

*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. -  
Philippians 3:1, 4:4*

I have a friend who LOVES the rain! In fact, the harder it rains, the better! She could watch it for hours. But to tell you the truth, I never understood her fascination. I always found rain kind of gloomy and depressing. If things could go the way I like them, we would always have just one beautiful, warm sunny day after another! In fact, I have often prayed for warm sunny days when we have important family gatherings or camping trips! But I have NEVER ONCE prayed for rain- until now!

In La Paz, we are currently experiencing a very severe water shortage! The reservoir that supplies La Paz with water is bone dry. We get water supplied to our home only for a few hours every week, so we fill every bucket and pot and basin we can find when we get water. The rest of the time, we use the water we've stored up- using the same water over and over again to make it last longer! Sometimes water cisterns come around to different neighborhoods, and then we fill up our buckets and bottles again- but the lines are long, and often the trucks run out of water before everyone can fill their containers. Even when we do get water, it is dirty. Many have become sick with typhoid and dysentery. As you can imagine, many people are feeling very anxious about this situation. . . and things have not been easy.

But here Paul tells us to be thankful and to rejoice ALWAYS- not just when everything is easy and pleasant. So- how can we be thankful even for water shortages and droughts? Here are a few of the things that God has been teaching me:

- **To Be Grateful for the Little Things.** How often I have taken God's good gifts to me for granted! I used to shower up quickly, and then stay a little longer under the warm water just because I liked the way it felt. I never saw that as a waste of water, because I was never in a situation where water was scarce. I never thanked God for the water that came into my house, either. It wasn't that I didn't appreciate it, I guess- it's just that I saw water as a given- I took it for granted. So, this water shortage has taught me to see things differently- not just to appreciate all of the big and little ways God takes care of us, but to actually praise Him for His detailed care, and to thank Him!
- **To Walk in Constant Dependence on God.** So many times when we feel threatened, we panic! At least I do! I worry, and I stay up at night, and sometimes I am even consumed by fear. I don't even stop at worrying about the situation at hand, either- my mind often becomes consumed by a lot of "what-ifs"- that never even happen!

But just the other day, God taught me a powerful lesson! I got up early to pray, and as the sun rose, I heard the most beautiful and joyful symphony of birds outside my window! They sang their hearts out, and fluttered about- birds of

every size and species, and I thought to myself- "Wow- **THEY** are obviously not at all concerned about the water shortage!" Clearly! Because they know instinctively that our Heavenly Father will care for them! Our God who clothes the flowers of the field will never abandon us! In fact He has **PROMISED** to care for us, because we are His own beloved children! (Matthew 6:25-33)

So, instead of hoarding water, as some do, or selling it at ridiculous prices- instead of frantically searching for water, and becoming obsessed with it, God showed me to just trust Him. The same God who moved the ravens to bring food to Elijah for over a year, is still on His throne, and He lovingly cares about every detail in the lives of His children! I only need to depend on Him! I only need to ask! He will take care of me, for He knows what I need even before I ask Him!

- **To Trust God's Sovereignty and Love in Every Circumstance.** Do you ever get frustrated with God when things don't go as planned? Do you ever just wish that God would bless what you already determined to do? We like to be in charge. We want control. But this drought has taught me a great lesson about the sovereignty of God.

Because here in La Paz, we are experiencing exceptionally beautiful weather! La Paz is generally fairly cold, but lately, every day is bright and sunny and exceptionally warm- just the way I like it! I always wanted EVERY day to be just like the days are now, and finally, they are!

But that's just the problem, isn't it? This is supposed to be the rainy season! And if it never rains, reservoirs dry up! Plants shrivel! And people thirst.

Sometimes God in His sovereignty sends us- not what we WANT, but what we NEED! **Our** responsibility- is to trust that He knows what He's doing! By nature, we only want God to send us sunny days- but He knows we also need rain! After all, it is in the midst of the storm, that we have our deepest encounters with God. It is when all is gray and cloudy, that we learn to trust in Him! Rain, therefore, is not a gloomy reality to endure- it is a necessary provision from Our Loving Heavenly Father! So, instead of complaining when things don't go as planned, I am determined now to learn to trust even when I don't understand. My God who knows when to send the sunshine also knows when to send the rain. He who is faithful in the sunshine, will keep and protect us in the storm. Our God uses ALL things for our good! And ALL His ways are love!

- **Praise Him for His Power Over all Creation.** We are so self- sufficient. We depend on our resources, our intelligence, and our strength. But tell me, even with all of our technological advances, who can make it rain? Only God! He alone is All- powerful and He alone is All-wise. And for me, personally, this drought has been a very good reminder of that! We are not as big and strong and important as we sometimes think we are! In the end, our lives are a breath. And in all of the Universe, only God stands firm. Nothing else!

How amazing then, that the Almighty God would set His eyes on us to save us and make us His children, don't you think? How amazing that Jesus would die on a cross in order to set us free from the power of sin! He who spoke all things into existence, tells us to cast all our cares upon Him, and to call Him "Daddy!" Isn't that amazing?! And for me, THAT is the best reason to thank Him this Thanksgiving!

Have a happy Thanksgiving!

Love, Debbie