

day and the next the naughtiness continued. The mother said nothing, thinking it best to wait for the Holy Spirit to teach the child Himself.

At the close of the third day as the mother was tucking up her darling for the night, the little girl burst out with, "Well, Mother, I am cured at last."

"Cured," repeated the mother in surprise, "cured of what?"

"Why, cured of trying to make myself good," replied the child. "It is not a bit of use, for I did try just as hard as ever I could, and I could not be good. And besides," she added, "I found out that even if I could be good outside, I would not be good inside, so what was the use?"

Silently thanking God for His divine teaching, the mother assured the child that since she had found out her own helplessness, she might with confidence trust the Lord to make her good. The mother tried to tell her in simple language how to do this. The childish heart seemed to comprehend the ***law of righteousness**, and joyfully put itself [herself] into the hands of the Lord, that He might give the victory.

"Do you tell everybody this, Mother?" she asked earnestly at last. "I am sure there must be lots of people just like me who think they can be good in their own strength, and they ought to know." Then, as her mother leaned over the little bed for the last good-night kiss, the child added her final childish prayer, "Dear Lord, I thank you for curing me of my foolish notion; and if I am not all cured tonight, please let me be all cured by tomorrow morning. Amen."

So, Little Fluff listened intently to this story and told Mama Ewe that she was going to let her Good Shepherd "cure" her of her naughty little secrets and selfish heart. Let's listen in on Little Fluff's contrite prayer, "Dear

Shepherd, I, too, am helpless to be good. I need your forgiveness of my naughty secret. You saw and you knew all along. It is no secret to you. I ask you to change my naughty heart. I've tried to be good on my own, but I need You. I am putting myself in your Good Hands from now on! Thank you! In Jesus' Precious Name. Amen."

Little Fluff soon found out that the Good Shepherd is the most forgiving person in the whole world, and that she was helpless without Him to be good. He loves and tenderly cares for His own. He wants to give His very best for His precious lambs so they can thrive, feel contented and be safe in the pastures to which He leads them. The Shepherd wants to carry every care, for He tenderly cares for his precious sheep (1 Peter. 5:7)!

Meanwhile, Mikala also began to thrive in his new pasture. The Shepherd was looking out for him, too!

The muddy waters were running clear again!

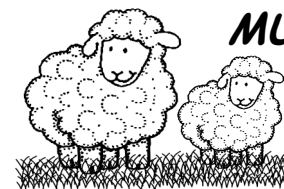
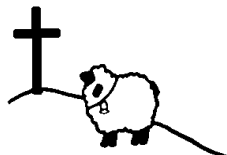
***Law of righteousness:** "And being found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9).

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:1-3).

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4).

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom 10:10).

See **Heart Booklet** as follow-up, available at: www.gracestoration.org.



MUDDY WATER RUNS CLEAR

It was time to move to another pasture. The cozy place where Little Fluff and Mama Ewe had spent most of their lives was not able to sustain them any longer. There was no grass left on which to nibble, so the refreshing morning dew had no place to go. Every day, Mama Ewe and Little Fluff were becoming increasingly hungry and thirsty.

The shepherd, of course, knew their needs and began to prepare a new pasture for them—much greener and more abundant than where they had been staying. The only difference was that it was going to be shared with others who also needed new pasture. It was very spacious and verdant with a gentle stream flowing through it—enough space and provision for everyone. It would meet all their needs for a very long time. The Shepherd knew what was best for them. Little Fluff and Mama Ewe were ready and eager to go to their new home. Moving day finally came!

They were not the first ones to settle in the new pasture, but that did not matter. They were now safe and secure and were very satisfied. And it wasn't long before Little Fluff found a new playmate, Mikala. Together they would jump and gambol around the fields without a care in the world. They would stop and nibble fresh grass and run to the stream for a cool refreshing drink. Little Fluff always got there first. After quenching her thirst, she would spot a place where the grass looked even greener. She ran to it before Mikala even noticed she was gone. By the time he got there, the greener grass was chewed down to its roots.

This went on all day long—he kept trying to keep up with Little Fluff as she flitted from one patch to another. Mikala finally got tired of it, and started to follow Little Fluff a long way off. He then decided he would be more comfortable staying by himself.

This really frustrated Little Fluff. She did not know why he wasn't following her anymore, so she began to look around for Mikala. She usually found him by the cool stream. Early one morning, Little Fluff decided to stomp around in the water upstream from where Mikala was getting his morning drink. He was minding his own business when all of a sudden he started coughing and spitting out the water. When he looked down into the water, he saw the terribly muddy water he was drinking. He ran to tell his mother what had happened and about the muddy water. She thought he was just careless and clumsy and muddied it himself with his big cloven hooves. Mikala was even more sad and lonely. Each day from then on started much the same way. Every time Mikala went home coughing, the other lambs teased him about being careless, clumsy, having big hooves, and always complaining. Poor little guy! Mikala was so sad and felt so all alone!

Each day was the same for Little Fluff too! Up before dawn, she would quietly wander upstream where no one would see her. When she was totally out of sight and drank as much fresh water as she could, she would start vigorously kicking up the stones and muddying the stream. No one ever saw her! This gave her great satisfaction, because she had decided that she didn't want to share the pasture any longer with anyone else. She wanted it all for herself and Mama Ewe. She got her naughty little way. No one ever saw her—no one ever knew!

Soon it was evident that Mikala was not doing well. He looked sickly. He was not thriving in

the pasture for some unknown reason. No one knew why. Will he be taken to another pasture? Will he have to be taken away—never to be seen again? The Shepherd was alert, but sad as He noticed Mikala losing weight. His fleece also was not looking good. But, since the Shepherd tenderly cares for His own, a move for Mikala to a better pasture was the only thing to do!

After Mikala was moved out, it was now Little Fluff who was the sad and lonely one. She thought she would be happy to have much of the pasture to herself. Why did she feel so sad now? Secretly, she knew why Mikala had to leave. She kept the naughty secret to herself. [Secrets are very isolating, especially guilty secrets.] Inwardly she decided that she would never treat anyone like that again. She knew down deep that she was naughty and selfish. She did not like feeling sad and all alone! From now on, she determined, she would try very hard to be good!

One night as she was falling asleep, she asked Mama Ewe a question. [We will now change the metaphor to a real mother and her seven-year-old girl from a testimony by Hannah Whitall Smith in *Everyday Religion*, pages 205-207.]

She was a child about seven years old and was, as her mother believed, a little Christian with a very simple but real faith in her Savior. She was, however, sometimes quite naughty. One night as she was going to bed, she said to her mother, "Mother, what can be the reason that I am so naughty? I know I am one of Jesus' lambs, and I thought His lambs were always good. But though I try and try as hard as I can, I am not always good.

Her mother said, "The reason is, Darling, that you are trying to be good in your own strength, and are not trusting the Lord to make you good."

"Of course I am," the child replied, "that is the only way there is to be good, to just try and try as hard as you can."

"Oh, no," said the mother, "that is not the way at all. You never can be good that way. You must just trust Jesus to make you good."

"I don't believe that at all," said the child indignantly. "I believe the way is to make up your mind to be good and then just try."

*The mother tried to explain the ***law of righteousness** [doing the thing that's right] and told the little girl that she herself had tried all ways of being good and had never succeeded until she trusted the Lord to make and keep her good. But all was in vain. The little girl persisted that she knew she could be good if she only tried hard enough. She was sure that was the way.*

Finally the mother thought of a plan and said, "Very well, Darling, if you will be good for a whole month by your own efforts, I will give you fifty dollars." The child was delighted and eagerly embraced her mother's offer. "I will begin tomorrow," she cried with eager anticipation, "and I know I shall be good every minute of the time, for I am just going to put my whole will into it and make myself be good."

The next morning the little girl was awake bright and early and called out eagerly from her little bed, "Well, Mother, I am going to begin being good today, and you had better write down what day of the month it is to keep a safe account." The mother agreed. Then in a few minutes the child added, as if after a little thought about the difficulties that might beset her, "But remember, Mother, nobody must be provoking [me]." This was promised, and the day began.

In about ten minutes there was not a naughtier little girl in that whole neighborhood. All that