

Happy New Year!

It's wonderful to start a new year. Out with the battered, weary and worn; in with the fresh, open and new.

Since I'm wishing you a Happy New Year half-way into January, chances are you've already broken at least one of your fresh, new resolutions (me too!). But whatever the status of your resolutions, you can be encouraged because with the Lord every single day is New Year's Day – a fresh start with new mercies and God's open arms. Every day we have hope. Not because of anything we do right or wrong, but because of His mercy, His sacrifice, and His forgiveness. And while our resolutions will fade and fail, He never will.

In praise of our Lord who is abounding in love,
Jennifer

Life Amid the Earthquakes

I had an amazing experience this weekend.

Sunday morning an earthquake hit at my house. You didn't hear about it on the news because no one outside of my home felt it. It only registered on my personal Richter scale.

Have you ever been shaken by an earthquake like that?

All of us have portions of our life built on fault lines. Often we create the fault line or build in the wrong place. But sometimes, as in this case, God directs us to build on a fault line. In fact, this particularly challenging fault line is in the area where I have most fully given myself to the Lord and His will. You would think that would create an earthquake-free zone, but it's not so.

Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Being a Christian doesn't create a trouble-free life. But having Christ as your Lord and Savior allows you to overcome every earthquake with your hope intact.

Being shaken and cracked was not my amazing experience; it was painful and miserable. My amazing experience came when we headed into church – me with my head down and eyes averted so I didn't have to answer questions about my swollen eyes and red face. We got settled just in time to start singing these words by Matt Redman, "And even when I'm caught in the middle of the storms of this life I won't turn back...I know you are near...Oh no, you never let go. Through the calm and through the storm...No you never let go of me."

The amazing experience was to stand in the aftermath of an earthquake and boldly sing praise to my God with full assurance and hope. To know that He is holding me and I need not worry or fear – even as the smoke and rubble surrounded me.

We all have earthquakes. Some just leave us slightly shaken. Others knock our plans and dreams to the ground and leave us in flames. But, we all have them.

Will your earthquakes shatter your foundation? Or, is Christ your foundation? Money, work, knowledge, even family don't have the power to sustain you through the storms and quakes of life. Only the Lord can guarantee that, "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze (Isaiah 43:2). He alone provides a solid foundation that nothing can change.

Paul says it beautifully in Romans 8, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yes, we will have earthquakes. But with Christ as our firm foundation, nothing can harm us.

(To see the wonderful, complete lyrics of *You Never Let Go* by Matt Redman, click [here](#). To hear the song, do a search on YouTube.)



Dig Deeper

Grab your notebook and Bible and get ready to explore. **Don't rush through!** Take your time to wander through the scripture and let God speak to you.

Looking for earlier lessons? You can print them at http://www.hopeintheLord.org/Downloadable_PDF_Bible_Study_Files.html

Pray for God's wisdom and then begin.

1. Read Romans 8:18-21.
 - a. What do you learn about your present sufferings in v.18?
 - b. Who subjects creation to frustration? Why?
2. Read Romans 8:22-27.
 - a. What do you learn about hope?
 - b. What do you learn about waiting?
 - c. What new thoughts do you have about how the Spirit works in your life?
3. Read Romans 8:28.
 - a. Write it out.
 - b. Circle the word "all."
 - c. Circle the word "good."
 - d. Underline "those who love him and have been called according to his purpose."
 - e. Meditate on this verse, reading it through several times and changing which words you emphasize.
 - f. What is new or challenging to you about this verse?
 - g. What in this verse gives you hope or changes your thinking?
4. Read Romans 8:28-39.
 - a. Answer the questions Paul asks.
 - b. What challenges have you faced?
5. What changes will you make as a result of these passages?



If you don't know Christ as your Savior, now is the time. Find the security and hope He provides that allows you to persevere through the storms of life. If you are a Christian, resolve to praise your God in the storms, secure in His love.

He will never let go,
Jennifer