

# THE FRUIT AFTER THE THORNS

Suffering Produces Lasting Spiritual Fruit

Texts: Romans 5:3-5; Galatians 5:22-23

## SERMON MANUSCRIPT

### INTRODUCTION

One of the hardest truths in the Christian life is that real fruit usually grows slower than we want.

We want fast change.

We want quick maturity.

We want instant peace.

We want visible progress.

We want a version of spiritual growth that feels efficient, predictable, and easy to measure.

But that is not usually how God works.

God is not just interested in making us feel better quickly.

He is committed to forming Christ in us deeply.

And deep formation takes time.

It takes hidden work.

It takes resistance.

It takes pressure.

It takes seasons where growth is happening under the surface before anything is obvious on the outside.

That is the burden of this message:

Suffering is often the soil where God produces His deepest fruit.

Not because pain is good in itself.

Not because hardship automatically makes people holy.

But because the Spirit of God uses suffering to form perseverance, deepen character, and anchor hope in ways comfort never could.

That is why the Christian life is not just about getting through pain.

It is about asking what God is growing through pain.

Because often the very thing you would have removed is the very thing God is using to mature you.

Tonight I want to show you three truths:

Suffering produces a chain of spiritual maturity

Fruit grows slowly, hiddenly, and at a cost

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The Spirit matures us through resistance

And my prayer is that by the end of this message, you would stop despising slow growth and start honoring the patient work of God in your life.

Because fruit that lasts is not usually fruit that comes quickly.

It is fruit that has grown through faithfulness, process, and costly formation.

## MAIN POINT 1

### SUFFERING PRODUCES A CHAIN OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

*Romans 5:3-5 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

Paul gives us one of the clearest progressions in the Christian life.

Suffering produces endurance.

Endurance produces character.

Character produces hope.

That means suffering is not presented as an isolated event. It is presented as the beginning of a process.

A process that God uses.

A process that shapes.

A process that forms.

A process that leads somewhere.

That is important because many people only ask one question in suffering:

"How do I get out of this?"

But Paul is helping us ask a deeper question:

"What is this producing in me?"

He does not say suffering feels good.

He does not say suffering is easy.

He does not say pain is enjoyable.

But he does say suffering can be productive.

It can produce endurance.

Endurance is the ability to remain under pressure without quitting.

It is not flashy.

It is not loud.

It is steady faithfulness.

It is the grace to keep standing, keep trusting, keep obeying, and keep walking with God when life is difficult.

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And endurance, Paul says, produces character.

Character is what has been tested and proven.

It is what remains after faith has gone through pressure.

It is not borrowed strength.

It is not emotional hype.

It is not surface-level inspiration.

Character is what gets formed when faith has been tried and found real.

Then Paul says character produces hope.

Not wishful thinking.

Not vague optimism.

Not pretending things will work out because we want them to.

Biblical hope is a settled confidence in God.

It is the deep assurance that He is faithful, that He is present, and that He will finish what He started.

And what is so beautiful here is that this hope is not theoretical.

It is forged through process.

It is the kind of hope that has been tested by pain and still stands.

It is the kind of hope that has wept and still believes.

It is the kind of hope that has been pressed and still trusts.

That is why Paul can speak this way.

He knows God grows things in suffering that comfort alone never can.

Comfort can calm you.

But suffering can deepen you.

Comfort can soothe the moment.

But suffering can strengthen the soul.

***Comfort can make you feel safe.***

But suffering can make your faith sturdy.

This does not mean we glorify pain.

It means we recognize God's power to produce maturity through it.

And notice where Paul ends: hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

That means this whole process is not cold spiritual mechanics.

It is held together by the love of God and the ministry of the Spirit.

God is not forming endurance, character, and hope in you from a distance.

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He is doing it through His loving presence.

## Application

Some of you are in a painful season, and all you can see right now is what it is taking from you.

But maybe God is also using it to produce something in you.

Maybe He is producing endurance, because you used to quit too quickly.

Maybe He is producing character, because your faith needed testing.

Maybe He is producing hope, because your confidence was too tied to outcomes instead of His love.

Do not judge the season only by the pain it contains.

Also ask what it is producing.

Because if you belong to Christ, suffering is never just something to survive.

It is often something God is using to mature you.

## Preaching Line

*Suffering is painful, but in the hands of God it becomes productive.*

## MAIN POINT 2

### FRUIT GROWS SLOWLY, HIDDENLY, AND AT A COST

*John 15:1-5 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

One of the frustrating things about fruit is that it almost never grows as fast as we want.

We want visible change now.

We want immediate maturity now.

We want God to do deep work on our preferred timeline.

But fruit does not grow that way.

Fruit is usually slow.

It is often hidden.

And it always costs something.

You do not get fruit overnight.

You get fruit through seasons.

Through weather.

Through resistance.

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Through waiting.

Through repeated exposure to sun, storm, wind, and time.

And spiritually, it is the same.

Love grows through opportunities to forgive.

Joy grows through seasons that test your delight in God.

Peace grows where anxiety has to be fought.

Patience grows where irritation must be restrained.

Kindness grows where selfishness must be denied.

Faithfulness grows when consistency is costly.

Self-control grows where desire must be submitted.

That means spiritual fruit is not formed in theory.

It is formed in real life.

It is formed when obedience costs.

It is formed when faith has to wait.

It is formed when love is inconvenient.

It is formed when peace has to be chosen in pressure.

It is formed when gentleness has to survive frustration.

That is why fruit is costly.

It costs your comfort.

It costs your pride.

It costs your flesh getting its way.

It costs your desire for instant results.

It costs the fantasy that maturity can happen without process.

A lot of believers want fruit, but they do not want the conditions that grow it.

We want patience, but not delay.

We want peace, but not pressure.

We want faithfulness, but not testing.

We want gentleness, but not irritation.

We want self-control, but not temptation.

But fruit is forged in the very places where those things are challenged.

That is why the Christian life requires patience with the process of God.

Some things are growing in you right now that are not visible yet.

Roots are going down before fruit comes out.

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Depth is being formed before evidence appears.

The hidden life with God is being strengthened before the public fruit becomes obvious.

And that can be discouraging if you only value what you can immediately see.

But God is not rushed.

He is after lasting fruit, not shallow appearance.

There is a kind of growth that looks impressive for a moment but has no depth.

And there is another kind of growth that takes longer, hurts more, and goes deeper, but it lasts.

That is the kind of fruit God wants.

## **Application**

Some of you are discouraged because you do not feel as mature as you thought you would by now.

You are still fighting things.

Still learning surrender.

Still trying to walk in peace.

Still asking God to shape your character.

And you are tempted to think slow growth means no growth.

But that is not true.

Slow does not mean absent.

Hidden does not mean dead.

Costly does not mean pointless.

Fruit takes time.

So do not despise the quiet seasons.

Do not dismiss the hidden work.

Do not assume God is inactive because everything is not visible yet.

He may be doing His deepest work below the surface.

## **Preaching Line**

***Fruit that lasts is never rushed. It grows slowly, deeply, and at a cost.***

## **MAIN POINT 3**

### **THE SPIRIT MATURES US THROUGH RESISTANCE**

*Galatians 5:22-23*

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

Paul calls these qualities the fruit of the Spirit.

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That means they are not self-manufactured.  
They are not the result of personality alone.  
They are not produced by human willpower apart from God.  
They are the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.  
That is important because spiritual fruit is not behavior management.  
It is transformation.  
The Spirit does not merely help us look better externally.  
He works from the inside out.  
He shapes the heart.  
He redirects desires.  
He forms the character of Christ within us.  
But here is where we need to be honest: the Spirit often matures us through resistance.  
Love grows when you are around difficult people.  
Joy grows when circumstances are unstable.  
Peace grows when your mind has reasons to panic.  
Patience grows when life is slow and irritating.  
Kindness grows when selfishness would be easier.  
Faithfulness grows when quitting would be more comfortable.  
Gentleness grows when harshness feels more natural.  
Self-control grows when real temptation must be denied.  
In other words, the Spirit often grows fruit in the very places where the opposite is being provoked.  
That means resistance is not always interruption.  
Sometimes it is the environment of formation.  
We tend to think the Spirit is working most when life feels smooth.  
But often He is working powerfully in the friction.  
In the delay.  
In the conflict.  
In the weakness.  
In the frustration.  
In the pressure.  
In the resistance that forces us to depend on Him instead of ourselves.  
That is because the Spirit is not just trying to get you through the moment.  
He is trying to form Christ in you through the moment.

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And that changes how we view hard seasons.

Instead of only asking God to remove resistance, we should also ask what fruit He is trying to grow through it. Because the resistance may be the very place where the Spirit is training you.

Training your reactions.

Training your desires.

Training your tongue.

Training your mind.

Training your heart to become more aligned with Jesus.

This is why suffering can become such a powerful place of formation.

Not because suffering itself is holy,

but because the Spirit of God is able to use resistance as the context for real maturity.

## **Application**

Some of you are frustrated by how much resistance you feel in this season.

Everything seems harder than it should be.

Your emotions are being tested.

Your patience is being tested.

Your peace is being tested.

Your consistency is being tested.

And your first instinct is to say, "Lord, why is everything pushing against me?"

Maybe because the Spirit is growing fruit in exactly those places.

Maybe the resistance is where love is being formed.

Maybe the pressure is where peace is being strengthened.

Maybe the irritation is where patience is being stretched.

Maybe the hidden fight is where self-control is being deepened.

So do not waste the resistance.

Lean into the Spirit in it.

Because the places where you feel most challenged may be the places where He is doing His most maturing work.

## **Preaching Line**

*The Spirit often grows fruit in the very places where your flesh feels the most resistance.*

## **CONCLUSION**

So what do we see in this message?

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We see that suffering produces a chain of spiritual maturity.

We see that fruit grows slowly, hiddenly, and at a cost.

We see that the Spirit matures us through resistance.

This is the hope for every believer in a painful season:

God is not only bringing you through something.

He is growing something in you.

He is growing endurance.

He is growing character.

He is growing hope.

He is growing fruit that comfort alone could never produce.

That means the thorns are not the whole story.

There is fruit after the thorns.

There is growth after the pressure.

There is maturity after the pain.

There is hope after the hard season.

And the fruit God produces is not shallow.

It is deep.

It is tested.

It is Spirit-formed.

It is lasting.

## Preaching Wrap

*Comfort can make life easier, but suffering often makes faith deeper.*

And fruit that lasts is fruit that costs.

## ALTAR CALL / RESPONSE

Tonight I want to call two groups of people to respond.

First, I want to speak to believers who feel discouraged by the pace of their growth.

You have been in a hard season.

You have been praying, fighting, enduring, and trying to stay faithful.

And if you are honest, you have wondered whether anything good is really coming from it.

Tonight, I want to remind you:

God is not wasting this season.

If you belong to Christ, He is producing something in you.

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It may be hidden right now.

It may be slower than you want.

It may be costly.

But He is growing fruit.

So bring Him your impatience.

Bring Him your discouragement.

Bring Him your weariness with slow growth.

And pray, "Lord, do not let me despise the process. Grow in me the fruit that lasts."

Second, I want to speak to those who do not know Christ.

The fruit of the Spirit does not come from trying harder in your own strength. It comes from new life in Christ.

Jesus Christ died and rose again so that sinners could be forgiven, made new, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

If you will turn from your sin and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, He will forgive you, save you, and begin a new work in you that only He can do.

This is your moment to respond to Him.

## **FINAL CLOSE**

There is fruit after the thorns.

And if the season has been painful,

do not assume it has been barren.

God may be growing in you

what comfort never could.