

connected are the two characteristics of those of whom it is said, *that all things work together for their good*. The divine calling and love to God stand related to each other as cause and effect, "Not that we loved God but that he first loved us." It is only when the sinner yields a full and unreserved compliance with the call of the gospel that love to God in the heart takes the place of that hatred which was previously entertained towards him. Prior to his acceptance of the overtures of mercy, the thought of God was associated in his mind only with feelings of enmity and aversion. But now that the holy spirit has effected a saving change on his heart, God is regarded by him as the supreme object of his esteem. In view of the excellencies of the divine character which he sees reflected on the page of inspiration, the language of the Psalmist embodies the sentiments which fill his mind, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in all the earth whom my soul desires beside thee." The love which he cherishes is not an imaginary feeling. It is a principle which engages all the powers of his moral nature. It is an effect which propagates itself through his whole being, extending its influence to every department of his conduct.

Such then are the characteristics of God's people as these are laid down in the text—*they love God and they are called according to his purpose*.

We come now, in the second place, to consider the declaration made respecting the people of God,—*we know that all things work together for their good*.

Some are of opinion that the phrase, *all things*, is not to be taken in its most comprehensive sense, but as having reference only to the sufferings which the apostle speaks of in a previous part of the chapter; and they regard the consideration contained in this verse as an additional reason why the afflictions of believers are not inconsistent with their adoption into the family of God. We prefer, however, regarding the words, *all things*, in their widest and most unrestricted sense, as denoting all the events whether of a prosperous or adverse character, that fall out in the history of God's people. According to this view nothing which can exert an influence upon believers in their earthly course is excepted. The phrase is to be regarded as embracing every corroding care that disturbs the peace and serenity of their minds; every affliction that visits them, every pest that sweeps over their temporal welfare and blasts their best and dearest prospects; every temptation that tends to allure them to the commission of sin; every act of unkindness that is done them. The words are also to be viewed as including in their reference the happy as well as the painful circumstances that fall the lot of believers, such as the pleasures of society and friendship, which they experience in common with other men; the joy arising from daily intercourse with the Father of their spirits; the joy which gladdens their hearts as they meditate on the exceeding light of glory which they know they shall hereafter possess.

Now, of these and all the other points of experience which enter into the earthly lot of God's people, the apostle emphatically declares that they work together for their good, and what truth can better fitted to impart comfort to their minds, exposed as they are to the crosses and afflictions of this nether world. Their course