



Rev. Dr. Tommy Goode
 Church Growth and Health Consultant
www.mid-america-disciples.org/available-consultants
tommygoode@gmail.com
 417.860.3471 (voice/text)

Flourishing 2024

Struggle ~ Endurance ~ Character ~ Hope

Romans 5:4 (NET)

For I know what I have planned for you,' says the Lord. 'I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope. Jeremiah 29:11 (NET)

What is it that we faith-filled pilgrims need in the opening days of a new year...? In answer, I am drawn to the “hope-filled” texts of scripture. These references to the ancient affirmations from Jeremiah and the learning outcomes from the Apostle Paul point us toward a posture of active HOPE. I choose to be HOPE-FILLED in these days where the public narrative is too often portrayed as *dire, dreadful, and despairing*.

Life sometimes gives us lessons if we are paying attention. For example, last week we looked out our window and saw a disabled and abandoned vehicle blocking our driveway. The following is expression of the inspiration and life lesson that followed in response to this incident with the question: “*Where does resistance and resilience meet?*”

Blocked!

*You sit and stare at the clock
 When the way is blocked
 Thoughts of will it ever clear
 That vehicle disabled in the drive*

*The young guy was so sincere
 He apologized and offered that effort was made
 To get the tow and clear the way*

*But you sit and stare at the clock
 When the way is blocked
 Thoughts of will it ever clear
 That vehicle disabled in the drive*

*Metaphor or simile that opens up the mind
 To thoughts and memories of being blocked
Blocked to choice and freedom's path
Blocked by fear and failure
Blocked by another's behavior
Blocked by what is out of control
Blocked while waiting and watching the clock*

How we (Jesus Followers) experience resistance is telling on our capacity to respond to resistance with faith and resilience. Resilience seems to be baked into what it means to be a practicing believer. So many biblical illustrations and narratives come to mind. I am choosing to focus in this writing on what inspires me to meet resistance with forward-leaning hope.

I recently read that, “beginning in 1755, John Wesley (founder of Methodism) encouraged gathering for worship on New Year’s Eve for a Covenant Renewal Service... central features of this service are remembering the past year—something of a communal examen—as well as recommitting to following Christ...” **In these early days of a new year**, perhaps Wesley’s stratum might move me and my fellow believers to grounding acts that *remembers the past... involves self-reflection... and reaffirms faithful discipleship disciplines*. After all, I believe with confident faith that God has our back, our present, and our future. As the old hymnal lyrics go, *Wholly lean on Jesus’ Name.*” Amen!

Join with me in celebrating our heritage and our vision as “People of the Chalice.”
 LOVE GOD! LOVE PEOPLE!

-end-