

This new year's eve brings with it some real apprehension for the year to come. There are so many uncertainties which we must face in the days ahead of us. Probably first on everyone's minds is when the virus will get under control so that our lives might return to some form of normalcy. Then we have the political disfunction in our nation. There is also the weirdness that we have been seeing in the weather, with earthquakes, volcanos, forest fires, and winter storms.

There have been many dramatic events which have occurred during the past year — it seems most of them were bad. Some of these events that had been eagerly anticipated — they did not happen. Obviously, the covid virus caught everyone by surprise. In spite of all of our advances, we are unable to look into the future to see what it holds in store for us. As we begin the new year, the one nagging question in the back of our minds is what will it hold in store for us? The new year may hold many joys, but it may also bring us many sorrows, so all that we can do is hope for the best. Yet, that hoping for the best is not without some very solid footing. Even though we do not know what the future holds in store for us, we do know without a doubt that **GOD WORKS FOR OUR GOOD IN ALL THINGS**. So 1) We wait patiently for what the new year holds, because 2) We know God will graciously give us only what is best for us.

This past year brought about changes which none of us could have anticipated one year ago. The virus seemed to change everything — all the way from total lockdowns, to not being able to shake each other's hands. But through it all, we treasured the blessings which God has promised to give to us, both in this life, as well as the spiritual gifts which Jesus came to win for us. We live in the hope that the Lord will grant us all of His blessings. We can have that hope because in faith we cling to God's promises. Listen to what Paul has to say about hope: **“Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”** (24f) We are no longer hoping and praying about a vaccine because that has already happened. What we do look forward to, and pray about, is what is yet to come in the year ahead of us — things which we have not yet experienced from the hand of our loving God.

Hope for things yet to come is not an idle wish or desire, it is a confident trust that the Lord will hold true to His promises and grant these blessings as He sees best for us. As we look forward to what might be in store for us, we might be tempted to be a little bit afraid, because uncertainty causes us apprehension. But while we do not know the specifics of what is going to be in store for us, we still have our faith and trust in our heavenly Father, and we know that He will never go back on any of His promises. Therefore we know that He will be with us every step of the way, guiding and directing our lives through every moment which He gives us here on this earth. For this reason we do not have to fear the future, even though we do not know what it holds in store for us. We have hope that whatever happens, the Lord will work through it all for our good.

And yet, our faith is not always strong enough to keep us from being afraid about what the future holds. Paul even gives us comfort when that happens: **“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”** (26) The Holy Spirit, who works and strengthens faith in our hearts, knows our weaknesses, and helps us to pray for those things which are only the best for us. Like little children, we do not always want those things which are the best for us. Sometimes we want too much sweetness and joy in our lives. When I was on a sports team, I never really liked it when the coach made us work hard in practices. I would have much rather had easy practices so that I would not be sore and tired when they were over. But he knew that it was only through hard work that we could get our bodies in condition for an actual match. The Lord knows that if He were to allow only joys and happiness in our lives, we would not be prepared to meet the challenges to our faith which are in this world. So, in His wisdom, the Holy Spirit pleads and intercedes for us to the Father so that we receive only those things which will work out for our best interest. Those things will not always be our first choice, but He will work for our good in all things

that come our way. We have His promise on that, even as Paul tells us, **“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”** (28)

God will see to it that we receive only what is best for us because He has given us blessings beyond our comprehension. From eternity, He knew who we were and called us to be His children. He brought the gospel to our hearts, and through His Holy Spirit, worked faith in us so that He could declare all our sins forgiven for the sake of His own Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. It was His love for us that caused Him to do all of these things for us. He did not have to. He could have abandoned us in our sin. But now, since He has shown us how much He truly does love us, how much He cares for the eternal welfare of our souls, how much He was willing to sacrifice so that He could take us to be members of His family forever, certainly in His love, He is not going to stop with those blessings, withholding from us all of those other, lesser blessings that come from His hand. **“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not with Him graciously give us all things?”** (32) God’s love for us is going to compel Him to take care of all of our needs in the year and the decade to come.

We have much for which to be thankful this new year’s eve. The Lord has been true to His promises throughout the past year. We have seen with our own eyes many of the evidences of His care and guidance of our lives so that we experience only those things that will work for our good. That does not mean that we do not experience sorrows and hardships in this life. Those are also used by Him to work for our good. We are still children who do not do everything we are supposed to or ask only for those things which are really for our best. So like any good father, God will not always give us only those things for which we ask, but at times, He will allow things to happen that we would not have preferred. But still, He stands by us, and even uses those trials to bring good out of them for us.

So as we stand before Him on the eve of the new year, we look forward in hope. We do not know what lies in store for us. But that does not bother us because we trust that in all things God will work for our good. With that trust and confidence, we look forward to everything the Lord will bring our way in the future. May our faith ever be that strong that we do not fear and doubt, but trust the Lord will give us only that which will work for our good.