

revelation as their guide. On the testimony of the volume of inspiration we learn that all the changes which they experience, all the pleasures and pain, all the trials and comforts through which they pass, are overruled by the providential hand of their heavenly Father, and rendered subservient to their spiritual and eternal good. The vast machinery of providence is said to be in operation for the accomplishment of a wise and merciful design regarding them.—“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

The statement of the text, viz: That all the events of life are co-operating to further the spiritual good of God's people, a mine of comfort as it is to the saint as he staggers amid the chequered scenes of earth, and startling though its announcement may appear, is nevertheless a doctrine which is exhibited in the inspired volume without the slightest indication of hesitancy or doubt. The apostle seems to have felt in penning these words that a response was found in his own consciousness to the truth which they unfold. He does not say, we hope, or we conjecture, that all events will, by their combined influence, be rendered conducive to the spiritual well-being of believers. It is in language which conveys the idea of absolute certainty that he announces the cheering doctrine of the text,—*we know* that all things work together for good. And with what singular force and beauty does such language come from the pen of one whose history was a history of trials and sufferings. From the hour that he had been called to be a follower of Christ, his life had been one continued round of trials and hardships. Frequently had he been exposed to the buffetings of his countrymen; many persecutions he had encountered in his efforts to extend the cause of truth: in his own graphic language “he had been in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” And yet, on a review of the dangers and difficulties through which he had passed, he felt that all through an unseen and mysterious agency, had been working together for his good. The doctrine therefore which Paul here lays down was one, the truth of which was established by his own experience. And though believers may frequently be unable to comprehend the designs of their heavenly Father, in appointing the varied vicissitudes of their earthly lot; still, they may rest assured, as Paul did, that these in their combined influence are to them the instruments of spiritual and everlasting good.

The language of the apostle in specifying the individuals to whom the privilege described in the text belongs, is guarded. He does not say that all things work together for good to all men indiscriminately, but only to those who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. In the following discourse, therefore, we shall, in the first place, consider the parties to whom the apostle refers; they are such as love God, and are the called according to his purpose; and in the second place, the important declaration made respecting them, “all things work together for their good.”

We are then, in the first place, to consider who the individuals are, to whom the privilege of the text belongs—they are such as love God, and are the called according to his purpose.