

The Godly Man's Portion & Sanctuary

Lesson 3: God Has Promised us Good

- I. The God of peace will be with you, Phil 4.9. This glorious promise is pregnant with all the blessings heaven and earth can afford. Why? Because *God* is in the promise. *All that is in God* is here assured to the godly as their portion.
- II. If God be with you, then *all* will work for your good. All providential occurrences and events whatsoever, all difficulties, straits, disasters, disappointments whatsoever, that may come upon you, will work for your good, Rom 8.28.
 - A. If God is for you, then nothing *can* be against you (Rom 8.31), and whatever is *against* you shall still work *for* you, because *that's* the promise of Rom 8.28. "This is such a promise that if it were thoroughly believed it would set our feet on the necks of all our fears and dangers."
 - B. Because this truth (Rom 8.28) is such a great encouragement to godliness in all conditions, we'll take the time to consider several points concerning it: 1) what things are included in "all things," 2) what the "good" is toward which all things must work, 3) to whom all things will work for good, 4) how all things will work for their good, 5) that all things will undoubtedly work for good to them that love God.
- III. What things are specially intended by the Apostle's words, "all things" in Rom 8.28?
 - A. There are some interpreters, like Augustine, who take it *universally* to mean all things whatsoever, whether good or evil, extending it even to the sins of the saints.
 1. It's true that God often brings good out of our sins, especially the good of making us more weary of it, for nothing makes the awakened sinner more weary and wary of sin than sin itself. Reflecting back on the evil we've done and the harvest of destruction it brought upon us is of good use to make us afraid of ever doing it again.
 - a) "When you look back on sin, and see its face (*for sin carries its face in its back*), you'll fear it all the more when you meet it again." "There's no argument which more effectually humbles and breaks the heart and makes it more fearful and watchful against sin than the shame and smart of those sins we've fallen to. He that has felt the wound will take heed how he plays with sharp tools."
 2. And so it's true that God sometimes makes use of sin to be its own cure. But as our *sins* are not in the Apostle's view here, this interpretation is too broad for the text.
 - B. There are others who take it to mean *all evil things*, the things Paul had been talking about in Rom 8.16-25. So *this interpretation best fits the context*. The promise of Rom 8.28 assures us, then, that *all the sufferings and afflictions and vanities and vexations* under which we groan in this life will be worked by God for our good. *In all God's dealings with us and all the dispensations of His providence toward us, we shall ever be able to say with the psalmist, "the LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places,"* (Ps 16.5-6).
- IV. What is the good toward which all things must work for the saints, or in what sense may all things be said to work good for them?
 - A. *Generally*, the promise is that nothing will befall them but that which, at some point, they'll have reason to say that it was good for them that it happened. The wisdom and goodness of God will so direct their providences in life and lead them through such a series of events that though they couldn't understand it at the time, they'll be able to say, "Now I see that every condition, every contingency and occurrence of my life, through which providence led me, was useful, and could not have been lacking or it would've been worse for me."
 - B. *Specifically*, there's a twofold good which the saints enjoy: that which they obtain in the way (*in via*) and that which they obtain when they get to the end of it (*in termino*). So that *the good*

that God works for the saints by the *confluence of all things* includes their *temporal and spiritual good* while *in via*, and their *eternal good* when *in termino*.

1. *Temporal Good*. The outward good things of this life which may serve us well in the days of our pilgrimage but must be left behind when we die.
 2. *Spiritual Good*. The ordinances of God, the privileges of the gospel, and all the graces which we enjoy in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
 3. *Eternal Good*. That glory, joy, everlasting rest, peace, and eternal inheritance reserved in heaven for us in the presence of God.
- C. There are some important things to note here about the good worked for us by God.
1. Our *outward* good things are only good for us as they work for the good of our *souls*. In other words, the good things in life are only good as they lead us to the good Father.
 - a) The world is but a nursery for eternity and whatever we have here is either good or evil according to its relation to eternity. Perishing things are good for us only in so far as they help and don't hinder that which cannot perish.
 - b) If we have the world's goods but they hinder our being rich toward God and if we enjoy a worldly fullness but it promotes a spiritual leanness, then how can these things be good for us? Is that man truly prosperous whose soul doesn't prosper?
 - c) It can't be said that it's always good to be rich or healthy or free or honored, because it may be better for our spiritual condition to be poor, sick, in bonds, and in disgrace. It's only good to abound when our outward abundance furthers our spiritual welfare.
 - d) This, then, is the truth we need to learn: that our *outward* good things are only good for us in so far as they promote our *spiritual* good.
 - (1) What a difference it would make in our lives if we could live under the power of this truth! Would there be such a violent pursuit of worldly things? Would there be such whining and complaining at every cross-providence?
 - (2) We must learn to say, "this is good for my soul," however sad it looks or feels.
 2. Our *external spiritual* good things (e.g., the ministry and ordinances of the gospel, etc.) are only good for us as they work for our *internal* spiritual good.
 - a) How do we actually receive the means of grace? We must so receive them that we feed on them and look for Christ to graciously use them for our maturity and sanctification.
 3. Our *internal spiritual* good is only good for us as it works for our *eternal* good.
 - a) It's good to be humble, it's good to fear God, it's good to have a clear conscience, and it's good to be holy, because all these things will serve our *eternal* good in glory.
 - b) We may have too much money, too much honor, too much praise—such that these things make us proud and independent—but we can never have too much grace.
 4. *This, then, is the full meaning of the promise in Rom 8.28*. Whether it's good for us to be rich or poor, in health or sickness, free or in bonds, in honor or disgrace, high or low, depends entirely on what will be most conducive to our eternal good, which is the end God eyes in all His providence with us. So we need to see everything in light of its impact on eternity.
 - a) *The sum of the promise is this*: "That all providential dispensations shall be so ordered, that we shall want nothing but what it's better to want than have, and we shall suffer nothing but what we cannot well be without because the good of our soul requires it; and that which we do possess and that which we do suffer, shall not fail to bring about its end, which is the advancing of our eternal good."
 - b) And if this be the meaning, then what a glorious promise is this! *For what more can we desire?* Nothing shall befall us but what'll be for our good; and we'll be deprived of nothing but what it's better to be without than have.

- c) If we're unsatisfied with this promise, it's either from lust or unbelief. For either we don't believe God will keep this promise or else we're bent on our own desires and must have them.
- (1) He that desires an estate in this world, or ease or pleasure or health or freedom or anything else upon any other terms but that it's good for his soul, has lost his wits and hates himself.
 - (2) And he that will take it upon himself to know what's good for him rather than trust God to decide, is the biggest fool and greatest loser.
- d) Therefore, let us instead *be thankful* for so great a promise, backed by so great a God, who's not only able to keep it but who's bound Himself by covenant and cross to keep it for all who will trust in Him and resign themselves into His hands and good care, Pss 16, 23, 73.