This week I was helping one of our high school grandsons with an English assignment to evaluate the messaging within the writings of author Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. I was familiar with Vonnegut’s name but had not read his books (one of the best known is “Slaughter-house Five,” which was also made into a movie in 1972) probably because of the sense of darkness and lack of hope they portray.

In considering Mr. Vonnegut’s writings, it was clear what contributed to the formation of his world perspective. His books, though fictional, in reality processed his personal experiences as a German POW in Dresden, Germany at the time of the 1945 incendiary bombing by Allied Forces. Vonnegut and other POWs survived the bombing by seeking shelter in the meat cooler under the slaughterhouse where the POWs were kept. Post-war, he lived with PTSD and depression, as well as a deep unrealized longing to see the world as it could be versus what it was in the reality of postwar Europe. Vonnegut described himself as an atheist/agnostic, yet expressed anger at the God who allowed such devastation.

We were saddened by someone having such terrible life experiences, and for countless others who have suffered in various circumstances that are beyond comprehension. Mr. Vonnegut lived in the pain of emotional and spiritual turmoil (though late in life, there is some indication, in a letter he wrote to a colleague, that he may have come to understand the significance of the love and sacrifice of Christ.)

As I thought of Mr. Vonnegut’s plight, the Lord brought another person to mind, a contemporary of his, who also suffered terribly during World War II. Corrie TenBoom, a Dutch woman, was imprisoned in Ravensbruck, a German concentration camp during World War II. Her family were Christians, and had hidden many Jewish people who were trying to escape the Nazis.
The family was reported and taken away by the Nazis. Though Corrie and her sister experienced the worst of human cruelty, she had a very different life perspective. She had a personal relationship with Christ, and even though the suffering and death of her family, she continued to trust her Heavenly Father. She had faith in Him that, “There is no pit so deep that God’s love is not deeper still,” and that “Memories are the key not to the past, but to the future. I know that the experiences of our lives when we let God use them, become the mysterious and perfect preparation for the work He will give us to do.”

Corrie TenBoom trusted that no matter what happened to her on earth, Christ was with her and that she and all those who belong to Him would one day be with Him for eternity.

God has provided for us the means for a relationship with Him and for a joyous eternal life through His Son Jesus Christ. No matter what we may experience in this world, in the coming of Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, the Light of Life, everything was changed for us, for eternity! This is the reason we celebrate Christmas!

BLESSINGS & MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Jan & Kit