

Thanksgiving
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“Give thanks in all circumstances” (1st Thessalonians 5:18a NIV).

Note, our title does not say, “Give thanks **for** everything” but rather, “Give thanks **in** all circumstances.” We cannot be thankful for everything that happens in this world because so much is contrary to God’s will. We certainly cannot be thankful for the suffering, sorrow and separation caused by sin and selfishness.

But rather I believe it is saying that in every situation, under whatever the circumstances God has permitted to happen, we can be thankful that He can be bringing a blessing out of what seems to be a disaster.

In my search through secular and sacred literature I have never found a more vivid example of this truth than in the story of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37 – 50. Joseph faced 2 counts of grievous injustice – sold into slavery by his own brothers and then wrongly convicted and imprisoned for life. He could have said, “I do all the right things and end up in prison as a slave.” But no, he did not lose faith, he rested in God’s promises.

Then thankfully, these unspeakable tragedies turned out to be blessings in disguise. Because of his God-given gift for accurately interpreting dreams, Joseph won the confidence of Pharaoh. This led to his becoming Prime Minister of Egypt and being reunited with his family. Their lives were spared during the seven years of famine.

This account unveils a remarkable truth. If Joseph had never been sold into slavery and later thrown into prison, the story could never have had a glorious ending. All the dreadful things had to happen first. During those 13 years of slavery, God was making a man out of this proud, pampered son of Jacob and working behind the scenes for his highest good.

After the death of father Jacob, the brothers feared that Joseph would take revenge because of their sin against him. But no, Joseph saw the big picture. He replied, “Am I in the place of God? Revenge is His responsibility. You intended to harm me, but God meant it for good to save many lives.” Joseph forgiveness was complete.

Over the years I’ve seen some of the best families torn apart because of conflict over a will, property or something trivial. Don’t let it happen, life is too short! You only harm yourself when you refuse to be reconciled.

These same truths can apply to our lives today. Perhaps, some of your dreams have been destroyed by the heartless law of cause and effect. You look at some of the tragedies of life such as the premature death of a friend or loved one and

nothing makes sense. You feel like giving up in despair. But God says, “Hold it, I’m not finished yet!”

Today, we are in the midst of history and everything seems to be against us at times. But, God’s plan is still unfolding and the day is coming when all wrongs will be righted, justice vindicated and truth prevail.

“For we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him” (Romans 8:28).