

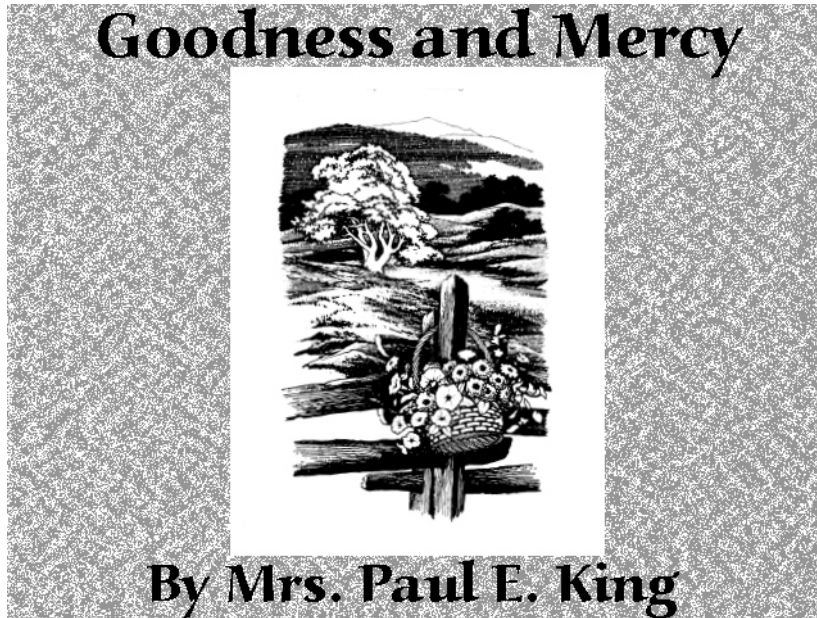
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**GOODNESS AND MERCY**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

The sun lay gold and warm on the meadow of newly mown hay as Goodness and Mercy walked softly across it. Butterflies with wings of brightest yellow and orange flitted gracefully about. The two sisters, always inseparable, inhaled deeply of the fragrant aroma as they hastened their footsteps.

"We must be quick," Goodness said anxiously to her gentle sister. "No telling what the man will do."

"You speak the truth, Goodness, and my heart pains me sorely over his misdemeanor. I do wish we could help him," and a tear rolled down Mercy's beautiful face.

"See!" and Goodness ran ahead as a man and a team of overworked horses came into full view. "Oh, Mercy, he's brutal! He'll kill those horses."

"Please, Sir! Please!" she cried, running up beside the angry man and grasping hold of the reins with which he had beat the horses. "'Tis sinful for you to thus treat the animals. Shew them a bit of kindness, I pray," and her tears flowed freely.

"Out of my way!" the man exclaimed loudly. "they are my horses and I'll do to them whatever I desire." And his face reddened all the more with anger.

"Did you not know, Sir, the Bible says 'A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast'? We reap what we sow and it is all too apparent that you are not a righteous man. Oh! It must be torment to be as you are." And Mercy shook her head sadly.

"Who are you? And what right have you to be talking to me like this?" the man asked tartly.

"We are Goodness and Mercy," the sisters answered. "Many times have we seen you abuse your hard working animals and your good wife and children. It grieves us sorely. We had to come by today to see if we could help you. You need not live like this, you know; God, through Jesus Christ, provided a better way of living. If you want to obtain it you can -- providing you meet the conditions. Your distant neighbor, Brother Gentle, has it. Even his animals know he's been changed -- yours will, too, if you obtain salvation and let the Holy Spirit sanctify you wholly."

Meekly the man dropped the taut lines he held. "Tell me more," he begged. "My heart is so dissatisfied."

"Let us lead the overheated horses to the shade of yon tree," Mercy said softly, "and we can show you the way of salvation more clearly -- as they rest."

Joyfully the two sat down and expounded the Scriptures to the penitent man who prayed till the light of Heaven's glory broke through upon him.

"Seek until you obtain the blessings of entire sanctification," Goodness admonished as they left the shouting man.

"'Tis indeed wonderful!" Mercy exclaimed. "What a change is wrought in the heart when Jesus comes to abide!"

The pair walked on and on, through meadows green and across valleys fragrant with blossoming fruit trees till they came to a crowded street where wares of every kind and description were sold. Two dark haired women were in loud conversation.

"Have you heard what Deacon Truth did?" the one asked the other, her dark eyes expressing the hatred that lay buried deep within her heart.

"I heard plenty!" the other exclaimed. "So much so that I think he should be dropped from the church roll. I never did like that man. He thinks he's the only one who has religion," and she scowled crossly.

"I can't understand why Reverend Patience puts up with him. He's constantly annoying people with his unannounced shouts and loud 'Amens,'" and the first speaker stamped her foot angrily.

"Let's organize a group from the church who'll see to it that he's put out. I'm fed up with him," the second said loudly.

"How can you be so unkind and bitter!" Mercy exclaimed sadly. "Have you not read the Bible? It so clearly says, 'If a man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. . . . Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.'"

The two troublemakers stood, brazenly staring Mercy and Goodness in the face.

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not," Goodness spoke softly, "and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.' Your tongues are as poisoned arrows."

Mercy walked closer to the women. "In every life the law of reciprocity is the rule. If we sow good seed, we reap good fruit -- bad seed, bad fruit. See to it, dear women, that neither of you utters one bad thing about Brother Truth. He is a godly man, full of piety and good works. Let this Scripture be a warning to you both 'For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.' Pray to God through Jesus Christ to have mercy on your souls and to put His presence in your hearts, which will enable you to fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Fare thee well and take heed to your words."

From somewhere to their right the sound of sweet music floated to their ears.

"Let us see who it is that makes such sweet and lovely music" And Goodness took her sister's kind hand and started in the direction of the singing.

In a little while they came to a clearing in the forest. Grazing in sweet contentment was a large herd of sheep. Among the flock sat two girls, playing and singing heavenly music, their faces aglow with an inner radiance.

"It . . . it must be Patience and Prudence!" Mercy said joyfully. "Let us go join them."

"'Tis indeed the twin sisters!" Goodness answered. "But let us not break in on this heavenly atmosphere. It is holy. My heart stands in awesome wonder at a time such as this. 'Tis good to find some who truly manifest Jesus Christ in their lives."

"This atmosphere is wonderful!" Mercy exclaimed, clapping her hands together joyfully. "Would to God we could always remain here," and she looked heavenward as tears of joy coursed down her sweet face.

"But we cannot, dear Sister. The world needs us," and the soft, tender, understanding eyes of Goodness looked lovingly on her sister as the singing of Psalms floated their way:

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. . . . Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah."

From the edge of the clearing Goodness and Mercy joined their voices as the Psalms floated sweetly and heavenly through the forest and mingled softly with the silvery, meandering babblings of the stream. Here they would linger awhile, among the heavenly, soul-refreshing atmosphere ere they went on their busy way again. Reverently they knelt on the soft grass and, raising their hands heavenward, received new refreshings from the Lord of hosts, God of gods, and King of kings.