



# ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

Thomas Watson

## I. Introduction

The book was originally published under the title, “A Divine Cordial.” In Watson’s day, a cordial was either a sweet, fruit-flavored, beverage, or something affecting the heart, or soul. He uses it here in both senses of the word, in keeping with his metaphor of Scripture as a feast, and Romans as a dish at the feast. Romans 8:28, then, is a divine cordial.

# INTRODUCTION

And we know that **for those who love God** all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Rom 8:28 (ESV)

And we know that all things work together for good, **for those who love God,** who are called according to his purpose.

“For those who love God” is a subordinate clause. By itself it is not a sentence, but it explains things about the rest of the sentence. It is usually set off by commas. It can appear in different places in the sentence.

Pay particular attention to the words around the word “work”. In this translation, it is not stated just how things work together for good - who makes that happen, or is it simply chance?

# A LOOK AT THE TEXT

- Some English translations say that “God works all things together” or some variation of that language
  - **NASB:** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
  - **NIV:** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

# A LOOK AT THE TEXT

- **NLT:** And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

# A LOOK AT THE TEXT

God works all things together for good.

*vs. either*

All things work together for good.

*or*

he works all things together for good.

There are different Greek manuscripts. A significant early manuscript reads “God works all things together for good”, while a number of other texts are translated either “he works all things together for good” or “all things work together for good”.

In essence, the meaning is that God is sovereign in all things.

# A LOOK AT THE TEXT

We should not understand that “all things” just happen to work for good for God’s people.

God is at work, according to His purpose, which is always for the good of His people.

# THREE BRANCHES

1. A glorious privilege
2. The persons to whom the privilege applies
3. The origin of the privilege



# I. A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE

## A. The certainty of the privilege - *we know*

- There are things we know, though details may not be clear

1 Cor 13:12

Though we may only know in part, still we know.

We have certain knowledge, not hope or conjecture, that all things work together for good...

1 Cor 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.



# I. A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE

## A. The certainty of the privilege - *we know*

- There are things we know, though details may not be clear

1 Jn 3:14

We know that we have passed from death into life.

1 Jn 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

# I. A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE

## A. The certainty of the privilege - *we know*

- There are things we know, though details may not be clear

2 Cor 5:1

We know that we have a home in heaven.

2 Cor 5:1 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

# I. A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE

B. The excellency of the privilege - *all things work together for good*

- Like ingredients in a medicine, all things are perfectly combined to work for the benefit of the patient

# I. A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE

B. The excellency of the privilege - *all things work together for good*

- Troubles of life do not hinder our walk but, to the contrary, they are helps to it.
- The flesh claims that God does not answer prayer, since the affliction continues just the same.

# I. A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE

- Though God does not provide his people immediate relief, he does not forsake them, for he turns the things which seem to be evil into things which promote their sanctification.
- "Though the elect and the reprobate are ... exposed to similar evils, there is yet a great difference; for God trains up the faithful by afflictions, and thereby promotes their salvation." Calvin, Commentary on Romans 8:28

## I. A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE

*All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth,  
To such as keep His covenant and His  
testimonies.*

Psalm 25:10 (NKJV)

If all the paths of the Lord are mercy, then all  
of them work together for good.

## 2. WHOSE PRIVILEGE?

- Those who Paul speaks of as loving God are also those who were previously chosen by God.
- Believers do not love God before they are called.

Notice the subject are those who have been called, not those who decide for themselves. Calvin observes that when salvation is the subject, people tend to begin with themselves, not with God, and list things they have done that they think may be pleasing to God.

The phrase “who are called according to his purpose” is so strong that several translators read it as “who are THE called, according to his purpose.” That rebuts any idea that this privilege is for any other than God’s people.





### 3. THE ORIGIN

- *according to his purpose*
- “This clause seems to have been added as a modification, lest anyone should think that the faithful, because they love God, obtain by their own merit the advantage of deriving such fruit from their adversities.”  
~ John Calvin

As we have seen, while one purpose may be, as Calvin says, to make certain it is understood that things do not work for good according to our merit, it is also the opposite - to make certain we understand it is according to the will of God.



### 3. THE ORIGIN

- The words “his purpose” excludes any idea that man chooses the purpose.
- The privilege of all things working for good originates with God, not with people - even His people.

How might we apply this to ourselves and our circumstances?

Are we the ones who should say in adversity “OK Lord, I get it. Please make it go away.”?

# NEXT TIME ...

- Chapter 1 “The Best Things Work for Good to the Godly” sections 1 & 2 (pages 13-17)

