

*'Welcome to the Library'*



## Volumes in the *Puritan Classics* Box Set

---

All Things for Good	<i>Thomas Watson</i>
The Doctrine of Repentance	<i>Thomas Watson</i>
The Bruised Reed	<i>Richard Sibbes</i>
The Art of Prophesying	<i>William Perkins</i>
The Godly Man's Picture	<i>Thomas Watson</i>
The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment	<i>Jeremiah Burroughs</i>
Letters of Samuel Rutherford	<i>Samuel Rutherford</i>
The Loveliness of Christ	<i>Samuel Rutherford</i>
A Lifting Up for the Downcast	<i>William Bridge</i>
The Mystery of Providence	<i>John Flavel</i>
Facing Grief	<i>John Flavel</i>
Prayer	<i>John Bunyan</i>
A Sure Guide to Heaven	<i>Joseph Alleine</i>
Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices	<i>Thomas Brooks</i>
The Reformed Pastor	<i>Richard Baxter</i>

# ‘Welcome to the Library’

## Introducing the *Puritan Classics* Box Set

---

Sinclair B. Ferguson



THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

# THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

<i>Head Office</i>	<i>North America Office</i>
3 Murrayfield Road	PO Box 621
Edinburgh	Carlisle
EH12 6EL	PA 17013
UK	USA

[banneroftruth.org](http://banneroftruth.org)

© The Banner of Truth Trust 2020

\*

ISBN 978 1 84871 461 8

\*

Typeset in 10/13 Minion Pro at  
The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh

Printed in the USA by  
Versa Press Inc.,  
East Peoria, IL.

## ‘Welcome to the Library’

### Introducing the *Puritan Classics* Box Set

‘FRIENDS have told me that they have discovered books written by some of the Puritans that have been a tremendous help to them! Could you recommend a few classics to me?’

Many Christians ask that question today. Nor are we the first to feel we need someone to guide us. Already in the Puritan period Richard Baxter saw that need—and drew up lists adjusted to finances available. But even his list for the poorest contained around one hundred authors! The *Puritan Classics* box set is more modest in size, certainly, but it presents a single package of attractively produced hardbound editions of some of the most helpful works written in the seventeenth century. All of them came from the ministries of men who were marked by God-centredness, faithfulness to Scripture, and a devotion to pointing people to Christ and maturing them in the faith.

This little library will, no doubt, be treasured for the quality of its production – its ten volumes are built to last. But it will be even more highly prized for the wonderful selection of Puritan literature it contains.

But who were these ‘Puritans’? They themselves did not use the term. Rather it emerged in the sixteenth century

## ‘WELCOME TO THE LIBRARY’

as a demeaning way of describing Christians who wanted to see the Church of England reformed according to God’s word – *purified* of unbiblical patterns of worship, of laxity in ministry, of sacramentalist views of the way of salvation, and deficient church government. But when a group of people are described by their opponents, it is often the worst caricature of them that is communicated. And so it has been with ‘Puritans’ throughout history.

The volumes in this little library tell a different story. It is one of people committed to the knowledge, worship, and service of God, living under his loving care as their heavenly Father, according to his word, experiencing forgiveness and new life in Christ, and conscious of the communion and power of the Holy Spirit.

The authors represented here span the years between 1558 (when William Perkins was born) and 1691 (when both Richard Baxter and John Flavel died)—in terms of English history, from the accession of Queen Elizabeth I in 1558 until just after the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688. They all served in pastoral ministry and shared a profound knowledge of Scripture, and had an enviable ability to apply it to the congregations they loved and served.

As you read their writings you will realize they had very different personalities. But they all brought to their ministry the providential ways in which God had shaped their lives. Some were converted dramatically after a period of deep agony of soul, while others were drawn quietly and almost imperceptibly to Christ. Each had gifts of mind, character, and experience that gave an individual flavour to their ministry of the word.

\* \* \*

When you are a new user of any library, however small, it is always helpful if one of the librarians gives you some idea of what you can expect to find, or perhaps recommends a book that you will appreciate, or tells you about a new author you might enjoy. Here, then, in chronological order, are brief introductions to the eleven authors whose works are included in the *Puritan Classics* box set.

**William Perkins (1558–1602)**, author of *The Art of Prophesying*, was born in Marston Jabbett in Warwickshire and became one of the great fountainheads of the Puritan brotherhood.

It is not difficult to understand Perkins' influence on those who followed. He enrolled in Christ's College, Cambridge in 1577, graduated B.A. in 1581, M.A. in 1584. He was invited to become lecturer (preacher) at St Andrew the Great Church, and here, in Cambridge, he would minister for the rest of his life. But in earlier life, fruitful Christian ministry could not have been predicted.

Perkins' biographers tell of an incident that inaugurated his spiritual awakening. He overheard a mother, walking in a Cambridge street with her son, and frustrated by his behaviour, threatening him 'Hold your tongue, or I will give you to drunken Perkins.' Converted, and subsequently spiritually nurtured by his tutor Laurence Chaderton, Perkins gave the rest of his life to serving Christ.

*The Works of William Perkins* fill three vast folio volumes. But the short book selected here, *The Art of Prophesying*, is particularly significant. To modern ears the title is striking. The Puritans believed in prophesying? Indeed, some of their meetings were known as *prophesyings*. But by this

## ‘WELCOME TO THE LIBRARY’

biblical term they understood *forth-telling* the word of God – preaching, biblical exposition, the faithful explanation and application of Scripture. While they certainly emphasised the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit, their conviction was that the present need was for his *illuminating* ministry: if we are to hear God’s voice it is to the Bible we must listen, since it is ‘the mouth of God’ (Matt. 4:4, where Jesus is citing Deut. 8:3). And so, the preacher’s right handling of God’s word was a central key to the conversion of sinners and the nurturing of saints.

Perkins’ book is a small instruction manual in this ‘art.’ It advocates what came to be known as preaching characterized by ‘the plain style’: its goal is not to impress hearers with the intelligence, or rhetorical skills of the preacher, but to communicate the gospel as clearly, simply, and persuasively as possible. As many passages in the writings of the Puritans demonstrate, doing this is not the abandonment of true oratory. Rather it brings to light the gospel’s own rhetoric as it feeds the minds and hearts of people with different levels of intellectual ability simply because it serves the bread of God to them.

Perkins’ own ministry illustrated the principles he enunciated. As the seventeenth-century historian Thomas Fuller wrote, ‘his sermons were not so plain but that the piously learned did admire them, nor so learned but that the plain did understand them.’ His preaching and praying left their mark. Thomas Goodwin tells us that when he became a student at Christ’s College, ten years after Perkins’ death, ‘the town was then filled with the discourse of the power of Mr Perkins’ ministry, still fresh in most men’s memories.’



PURITAN CLASSICS

*All Things for Good*

---

*The Doctrine of Repentance*

## Thomas Watson

*c.* 1620–1686

Thomas Watson was probably born in Yorkshire, although the exact place and date of his birth are unknown. He studied at Emmanuel College, Cambridge (BA, 1639; MA, 1642), then in 1646 went to St Stephen's Church, Walbrook, London, where he served as lecturer for about ten years, and then as rector for another six years. He was ejected in 1662 under the Act of Uniformity, but after the Declaration of Indulgence took effect in 1672, Watson obtained a licence for Crosby Hall, Bishopsgate, and preached there for three years before Stephen Charnock joined him. They ministered together until Charnock's death in 1680.

Watson kept working until his health failed. He then retired to Barnston, Essex, where he died suddenly in 1686 while engaged in private prayer.

A master of a terse, vigorous style, and of a beauty of expression, Watson spoke and wrote not only to win men's understanding but also to secure a place for the truth in their memories. His writings are 'ever fresh, pointed and instructive' (William Jay of Bath).

*Thomas Watson*

---

# All Things for Good

---

## The Doctrine of Repentance



THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

# THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

*Head Office*  
3 Murrayfield Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 6EL  
UK

*North America Office*  
PO Box 621  
Carlisle  
PA 17013  
USA

[banneroftruth.org](http://banneroftruth.org)

*All Things for Good* first published 1663 as *A Divine Cordial*

First Banner of Truth edition © 1963

*The Doctrine of Repentance* first published 1668

First Banner of Truth edition © 1987

This combined edition 2020

\*

ISBN

This vol: 978 0 85151 905 0

Box set of 10 vols: 978 1 84871 021 4

\*

Typeset in 10/13 Minion Pro at  
The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh

Printed in the USA by  
Versa Press Inc.,  
East Peoria, IL.

# All Things for Good



# Contents

Extract from Preface of 1663	1
Introduction	3
1. The Best Things Work for Good to the Godly	7
1. The Attributes of God	7
2. The Promises of God	9
3. The Mercies of God	12
4. The Graces of the Spirit	15
5. The Angels of God	15
6. The Communion of Saints	17
7. The Intercession of Christ	17
8. The Prayers of Saints	18
2. The Worst Things Work for Good to the Godly	21
1. The Evil of Affliction	21
2. The Evil of Temptation	29
3. The Evil of Desertion	36
4. The Evil of Sin	42

## ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

3.	Why All Things Work for Good to the Godly	51
	1. The Reason Why All Things Work for Good	51
	2. Inferences from this Proposition	55
4.	Of Love to God	67
	1. The Nature of Love	67
	2. The Ground of Love	67
	3. The Kinds of Love	68
	4. The Properties of Love	69
	5. The Degrees of Love	72
	Use: A Reproof to Those Who Do Not Love God	74
5.	The Tests of Love to God	77
	1. The Musing of the Mind upon God	77
	2. Desiring Communion with God	78
	3. Grief	79
	4. Magnanimity	80
	5. Sensitiveness	80
	6. Hatred against Sin	81
	7. Crucifixion	81
	8. Fear	82
	9. Loving What God Loves	84
	10. Entertaining Good Thoughts of God	87



11. Obedience	87
12. Making God Appear Glorious in the Eyes of Others	90
13. Longing for Christ's Appearing	90
14. Stooping to the Meanest Offices	91
6. An Exhortation to Love God	93
1. An Exhortation to Become Lovers of God – Twenty Motives for Loving God	93
2. An Exhortation to Preserve Your Love to God	104
3. An Exhortation to Increase Your Love to God	107
7. Effectual Calling	111
1. A Distinction about Calling	111
2. Our Condition before We are Called	112
3. The Means of Our Effectual Call	113
4. The Method God Uses in Calling Sinners	114
5. The Properties of this Effectual Calling	114
6. The End of Effectual Calling	119
Use: An Exhortation to Make Your Calling Sure	121
8. Exhortations to Those Who Are Called	127
1. Admire God's Free Grace	127
2. Pity Those Who Are Not Yet Called	128
3. Walk Worthy of Your High Calling	128

ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

9. Concerning God's Purpose	133
1. God's Purpose is the Cause of Salvation	133
2. God's Purpose is the Ground of Assurance	136

## Extract from the Preface of 1663

CHRISTIAN READER,

There are two things which I have always looked upon as difficult. The one is, to make the wicked sad; the other is, to make the godly joyful. Dejection in the godly arises from a double spring; either because their inward comforts are darkened, or their outward comforts are disturbed. To cure both these troubles, I have put forth this ensuing piece, hoping, by the blessing of God, that it will buoy up their desponding hearts, and make them look with a more pleasant aspect. I would prescribe them to take, now and then, a little of this cordial: *All things work together for good to them that love god.* To know that nothing hurts the godly, is a matter of comfort; but to be assured that *all* things which fall out shall co-operate for their good, that their crosses shall be turned into blessings, that showers of affliction water the withering root of their grace and make it flourish more; this may fill their hearts with joy till they run over.



## Introduction

*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* – Romans 8:28

IF the whole Scripture be the feast of the soul, as Ambrose<sup>1</sup> said, then Romans 8 may be a dish at that feast, and with its sweet variety may very much refresh and animate the hearts of God's people. In the preceding verses the apostle had been wading through the great doctrines of justification and adoption, mysteries so arduous and profound, that without the help and conduct of the Spirit, he might soon have waded beyond his depth. In this verse the apostle touches upon that pleasant string of consolation, '*we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*' Not a word but is weighty; therefore I shall gather up every filing of this gold, that nothing be lost.

In the text there are three general branches:

First, a glorious privilege. *All things work together for good.*

Second, the persons interested in this privilege. They are doubly specified. They are *lovers of God*, they are *the called*.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop of Milan in the 4th century.

Third, the origin and spring of this effectual calling, set down in these words, '*according to his purpose.*'

First, *the glorious privilege*. Here are two things to be considered.

1. The certainty of the privilege – '*We know.*'
2. The excellency of the privilege – '*All things work together for good.*'

### *1. The certainty of the privilege*

'*We know.*' It is not a matter wavering or doubtful. The apostle does not say, We hope, or conjecture, but it is like an article in our creed, We KNOW that all things work for good. Hence observe that the truths of the gospel are evident and infallible.

A Christian may come not merely to a vague opinion, but to a certainty of what he holds. As axioms and aphorisms are evident to reason, so the truths of religion are evident to faith. '*We know,*' says the apostle. Though a Christian has not a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, yet he has a certain knowledge. '*We see through a glass darkly*' (1 Cor. 13:12), therefore we have not perfection of knowledge; but '*we behold with open face*' (2 Cor. 3:18), therefore we have certainty. The Spirit of God imprints heavenly truths upon the heart as with the point of a diamond. A Christian may know infallibly that there is an evil in sin, and a beauty in holiness. He may know that he is in the state of grace. '*We know that we have passed from death to life*' (1 John 3:14).

He may know that he shall go to heaven. '*We know that if our earthly tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*'

(2 Cor. 5:1). The Lord does not leave his people at uncertainties in matters of salvation. The apostle says, 'We know.' We have arrived at a holy confidence. We have both the Spirit of God, and our own experience, setting seal to it.

Let us then not rest in scepticism or doubts, but labour to come to a certainty in the things of religion. As that martyr-woman said, 'I cannot dispute for Christ, but I can burn for Christ.' God knows whether we may be called forth to be witnesses to his truth; therefore it concerns us to be well grounded and confirmed in it. If we are doubting Christians, we shall be wavering Christians. Whence is apostasy, but from incredulity? Men first question the truth, and then fall from the truth. Oh, beg the Spirit of God, not only to anoint you, but to seal you (2 Cor. 1:22).

## *2. The excellency of the privilege*

'*All things work together for good.*' This is as Jacob's staff in the hand of faith, with which we may walk cheerfully to the mount of God. What will satisfy or make us content, if this will not? All things work together for good. This expression 'work together' refers to medicine. Several poisonous ingredients put together, being tempered by the skill of the apothecary, make a sovereign medicine, and work together for the good of the patient. So all God's providences, being divinely tempered and sanctified, work together for the best to the saints. He who loves God and is called according to his purpose, may rest assured that everything in the world shall be for his good. This is a Christian's cordial, which may warm him – make him like Jonathan who, when he had tasted the honey at the end of the rod, 'his eyes were enlightened' (1 Sam. 14:27). Why should a Christian destroy

## ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

himself? Why should he kill himself with care, when all things shall sweetly concur, yea, conspire for his good? The result of the text is this. *All the various dealings of God with his children do by a special providence turn to their good.* 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant' (Psa. 25:10). If every path has mercy in it, then it works for good.



## The Best Things Work for Good to the Godly

WE shall consider, first, what things work for good to the godly; and here we shall show that both the *best things* and the *worst things* work for their good. We begin with the best things.

### *1. God's attributes work for good to the godly.*

(1) God's *power* works for good. It is a glorious power (Col. 1:11), and it is engaged for the good of the elect.

God's power works for good in supporting us in trouble. 'Underneath are the everlasting arms' (Deut. 33:27). What upheld Daniel in the lion's den? Jonah in the whale's belly? The three Hebrews in the furnace? Only the power of God! Is it not strange to see a bruised reed grow and flourish? How is a weak Christian able, not only to endure affliction, but to rejoice in it? He is upheld by the arms of the Almighty. 'My strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. 12:9).

The power of God works for us by supplying our wants. God creates comforts when means fail. He that brought food to the prophet Elijah by ravens, will bring sustenance

to his people. God can preserve the 'oil in the cruse' (1 Kings 17:14). The Lord made the sun on Ahaz's dial go ten degrees backward: so when our outward comforts are declining, and the sun is almost setting, God often causes a revival, and brings the sun many degrees backward.

The power of God subdues our corruptions. 'He will subdue our iniquities' (Mic. 7:19). Is your sin strong? God is powerful, he will break the head of this leviathan. Is your heart hard? God will dissolve that stone in Christ's blood. 'The Almighty maketh my heart soft' (Job 23:16). When we say as Jehoshaphat, 'We have no might against this great army,' the Lord goes up with us, and helps us to fight our battles. He strikes off the heads of those Goliath-lusts which are too strong for us.

The power of God conquers our enemies. He stains the pride, and breaks the confidence of adversaries. 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron' (Psa. 2:9). There is rage in the enemy, malice in the devil, but power in God. How easily can he rout all the forces of the wicked! 'It is nothing for thee, Lord, to help' (2 Chron. 14:11). God's power is on the side of his church. 'Happy art thou, O Israel, O people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency' (Deut. 33:29).

(2) The *wisdom* of God works for good. God's wisdom is our oracle to instruct us. As he is the mighty God, so also is he the Counsellor (Isa. 9:6). We are oftentimes in the dark, and in matters intricate and doubtful know not which way to take; here God comes in with light. 'I will guide thee with mine eye' (Psa. 32:8). 'Eye,' there, is put for God's wisdom. Why is it the saints can see further than the most quick-sighted politicians? They foresee the evil, and

hide themselves; they see Satan's sophisms. God's wisdom is the pillar of fire to go before, and guide them.

(3) The *goodness* of God works for good to the godly. God's goodness is a means to make us good. 'The goodness of God leadeth to repentance' (Rom. 2:4). The goodness of God is a spiritual sunbeam to melt the heart into tears. Oh, says the soul, has God been so good to me? Has he reprieved me so long from hell, and shall I grieve his Spirit any more? Shall I sin against goodness?

The goodness of God works for good, as it ushers in all blessings. The favours we receive are the silver streams which flow from the fountain of God's goodness. This divine attribute of goodness brings in two sorts of blessings. Common blessings: all partake of these, the bad as well as the good. This sweet dew falls upon the thistle as well as the rose. Crowning blessings: these only the godly partake of. 'Who crowneth us with lovingkindness' (Psa. 103:4). Thus the blessed attributes of God work for good to the saints.

## *2. The promises of God work for good to the godly.*

The promises are notes of God's hand; is it not good to have security? The promises are the milk of the gospel; and is not the milk for the good of the infant? They are called 'precious promises' (2 Pet. 1:4). They are as cordials to a soul that is ready to faint. The promises are full of virtue.

Are we under the guilt of sin? There is a promise, 'The Lord, merciful and gracious' (Exod. 34:6), where God as it were puts on his glorious embroidery, and holds out the golden sceptre, to encourage poor trembling sinners to come to him. 'The Lord, merciful.' God is more willing to pardon than to punish. Mercy does more multiply in him

## ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

than sin in us. Mercy is his nature. The bee naturally gives honey; it stings only when it is provoked. 'But,' says the guilty sinner, 'I cannot deserve mercy.' Yet he is gracious; he shows mercy, not because we deserve mercy, but because he delights in mercy. But what is that to me? Perhaps my name is not in the pardon. 'He keeps mercy for thousands,' the exchequer of mercy is not exhausted. God has treasures lying by, and why should not you come in for a child's part?

Are we under the defilement of sin? There is a promise working for good. 'I will heal their backslidings' (Hos. 14:4). God will not only bestow mercy, but grace. And he has made a promise of sending his Spirit (Isa. 44:3), which for its sanctifying nature, is in Scripture compared sometimes to water, which cleanses the vessel; sometimes to the fan, which winnows corn, and purifies the air; sometimes to fire, which refines metals. Thus will the Spirit of God cleanse and consecrate the soul, making it partake of the divine nature.

Are we in great trouble? There is a promise that works for our good, 'I will be with him in trouble' (Psa. 91:15). God does not bring his people into troubles, and leave them there. He will stand by them; he will hold their heads and hearts when they are fainting. And there is another promise, 'he is their strength in the time of trouble' (Psa. 37:39). 'Oh,' says the soul, 'I shall faint in the day of trial.' But God will be the strength of our hearts; he will join his forces with us. Either he will make his hand lighter, or our faith stronger.

Do we fear outward wants? There is a promise. 'They that seek the Lord shall not want [lack] any good thing' (Psa. 34:10). If it is good for us, we shall have it; if it is not good for us, then the withholding of it is good. 'I will bless

thy bread and thy water' (Exod. 23:25). This blessing falls as the honey-dew upon the leaf; it sweetens that little we possess. Let me be without the venison, so I may have the blessing. But I fear I shall not get a livelihood? Peruse that Scripture, 'I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread' (Psa. 37:25). How must we understand this? David speaks it as his own observation; he never beheld such an eclipse, he never saw a godly man brought so low that he had not a bit of bread to put in his mouth. David never saw the righteous and their seed lacking. Though the Lord might try godly parents a while by want, yet not their seed too; the seed of the godly shall be provided for. David never saw the righteous begging bread, and forsaken. Though he might be reduced to great straits, yet not forsaken; still he is an heir of heaven, and God loves him.

*Question.* How do the promises work for good?

*Answer.* They are food for faith; and that which strengthens faith works for good. The promises are the milk of faith; faith sucks nourishment from them, as the child from the breast. 'Jacob feared exceedingly' (Gen. 32:7). His spirits were ready to faint; now he goes to the promise, 'Lord, thou hast said that thou wilt do me good' (Gen. 32:12). This promise was his food. He got so much strength from this promise that he was able to wrestle with the Lord all night in prayer, and would not let him go till he had blessed him.

The promises also are springs of joy. There is more in the promises to comfort than in the world to perplex. Ursin<sup>1</sup> was comforted by that promise: 'No man shall pluck them out of my Father's hand' (John 10:29). The promises are

<sup>1</sup> A German reformer in the 16th century.

cordials in a fainting-fit. 'Unless thy word had been my delights, I had perished in my affliction' (Psa. 119:92). The promises are as cork to the net, to bear up the heart from sinking in the deep waters of distress.

*3. The mercies of God work for good to the godly.*

The mercies of God humble us. 'Then went King David, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' (2 Sam. 7:18). Lord, why is such honour conferred upon me, that I should be king? That I who followed the sheep, should go in and out before thy people? So says a gracious heart, 'Lord, what am I, that it should be better with me than others? That I should drink of the fruit of the vine, when others drink, not only a cup of wormwood, but a cup of blood (or suffering to death). What am I, that I should have those mercies which others want, who are better than I? Lord, why is it, that notwithstanding all my unworthiness, a fresh tide of mercy comes in every day?' The mercies of God make a sinner proud, but a saint humble.

The mercies of God have a melting influence upon the soul; they dissolve it in love to God. God's judgments make us fear him, his mercies make us love him. How was Saul wrought upon by kindness! David had him at the advantage, and might have cut off, not only the skirt of his robe, but his head; yet he spares his life. This kindness melted Saul's heart. 'Is this thy voice, my son David? and Saul lifted up his voice, and wept' (1 Sam. 24:16). Such a melting influence has God's mercy; it makes the eyes drop with tears of love.

The mercies of God make the heart fruitful. When you lay out more cost upon a field, it bears a better crop. A gracious soul honours the Lord with his substance. He does not do with his mercies, as Israel with their jewels and earrings, make a golden calf, but, as Solomon did with the money thrown into the treasury, build a temple for the Lord. The golden showers of mercy cause fertility.

The mercies of God make the heart thankful. 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation' (Psa. 116:12, 13). David alludes to the people of Israel, who at their peace-offerings used to take a cup in their hands, and give thanks to God for deliverances. Every mercy is an alms of free grace; and this enlarges the soul in gratitude. A good Christian is not a grave to bury God's mercies, but a temple to sing his praises. If every bird in its kind, as Ambrose says, chirps forth thankfulness to its Maker, much more will an ingenuous Christian, whose life is enriched and perfumed with mercy.

The mercies of God quicken. As they are lodestones to love, so they are whetstones to obedience. 'I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living' (Psa. 116:9). He that takes a review of his blessings looks upon himself as a person engaged for God. He argues from the sweetness of mercy to the swiftness of duty. He spends and is spent for Christ; he dedicates himself to God. Among the Romans, when one had been redeemed by another, he was afterwards to serve him. A soul encompassed with mercy is zealously active in God's service.

The mercies of God work compassion to others. A Christian is a temporal saviour. He feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and visits the widow and orphan in their distress;

## ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

among them he sows the golden seeds of his charity. 'A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth' (Psa. 112:5). Charity drops from him freely, as myrrh from the tree. Thus to the godly, the mercies of God work for good; they are wings to lift them up to heaven.

*Spiritual mercies also work for good.*

The *word preached* works for good. It is a savour of life, it is a soul-transforming word, it assimilates the heart into Christ's likeness; it produces assurance. 'Our gospel came to you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance' (1 Thess. 1:5). It is the chariot of salvation.

*Prayer* works for good. Prayer is the bellows of the affections; it blows up holy desires and ardours of soul. Prayer has power with God. 'Command ye me' (Isa. 45:11). It is a key that unlocks the treasury of God's mercy. Prayer keeps the heart open to God, and shut to sin; it assuages the intemperate heart and the swellings of lust. It was Luther's counsel to a friend, when he perceived a temptation begin to arise, to betake himself to prayer. Prayer is the Christian's gun, which he discharges against his enemies. Prayer is the sovereign medicine of the soul. Prayer sanctifies every mercy (1 Tim. 4:5). It is the dispeller of sorrow: by venting the grief it eases the heart. When Hannah had prayed, 'she went away, and was no more sad' (1 Sam. 1:18). And if it has these rare effects, then it works for good.

*The Lord's Supper* works for good. It is an emblem of the marriage-supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9), and an earnest of that communion we shall have with Christ in glory. It is a feast of fat things; it gives us bread from heaven, such as



preserves life, and prevents death. It has glorious effects in the hearts of the godly. It quickens their affections, strengthens their graces, mortifies their corruptions, revives their hopes, and increases their joy. Luther says, 'It is as great a work to comfort a dejected soul, as to raise the dead to life'; yet this may and sometimes is done to the souls of the godly in the blessed Supper.

*4. The graces of the Spirit work for good.*

Grace is to the soul, as light to the eye, as health to the body. Grace does to the soul, as a virtuous wife to her husband, 'She will do him good all the days of her life' (Prov. 31:12). How incomparably useful are the graces! Faith and fear go hand in hand. Faith keeps the heart cheerful, fear keeps the heart serious. Faith keeps the heart from sinking in despair, fear keeps it from floating in presumption. All the graces display themselves in their beauty: hope is 'the helmet' (1 Thess. 5:8), meekness 'the ornament' (1 Pet. 3:4), love 'the bond of perfectness' (Col. 3:14). The saints' graces are weapons to defend them, wings to elevate them, jewels to enrich them, spices to perfume them, stars to adorn them, cordials to refresh them. And does not all this work for good? The graces are our evidences for heaven. Is it not good to have our evidences at the hour of death?

*5. The angels work for the good of the saints.*

The good angels are ready to do all offices of love to the people of God. 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' (Heb. 1:14). Some of the fathers were of the opinion that every believer has his guardian angel. This subject needs no