

heaven. All else, whether it please or pain us, whether it give or take away, all things work together for good to them that love Him.

Nowhere are we taught that it is God's main purpose to give us prosperity. It might have been if He had willed it so, and the earth would have been peopled by a race of imbeciles who, though unruffled by any of the storms of life, were utterly without strength in their inmost souls. The heroes of history are not nursed upon the lap of ease. Theirs is the struggle, the trial and the war; theirs too the final victory. God's main purpose is not to make us prosperous, but to make us good. His chief concern is with ourselves, not with our surroundings. He would build up character. He would have us men. If what we call prosperity will best minister to these ends, then we may be sure we shall have it. But if on the other hand, as is most probable, some discipline of trial is needed to round and perfect our life, then let us be thankful when it comes. If we miss the light affliction, which is but for a moment, we miss also the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Before our thanksgiving can be universal, we must have faith in God, not the easy faith of intellectual assent, but the faith which is rooted in our inmost being. Probably there will be whole periods of our life where such a faith will not seem to need exercise at all. Our affairs moving on in a clear current agreeably to our own desires, we shall begin to wonder, perhaps, why faith is made so much of in Scripture, and in what way it is the victory which overcometh the world. But we have not yet tested it. It is not in fair weather, but when the storm rages that we need the house that is founded upon a rock. Your life and mine will be unlike the lives of most men if it has no season of trial and doubt and fear, uncheered by any friendly ray, unless we believe with an absolute certainty of conviction which it is impossible to destroy in the love and goodness of God, the God of all consolation: the God who hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities: the God who feeds the flock of mankind like a shepherd, gathering the lambs with His arm, and carrying them in His bosom; the God who is a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land: the God who is Father of the man Christ Jesus, tempted, despised, forsaken, yet even on the cross able to look up and say, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."