

Chapter 34

When the message started Jenni forgot all about the big man. The pastor was talking about being thankful even in the bad things that happen in life. She was intrigued because she'd certainly had enough bad things in her life but she'd never seen any need to be thankful in them.

The pastor clarified the difference between being thankful *in* and being thankful *for*, and Jenni began to understand. You could be thankful to God 'in' anything because God is bigger than anything you faced and you could be thankful to God 'for' all the good things he gives. Being thankful 'in' was based on the goodness of God himself, which never changes. Being thankful 'for' was based on receiving things from God.

"It's much too easy to focus so much on the things to be thankful *for*, all the good things that God gives us, that we forget about being thankful *in* everything," the pastor said. "God is always good. It's an integral part of his character. He can never be anything but good. Anything that he allows us to go through is going to be used for good. It may be horrible if we look at it by itself, but Paul promised us in Romans 8:28 that God works all things for the good of those who love him. That's *all things*, even things that are too horrible for you to think about or talk about. If you love God, truly love him

not just give him lip service, you'll discover that God has worked even those bad things for your good.

"What is it that you think you can't be thankful *in*? Did you ever stop to realize that on that first Good Friday, no one found anything to be thankful *in*? The disciples were firmly convinced that Jesus was the Messiah whom the Israelites had long awaited, but he was brutally killed. Most of us today cannot begin to understand how devastating Jesus' crucifixion was for his followers because we don't understand the religion and culture that Jesus lived in.

"Imagine for a moment that someone comes along with the ability and charisma to resolve all the conflicts in the Middle East, to end the war over there forever. Imagine that even as our soldiers begin to hope that they'll be home for good, our own government, in conjunction with the Iraqi government publicly and brutally murders him. That's kind of the way Jesus' believers felt on that first Good Friday – hopeless and betrayed.

"But God had a plan that no one could see. No one but Jesus.

"For two nights, Jesus' disciples tossed and turned on their beds, trying to figure out what had gone wrong. They had no hope because there was nothing to hope in anymore. Then the Son rose on Sunday morning and they discovered a hope that far exceeded the expectations they'd had before the crucifixion.

"Look again at whatever it is that you can't be thankful *in*, then look some more. Keep on looking and one day, I promise you, you will find something you can be thankful *for* that can be tied back to that thing you couldn't be thankful *in*. Maybe it'll be a friend whom you can help through a difficult time because you've already been there. Maybe it'll be a job that you find because you met someone during what you saw as a disaster. I don't know what it is, but I guarantee that God is faithful and he is going to work *everything* for your good."