

Thankfulness: “Thank You, God, for the Fleas”
Adapted from *Hero Tales: Volume II*, by Dave and Neta Jackson

Corrie Ten Boom and her family served the Lord by helping to hide Jews during World War II. Even though she was arrested and imprisoned, her faith remained strong.

I and my sister Betsie were roughly pushed into Barracks 28 at Ravensbruck, a “work camp” for prisoners. We stared at the stacks of wooden sleeping platforms crowded into the large room. Only a narrow walkway cut between. The platforms were three deep and covered with dirty, stinking straw. There wasn’t even enough room to sit up.

We had just arrived by train along with hundreds of other prisoners, crushed together for three days with eighty women in a freight car. Exhausted, we crawled onto the platform that had been assigned to us. But within moments, I sat up quickly and bumped my head on the platform above. “Fleas!” I jumped down to the floor. “The place is crawling with fleas! I...I don’t know how I can cope with living in such a terrible place!”

“Corrie, I think God has already given us the answer,” my sister Betsie said. “What was that verse we read from the Bible this morning?”

I pulled out my Bible from the bag I wore on a string around my neck. In the dim light, I read from I Thessalonians:16-18: “‘Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.’ Oh, Betsie, that’s too hard in a place like this!”

“No, come on, Corrie—let’s try. What are we thankful for?” my sister asked.

“Well...if we must be in this awful place, I’m thankful that we’re together.”

“And that the guards didn’t find the Bible you had hanging down your back!” added Betsie.

I nodded gratefully. “Maybe we should thank God for how crowded we are in here because that way more women will hear the Word of God when we read it aloud!”

“That’s right!” Betsie’s eyes danced. “And thank you, God, for the fleas—“

“No, Betsie! I can’t thank God for the fleas. There’s nothing good about them.”

“Well, we’ll just have to wait and see,” my sister answered.

Every day we were awakened at 4:30 A.M. and forced to stand outside in the cold for roll call. Then we worked an eleven-hour day. We were given black bread for breakfast and a thin soup of turnips for supper. The only thing we had to look forward to was when all of us stumbled back to the barracks at night. Before we went to sleep, Betsie and I would open our smuggled Bible and read God’s Word to the other women.

At first, we posted lookouts to keep a watch for the guards. Anyone caught with a Bible would certainly be killed. But day after day passed, and no guards came into Barracks 28. Soon we read the Bible twice a day, and more and more women listened. No one bothered us.

One day, Betsie grabbed my arm and whispered, “I know why no one has bothered our Bible studies. I overheard some of the guards talking. None of them wants to come into Barracks 28 *because of the fleas!*”

I wanted to laugh. “All right, Lord. Thank you for the fleas!”

Thankfulness helps us look for the ways God can use everything—even bad things—for good.