

Lemons or Lemonade

There is sure a stark contrast between slurping the juice out of a fresh cut lemon and sitting down with a glass of fresh, sweet, homemade lemonade. It is amazing what a little, or a lot, of sugar and some water can do to something that is almost unbearably sour. I wonder who first took the time and trouble to take that old nasty lemon and figured out how to make it not only bearable but actually pleasant and refreshing to consume.

I imagine there are few, if any, who have not been at least marginally, if not severely, impacted by the “sour” turn of our economy over the last three years. We’ve all been handed some lemons. What I would have never predicted was how much our lives have been affected beyond just our economic circumstances. It has affected our marriages, families, fellowship, how we treat each other, our overall sense of joy, peace and contentment, and probably even our health, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the not so good.

The interesting and sometimes disappointing thing for me to observe is the way different people have responded to their recent circumstances. Some have let their current, temporary circumstances drain them of hope and joy, stifle their commitment, and hinder their spiritual growth, while others have responded to their personal adversity with such grace and confidence in God that their temporarily negative circumstances seem to be like a fertilizer applied to a young plant at just the right time bringing life, growth, and natural beauty.

That which is going on in our community and throughout our country today is either a result of (1) a natural cycle of the

nation's economy, (2) an unnatural event caused by the poor decisions of policy makers, and or (3) God's intervention in the affairs of men intended to bring men and women to repentance and reconciliation. We could discuss and analyze these causes and results extensively, but the important thing to realize is that no matter which source or combination of sources that have led us to the place we are right now, our response as followers of Christ should be the same.

When **David** began to discover his gifts and the call of God on his life, he seemed to be doing everything right and everything was going his way. He worshipped the Lord with a talent and heart for God that we should all have. He was fearless in defending the name and honor of his God, our God. As a young boy he was used by God to lead the defeat of Israel's enemy the Philistines. He was faithful in serving and honoring a king who was prone to fits of rage and hatred. But it seems the more David grew in skill, devotion, loyalty, and obedience to God, the more "Lemons" came his way. The king who he so loyally served was determined to kill him. David, the one who had risen to such a place of respect and honor among the Jewish people, became a fugitive hiding in the mountains and caves. But even then, he refused to take Saul's life when he had the chance. He lived honorably and refused to take judgment into his own hands. And what did this get him? Nothing but grief and heightened persecution. A huge bag of very sour lemons. Listen to his psalm....

¹ LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger; do not discipline me in Your wrath. **²** Be gracious to me, LORD, for I am weak; heal me, LORD, for my bones are shaking; **³** my

whole being is shaken with terror. And You, LORD—how long?⁴ Turn, LORD! Rescue me; save me because of Your faithful love. ⁵ For there is no remembrance of You in death; who can thank You in Sheol? ⁶ I am weary from my groaning; with my tears I dampen my pillow and drench my bed every night. ⁷ My eyes are swollen from grief; they grow old because of all my enemies. ⁸ Depart from me, all evildoers, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping. ⁹ The LORD has heard my plea for help; the LORD accepts my prayer. ¹⁰ All my enemies will be ashamed and shake with terror; they will turn back and suddenly be disgraced. **Psalms 6:1-10 (HCSB)**

David trusted and remained faithful to God, even though for years after he was anointed by Samuel to be king over Israel, he lived as an outlaw fugitive living off the land and the generosity of a few friends. David not only suffered from the constant stress of risk of life, hiding and running, he also had to have been faced constantly with disillusionment in his understanding of God's purposes for his life.

David wisely chose to make lemonade out of the lemons that were dealt him in life. And, I bet even a little sugar was pretty hard to come by during those years of running and hiding. What could we learn from the younger years of David's life that will help us learn to deal with our own adversity more positively?

Make lemonade: (recipe)

Cry out to the Lord. Tell Him about it. Unload on Him. This is not to condemn counseling, bearing each others burdens, pulling yourself up by your boot straps, etc. It's just that we should go to the Lord first, last, most and throughout life's challenges. These other elements may have some value but they pale in significance to crying out to the Lord in your time of need.

The human habit is to complain to or dump on others spreading negativity and robbing them of their joy. The human habit is to blame others for the lemons dealt us in life. The human habit is to try everything we have in our own power and strength to fix our own problems. The human habit is to only have "fox hole" type, last minute desperation, attempts to finally call out to the Lord and truly seek His help in our time of need.

I'm sure there have been many a soldier who has called out to the Lord for the first time from a fox hole as bullets and bombs were flying everywhere around him. I'm sure all heaven rejoices when that takes place, but we, especially those of us who claim to already know Him, need to be in the habit of calling to the Lord even before tragedy and heartache occur. David wrote....

1 LORD, how long will You continually forget me? How long will You hide Your face from me? **2** How long will I store up anxious concerns within me, agony in my mind every day? How long will my enemy dominate me? **3** Consider me and answer, LORD, my God. Restore brightness to my eyes; otherwise, I will sleep in death, **4** my enemy will say, "I have triumphed over him," and my foes will rejoice because I am shaken. **5** But I have trusted in Your faithful

love; my heart will rejoice in Your deliverance. ⁶ I will sing to the LORD because He has treated me generously.

Psalms 13:1-6 (HCSB)

It looks to me that the first few dozen psalms were all Psalms of David desperately calling out to the Lord for help and deliverance during his times of trouble. He didn't just call out once to the Lord. He seemed to make a habit of it and he wrote them down. You can sense the desperation, but you can also see the stability of David's faith throughout his entire ordeal. He never lost hope. He never quit singing.

Make friends. (not enemies) For David it was Jonathon. God had brought Jonathan into David's life before any of his troubles began. They became very close friends and this friendship served as a rock of stability and strength during the times of David's troubles. The friendship began when young David went to the Israelite camp with food for his brothers and where he killed Goliath.

1 When David had finished speaking with Saul, Jonathan committed himself to David, and loved him as much as he loved himself. **2** Saul kept David with him from that day on and did not let him return to his father's house. **1** Sam 18:1-2 (HCSB)

There was nothing inappropriate about this relationship. It was a God-ordained, blessed friendship, the kind that would help sustain David through much of his adversity.

¹ Saul ordered his son Jonathan and all his servants to kill David. But Saul's son Jonathan liked David very much, ² so he told him: "My father Saul intends to kill you. Be on your guard in the morning and hide in a secret place and stay there. ³ I'll go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are and talk to him about you. When I see what [he says] , I'll tell you." ⁴ Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul. He said to him: "The king should not sin against his servant David. He hasn't sinned against you; in fact, his actions have been a great advantage to you. **1**Sam 19:1-4 (HCSB)

Wouldn't you like to have a friend like that? You must take the initiative. Don't sit around waiting for someone to come to you. You must show yourself friendly. Your current situation may make you more like David but you must be willing to be a Jonathan.

Sometimes when lemons come our way we tend to withdraw from close Christian friends and our church family. And these are the very people whom God intends, in His design of the body of Christ the Church, to support, encourage, instruct, and help us. The Sunday School class/small groups serve as a vital function in the church to support and encourage one another. There you will find your Jonathans! There you can be a Jonathan!

Find Joy. How? Look beyond your immediate circumstances (lemons) and look forward to what will be (lemonade). You may feel like you have nothing but a huge growing sack of sour lemons in your life. You can sit

there with your elbows on the table staring at that huge bag of lemons if you like, or you can start at least thinking about all the awesome lemonade all those lemons are going to make.

Understand the divine purpose of trials. If there never were any lemons, how would there ever be any lemonade? Most often, the sweetest, most inspiring, growth oriented seasons of our lives or born and developed in and through diversity. But this sweetness, inspiration, and growth are not guaranteed. We must choose to respond with grace and joy.

² Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. James 1:2-3 (HCSB)

various trials- lemons; endurance- lemonade

¹⁶ Rejoice always! ¹ Thess 5:16 (HCSB)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Phil 4:4-5 (HCSB) Rejoice always? Even in trials? Yes you can and you must if you have any hope at all in the Lord's wisdom and His plan for your future!

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you" —[this is] the LORD's declaration—"plans for [your] welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. Jer 29:11 (HCSB)

Trust God. Trust in His will, sovereignty and promises.

During a time when David was fleeing from Saul, his life was in great danger. He went in such fear for his life that he attempted to hide himself among the Philistines. He actually went before King Achish who was the king of Gath, the home town of Goliath whom he had killed, seeking refuge. When he realized he was in danger there, he pretended to be insane. Then he went and hid in a cave. It was from that series of circumstances that he wrote....

3 When I am afraid, I will trust in You. **4** In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not fear. What can man do to me? **Psalms 56:3-4 (HCSB)**

What do you do when you are afraid, broken, or worried? Who or what do you turn to? It's easy to say "I trust God," but do you? David pointed out...

7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. **Psalms 20:7 (KJV)**

What are you trusting in? The federal government? Your bank account? Your own wisdom and strength? Or, do you trust God?

You make the choice daily whether to suck on sour lemons or sip on cool refreshing lemonade. It shows on your face.