

Dear Friends,

This month some of us are raring to go, full of plans for the year and already making headway, viewing the future with optimism. Tennyson's words may sit easily with you:

Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, 'It will be happier.' (Alfred Lord Tennyson)

Or you may be among those who already realise that new year's resolutions have fallen by the wayside and it's difficult to maintain one's spirit against the variable winter weather and the continual drain of negative news in the media; for others the circumstances of their life may have taken a negative turn and God seems to have turned a blind eye. He doesn't seem to care because their prayers are unanswered and there is the temptation to feel abandoned by God and alone in the world.

No doubt the majority of us are somewhere in between these extremes. Whatever our personal outlook or circumstance, which can always change, the Christian message is that in Christ we have a firm and confident hope that will not disappoint us. Paul wrote this:

'We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.' (Romans 5: 2-5)

Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? If we hope for what we do not have, we wait for it patiently. (Romans 8: 24-25).

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12: 12, 21)

Paul and the Roman church had endured suffering and showed perseverance. These words are echoed by Christian leaders and writers who have also found them to be true.

We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.
(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Hope is being able to see there is light despite all of the darkness.
(Desmond Tutu)

Darkness comes. In the middle of it, the future looks blank. The temptation to quit is huge. Don't. You are in good company... You will argue with yourself that there is no way forward. But with God, nothing is impossible. He has more ropes and ladders and tunnels out of pits than you can conceive. Wait. Pray without ceasing. Hope. (John Piper)

I trust you have a hope-filled and good year ahead.

By David Crozier

Non-biblical quotes from <http://www.brainyquote.com>