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## 2024 – WE WILL STAND ON EVERY PROMISE OF HIS WORD

2023 is done and finished. Stretched out before us 2024 holds many unknown secrets, lots of unknown factors that we as a fellowship will have to face as the year progresses. When we look back over 2023 there have been many peaks and troughs that had to be coped with, but we are still here in the goodness of Almighty God.

We have, in one way or another, all had our problems and difficulties to deal with, but God has brought us through them.



That fact alone should encourage us to know that we are never alone, never isolated. In our Bibles we have some wonderful promises from our great Saviour as we look to Him to guide us through the coming year.

Around us at this moment we see trouble and strife on all sides. The conflict in Israel and Gaza, protracted war in Ukraine with first one side gaining the upper hand, then the other. Should we be surprised? Should we be downhearted? Matthew chapter 24 verses 6 & 7 tell us. *“And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.”*

So, with that in mind we recall Paul’s word in his letter to the Philippian church. Chapter 3 verses 12 -14 *“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

Please bear mind that Paul wrote this letter to the Philippian church from the confines of a Roman prison. We need to draw encouragement and courage from Paul that though in somewhat of a dire personal situation, his faith and trust in Almighty God never wavered. He *“pressed on towards the goal”* of being united with his Saviour. In the meantime, he pressed on with his God-given commission of spreading the gospel news of what Jesus came to earth to do for mankind. The mankind that He had created and loved, even though so many turn their backs on Him. A love so deep He paid the ultimate price for their and our restoration to His kingdom, if only a spirit of repentance would prevail.

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Isaiah chapter 40 verse 31 conveys yet another promise. *"They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint"* God is here giving reassurance of his ongoing provision for, and participation in, our daily walk with, and service for, our loving Saviour.

Another verse that should reinforce our faith is 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 3 *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* the resurrection of Christ shows our Salvation is secure. We can wait confidently for Christ to come with final salvation.

Looking back to the Old Testament, the book of Zephaniah chapter 3 verse 17 tells us *"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exalt over you with loud singing"* now, what a privilege we have to be in total communion with our Lord every moment of our lives.

Today in 2024, we are as surrounded by exactly the same problems as Habakkuk was in that last quarter of the seventh century BC. In his day it was the Chaldeans (Babylonians) who were the culprits, today it's Russia and terrorist groups among the many we see as being the cause of so much death and destruction. Just read the whole book of Habakkuk, it's only three chapters long!

Habakkuk complains to God that He doesn't answer his many cries for help because of the violence. God responds to this in Habakkuk Chapter 1 verse 5 *"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told."*

Today God is still working. In China despite all the opposition from the state, the church is growing as hundreds upon hundreds are giving their lives to Jesus. In Ukraine, churches are packed to the doors with people trusting in Almighty God for salvation.

In Habakkuk's time, God revealed to him that things would get worse before they got better, then in chapter 2 verse 14 God made a promise. Habakkuk saw the day when the message of the gospel would be known worldwide. God's evangelistic purposes will be realised. This speaks of a great day of culmination, but in the meantime, we labour to fulfil the Great Commission so all may hear of Jesus Christ and his power to save.

Finally, what have we got to shout about? The answer is Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3 *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."*

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We praise the sovereign God because He has planned and worked since before He created our world. Every effort was directed to our salvation. God is at work approaching us as heavenly Father, crucified Son and indwelling Holy Spirit, that He might save and develop our lives into spiritual maturity. This shows the total grace of God in all his sovereign work and rule. His grace appears again as He gives His authority to Christ Jesus to rule the kingdom. And so, we look forward with increasing confidence, firstly in Almighty God that His plans **will** come to fruition, and in the knowledge that he **will** still be walking with us, guiding, and directing us at the end of this year, wherever we may be.

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Discussed at the church-based home group on Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2024.

All scripture references are from the ESV.

