



September 2024

**Theme:** Courage to Persevere

**Scripture Passage:** Romans 8:35-39

Have you heard the phrase “when life give you lemons, make lemonade”? Well, I know a thing or two about lemons. Back in 2019, I was handed a huge lemon, an unexpected diagnosis of aggressive breast cancer.

This diagnostic changed everything in both my personal and ministerial life. Only by God’s grace, and the support of my family and friends, especially my husband Hector, I found the courage to face this huge challenge. Making sense of my new normal was not easy, but God provided me the tools so that I can persevere – so that I could make lemonade.

I had to surrender to God’s sovereignty and trust that God was walking with me every step of the way. During that difficult season, the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans eight, verses thirty-five through thirty-nine sustained and strengthened me: Paul wrote, “who can separate us from Christ’s love? Trouble or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger or sword? Who will separate us from Christ’s love? Will we be separated by trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? NO, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Perhaps in this season, you are faced with some lemons of your own.

Let’s be clear, in this life, we will all, at one point or another, face significant challenges. Whether it is an illness, a broken relationship, a plan or project that failed or did not go as we had hoped for.

This is also the case in our discipleship and leadership in the church. We all face cloudy days, lonely valleys, frustration, and disappointment. Lemons, that threaten to make us bitter, and sometimes even make us feel like we want to give up or quit.

Today, God, through his word, reminds us that when thing get tough, we can be certain of one thing – we will never be alone. God will always be with us – NOTHING...nothing that this life may bring, no lemons, can separate us from the love of God.

God not only journeys with us, but through the Holy Spirit, and the people he puts in our way, God encourages us, and reassure us that by Christ's grace, if we persevere, we can overcome anything that comes our way.

Perseverance means staying the course trusting God is leading and providing. Other times, perseverance will mean having the courage to reassess our journey, seek alternative solutions to problems, and embrace change to make way for God's vision to become a reality in our lives and ministries.

As you can see, perseverance and courage come hand in hand, and are necessary to navigate the ever-changing landscape of life.

Perseverance and courage can be cultivated – and this go for all, clergy and laity. First, every day we need to embrace the truth that we are never alone. That God is always with us, and that God's love, peace, and joy are always working on our behalf. Trusting this truth, set a strong foundation for our journey through life.

We also need to be intentional about going deeper in our spiritual practices: prayer, meditation, reading scripture, and both personal and corporate worship. These practices strengthen us and when the lemons come our way, they fuel our perseverance and courage.

The next time life presents you with lemons, or if this season you are dealing with some difficulties, know that thanks to Jesus Christ, you can turn bitter lemons into a sweet lemonade as the fruit of the Spirit is shown in your life, through difficult times. Yes, we turn lemons into sweet lemonade when we face life, and all that it brings: love, patience, joy, peace, faith, self-control, and kindness.

This month, during your times of focused prayer, I invite you to ask God to increase your faith, to adjust your spiritual eyes so that you can see life challenges from God's perspective, so when lemons come your way, you, like the Apostle Paul, can proclaim: all things are possible through Christ who strengthen me.

Keep going. Don't stop. Never give up. Our faith in Christ, turns life's lemons into sweet lemonades that sweeten our souls and bring glory to God.

Now, 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 – Amen. God bless you.

### **Prayer for the Month**

Almighty God, thank you for being our loving God. Give us the strength, the wisdom and the faith to follow you no matter what life can bring to us. Through your Holy Spirit grant us courage to continue the race in front of us and help us to be agents of hope, love, faith and mercy everywhere we go. Amen.

## Prayer Queues or Breath Prayers for the Month

- **September 1** - Lord, grant my spirit the assurance that nothing can separate me from your love.
- **September 8** - Lord, grant me the humility to accept and find content in your will for my life.
- **September 15** - Lord, strengthen my faith and fuel my courage so that I can persevere through life.
- **September 22** - Lord, guide me so that I can embody your healing presence and encourage others through difficult times.
- **September 29** - Lord, may my life display the fruit of the Spirit in all seasons.

