

THANK GOD FOR FLEAS

I Thessalonians 5:18

November 23, 2008 Sunday am

INTRODUCTION

- A. In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells about an incident that taught her the principle of giving thanks in all things. It was during World War II. Corrie and her sister, Betsy, had been harboring Jewish people in their home, so they were arrested and imprisoned at Ravensbruck Camp. The barracks was extremely crowded and infested with fleas. One morning they read in their tattered Bible from 1 Thessalonians the reminder to rejoice in all things. Betsy said, "Corrie, we've got to give thanks for this barracks and even for these fleas." Corrie replied, "No way am I going to thank God for fleas." But Betsy was persuasive, and they did thank God even for the fleas. During the months that followed, they found that their barracks was left relatively free, and they could do Bible study, talk openly, and even pray in the barracks. It was their only place of refuge. Several months later they learned that the reason the guards never entered their barracks was because of those blasted fleas.
- B. As we all well know, its easier to thank God for our blessing, and we all have many blessings to be thankful for.
1. But what about the fleas? Can you thank God for the fleas in your life?
 2. Our fleas may be different from those experienced by Corrie ten Boom, but we all have them (i.e. health issues, family, financial, job, etc). What about all those fleas?
 3. Let's consider what we have to be thankful for when all we can see all around us are fleas?

I. THANKSGIVING WAS BORN OUT OF ADVERSITY.

- A. Thanksgiving may be the purest holiday we Americans celebrate. There is less commercialism, at least until the Christmas sales begin the day after.
- B. The first American Thanksgiving was held in 1621 when the Pilgrims in the tiny Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts feasted with members of a local tribe of Native Americans.
1. On the menu were eels, clams, lobsters, cod and bass as well as a turkey or two.
 2. Only 52 settlers survived that first harsh American winter.
 3. They feasted not because of their abundance, but because of their survival.
 4. Like Corrie ten Boom, they were grateful for their fleas!

II. SOMETIMES THANKSGIVING CAN BE A CHALLENGE.

- A. A few years ago, **Oprah Winfrey** wrote the following in her magazine (Nov., 200)...
"Gratitude comes easily when our lives are in order—when the bills are paid, the children are behaving, our health is good. But our challenges are what bring the chance for transformation. And it is during our deepest pain that we can be most grateful, because we know our hardship will deliver a lesson that refines our character---and when you can give thanks in the midst of your trial, know that you are becoming your finest."
I didn't know Oprah was a Baptist! I really don't think she is.
- B. The Apostle Paul also says we should give thanks even when its difficult, or especially when its difficult—I Thessalonians 5:18.
1 Thessalonians 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
1. Notice we aren't told to be thankful "for" our problems and hardships, but "in" them or in spite of them.
 2. Out of great suffering can come our greatest expressions of gratitude.

3. Anyone can thank God when things are going good. Its takes a person of faith, however, to thank Him when fleas are all around.
- C. Sometimes blessings can come from adversity.
1. One cold morning a young mother was outside shoveling snow off the driveway. Her neighbor passed by and asked why her husband wasn't doing that. The young woman replied that one of them needed to stay inside with the kids so they flipped a coin to decide who would shovel snow. The neighbor said I'm sorry you have such bad luck. The young mother replied, Don't be sorry, I won!
 2. Someone expressed it like this....I'm thankful for....
 - a. the mess to clean up after thanksgiving lunch because it means I have been surrounded by family and friends.
 - b. the taxes I pay because it means I have a job.
 - c. the clothes that fit a little too snug because it means I have plenty to eat.
 - d. a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing because it means I have a home.
 - e. all the complaining I hear about our government because it means I have freedom of speech.
 - f. my huge utility bill because it means I have heat.
 - g. the alarm clock that goes off every morning because it means I'm alive.

CONCLUSION

- A. If God has blessed you, and he has all of us, give thanks.
- B. If there are a few fleas in your life, give thanks for those too.