

# Through It All

Dear Friends,

I recently published a book entitled, "Though It All". In it I described the struggles I was having in the midst of the trials and tribulations I was facing. I quoted from my journal where I cried out to God, "O Lord have mercy on me. Please purge me of this world's influences and desires. I fought depression throughout the day. I must not forget though that God is in control. I must stay in the Word of God each and every day."

How hard and even impossible it seems to be positive in a negative world immersed in hopelessness. After so many losses during the past five years it would be so easy for me just to give up.

If Paul can write while he is in a Roman prison "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again; Rejoice, (Phil.4:4) you and I can certainly find it in ourselves to rejoice as people let us down and frequently disappoint us.

Paul's secret for such rejoicing can be found in Phil.4:6-8 where he tells us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally brothers, (and that includes your sisters also) whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Each time a negative thought hits us, you and I are given a choice. We can either receive that thought and dwell upon it or we can choose to believe that which is true, noble, right, pure, lovely or admirable. The reason we can engage in thinking on that which is positive is because we have a God who loves us, who is in control.

Just knowing this doesn't make it any easier. At one point I wrote in my journal, "What is wrong with me? Why am I so controlled by my emotions? How I need to work to be positive and live positive. Please help me Jesus. I don't know what the future may hold, but I know you hold the future. I must not let the devil trap me emotionally and forget what you have called me to do."

Knowing that God is in control is not enough. I must act on this knowledge. In verses 12 and 13 of Phil. 4, Paul declares, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."

Through Jesus and His resurrection power, Paul is not only telling us but also showing us how to act on this knowledge as he rises above his present circumstances. We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. It is the resurrection power of Jesus Christ which crushed the powers of Satan. It is this resurrection power which shut down the pits of hell and opened the gates of heaven. As this power of the resurrection flows in our veins we can also shout, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

This strength He provides also lets us know that, "my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

As I write this I am facing the disappointment and heartbreak brought on by some who have let me down. At such a moment it would be easy to have all the joy and peace existing in my life to be choked out. As that happens I know that depression will sweep in and hopelessness will prevail. I can't let that be the result and neither can you. I must let the God of hope fill me with all joy and peace, as I trust in Him so that I can overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 15:13 we are told, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." It is by trusting in Jesus and His resurrection power that Christ is able to fill us in spite of the circumstances with all joy and peace until we overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are certain seasons of the year that seem to be the hardest to go through. Christmas is one of these for me. For that reason I wrote the following in my journal during the Christmas season. "For those who have lost a loved one, Christmas can be the loneliest time of the year. How I need Psalm 37:3 to unfold in my life. Psalm 37:3 tells me to 'trust in the Lord and do good'. Then verse 4 tells me to 'delight myself in the Lord and He will give me the desires of my heart'. Help me Lord, to do this. Help me to commit my way to You, for You have promised that as I trust You, You 'will make my righteousness be like the dawn and the justice of my cause like the noon day sun'" (vs. 5).

At some point in our lives we must stand up and declare, "Lord I am tired of receiving that hopelessness, negativism, depression and despair that Satan throws at me year after year. I hereby renounce the lies of the devil and I chose to believe and trust the fact that God loves me and has the very best intended for my life. Therefore in the name of Jesus I take authority over you Satan and I let the God of hope fill me with all joy and peace. Thank you Jesus that in spite of what the circumstances might say, I declare that through your resurrection power I can and will overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Such a proclamation of faith cannot be made except through the power of the resurrection and trust in the God of hope. "For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power" (1 Co 4:20).

I critically need this power at this time in my life. I have got to somehow find my way out of the woods. John Eldredge in his book, Waking the Dead writes, "We too, have suffered a series of blows over time. And we too have seized upon efficiency, busyness, and productivity as the life we will live instead. Now we are lost. Dazed. Alert and oriented times zero. Sleepwalking through life. In order to find our way out of these woods, we must return to the heart."

Jesus shows us how we can move through the woods by taking us to Deut. 6:5. There we are told to, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." It is in this love for God that I find the power to follow the rest of that commandment that Jesus gave which is "to love your neighbor as yourself."

Yet hopelessness continues to knock at the door of my heart telling me that maybe God might love me but those I have hurt as I was sleepwalking through life, wrapped up in self, busyness, and productivity won't. John

Eldredge continued by asking, “Why are so many people struggling with depression and discouragement. They’ve lost heart. Why can’t we seem able to break free of our addictions? Because somewhere along the way, in a moment of carelessness or desperation, we gave our heart away and now we can’t get it back.”

Our only hope as we go through it all lies in the fact that God is love. Life is merciful, forgiving and is the God of hope who now desires to fill you and me with peace and joy.

The first step for receiving this is for us to admit we were wrong. This admittance means confessing that we have sinned. We have given our heart away to others rather than God. Now we need to repent and love the Lord with all our heart, and receive His love and forgiveness.

Experiencing this forgiveness, the real power of God, is possible because God demonstrates His own love for us in this: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us,” (Romans 5:8).

Paul says that this is the base for our hope even in the midst of the hopeless situations our sins have produced. “But we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us” (Romans 5:3, 4).

This Biblical hope that is provided is a hope standing on the promises of God’s word found in the Scriptures and revealed through Jesus Christ. Paul goes on and explains this hope that is ours and our reason for being able to rejoice, even in the midst of adversity, when he declares, “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom.5:10, 11).

We hear this message over and over yet why do we keep engaging in the same self-destructive behavior? Could it be that we have so much more to learn in order to get to know Christ better and the only way we will learn it is through pain?

In Phil.3:8,10,11 we see Paul declaring from that Roman prison, “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ. I want to know Christ and the power of the resurrection and fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Henri Nouwen in his book, Here and Now states, “Here a completely new way of living is revealed. It is the way in which pain can be embraced, not out of a desire to suffer but in the knowledge that something new will be born in pain... The cross is a symbol of death and of life, of suffering and of joy, of defeat and of victory.”

I might also add that the cross is a symbol of our breaking point. That place where we come to the end of ourselves and are left to choose whether we will follow Christ into the unknown, of which we have no control, or will we choose to dwell in the mundane, the status quo where we feel we can control the events at hand.

When will we learn that when we choose the safety of the predictable we have at the same time committed the spiritual suicide of not experiencing a deeper walk with Christ?

Suffering and pain is a constant reminder we are not in control. It breaks up the hard ground of the heart in order for the truth of God's word to germinate and come forth. It is when I am suffering and feeling rejected and alone that I know my survival depends upon the Holy Spirit points infusing within me the Word of God. After such an infusion takes place I am then able to arise and face the uncertainties and the impossibilities, knowing that I am not alone but in fact am "more than a conqueror through Christ who strengthens me." It is then that I am able to go through it all.

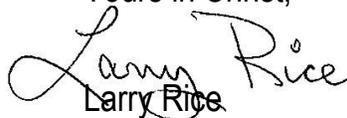
Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his work, Tempted by Suffering, stated: "All suffering must lead the Christian to the strengthening of his faith and not to defection. While the flesh shuns suffering and rejects it, the Christian sees his suffering as the suffering of Christ in him. For He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows. He bore God's wrath on sin. He died in the flesh, and so we also die in the flesh, because He lives in us. Now the Christian understands his suffering, also as the temptation of Christ in him. That leads him into patience, into the silence, waiting endurance of temptation, and fills him with gratitude; for the more the old man (the old sinful nature) dies, the more certainly lives the new man (new life in Christ); the deeper man is driven into suffering, the nearer he comes to Christ."

It is in this reality of Christ's love that we have hope that things will improve. 1 Peter 1:3-7 explains this hope and help in the midst of suffering. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last times. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Just like that song "Through It All" that Andrew Crouch wrote a number of years ago which says, "through it all I have learned to depend upon His Word," you and I can go through it all if we depend upon His Word. God is true to His written Word which is certified daily for us through the wonders of creation and the power of the Holy Spirit.

By reading the Bible ten minutes in the morning and ten minutes at night you will read through it once a year. As you read it take notes and underline passages as the Holy Spirit confirms the word and promises of God deep within your soul. Then earnestly pray, letting the power of God dwell within you daily. As you do this you will move through all the suffering and discouragement that the devil and the world may throw at you. This is possible as you know in the depths of your soul that Christ, the hope of glory, dwells within you and will never leave you nor forsake you.

Yours in Christ,

  
Larry Rice