

**Thanksgiving Celebration Service 2020**  
Thankful For The Fleas w/ *Canaan Sloane*  
*1 Thessalonians 5:14-18*  
Memory Verses: *1 Thessalonians 5:18*

**MANUSCRIPT**

**Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle) – Shevi**

Corrie Ten Boom, the famous Christian Holocaust survivor, told a story in her book, *The Hiding Place*, about being thankful in a concentration camp. The story goes like this. Her and her best friend Betsie had just arrived at the Ravensbruck Concentration Camp not long after being arrested for harboring Jews in her attic. They were assigned to the same dormitory dubbed Barracks 28. It was a very close quartered room packed to overflowing with other women. After a long day of work they were served their one meal for the day, a bowl of turnip soup. After dinner they would read their smuggled in Bible by a very dim light and conduct worship services with the rest of the women. One night after worship Corrie was really struggling with the nausea that arose each night from the stench of the barracks and the smell of the rotting straw they were made to sleep on, when suddenly she felt something pinch her leg. Again, and again... she felt a pinch. She wondered what new torture this might be. She discovered that it was a flea... many fleas, the whole place was crawling with them. She looked over at Betsie and said... "how can we go on living in such a place as this?"

Betsie bowed her head, and asked a simple prayer... "Lord, show us how." After a few seconds Betsie lifted up her head and said... "the Lord has given us the answer, just as he always does." Corrie... thought, "what answer could he possibly give us." Betsie answered, "do you remember what we read today in the scriptures?" Corrie answered, "yes, we were in 1 Thessalonians." She picked up her Bible, checked for any guards, and then read **1 Thessalonians 5:14-18**. Betsie said, "that's the answer. Give thanks in all circumstances! That's what we can do. We can start right now to thank God for every single thing about this new barracks!" Corrie stared at her; then around at the dark, foul-aired room. "Such as?" "Such as being assigned here together. Such as the Bible you're holding in your hands." Corrie looked down at the Bible and began to pray, "Yes! Thank You, dear Lord, that there was no inspection when we entered here! Thank You for all these women, here in this room, who will meet You in these pages." Betsie chimed in, "Yes, Thank You for the very crowding here. Since we're packed so close, that many more will hear! And, thank you for the fleas."

"Thank you for the fleas?" Corrie said with surprise. "How in the world can we be thankful for the fleas?" Betsie assured her, "I don't know

how, but thank him anyway."

As the months went by Corrie and Betsie were able to lead more worship services and share the Gospel freely to every woman in the barracks. It got to the point where so many were interested in their preaching that all of their free time in the barracks was dedicated to the preaching of the Gospel. The guards never came in and so they were free to preach as much as they wanted. At night Corrie and Betsie would wonder... why in the world do the guards never come in the barracks? They watch us in the yard, they watch us all the time, but never in the barracks.

One day Betsie was given an answer. She overheard a guard mention why they never came in the barracks... because of the fleas. They would not enter the barracks because they were scared to death of the fleas. As she told this to Corrie, Corrie broke down in tears and in prayer. She remembered the conversation about being thankful for the fleas... wondering how in the world she could ever be thankful for such a miserable plague... and yet it was for this little bug that God had blessed them with, that they were given all the freedom they needed to share the Gospel with the women in the barracks. She cried out, "thank you Jesus, for the fleas."

We all need to learn to thank God for the fleas. **When You Find It Hard To Thank God For Something... Thank Him Anyway.**

Today is the fifth Sunday of the month, and right before the Covid restrictions were put in place, we tried to institute every 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday as a Next Gen service where we would incorporate our children and youth into the worship service. Unfortunately, the first Sunday we were going to launch this back in March was the first Sunday we had to cancel services for Covid. Now in 2021 we would like to get rolling with our Next Gen services again... but for this 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday we have a special treat. Today, one of our students is going to share with us a little about what God has been speaking to him about thankfulness. Would you welcome my son, Canaan Sloane, as he comes to share with you how God has taught him to be thankful in 2020 and how we can all learn to be thankful... even for things we don't like so much.

**Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God) – Canaan Sloane**

Hello, my name is Canaan. I'm 14 years old, a freshman at Chatham High, and I'm usually in the back there with Chris running the media. But today I'm blessed to be able to preach the Word of God to my home church. And for that I am very thankful. And I'm also speaking about thankfulness. So let's get into it. How can we be thankful for the fleas? How can we be thankful when God gives us things or situations that don't feel great? I've got four promises from God today that I want us to focus on that will help us be thankful for the fleas.

The first is this... **Even When You Can't See Him, God Is Working.** Look with me at a couple of verses here. **John 5:17, 1 Corinthians 12:6, 2 Corinthians 3:18, & Romans 8:28** all talk about how God loves us and is

working behind the scenes to help us in our walk with him. But there is another verse that really hammers this point home. Look with me at **Philippians 2:13**. It's simple, God gives us the desires to please him. We are only here to give God glory and we can't on our own. We can't do anything on our own, we have to have God's help for everything whether that be walking or driving a car, to worshiping and praying. Have you ever thought of that, that you have to have God's help to worship God? When I read these verses I thought about God working behind the scenes and how it relates a lot to the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus rose into heaven He gave the disciples, and us, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a great gift from God that we receive when we accept God into our hearts. The Holy Spirit is what fills you and encourages to praise God and spread his word. The Holy Spirit also prays on your behalf even when you yourself are not praying. What a gift that God is praying for us on his behalf. As many of y'all have heard the song Way Maker, the bridge part of the song talks about how God is working even when we can't feel his presence. Normally we want to give God thanks for generic things but we really need to be thankful for everything, even our failures and flaws because even though we can't see it God is using them to draw us closer to him. Listen, **we often don't consider the storms in our life a blessing because we fail to see how God is using them to draw us closer to Him**. Philippians 2:13 makes it clear.. God is working in your storms to draw you closer to him... and so we must thank him for the storms. **When You Find It Hard To Thank God For Something... Thank Him Anyway**.

The second promise we need to see here is this... **Even When You Feel Lost, God is Making a Way**. Sometime life is hard, difficult and merciless. I know because I have to go to high school... and the work there is hard and merciless. Sometimes I just want to give up and just get a "0" on my papers and not do the work. But my mom encourages me and helps me get through my work and because of that I maintain good grades. In the same way my mom helps me with my work God helps us and encourages us to do his good work even when we don't feel encouraged to. I am thankful for that. Im sure that many of you have heard this before but God moves in mysterious ways. **God has a plan for your life, even when you feel that you don't have a purpose in life**.

When you have a purpose in life you feel more thankful. God gives us a purpose and that is to live for him. When we live for god we are at are most thankful. Thankful not just for the good things but for the bad things in our life. I know a man in the Bible called Job, and Job lived for God most of his life, was very wealthy, had hundreds of cattle sheep, and big family, servants, and more. God allowed Satan to take everything

away from him - his family, his house, servants, livestock, and health. Even through the hardest time of his life Job remained thankful and praised God. **Job 1:21** says, "naked I came from my mothers womb and naked I shall depart. The lord gave and the lord has taken away blessed be the name of the lord." If Job can find purpose in the midst of tragedy... and be thankful for it... so can you. **When You Find It Hard To Thank God For Something... Thank Him Anyway**.

The third promise from God about being thankful when you don't want to be is this... **Even When Things Look Bad, God is Good**. Look with me at a familiar story in **Genesis 22:1-19**. Some of you might know this story, the story of Abraham and Isaac, how God came to Abraham and told him to go up and sacrifice his son. Abraham immediately took his son and went to the place God told him to go. As he got ready to sacrifice his son God offered up a ram to take Isaac's place and be killed instead. I bet Abraham was very thankful to God for sparing his son. Abraham was obedient to God and was thankful for it. Being obedient to God means being thankful even when we can't understand how or why. When we obey God we are thankful... when we obey God we become thankful. God has a plan even when we can't see it. Even when things look bad God is good. Both Job and Abraham were in tough spots but they also were obedient to God and in the end were thankful. Because Job and Abraham were obedient they were rewarded. Job got everything he had lost back... and then some. Abraham was promised more offspring than stars in the sky. Im not saying that you will get all you wishes granted if you obey God but you will be thankful to God for helping you be obedient. Abraham was thankful to a God who took a bad situation and made it good. When your situation looks bad... thank God... cause he's making it good. **When You Find It Hard To Thank God For Something... Thank Him Anyway**.

And finally, the last promise is this... **Even When You Feel Cheated, God Gives Good Gifts**. Have you ever felt cheated in life.. or by God? Its like that one time at Christmas when you want Jordans but get socks and you're like what, why did I get this when I asked for Jordans not knowing that one week from then you really need socks and have some. **James 1:17** says every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of the heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows. **Matthew 7:9-11** says, "which of you, if your son asks for bread will give him a stone or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him." I think sometimes that we forget that the gifts we are given are good gifts. Just like Cory Ten Boom with the fleas. She thought that the fleas were a pest and a nuisance and didn't know how to thank god for them but then she found out that the fleas

were what kept the Nazi's out of the barracks and allowed her to lead worship and share the gospel to the other women. she thought that god had given her a snake when he really had given her a fish she thought that God had given her a rock when he had given her a loaf of bread. lets be honest, how many time have we looked back and thought that god had given us a snake when he had given us a fish. **We have to learn to thank God for rocks, snakes, and fleas trusting that he will turn them into something good. When You Find It Hard To Thank God For Something... Thank Him Anyway.**

### **Application**

Let's be honest, we struggle to be thankful for the most obvious things; family, friends, our homes, jobs, transportation, health, food etc... How much more is it a struggle to be thankful for the things that aren't so obvious or are things we don't want to be thankful for such as the fleas. Today God is calling some of us to be more thankful... not just for the obvious things but for the hard things. God has you where he has you today to show you his goodness through his mysterious ways. Would you be willing to thank him today for your financial stress, your struggling relationship, your failing health, your frustrations and stresses? You never know how he's going to turn it around for your good. **When You Find It Hard To Thank God For Something... Thank Him Anyway**

### **Conclusion**

Let's Pray and then we will take some time to allow you to share your testimonies of thankfulness for what God has done in your life. Perhaps some of you will even thank God for the fleas. Then Pastor Shevi will lead us in a prayer of Thanksgiving as we close.