**2024**  dkm Jan2024

It is now 2024. Happy New Year! The fireworks are over and summer holidays are drawing to a close. We looked forward to this time of the year, to the holidays, the family gathering, and even the fireworks. But what now? What are your plans for 2024? Have you filled all the spots in your 2024 planning calendar? Do you have plans for a holiday, house renovations or even a new house, or maybe a knee operation! Are you hesitant about making travel plans after the experience of COVID lockdowns? Many seem to have forgotten this experience and are back planning where they will go and what they will do in 2024.

Some people have made New Year’s resolutions, but will they keep them? One cricket commentator said he made nine resolutions last year and kept three; so this year he was only making three! We don’t hear much about such resolutions nowadays- why? Usually people resolve to change for the better- is this no longer the case? Are we happy living the way we are? It is good to resolve to change one’s life for the better but we must ask the Lord to help us if we want to succeed. Hopefully we want to spend more time in prayer and reading our Bible.

The word we hear a lot these days is ‘resilience’- we are resilient or must be more resilient. While resilience is important, the Bible speaks of patient endurance which is more positive. Three of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 were commended for their ‘patient endurance’. We must also have hope as we look to the Lord, to what he has done for us on the cross, what he is doing for us today, and what he will do when he comes again in glory. Those who are without God are without hope (Eph 2:12). Let faith, hope, and love mark our lives in this New Year.

COVID reminded us that we are not in control of our lives. As Bible readers, we knew this anyway. James told people making travel and business plans that they didn’t even know what will happen tomorrow (Ja 4:14). They were making plans for the year but they could not even say for sure what would happen the next day! For this reason, and because God is in control and knows what will happen tomorrow, we should pray, ‘If the Lord wills we shall live and do this or that’ (Ja 5:15). Our very life is in God hands. God is sovereign in all things: the weather, our health, our finances, our coming and going, our church, and our nation. So before making plans for 2024 let us first seek the will of God, and remember, ‘Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever’.

Some have made plans not just for 2024 but for years ahead. They have a financial planner looking at their superannuation and their shares. They are planning for a long and comfortable retirement. I had a well-off aunty who planned for a long retirement with her husband. He was a fit man who went swimming every day, but had a heart attack and died. She was devastated; ‘But he was so fit and healthy’ she said. I pray you will not suffer such a ‘loss’ this year, although as believers we talk about ‘gain’ rather than ‘loss’; ‘For me to live is Christ and to die is gain’ (Phil 1:21).

If you are walking close to the Lord- and let us resolve to do so in 2024- if you are walking close to the Lord you will know his will, as well as his peace and his joy (Ja 4:8, Rom 12:2). Nothing that happens in your life will shake you because you know God is sovereign and is in control. He will keep you all the days of your life, and will call you to himself when he chooses. Until that day, let us be looking to the Lord and to his coming, not just to the days and months of 2024.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,*

*And lean not on your own understanding;*

*In all your ways acknowledge Him,*

*and He will make your paths straight* (Proverbs 3:5,6)