

# Are You Ready for the Next Blessing?

by Roland Foster

In 1910 the boll weevil wiped out the cotton crop in the southern United States. Southern farmers, whose livelihood was dependent primarily upon this single crop, were forced to diversify by planting peanuts and other new crops. Unexpectedly, this change brought prosperity to the region. The farmers in Enterprise, Alabama, were so grateful that in 1919 they erected a monument to the boll weevil in their town square. What had seemed a curse had turned out to be a blessing.

Here's another story: Corrie Ten Boom, in *The Hiding Place*, told how she and her sister, Betsy, had just been transferred to Ravensbruck, the worst German prison camp they had seen so far. They found that the barracks were extremely overcrowded and flea-infested. Their Scripture reading that morning in 1 Thessalonians reminded them to rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in all circumstances. Betsy told Corrie to stop and thank the Lord for every detail of their new living quarters. Corrie at first flatly refused to give thanks for the fleas, but at Betsy's insistence she finally did. During their months at that camp, they were surprised at how openly they could hold Bible study and prayer meetings without interference. Several months later they learned that the guards would not enter the barracks because of the fleas.

What should we learn from these stories? That insect pests are always a blessing in disguise? That "Every cloud has a silver lining"? Even that "All things work together for good," with or without conditions?

Let me tell you a harder one: At the age of 70 my dad was diagnosed with colon cancer. Three years later Daddy was dead. That was many years ago, and I still miss him, and often find myself wishing I could share something with him or ask his wise advice.

Where are the silver linings, the blessings, in my dad's too-early death? Actually, there are a few. First, during those three years my parents began to really communicate for the first time in a long time, perhaps the first time ever. Their habit had been to keep quiet about things that might upset the other; now they talked, shared, cried together, and grew very much closer. Secondly, Daddy stopped drinking. He had been a borderline alcoholic for many years, never really incapacitated by booze but certainly dependent upon it. Finally, in my judgment, Daddy was spared what might have been miserable years of declining health and abilities, together with societal changes that would have distressed him a lot. (NOT, I emphatically add, that WE should ever seek to "spare" someone whatever old age might bring; but if God so chooses, why not acknowledge it?)

From these stories and others, I believe God wants me to know just two things:

1. He is in control.
2. I cannot understand how He works — and I don't need to.