

Rome, but they built on its ruins a nobler edifice, the corner-stone of which was Christianity, and one wall of which was the lasting work of these ancient nations, resurrected and freed from its encumbrances to form a part of the completed building. The very things that men oftentimes considered the greatest catastrophies, have turned out to be the greatest boons to humanity, for God has used even the wrath of man to praise Him and bless His children.

If this be true in the history of the race, it is also true in the lives of individuals, that God makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. Much of our faith in this and similar statements is destroyed by our mistaken ideas of goodness. When we find that all things do not work together to bring about the good we expect, we conclude that God cannot or will not fulfil His promises, and that it is useless to rely on Him.

This does not mean that we are to have no trouble. Many people can form no idea of peace except that of absolute quietness, while it really means internal calm amid external storm. Among the coral islands the mariner often sees a small sheet of water that is perfectly calm, no matter how furiously the tempest may rage in the ocean around, because a coral reef has been built about it, and the waves cannot force their way in. Now, amid the storms of the world we must expect many hurricanes to blow over us, and many thundering billows to surge against our lives, but around us Christ has built a wall of protection, and no distress or despair can roll through our souls, so long as our trust in Him keeps us inside of it. It is impossible to escape affliction here. Friends must separate, and no matter how firm our assurance that the departed are far better and happier with Christ than in the world, yet those who remain behind, must feel their loss.

Business troubles and many other sorrows must be encountered, for God does not take His people out of the world, but keeps them from the evil, so that while we may expect good from everything and all things together, we must not expect to encounter no difficulties.

Nor does this promise mean that we are to have unbroken earthly prosperity. If we believe that we are doing the work that God has called us to, it is natural to think that the more we make of it, the more will God be glorified, and it is right to do our utmost to reach the loftiest pinnacle of earthly success. But it frequently has occurred that temporal prosperity brought spiritual degradation, and then, in order to secure our highest welfare, God must thwart our endeavors, not because He cannot give both temporal and spiritual success, but because we cannot receive both. There is something better for every Christian than anything that earth affords. Though you should acquire the wealth of a Gould, a Vanderbilt or a Rothschild, the power over nations of a Caesar, a Cromwell, or a Napoleon, the influence over the minds and hearts of men, and the immortal renown of a Homer, a Shakespeare, or a Milton, there is still a more glorious work and destiny for you in the spiritual world, to which all the successes and sorrows of earth are only stepping-stones. If John the Baptist be as great as any who went before him, and if the least in the Kingdom of Heaven be greater than he, then the world's most famous characters are not worthy to be compared with the least of God's children, for their lives, influence and work are spiritual, and they are eternal as God Himself. The object of our lives is to reach this end, and we must be prepared to sacrifice anything that is inconsistent with it, for no matter how pleasing or profitable an earthly possession might be here, it would be a positive injury if it robbed us of eternal