

From the Pastor's Heart

Happy New Year! We are accustomed to hearing these familiar words of greeting at this time of year; words that are meant to bestow blessings on the recipient that the new year will be better than the one before, and that even more contentment lies ahead.

But these words ring hollow against much of the realities we have woken up to as a nation since the start of 2018. What does "Happy New Year" mean, when after just 27 days into the new year, 130 persons have already been murdered, leaving scores of families in mourning? What does "Happy New Year" mean for the many families whose homes and much of their personal belongings have been destroyed by fire, and worse,

whose loved ones have been burned alive, leaving behind survivors who must now start life all over again? And what does a "Happy New Year" mean for the family members of the 28 victims who have already lost their lives to the carnage on our roadways? What does a "Happy New Year" look like for all these persons?

Is God still a good God, even when he says no?

What does a "Happy New Year" look like for YOU? Is it a year that offers opportunity, success, wellness, prosperity and contentment? What if God's only gift to you this year was his grace? Would you still be able to have a "Happy New Year"? What if, instead of experiencing a problem-free way of life, you encounter loss, hardship and tragedy? Your loved one is gravely ill; you beg God to save his/her life. Or, as the sole breadwinner in your family, you desperately plead with God not to allow you to lose your job. Or, you frantically implore God to remove the inoperable cancer that will eventually take your life. But what if God's answer to you is, "My grace is all you need" (2 Corinthians 12:9)? Would you be content with such a response, or would you think that God is being unfair? Would you still be able to say, "God is good all the time"? Even when tragedy knocks at your door?

Best-selling Christian author, Max Lucado, tells of how his eldest daughter, Jenna, fell into a swimming pool when she was two years old. She was rescued by a quick-thinking friend who pulled her to safety. The following morning, during Max's prayer time, he made a special effort to express his gratitude to God, telling him just how wonderful he was for saving Jenna's life. Then he said, "As clearly as if God himself were speaking, this question came to mind: *Would I be less wonderful had I let her drown? Would I be any less a good God for calling her home? Would I still be receiving your praise this morning had I not saved her?*"¹

Is God still a good God, even when he says no to you? How we answer this question will determine if your New Year is going to be miserable one, or a truly happy one. The choice is ours.



¹ Max Lucado, "Sufficient Grace," Devotionals Daily, newsletter@e.faithgateway.com, accessed 29/01/2018.

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