

## **Our Hope—Confidence in Christ for the New Year**

Turning into the New Year, one oft-mentioned word is "hope." "What are your hopes for the new year?" "What do you hope to do?" This kind of "hope" is that of a deeply-held wish, or, as the dictionary defines it, "a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen."

May I suggest that biblical hope is far better and greater than what the dictionary says? Even the dictionary notes that an "archaic" use of hope is "a feeling of trust." That is exactly what the Bible teaches—hope is trust, hope is confidence, hope is expectancy—not merely in a wish or good feeling. That trust, confidence, and expectancy is in God Himself and His promises. Paul the Apostle expresses this well in 1 Timothy 4:10: "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of believers."

Notice that. "We have fixed our hope on the Living God." That is, we have established our confidence and trust on *God*. People make promises, and renege or die. The government makes promises, and comes up short. Even the one we would think to have the most confidence—ourselves—fails us. A fellow said that he made a pledge to himself to lose 15 pounds this past year. He only has 20 more to go!

Now, what kinds of things may we have hope in the year 2018? Here's a few, but certainly not an exhausting list of things we are to have confidence in for the coming year.

--Confidence that ***God's shall accomplish His will***. We don't flail about fretting that God will not accomplish His will. He is God. He is Almighty. Of course, His will shall be done! We pray that, as with all of the prayer that Jesus taught, with great confidence. He does not always reveal to us His ways, but we know for a fact that He will do as He intends, and will do it rather well.

--Confidence that ***God will save people***. God wants people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), and so they will be. Our role is to present the Gospel. God will do the saving. If it were up to you and me to save people, we would make major mistakes. Yet God tells us to proclaim the Gospel, and the Holy Spirit will do His part to see that people trust in Christ for salvation.

--Confidence that ***Christ will build His church*** (Matthew 16:18). This is not speaking of the physical building, but of the universal church and the local church—the body of believers in Christ. We often think the construction should be quick and evident, yet sometimes it takes time to build the church with the people that He is using as spiritual stones. He has an exact place in mind for each of us to serve and glorify Him. Note too, that this is more than saving people from sin; it is building their lives to reflect the image of Christ.

--Confidence that ***Christ will make His church fruitful*** (John 15:1-7, Galatians 5:22-23). Again, our tendency is to look at the external—will the tree be full of fruit? Yet God is seeking to develop good fruit, of which there may not a tremendous quantity (or again, there may well be!), but is of the finest quality and fit for display by the Divine Husbandman. Galatians 5 says that fruit is nine-fold, and it is not always immediately evident how it is developing or how great a harvest it will produce.

--Confidence that ***Jesus will return for His Bride***. Now, this may not occur in 2018; then again, it is as likely in 2018 as it has ever been! We are always to anticipate that "Blessed Hope," and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ! There are no prophecies or conditions yet to be fulfilled for the Rapture of the Church to occur at any time. The disciples looked for a soon return of Christ. Paul taught the soon appearing of Christ! John prayed for the Second Coming as he ended the Revelation. He is coming! Perhaps today!

--Confidence that ***God loves you!*** If you are His, by trusting in His Son Jesus, He loves you now as much as He ever has loved you or will love you! So with that promise with us, we have confidence to live our lives as He intend us to!

Observe that all this confidence is ***in God Himself***. He will do as He has promised. He will make His covenants sure. He will fulfill His Word. Of that, you may have *no* doubt.

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