

Going Through Hot Water

Dear Friend,

As we get older, if we are going to get better and not bitter, we need to daily be aware of the presence and promises of God. Determine now that next time you encounter a crisis instead of panicking, you will pray and remember Is. 43: 2-3. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your God."

We are promised throughout the scriptures that if we pass through the hot flames or the hot waters of life's trials and tribulations, like the tea bag that is not destroyed by the hot water, we will come to see that our purpose for being in such hot water is to change the water through the power of God.

If we are going to not only survive, but actually change the hot waters and flames of life, we must see ourselves not as free floating spiritual tea leaves, but as members of God's community tea bag of love. With His loving presence flowing through His community of compassion, the homeless are given homes, the hopeless are given hope, and the helpless provided help. Those immersed in the hot water of trials and tribulation are able to confidently declare, "God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and Godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness" (2 Peter 1:3).

Living victorious lives involves guarding the spirit or the heart. As Proverbs 4:23 refers to it when it says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issue of life." This passage emphasizes the need to daily guard the mind, emotions, and will power which make up the spiritual heart of each of us. This means we need to carefully watch what we read, what company we keep, and what we let enter our spirit.

The only way we can fulfill our God given purpose of letting our light of love transform the hot waters of adversity, is to put our faith in the Risen Christ. As 1 John 5:4-5 says, "**This is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith. Who is he or she who overcomes the world, but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**"

The heat is on. Satan is mad. We read in Rev.12, that as the resurrection of Jesus Christ takes place on earth, Satan is thrown out of heaven and "he went to make war with those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev 12:17). The key to victory over Satan as he makes his all out attacks is given a few verses earlier in Rev. 12 where it says, "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives to the death" (vs.11).

The victory lies in Jesus Christ. He is the Lamb of who by having his blood shed on the cross for our sins, and then rising victoriously from the dead now provides us victory for all eternity. It is our testimony through word and deed of Jesus that allows this victorious power to flow through us daily.

Here is how it is supposed to work. Suddenly, expectantly I am dropped like a tea bag into the middle of a big hot water problem. The heat is on. What I should be doing is praying but I must confess like many of you I panic and try to figure out how I am going to get out of the hot water problem.

It is when I pray and experience the peace of God that passes all understanding that I am able to rejoice in the hope of God's glorious deliverance. This takes place after His grace has allowed me to turn that hot water problem into the sweet tea of His love. Romans 5:1-5 explains it this way, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through who also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance and perseverance character and character hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

When we are dropped in the hot waters of tribulation, the love of God poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit transforms this hot water into tea. This is the tea of **perseverance, character and hope**. It is this spiritual tea that allows us to produce the fruits of justice and the works of compassion. The end result is food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless and help for the hurting.

Without the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we will never experience the hope that does not disappoint. We will be like tea bags hopping around from place to place singing our Christian songs, but avoiding the hot water of circumstances, which requires the practical application of faith in order to survive.

The hot water of circumstances, or trials and tribulations, include family problems, troubles on the job, or in school, financial difficulties, sickness, rejection, failure, and even the death of a loved one. Survival in the midst of life's hot water is possible only when we allow this hot water to be filtered through God's love, manifested through Jesus Christ, under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Right now I feel like a tea bag that is being dropped into the hot water of overwhelming financial needs. The heat is on. \$280,000 is needed in the next four weeks to meet a wide range of emergency needs. With this burden on my heart I go over to the couch in my office and fall on my knees in prayer. Then I get up and my eyes fall on a Bible verse sitting on my desk. The verse is from 2 Cor. 9:8 which says, "And God is able to make all grace (every favor and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance, so that you may always and under all circumstance, and whatever the need, be self-sufficient (providing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donations)."

Applying this verse from the Amplified Bible was the first step toward experiencing the peace of God provided through Jesus Christ. It made clear to me that God is able to make every blessing come into the abundance needed to provide the necessary assistance for those who were coming for help.

We all reach that point where we get tired out, burned out and worn out. The overwhelming temptation at that time is to think of a way out. Positive thinking is not enough. The religious self-help phrases become increasingly empty with each passing day. God sometimes even becomes a distant memory, along with the adverse hot water circumstances that drove us to Him in the first place.

It is in those times when the hot water becomes unbearable that we must dare to believe that we are not alone. God is right here and has manifested Himself through Jesus Christ.

When I reach that point where I just can't take the hot water and start looking for ways of getting out it, I know I must accept the reality God is not a religion, a theology, or a self-help slogan. **He is real.** His reality is painted across of the skies, demonstrated across the landscape, and portrayed in every living creation. In addition to all this He sent His Son Jesus Christ who not only showed me how the hot water experience of death itself can be conquered, but promised to send His Holy Spirit to help me in every situations.

So as I sit here looking at this big legal bill, knowing that the battle to protect the rights of the hurting and homeless could go on for years. I must remember first that I am not alone, Jesus is there and has promised never to leave me nor forsake me. Second I have to realize that the battle is not mine, but the Lords. Without allowing the Holy Spirit to work within me, no words in a book or a preacher's sermon will pierce the shell of frustration and anger that will grow around me.

All this involves surrender and trust. I must surrender to the reality that I am not alone in the hot water of life. Then as I am trusting God the Holy Spirit puts life, power and hope into my spirit.

Now through the eyes of faith we are challenged to receive the words found in Romans 8:31-39. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor thing to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We find the solution when we feel the pressures coming from every direction and we are drowning in the hot water troubles of life. Even the big bills, along with a host of other needs, won't seem that overwhelming when we dwell upon the fact that "if God be for us who can be against us?" He didn't even spare sending His only begotten Son to provide redemption and free us from sin, death and the devil. Now why should we doubt he will provide everything else we need?

When I find myself in the hot water of hard times it seems Satan is right there to remind me that I wouldn't be in this situation if I had done things differently. I can at that moment either wallow in self-pity or take God at His word when it says, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

Even the hot water of bigotry and injustice can be changed when the dynamic universal power of God's love is applied. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and the civil rights movement demonstrated how the power of that love can transform the hot water of hate into the sweet tea of compassion, justice and equality. These courageous disciples of nonviolent agape love saw a revolution take place because they believed and went through hot water knowing they were more than conquerors through Him who loved them. Those civil right heroes were persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things

present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing could separate them “from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This is our time and place in history. At this time we must now stand steadfast in the hot water of bigotry, where the new “N” word is homeless and it is socially acceptable to drive those who have no place to sleep out of the parks, from the store fronts and even out of the churches at night. We must not run from the hot water, but must change it by insisting that everyone has a place to sleep at night. We must change the hot waters of injustice by confronting the oppressors in the courts, and in the neighborhoods which have no room in their inns for the homeless people Jesus identified with.

Giving up is not an option. Nor is it an option for us to spend the rest of our lives trying to stay out of the hot waters. God wants us to change. Determine now you are going to let the light of the love of Christ shine through you both now and for all eternity. Yes, you may have to face opposition like we do at New Life Evangelistic Center, if you open your church doors to the homeless, but we must do it. Scripture commands us to be a sanctuary of love and shelter to those in need.

This week when you find yourself going through the hot waters, my prayer is that the wondrous works of God’s creation will remind you of His faithfulness and love. I pray you will read and apply Isaiah 41:10 where it says, “Don’t be afraid: for God is with you: be not dismayed; for He is your God. He will strengthen you, yes He will help you and uphold you with the right hand of His righteousness.”

Then remember that you “can do all things through Christ who strengthens you” as Philippians 4:13 says.

Now as you go through the hot water of adversity, remember to put on the full armour of God spoken of in Ephesians 6:10-18 and never forget that “Greater is He (Jesus Christ) who is in you than he (Satan) that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

With Jesus in our lives we can see our circumstances change like when a tea bag is placed in hot water. God has promised us that “**When you pass through the waters, I will be with you... when you walk through the fire you will not be burned... for I am the Lord, your God**” (Is. 43:2-3).

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Rice". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Larry Rice