



# “Happy New Year”...

... easier said than done!?

I have found this quite a difficult sentiment to express to others if I am honest for the simple reason that, despite our hopefulness that 2021 has GOT to be better than 2020, we don’t actually know for sure how it will pan out do we?

Even as our school community continues to successfully adjust to conditions imposed by Lockdown 3 - with staff creating virtual lessons, students engaging online and parents encouraging participation- we may still have questions about the year ahead: Can we still hope for good things to happen? Will everything be all right with my future? **Is there something, anything that we can truly rely on** to bring us peace in the midst of a turbulent world?

Of course, as school Chaplain you would expect my answer to be a resounding YES! **God is our rock and refuge an ever present help in troubled times!** duh! It’s the obvious answer and part of ‘the job’ to remind everyone of this. However, although I do believe it 100%, if I am honest, I have found this quite a difficult truth to live out at times- **it is far easier said than done!** Being a christian doesn’t mean that life is easier, less stressful or even devoid of doubt - however, when everything else I might trust in or rely upon is weighed up against faith in God, my experience is that **He is there with me and He remains when all else falls away.** What I have discovered is that it is in the difficult times that my faith proves real.



This week I sat in on a virtual DT lesson with Mr Buck. He was explaining to students the process of testing materials to create a phone case: adding weights to test its strength, bending it backwards and forwards in a vice to test its flexibility etc. **The whole purpose of testing the material was to put it under stress and see if it would be up to the job...or not.** It would be easy to just pick any material than go through the trouble of testing - but this would be foolish. It is only by going through the trials that the material is found to be resilient and sustainable.

**So it is with our faith in God.** It is through the trials of life that our faith is tested and found to be resilient, sustainable and real. Imagine “a pound of faith.” Although we may not like to admit it, this faith is most likely mixed with trust in other things too.

Our so-called ‘pound of faith’ is perhaps, alloyed with an ounce of trust in our own good actions , a few ounces of trust in our families, an ounce of trust in our abilities and a few more ounces of trust in our wealth, health and status.

Our "pound of faith", it turns out, is more like a few ounces of genuine faith in God alone, and a whole lot of faith in other things that cannot satisfy the infinite longings of our souls.

**The strength of our faith is tested in the moments of affliction, conflict or suffering.** And little by little those things we THINK we can trust are broken, snapped, found wanting and yet God remains. Like a parent may take a step back in order to allow a child to experience difficulties, challenges and trials in order to grow in character, so too God allows us opportunity to test our faith in him - easier said than done!

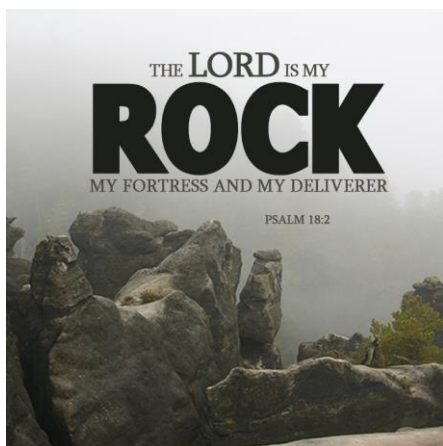
Our health might be affected, removing our trust in personal strength. Some of our wealth may be lost, so to expose and diminish our trust in money. We may pass through severe spiritual afflictions that teach us not to trust in any of our own righteousness, piety or religiosity. Even strains in family relationships, unpleasant as they are, expose our over reliance and trust in family members. Humbling as it may be, our reputation may be shredded to show us how reliant we have been on what others think about us! **We are left to consider...can God alone meet all our needs - or not?**

The apostle Peter uses an analogy to explain that all the various trials we face are like a fire that purifies the gold of our faith. **These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.** (1Peter 1v7)



Impurities remain locked solid in gold until the block is melted in flames of heat. We do not even know the impurities are there! It is only in the fire that they rise to the surface where they can be recognised and then skimmed away. Those things we try to hold onto in life, but good as they are, do not provide peace, are revealed in trials. The Psalmist says this **"My soul finds rest in God alone."** (Psalm 62:1). God has made us so that we find our greatest joy when we trust in Him alone. While our soul trusts in money, reputation, family or education, it will always feel uneasy and be fragile as these may fail at any moment as we have experienced in 2020.

**He invites us to re-centre our faith to rest instead, in Him alone. Easier said than done...but worth!**



#### CHAPLAIN'S CHALLENGE

1. How did you see the New Year in?
2. What were you glad to 'leave behind' in 2020 and what are you most excited about in 2021?
3. Describe a time you trusted in something that turned out to be a let down!
4. How true is it that we get stronger when we go through difficult times?
5. Read 1Peter 1v7 Why does he suggest it is a good thing to suffer tough times?
6. Share your experience of Faith in God by creating a picture, poem or meme based on Faith in God - share it with others ( send a copy to Joe too to include in school worship)

**Prayer: Heavenly Father**, at the start of a new year for us, although we do not know what lies ahead, we are thankful that if we trust in you, you enable us to know your peace, your strength and purpose in life. Test our faith in you Lord that we can be closer to you **Amen**

requests and everything else

Happy to chat about the blog, Christian faith, prayer

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