

Why All Things Work for Good

By Thomas Watson

An extract from "All Things for Good"

The grand reason why all things work for good, is the near and dear interest which God has in his people. The Lord has made a covenant with them. 'They shall be my people, and I will be their God' (Jer 32:38). By virtue of this compact, all things do, and must, work for good to them. 'I am God, even thy God' (Ps 50:7). This word, 'Thy God', is the sweetest word in the Bible, it implies the best relations; and it is impossible there should be these relations between God and his people, and everything not work for their good. This expression, 'I am thy God', implies,

(i) The relation of a Physician: 'I am thy Physician'. God is a skilful Physician. He

knows what is best. God observes the different temperaments of men, and knows what will work most effectually. Some are of a more sweet disposition, and are drawn by mercy. Others are more rugged and knotty pieces; these God deals with in a more forcible way. Some things are kept in sugar, some in brine. God does not deal alike with all; He has trials for the strong and cordials for the weak. God is a faithful Physician, and therefore will turn all to the best. If God does not give you that which you like, he will give you that which you need. A Physician does not so much study to please the taste of the patient, as to cure his disease. We complain that very sore trials lie upon us; let us remember God is our Physician, therefore he labours rather to heal us than humour us. God's dealings

with his children, though they are sharp, yet they are safe, and in order to cure; 'that he might do thee good at thy latter end' (Deut 8:16).

(ii) This word, 'Thy God', implies the relation of a Father. A father loves his child; therefore whether it be a smile or a stroke, it is for the good of the child. I am thy God, thy Father, therefore all I do is for thy good. 'As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee' (Deut 8:5). God's chastening is not to destroy but to reform. God cannot hurt his children, for he is a tender-hearted Father, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him' (Ps 103:13). Will a father seek the ruin of his child, the child that came from himself, that bears his image? All his care and contrivance is for his child: whom does he settle the inheritance upon, but his child? God is the tender-hearted 'Father of mercies' (2 Cor 1:3). He begets all the mercies and kindness in the creatures.

God is an everlasting Father (Isa 9:6). He was our Father from eternity; before we were children, God was our Father, and he will be our Father to eternity. A father provides for his child while he lives; but the father dies, and then the child may be exposed to injury. But God never ceases to be a Father. You who are a believer, have a Father that never dies; and if God be your Father, you can never be undone. All things must needs work for your good.

(iii) This word, 'thy God', implies the relation of a Husband. This is a near and sweet relation. The husband seeks the good of his spouse; he were unnatural that should go about to destroy his wife. 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh' (Eph 5:29). There is a marriage relation between God and his people. 'Thy Maker is thy Husband' (Isa 54:5). God entirely loves his people. He engraves them upon the palms of his hands (Isa 49:16). He sets them as a seal upon his breast (Song 8:6). He will give kingdoms for their ransom (Isa 43:3). This shows how near they lie to his heart. If he be a Husband whose heart is full of love, then he will seek the good of his spouse. Either he will shield off an injury, or will turn it to the best.

(iv) This word, 'thy God', implies the relation of a Friend. 'This is my friend' (Song 5:16). A friend is, as Augustine says, half one's self. He is studious and desirous how he may do his friend good; he promotes his welfare as his own. Jonathan ventured the king's displeasure for his friend David (1 Sam 19:4). God is our Friend, therefore he will turn all things to our good. There are false friends; Christ was betrayed by a friend: but God is the best Friend.

He is a faithful Friend. 'Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God' (Deut 7:9). He is faithful in his love. He gave his very heart to us, when he gave the Son out of his bosom.

Here was a pattern of love without a parallel. He is faithful in his promises. 'God, that cannot lie, hath promised' (Titus 1:2). He may change his promise, but cannot break it. He is faithful in his dealings; when he is afflicting he is faithful. 'In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me'(Ps 119:75). He is sifting and refining us as silver (Ps 66:10).

God is an immutable Friend. 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee' (Heb 13:5). Friends often fail at a pinch. Many deal with their friends as women do with flowers; while they are fresh they put them in their bosoms, but when they begin to wither they throw them away. Or as the traveller does with the sun-dial; if the sun shines upon the dial, the traveller will step out of the road, and look upon the dial; but if the sun does not shine upon it, he will ride by, and never take any notice of it. So, if prosperity shine on men, then friends will look upon them; but if there be a cloud of adversity on them, they will not come near them. But God is a Friend for ever; he has said 'I will never leave thee'. Though David walked in the shadow of death, he knew he had a Friend by him. 'I will fear no evil, for thou art with me' (Ps 23:4). God never takes off his love wholly from his people. 'He loved them unto the end' (Jn 13:1). God being such a Friend, will make all things work for our good. There is no friend but will seek the good of his friend.

(v) This word, 'thy God', implies yet a

nearer relation, the relation between the Head and the members. There is a mystical union between Christ and the saints. He is called, 'the Head of the church' (Eph 5:23). Does not the head consult for the good of the body? The head guides the body, it sympathizes with it, it is the fountain of spirits, it sends forth influence and comfort into the body. All the parts of the head are placed for the good of the body. The eye is set as it were in the watch-tower, it stands sentinel to spy any danger that may come to the body, and prevent it. The tongue is both a taster and an orator. If the body be a microcosm, or little world, the head is the sun in this world, from which proceeds the light of reason. The head is placed for the good of the body. Christ and the saints make one body mystical. Our Head is in heaven, and surely he will not suffer his body to be hurt, but will consult for the safety of it, and make all things work for the good of the body mystical.