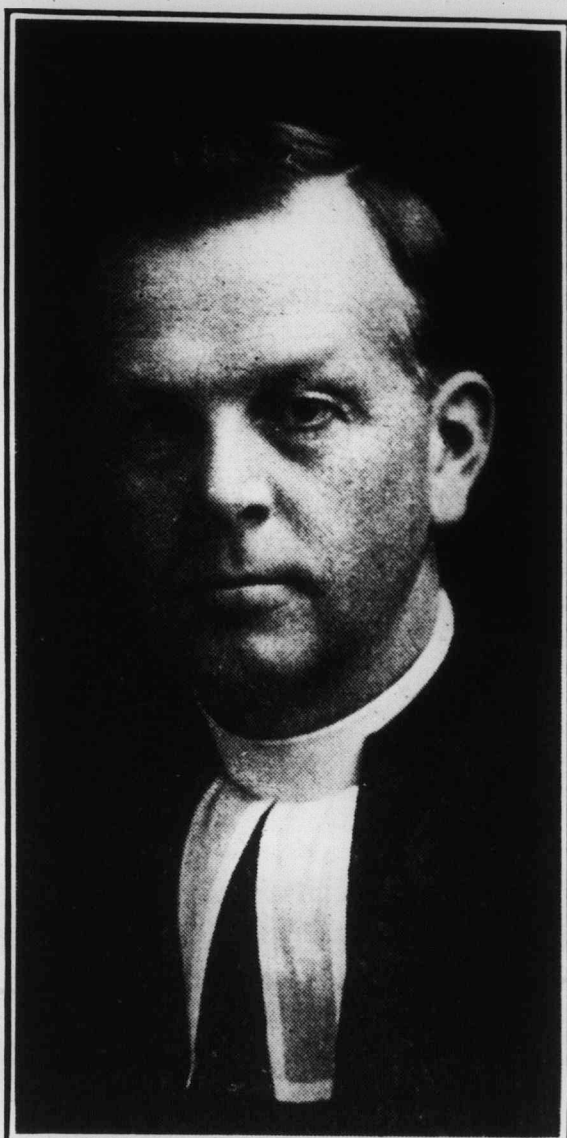


The Final Triumph of Goodness

(By Principal W. H. Smith, D. D.)

The Apostle Paul in one of his great messages to the Church at Rome, when dealing with the conflict raging in the world and the human heart assured the Children of God that ALL THINGS work together for good to them that love God. He states this on the ground of personal conviction, "We know." But to many weak Christians this great saying has seemed a hard saying, too good to become the guiding star of their lives. It would have been easier to believe if Paul had said SOME THINGS, or even MANY THINGS.



Had he gone so far as to say MOST THINGS it would be regarded as reasonable, for there is so much in the world and life which promises success to goodness, that, if some things were not clear, they would be regarded as within the realm of probability. But when he declares that "all things work together for good," instantly we think of many things which worked disaster without a single redeeming feature as far as we can see. Illustrations abound on every hand. The real difficulty arises from the fact that the ordinary idea of good and Paul's idea of good are not the same, and, instead of trying to see things from his view-point, we persist in thinking our definition is the proper one to consider. Before we disagree with the message, we must understand what it is.

Take that word "good": In what sense does Paul use it? If we were asked to define the word we would be inclined to say that it means several things which minister to our enjoyment, success or power in this world. The good is whatever helps us to get what we want. But we cannot read Paul's works without feeling that he is not thinking of these things at all. As a matter of fact in one place he tells us he counts all these worldly things as dross in the presence of one great reality, the personal knowledge of Christ. Paul does not despise earthly possessions or privileges, but he evaluates them.

Take wealth: Many regard this as the one good of life. They seek it at any cost and when they get it the question remains, Is it a good for them? Some find wealth a great blessing but some find it a great curse. In itself it is non-moral. What it will mean to any individual depends upon the ideal and spirit of the individual. In itself it is not a good, or blessing. One may have it without any real gain or help.

The same is true of pleasure: Many seek this as if it were the one good of life. To some, enjoyment of life and gifts is a blessing, but to others pleasure is a step toward ruin. And so with all that belongs to this world.

What does Paul mean by good? It has almost a technical meaning and reminds us of its use in Greek Philosophy. It is something ultimate, eternal, spiritual, which remains when all lower values fail. If it is regarded as Christian character,

Christian experience, the knowledge of God, perfection of life and fellowship, the message is clear. It is that reality which everyone that seeks, finds, and when he finds he is aware that it is unique. It never ruins or destroys any life nor does its pursuit or enjoyment ever weaken, debase or destroy real happiness or efficiency. There are no disappointments or reactions. It brings no discounts, failures or tragedies. The good in Paul's sense is that possession of Christian life which brings eternal values and hence heavenly riches. The good may be an abiding reality if all earthly possessions, pleasures or honors be swept away. It is not conditioned by earthly facts or lost in earthly disasters. The poorest may have it, and all may know its abiding reality.

Paul assures us that all things work together for good to them that love God. It is not a universal but a conditioned promise. To have this promise fulfilled, demands that we love God.

Turn to that word love, for here many go astray in their thinking. There are two Greek words for love in the New Testament, a lower and a higher; one belonging to the realms of the affections and emotions, the other including the Will.

We are often told that we cannot make ourselves love others, Love cannot be commanded. And yet it is commanded both in the Old Testament and the New. We are commanded to love one another. It is the will of God that we love. We cannot command ourselves to love in the lower sense where emotions respond to something which appeals to these emotions and feelings. But we can love in the higher sense of will, that is we can bring our lives into right relations with God, can serve others, can see that the right things are done, can fulfil the conditions which result in love and obedience.

This is Paul's position: Those who love God are those who are striving to bring themselves into right relations to God, to do His will in the world. They are co-workers with God. As the chief good of life is to be like Christ, those who are seeking to do His will are those to whom this great promise is given. Paul could say that all the things which come to those who are making Christ the object of their life work together toward this goal. Everything which befalls the Christian will contribute to his Christian destiny. This is Paul's message. It is universal to the Christian. Things which confuse the worldling, which result in disappointment, which turn the selfish into atheists and paralyze faith and hope in the doubter, bring the Christian on his way toward God.

How does it work out in experience? There are two things to be said. First, It is a matter of history and testimony that hardships, sorrows, losses, bereavements are found to make the real Christian more like Christ. He endures; but more, he overcomes, and feels that God is working out a richer experience. The Christian man may not be able to realize his ambitions in service, but he feels it is good that high ideals are in his heart, and he is the better for these ideals even if he cannot attain them here. He wages an unceasing warfare with evil, and may not see the day of victory,

Lantern Slides for Sale

1. History of Bible, 56 Slides, with MSS. and Carrying Case.
2. Japan Slides (Colored) 36.
3. Miscellaneous Slides of India, 38.
4. New Zealand Slides, over 100, 18 coloured.

Address "Slides," c/o British Columbia Monthly
Office, 1100 Bute Street, Vancouver, B. C.