

What's Coming out of Your Tea-Bag?

Luke 22:47-53 *And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. ⁴⁸ But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" ⁴⁹ When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus answered and said, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him. ⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³ When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."*

Jim Berg's Law of the Tea-Bag.

If you want to make tea, you add hot water. The ultimate colour and taste of the water is determined by the contents of the tea-bag. If you get a pale yellow, and you wanted a dark red – is it the hot water's fault? No, what is inside the tea-bag determines the type of taste you get. The hot water just brings out what was always inside the tea-bag.

In the same way, when God wants to show you what is really inside you, He pours on the hot water of problems, pressure, difficulties, conflict, temptations and trials. He pours on you a financial squeeze, an unfair boss, an impossible work situation, a health problem. He allows the selfishness of your spouse, or children, or parents to be poured on you. And what comes out of you is who you really are. Your character is really seen under pressure. We can all be composed and nice at 10 am on a Sunday morning.

Many Christians do not understand the 'Law of the Tea-Bag.' They are still fighting the hot water. They are fighting the hot water of their spouse being selfish. 'If he wasn't like this, then I wouldn't be like this. Yes, I know I am being angry, demanding, controlling, frustrated and even fearful – but it is because of him! If he wasn't doing this, I wouldn't be like this.' And God is saying, 'Sure, if I didn't pour hot water on you, you wouldn't really know what is in the tea-bag.'

Such Christians don't see that a sovereign God has allowed the hot water of their spouse's selfishness to be poured on them, so they can deal with what is coming out of their tea-bag.

Some may say, 'If finances weren't so tight, of course we would be rejoicing and thankful. Yes, I know right now I am murmuring, discontented, unthankful and depressed. But I have a right to be! Why doesn't God stop pouring hot water on me?' And God says, 'I have allowed the hot water of a financial squeeze on you, because I want you to deal with what is coming out of you.'

If you keep focusing on the hot water, you miss the point of what God is doing. He is the one who regulates the temperature. If it is boiling right now, it's because there are some things He wants you to deal with. Keep fighting with hot water and you're fighting with God Himself. God doesn't want to change the temperature of the water – He wants to change the taste of the water. He wants to deal with what is coming out of your tea-bag.

In this miracle and in the whole account of the passion, we see what happens when you add hot water to Jesus Christ and then we can compare it to what comes out of us.

I. When You Add the Hot Water of Betrayal, False Arrest and Desertion to Christ – Kindness Comes Out.

This is Thursday night. The disciples are eating the Last Supper with Jesus. Judas leaves in the middle of it to go and tell the Pharisees and scribes and elders where He is. They give him a band of men and officers with weapons. After the Last Supper, Jesus took His disciples out, knowing that Judas was planning to bring the soldiers to that Upper Room, where he expected Jesus still to be. But Jesus wanted a few more hours – to teach His disciples about the Vine and the Branches as they walked up to Gethsemane, and to have His last concentrated hours of prayer before His death. No doubt Judas came to that Upper Room, found no one there, and then remembered that Gethsemane was one of Christ's favourite places. So Jesus' delay tactic bought Him a few more hours. But finally they arrived.

And Judas is so cowardly; this is how He does it. He tells them, 'The one I kiss is Jesus.' That shows us that Jesus did not appear outwardly striking, compared to the others. But here is how Judas seemed to want to do it. Our text tells us Judas went before them, probably a good way ahead of them, to act as if he were alone. The group is probably watching from a distance. So he comes up to Jesus and pretends to say, 'Greetings, Master', and kisses him – a greeting of warmest, kindest affection. He's probably hoping then to slip into the shadows and fool the other disciples into thinking he just came late, and the soldiers just came out of nowhere.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us Jesus asks him, 'Friend, why have you come?'

'Friend!' This is what Jesus calls Judas. Jesus has poured His life into Judas. He has taught Him. He has mentored Him. He has shown Judas more miracles than most people had ever, or will ever, see. Judas has seen that Christ is the Son of God. Now when the kingdom doesn't seem to be on Jesus' agenda, when the money doesn't seem to be rolling in – he decides he'd better cash out, and betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver – the price of a slave.

And as he does this, he still has to do it the cowardly way – perhaps trying to look like he hadn't betrayed Him at all. But Jesus wasn't fooled. He says, 'Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?' Jesus knows He is being betrayed.

What comes out of Jesus when the hot water of betrayal is poured on Him? Does retaliation, blind rage, seething fury, a desire to lash out, come out? No – what comes out of Him is kindness. At the Last Supper, He offered the tastiest morsel to Judas – again, pure kindness – an extended hand of mercy.

At this point, the group comes up to Him and lays hands on Him. Peter says, 'Lord, should we strike them with the sword?', and without waiting for the answer, strikes out. He cuts off the right ear of the servant of the High priest, whose name was Malchus.

Has Jesus committed a crime? Should Jesus be arrested like a fugitive criminal? As He says to them, 'Every day I was openly teaching in the Temple, and you did not lay your hands on Me.' The Temple was the most public, open and visible place He could have gone. The Temple was no synagogue. By going to the Temple, Jesus was going to the heart of the nation of Israel, confronting the absolute chief rulers of religious Israel and proclaiming Himself as Messiah. They did not lay a hand on Him. Why not? They were cowards like Judas. Now, in the middle of the night, they sneak up on Him with a gang of armed thugs. When Peter struck off Malchus' ear, you would think Jesus might say, 'That's what you get for being such cowards.'

But what does He do? He says, ‘Permit even this.’ Some translations say, ‘No more of this. Put your sword back into its sheath.’ He goes on to say, as recorded in the other Gospels, ‘All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?’

And then what does He do for Malchus? He heals him. Here He is, being arrested by these men, being unfairly taken off to His trial and crucifixion – and what is coming out of Him for His enemies? Kindness comes out.

He shows kindness to Judas, kindness to Malchus, and there is a third group He shows kindness to. He knows the disciples are all going to forsake Him. Earlier He had predicted - **Matthew 26:31** - *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'*

He knows they are going to forsake Him now at His most needy hour. But in John’s account, what do we find Him doing? He tells them, ‘If it is me you want – let these ones go.’ He is betrayed by one of His chosen twelve. He is arrested in a cowardly fashion by His enemies. He is deserted by the other eleven. What comes out of Him for all three groups? Kindness comes out.

What would come out of you if the hot water of betrayal was poured on you? Perhaps a spouse cheats on you; perhaps a colleague stabs you in the back; or a close friend breaks your confidence and shares private information? Does kindness come out?

Imagine you were arrested like a common criminal; what would come out of you? Would kindness come out, or perhaps bitterness, malice, fury, a wounded heart ready to strike back with revenge?

What if you were deserted by those closest to you – when things went wrong for you, they all turned tail and ran? What would come out of you?

2. When You Add the Hot Water of Slander, Humiliation And Abuse – Meekness Comes Out.

From that garden, Jesus begins a harrowing night:

- [First He is taken to Annas, the former High Priest. He questions Him, and He is struck in the face when He answers the High Priest.
- [From there He is taken to Caiaphas, the current High Priest. This is an illegal gathering. The Sanhedrin was not supposed to gather in the early morning. They were supposed to fast for a whole day after they condemned someone to death. He is experiencing the hot water of being slandered. Here is he condemned of blasphemy, and they spit upon Him, and beat Him with their fists. What is His response to slander, false accusations and being abused? We read in **Matthew 26:59-68** that He is silent. He does not respond. His posture is one of meekness.

- [From here they head out to the Romans. They take Him to Pilate, and now they change the charge from blasphemy, which Pilate would ignore, to treason. Pilate interviews Him privately, and finds no fault in Him. He brings him out and says so, and the crowd starts to accuse him of all kinds of things
What is His response? He is silent!
Matthew 27:12-14 *And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?"¹⁴ But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.*
- [Pilate sends Jesus to Herod.
- [Herod questions Him, and He is silent. Herod joins in with the crowd and mocks Jesus and sends Him back to Pilate.
- [Pilate offers to release Jesus, but they want Barabbas.
- [Pilate has Jesus scourged, hoping this will placate the crowds.
- [Pilate hands Jesus over to the Roman soldiers who place a crown of thorns on Him, mock Him and smite Him.

What comes out of Jesus when they pour this on Him?

Meekness comes out. Meekness is power under control. It is choosing not to exercise your strength, for the good of others. It is holding back what you could do, so as to do what you should do.

In the garden, when Peter took out his sword, Jesus said these words, *'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?'*

Jesus could have called on angels. Jesus could have had the entire Sanhedrin wiped out in a moment. Jesus could have asked His Father to deliver Him from this and leave the world without a way of salvation. But what did He do? He remained meek.

What comes out of you when you are slandered? What comes out of you when you are mocked; when you are humiliated? Does one of these reactions come out - a life-long grudge; violent thoughts of retaliation; malice; hatred; vengeance?

3. When You Add the Hot Water of a Torturous Death – Forgiveness Comes Out

After all this, Jesus is told to carry His own cross, and is nailed to a cross. He isn't executed with a painless lethal injection. It isn't a sudden breaking of the neck as in hanging. It is death by torture - a death reserved for murderers, rapists, people found guilty of treason. To be crucified is to be looked on as an extreme evildoer.

And, while He is up there on that cross, the taunts, the mocking carries on.

But what comes out of Jesus when you pour on the hot water of a torturous, undeserved death? We see in **Luke 23:33-34** '*Forgive them for they know not what they are doing?*' Kindness, meekness and forgiveness come out.

You see, in the last 24 hours of His life, Jesus practiced what He preached. He preached the Sermon on the Mount - **Matthew 5:39-48**.

The Sermon on the Mount is not meant to make us smile at its ethics, it is meant to make us frustrated at its impossibility.

We are supposed to reflect on it and say, 'When the hot water of betrayal and accusations and slander, and mockery and humiliation is put on me, what comes out of me is not forgiveness, kindness, silence, meekness, forgiveness.'

But here is the thing. Jesus is not a perfect ideal to be admired; He is a pattern to be followed. He is a life to be imitated. We are instructed to be like Christ – **1 Peter 2:21-24**. And notice that Peter brings out the very things we are looking at – the hottest water of all – being abused, insulted, unjustly harmed.

This is not what is in us. It is not something we can try to force upon ourselves. We need a work of God. Specifically, we need two works.

We need the work of Regeneration.

We need an inward change. We need new tea-leaves inside the bags. So that when the hot water comes upon them, they naturally give forth the taste of Christlikeness.

Note, I didn't say reformation - where you try to be more kind, more patient, more forgiving. I said *regeneration*. That means something that is dead is made alive - something which was not there; is now there. God does an act of creation, an act of breathing in His very Spirit into your spirit so that His life is now in the tea-bag, so to speak.

No one can be like Christ unless the Spirit of Christ has come in to dwell. **Romans 8:9** explains that unless you have been given a new heart, a new nature – which seeks to love and please God – you can never be like this.

If you have never been born from above, you will not be able to be like Christ. According to **John 3:3** God must not only switch on the light, He must give you new eyes. He must not only give you the right food, He must give you new appetites.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

We need the work of sanctification.

God puts within you a new heart, but He doesn't all at once remove the old nature. That old sinful nature is still within you, although it is no longer in control. But God wants to draw it out, so that

you can see what is still in there – confess it as sin, repent of it. And then wash it out with the Word of God. Be renewed in your mind – take in what the Scripture says.

Let me change the illustration a little bit. Let's say we wanted to get rid of this tea taste altogether. To keep pouring in water with the tea leaves in there won't help. I must remove the sinful tea-leaves. But then I must keep pouring the Word of God into my mind so it washes out the old ways. If you keep pouring water into a vessel with tea, but without a tea-bag, eventually it will be purified of tea. And then you put on the new man. That new nature within you must obey the Word of God in those hot-water situations.

What God brings out, we are supposed to confess, and replace by the power of the Spirit of God. There is to be a continual washing out of the old with the water of the Word, and a replacement of that old with obedience to Christ.

Everyone needs these two works. Now, some have already experienced the first work – regeneration. Some haven't. And to do so, we must stop excusing the taste in your water and come to God and repent of it. Cry out to Him for mercy and ask Him to save you, to give you the righteousness of Christ, to give you His heart – literally, His life – eternal life.

And everyone who has been born again needs continual sanctification. You and I need to be continually changing. The way we do that is not by complaining about the temperature of the water, but by seeing what taste is coming out as the water gets hot. Then we take it to Christ for cleansing, saturating ourselves with the Word of God and putting on the new man.