

11-14-19 Thursday Thoughts by Joan

As we go through this season of thanksgiving... a season in which we should be reminded that we are to **"In everything, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."** (1 Thessalonians 5:18) The verses preceding this are of equal difficulty to achieve... **"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing"** Rejoice... Pray continuously... Give thanks always... these are difficult requests of Paul. Yet, if you know anything about Paul... you know he is not one to ask something of someone else he would not willingly do himself...

So how does one even go about rejoicing always... Praying without ceasing... always giving thanks to God in every circumstance? How do you rejoice when you are in insufferable pain? How do you rejoice when a horrific storm has just leveled your home? How do you rejoice when someone very near and dear to you has departed from your presence... never to be seen or held in your embrace ever again in this life? The answer to 'how in the world do you accomplish this' is found in looking to the future and the eternal hope promised to every Christian. In Romans 12 Paul tells us the context of our rejoicing... it is 'hope'. In times of trials and tribulations Christians can look forward to the time God has promised us in eternity... a time without the trials of this world... God's promise is that when all is said and done... He will turn our trials... however difficult... into eternal good... Some trials... many of our trials will come to an end in this lifetime... However, there are those that will have to be endured for a lifetime by some... an earthly lifetime... Not a joyful thought...

True joy... however... is not grounded in personal sentiment or emotions... nor in a stoic resolution to bravely face the future... True joy is grounded in the fact that the crucified Savior... who died for the sins of you and me... will come again in fulfillment of His promises... The pattern was established by Jesus... suffering precedes glory... and holds true for all who trust in Him and are united to Him by the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus suffered and was raised... we are promised the same thing...

And how does one 'pray without ceasing?' ... Prayer assumes that a relationship exists between a person and God... therefore that person can believe that God is listening... and God will take us seriously... This doesn't mean that God will always answer our prayers just as we ask... because sometimes we ask for things that are not in accordance with God's will for our lives... And God's will for our lives always... always... is what is best for us ... we might not see it that way in the present... but in the long scope of things... God wants to help you live the life He desires for you... He wants a walking-talking relationship with you... A very popular verse (and favorite of mine) tells us **'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'** (Jeremiah 29:11). So, do not be disheartened when God doesn't answer your prayer in accord with your wishes... perhaps your wishes are not in your best interest... God knows far more about what's going on than we do... than we ever will... So why do we need to be in constant contact with Him... you may ask... The purpose is to recognize our need... many times when we voice our needs to the Father... we come face-to-face with our needs for the first time... God wants us to recognize... acknowledge ... and confess each need... Jesus wants to be your best friend... and you cannot grow into that kind of a relationship without constant truthful communication...

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And now we come to the 'in everything give thanks' ... impossible you might be saying... I think this can best be explained with a story... a true story mind you... by Corrie ten Boom... it goes like this... *"Corrie and her sister, Betsy, were prisoners in a Nazi concentration camp. The camp was horrible. Fleas nearly drove them crazy. Fleas were everywhere. Fleas got in their hair and under their skin. Fleas made it impossible to sleep. Corrie and Betsy had no soap or flea power. The fleas swarmed unchecked. It was terrible.*

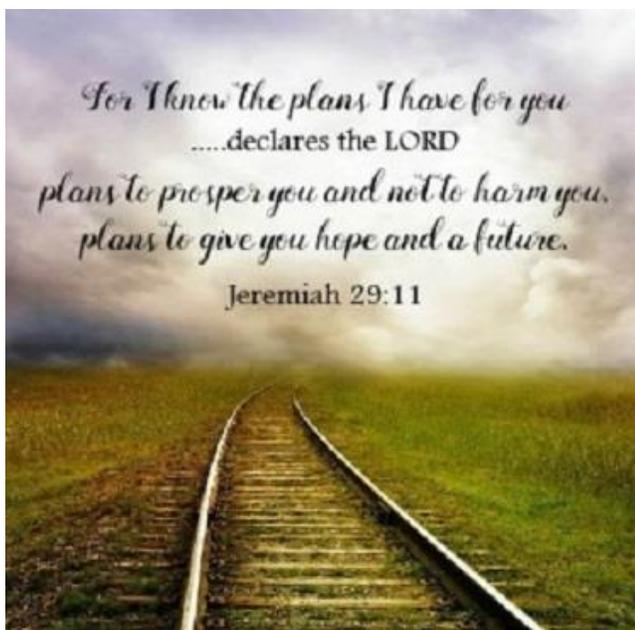
Betsy mentioned this verse, "in everything give thanks." Corrie said, "I can't give thanks for the fleas." Betsy said, "Give thanks that we're together. Give thanks that they didn't check our belongings, and we have our Bible." So Corrie agreed to give thanks for her sister and for their Bible. They didn't give thanks for the fleas, but they did give thanks while living a flea-bitten existence.

Much later, Corrie discovered that the fleas had been a blessing in disguise. She learned that the guards often raped women prisoners. But the guards never touched the women in Corrie's section of the camp, because they didn't want to expose themselves to the fleas. Corrie said that this taught her to give thanks for all things—because you never know."

So keeping this example in mind we can surmise that we never really know all that is going on... but we have an omniscient God that does... and is always working things together for our benefit! We must consider that these three commands are not the product of human wisdom.... They come from God... it is God's will that Christians obey these three commands... for their own good.... and for their own spiritual growth... it's a part of God's plan for our lives...

We as Christians can rejoice in the midst of our suffering... because of Jesus... He has secured and now guarantees our future joy... and this is for all those whom He redeems...

With all Joy,
Joan ☺



“Rejoice always, **pray** continually, **give thanks** in all circumstances; for this is **God’s will** for you in **Christ Jesus”**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18