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Hannah Whitall Smith

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Attached to Carrie Mirrall letter.

See correspondence.

A Greeting to  
My Friends .

From H.W.S.,

*Court Place,*

*Iffley,*

*Oxford.*

I felt a great desire, during the season of Christmas and New Year's greetings, to send one myself to all the friends whom I love so much, but, owing to my difficulty in writing, it seemed impossible. In one of my wakeful hours at night, however, on the first day of the New Year, it suddenly came to me that I might send a circular Greeting for 1911 to all of you, which would embody the substance of what I would love to say to each one individually, had I but the strength to do so.

I expect that first of all some of you may want to know just how I am, and what are my surroundings and my life. I am living with my son and my two granddaughters in a beautiful home on the banks of the Thames, not far from Oxford, with frequent visits from my daughter Mary from Italy, and at least a weekly visit from my daughter Alys, now living in Cambridge.

I could not ask for a lovelier refuge in which to pass the last years of my life, nor for better company. I am, as no doubt you all know, very much of an invalid, and am obliged to sit in a wheeled chair, both day and night, as my many infirmities prevent me from much lying in bed. But I am very comfortable in my chair, and get plenty of sleep. I cannot either read or write much, and often am not well enough to see my friends. In fact I have very little energy for anything, and am not even able to go on with a half finished book that I was in the midst of writing when I was taken ill. My old activities have all had to be laid aside, and I am only waiting and longing for the blessed call to my heavenly home. But I am glad to tell you that I am very happy and contented in my narrowed life, and with my lessening capabilities, and can say, "Thy will be done" to my Divine Master from the very bottom of my heart.

I knew once an old colored aunty who had been very active in Mission Work for many years, but who was at last laid aside from it all by a severe cough that racked her day and night. One might think she would have been unhappy at being so set aside, but on the contrary she was always bright and cheerful. A friend who had known her in her days of activity, asked her how she was able to be so happy. "Why, honey," she replied, "in

course, I'se happy. Once the Lord used to say to me, 'Nancy, come here and do this,' or 'Nancy, go there and do that'; and I knew His will was good, and I went and did what He said, and in course I was happy. And now He says, 'Nancy, lie here and cough,' and I know His will is good just the same, and I lies here and coughs, and am just as happy." And in my measure I feel as Nancy did. Once my Divine Master sent me on His errands, and I knew His will was good, and was happy in trying to do it. And now He has shut me up to an invalid life, and tells me to sit in my wheeled chair, and to be content to let others do His errands and carry on His work, and I know His will is good just the same, and am happy in trying to accept it.

I feel sure that the secret which made Nancy love the will of God and be happy in doing it, was the same that has made me love the will of God, and be happy in trying to do it; and this secret is only that we have both come to a knowledge of the character of God that has convinced us, beyond all possibility of doubt, that His will is, and cannot help being, the best and sweetest thing the universe contains.

Do not think for a moment that this is because Nancy and I are extra good and pious people, for we are not at all, but are just like most of the Christians around us, and probably are not half so good and pious as many. But we have found

out from the Lord Jesus three things about God which have convinced us that it is to our own best interest to trust and obey Him.

I say we have found out these things from Christ, and I want to emphasize this, because so many people will not believe what Christ tells about God unless it is accompanied with feelings and experiences of their own. The bare word of the Lord is not enough for them, and consequently, before they can believe what He says about God, they look inside themselves to find there some proof that His statements are really true. But Nancy and I ask for no other proofs, but simply accept what God says about Himself in His own Book as being absolutely true, and we rely on His word without a question.

It will not take many words to tell what were the three things about God that Nancy and I discovered in the Bible, and upon which we pinned our faith. They are not in any way mysterious, nor at all hard to understand. They are simply comprised in three statements, namely: God is wise, God is good, God is love. And yet what more could one ask of the God whom we are commanded to worship and trust and obey, than that He should be just this—wise, and good, and loving?

We all understand that to be wise means to know what is best under all circumstances, an

to know how to carry it out. We all comprehend up to our measure what it means to be good; and we, every one of us, know what love is and how it works. Therefore, however little we may know otherwise about God, we surely may know these three things, even though as yet we cannot comprehend them in their fulness. We cannot help knowing them, for they are declared to us so plainly and so emphatically in the Bible, that, if we believe the Bible at all, we are forced to believe that God *is* wise and *is* good, and that He is not only loving, but that the very essence of His Being is love. This is His character, this is the sort of Being He is. And since it must be that His character necessarily lies back of His will, and that His will is necessarily what His character makes it, then, when we have found out His character, we cannot help knowing the nature of His will. We may not *feel* that God's character is what these three characteristics declare Him to be, but we may always *know* it, on the authority of God Himself. If He says these are His characteristics, then they are, no matter how things look, nor how we feel. Our feelings are never to be depended on. They are subject to the state of our health, or to the influence of those around us, or even, with some people, upon the way the wind blows. But neither dyspepsia, nor liver complaint, nor the East wind can alter facts, and the fact is that

God of course tells the truth about Himself in His own Book, and although we may not be able to *feel* that He actually is what He declares himself to be, if we believe in Him at all, we must believe that He really is just exactly what He says He is, let appearances or our feelings be what they may.]

[No one in their senses can doubt that the Bible declares to us in unmistakeable language over and over and over again that God is wise and good, and that He loves us. And good sound common sense, to say nothing of religion, would tell us that, unless we want to make Him a liar, we have simply got to believe Him, utterly regardless of our own state of feeling, or of the way the wind may blow. I mean of course the God who declares that He has spoken to us through His Son, and that if we want to know about Himself, we must believe the testimony of Christ.

Some of you may think I am talking platitudes when I say all this—that every Christian of course believes it all. But do they? Who among us really believes that God is wise and good, and that He loves us. Believe it, I mean, enough to depend on it as an actual incontrovertible fact? Do not even some Christians believe things about Him that are entirely contrary to this? Do not some of them attribute to Him feelings and actions that, if they them-

selves or anyone else should feel or do them, they would consider it to be unkindness, or selfishness, or meanness? To be wise and good and loving must mean the exact opposite to these things, and if we attribute to God what we would scorn to do ourselves, or would despise in others, it is to make Him out to be a God who is very far from good, when judged by the standard He Himself has set before us as the ideal we must seek to reach. If we are to be kind, and unselfish, and generous, and if we are to love others better than ourselves, and are not to seek our own glory but only the glory of others, if we are to forgive until seventy times seven, if we are to do unto others as we would want others to do to us, surely He Himself can do no less.]

Now, dear friends, is this the character we attribute to our God, this splendid, magnificent, character, that, once to know, must enchain our hearts for ever? Why, dear friends, if we did really believe that our God was this sort of a God, we should all be millionaires in grace; nay more, multi-millionaires, rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

Nancy and I do believe it, and we are multi-millionaires, rich in nothing of our own, but rich beyond words in the wisdom and goodness and love of our God. "Thou, oh God, art all

we want, more than all in Thee we find." This God is our God, and He is enough !

This is my greeting for 1911 ; and, since it is so late, a Birthday greeting as well, as I was 79 a few days ago.

May all to whom I send this message say Amen and Amen !

