inward and outward, and we feel sure that all our failures are because of our unfortunate temperaments; and we are inclined to blame our Creator for having “*made us thus*.”

I remember vividly a time in my life when I was tempted to be very rebellious about my own make-up. I was a plain-spoken, energetic sort of an individual, trying to be a “good Christian,” but with no especial air of piety about me. But I had a sister who was so saintly in her looks, and had such a pious manner, that she seemed to be the embodiment of piety; and I felt sure I could be a great deal better Christian if only I could get her saintly looks and

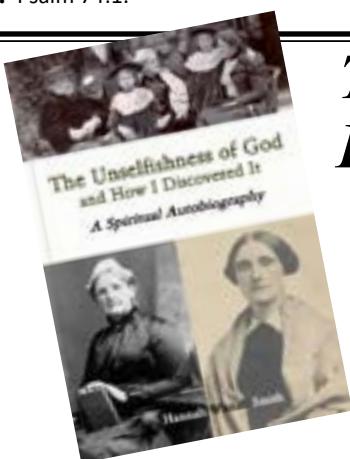
11. Romans 9:20.

## *The Unselfishness of God and How I Discovered It*

The autobiography of Hannah Whitall Smith (1832–1911)

Smith was the author of the famed *A Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life* (1875). She was influential in the “higher life” and “holiness” movements. Remarkably, she would come to see and embrace the *salvation of all*. She included a description of this journey and understanding in this autobiography published in 1903.

Not surprisingly, her autobiography would subsequently be republished, but with her accounts of coming to the conviction of the *salvation of all* having been removed. This publication is the complete and unabridged facsimile of the original edition.



322 pp., PB/HC

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manner. But all my struggles to get them were useless. My natural temperament was far too energetic and outspoken for any appearance of saintliness, and many a time I said upbraidingly in my heart to God, “*Why hast thou made me thus?*” But one day I came across a sentence in an old book that seemed to open my eyes. It was as follows: “Be content to be what thy God has made thee”; and it flashed on me that it really was a fact that God had made me, and that He must know the sort of creature He wanted me to be; and that if He had made me a potato vine, I must be satisfied to grow potatoes, and must not want to be a rosebush and grow roses; and if He had fashioned me for humble tasks, I must be content to let others do the grander work. We are “*God’s workmanship*,”<sup>12</sup> and God is good, therefore His workmanship must be good also; and we may securely trust that before He is done with us, He will make out of us something that will be to His glory, no matter how unlike this we may as yet feel ourselves to be.

The psalmist seemed to delight in repeating over and over again this blessed refrain, “*for the Lord is good.*” It would be worthwhile for us to take our concordances and see how often he says it. And he exhorted everyone to join him in saying it. “*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,*”<sup>13</sup> was his earnest cry. We must join our voices to his – The Lord is good, The Lord is good! Let’s not say it with our lips only; let’s “say” it with our whole being.

A great many things in God’s divine providences do not look like goodness to the “eye” of our senses, and in reading the Psalms we wonder perhaps how the

psalmist could have said so repeatedly, after some of the things he records, “*for His mercy endureth forever.*”<sup>14</sup> But faith sits down before mysteries such as these, and says, “The Lord is good, therefore all that He does must be good, no matter how it looks, and I can wait for His explanations.”

A housekeeping illustration has often helped me here. If I have a friend whom I know to be a good housekeeper, I do not trouble over the fact that at housecleaning time things in her house may seem to be more or less upset, carpets up, and furniture shrouded in coverings, and even perhaps painting and decorating making some rooms uninhabitable. I say to myself, “My friend is a good housekeeper, and although things look so uncomfortable now, all this upset is only because she means in the end to make it far more comfortable than ever it was before.” This world is God’s housekeeping; and although things at present look grievously upset, yet, since we know that He is good, and therefore must be a good Housekeeper, we may be perfectly sure that all this present upset is only to bring about in the end a far better state of things than could have been without it.

I dare say we have all felt at times as though we could have done God’s housekeeping better than He does it Himself, but, when we realize that God is good, we can feel this no longer. **And it comforts me enormously, when the world seems to me to be going all wrong, just to say to myself, “It is not my housekeeping, but it is the Lord’s; and the Lord is good, therefore His housekeeping must be good too; and it is foolish for me to trouble.”**

(see **COMFORT**, last page)

12. Ephesians 2:10.

13. Psalm 107:2.

14. Psalm 106:1, etc.



## *The Unveiled Glory*

— Hannah Hurnard (1905-1990)

and

## *My Unexpected Discovery*

— Hannah Whitall Smith (1832-1911)

Hannah Whitall Smith (1832-1911) was the author of the classic work, *A Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*. Both famous Christian authors discuss their coming to see and embrace the salvation of all.



# Tidbits of Truth #43

“Tidbits” is a column dedicated to short comments, thoughts, studies and excerpts.

## Paul’s Premature Gentile Ministry

Paul declared himself to be “one born out of due time” (I Corinthians 15:8; KJV), or of a “premature birth” (CV). Or as other translations render it:

“untimely born” (ASV; ALV)  
“out of the right time” (BBE)  
“not fully developed” (JMNT)  
“unseasonable birth” (REB).

Prophetically, the Gentiles were to be blessed through Israel’s spiritual and national rise. Speaking of the future glory of Israel, Isaiah writes:

*Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the Earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising* (60:1-3).

During the Pentecost Administration, along with Israel, Paul brought the nations a sampling of the com-

ing Kingdom. They,

*... tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the coming age* (Hebrews 6:4).

The prophetic intent of this premature Gentile ministry was to provoke Israel to jealousy (Romans 10:19; 11:11, 14; cf. Deuteronomy 32:31).

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

## The Only Source of Truth

[*Excerpt:*] Whatever may be the differences of opinion, one thing is common to them all, they are merely “opinions.” That every man has a right to his own opinion is one of the cherished articles of our modern freedom. That one man’s opinion may be as good as another, and therefore no one has a right to force his views upon another, is also an accepted precept. Nevertheless, it is apparent that these opinions, so diverse and conflicting, cannot all be right, and consequently the sincere seeker for truth is eventually



180 pp., PB

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“Other Authors.”

## Was Jesus Christ Alive Before His Life on Earth Began? A Critical Look at the Supposed Preexistence of Christ

by — Aaron Welch

Paul was exact in his statement that “*there is one God, the Father ... and one Lord, Jesus Christ*” (I Corinthians 8:6, Concordant). The only absolute God is the Father, and He has no equals. The Lord Jesus Christ is a part of His creation; the Spirit is an expression meaning God’s spirit.

This exceptional work embraces the truth of “*the man Christ Jesus*” (I Timothy 2:5), exposing the traditional orthodox position known as the “pre-existence of Christ,” a creed vitally connected with Christendom’s teaching of the Trinity. The “pre-existence of Christ” does great dishonor to both the Father and His Son, diminishing the true glory that belong uniquely to each.



weaned from his own opinions and those of others to come at last to what is the only source of truth – revelation.

— J. Eustace Mills  
*His Workmanship*

## The Whole Creation – Including Animals

[Excerpt:] In the Old Testament the mysteries of redemption were ever veiled in symbolism; but in the New the salvation of the creature is set before us in plain and unmistakable terms. ... A sufficient proof of this may be found in the well-known passage contained in Romans 8:19-24. There Paul declares "*the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God*" ... and that then the time will have come for "*the creation itself also*" to "*be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.*"

Such will be the end of the groaning and travailing in pain together of *the whole creation*. And, like ourselves who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, the animal creation is saved by hope; for it was subjected to vanity "*in hope*."

— G.H. Pember (1837-1910)<sup>1</sup>  
*Animals: Their Past and Present*

## The Role of Animals in Our Development

*A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast*  
(Proverbs 12:10).

[Excerpt:] [Animals] are doubtless made to play no unimportant part in our discipline here below. Our powers over them are almost unlimited, and they are indisputably our inferiors in every way: these two facts are often adduced as an unanswerable proof that it is right to treat them with any cruelty, provided that by their sufferings we can secure some advantage for ourselves or our race. Were this logic true, it would be somewhat disquieting; for we may reasonably suppose justice to be the same throughout the Universe, and there are beings more powerful than we. But the great Creator Himself, towering so high above us in wisdom and might that the distinction

between ourselves and the beasts becomes relatively inappreciable, set us no example of selfish disregard for inferiors when He gave His only-begotten Son for the life of the world.

Now one purpose obviously served by the inferior creation is to supply opportunities by which we may be exercised in this matter ... And while these opportunities are useful to everyone, there are many whose conduct under the temptation of power could scarcely be tested at all were it not for the presence of animals. The child with his cat or bird, the boy with his donkey, and the laborer with his dog or horse, should each be learning lessons of justice, kindness, and self-restraint.

— G.H. Pember (1837-1910)<sup>1</sup>  
*Animals: Their Past and Present*

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### TOPICS:

**Major:** [Paul's Premature Gentile Ministry:] Paul's Priestly Ministry; Paul's Early Epistles [The Only Source of Truth:] Revelation; Opinions [The Whole Creation – Including Animals:] Animals [The Role of Animals in Our Development:] Animals



## *Evaluating Western Christianity's Interpretation of Biblical Polygamy*

by — Lauren Heiligenthal  
88 pp, PB (see [order form](#) under "Other Authors.")

This book demonstrates that the popular Western worldview regarding marriage affects biblical interpretation. While most Western societies uphold monogamy as God's ideal form of marriage, a number of other cultures practice polygamy. Western Christianity often perceives polygamy as a threat to the monogamist ideal; therefore, this book evaluates whether the Bible clearly advocates that polygamous men should become monogamous through divorce.

After interpreting Scripture through the lens of the biblical audience, this book then applies the interpretations from the five biblical texts to a modern situation involving polygamy. Since there is no biblical text that explicitly prohibits polygamy or promotes monogamy, this book argues that the interpretation of the monogamist ideal tends to derive from one's worldview rather than the Bible.

1. Author of the classic, *Earth's Earliest Ages*.

**COMFORT** (continued from page 7869)

Someone may ask, "Does not the world look to you like a wreck?" To which we may reply, "Yes, like the wreck of a bursting seed." Any of us who have watched the first sprouting of an oak tree from the heart of a decaying acorn will understand this. Before the acorn can bring forth the oak, it must become itself a wreck. No plant ever came from any but a wrecked seed.

Our Lord uses this fact to teach us the meaning of His processes with us.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."*<sup>15</sup>

The whole explanation of the apparent wreckage of the world at large, or of our own personal lives in particular, is here set forth. And, looked at in this light, we can understand how it is that the Lord can be good, and yet can have the existence of sorrow and wrong in the world He has created, and in the lives of the human beings He loves.

It is His very goodness that compels Him to have it thus. **For He knows that, only through such apparent wreckage, can the fruition of His glorious purposes for us be brought to pass.** And we whose hearts also long for that fruition will, if we understand His ways,

15. John 12:24.

be able to praise Him for all His goodness, even when things seem hardest and most mysterious.

The apostle Paul tells us that the will of God is "good and acceptable, and perfect."<sup>16</sup> The will of a good God cannot help being "good" – in fact, it must be "perfect"; and, when we come to know this, we always find it "acceptable"; that is, we come to love it.

I am convinced that all trouble about "submitting" to the will of God would disappear, if once we could see clearly that His will is good. We struggle and struggle in vain to "submit" to a will that we do not believe to be good, but when we see that it is really good, we submit to it *with delight*. We want it to be accomplished. Our hearts spring out to meet it.

Space fails me to tell all that I might of the infinite goodness of the Lord. Each one must "taste and see" for himself.

(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; Father; God; Good

**Minor:** Love

16. Romans 12:2.

## *Nothing Will Be Lost! The Truth About God's Good News*

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Is the Creator wasteful? Has He brought His creation into existence just to abandon it to a "Christless eternity"? No! God is the true Savior of His Own creation, and nothing will be lost. The realization of this truth about the true nature of our Father will completely change the way we look at Him and everyone around us.

88 pp., PB,      This is an abridgement of the larger work *The Salvation of All*. It is designed as a give-away edition, with quantity pricing available.

"*Nothing Will be Lost* was one of the most edifying studies I have read in a very long time. It brings real joy to my heart when I see someone stand for the truth of Christ's total victory over sin. We do not have a weak Savior Who hopes to save only a few; rather, we have a Savior Who saves all!" – NY

See [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington."