

FAITH OR FATE?

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“Have a good day!” is perhaps the most commonly used greeting ever. We want our dearest loved ones to have a good day. We also express that wish to strangers. Have you ever started up a conversation with a someone as you waited in line together to get to the cashier in the grocery store? It starts out with a comment about the weather, followed by some chit-chat about what you are doing that day, until it’s your turn to check out and pay, then as you leave, you and your new acquaintance (you didn’t even exchange names) say to each other, “Hey, have a good day!”

What do we mean by that? Probably, if you thought about it (though you likely didn’t), you meant something like, “I hope you don’t have a traffic accident, a flat tire, get sick, lose something important to you, nothing breaks. I hope people are nice and not mean to you. I hope your family is well and happy. I hope you have good luck and not bad.” It’s a nice wish. Of course, if everything goes well, then a person will have a happy day.

But what about the possibility, or even the likelihood, that something bad might happen that day? Could a person still have a good day? As Christians, we believe that we can have a good day even when we are having a bad day! That is, we can be happy and thankful if things are going well or even if something bad happens. This is why when Paul wrote to Christians he did not wish for them to have a day in which everything goes well and nothing bad happens. So he wrote to them, *“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”* His wish for these Christians to experience joy and thanksgiving applied in all circumstances, good or bad, they might face. He instructed them, as believers in God’s care and providence, not to let joy depend on unpredictable, changing circumstances. Rather regardless of how things turn out, whether good things happen or bad things, to be joyful and to give thanks. We can choose joy rather than sadness, peace rather than stress. A good day depends on our faith, not our fate.

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)