

## The Peaceful Product of God's Discipline, Part 2

The book of Hebrews chapter 12. And we're going to begin reading at verse 9, and we'll read 9 through verse 11 and be looking today at verse 11. Hebrews 12, verse 9:

9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (Heb. 12:9–11 NASB)

You and I are driven by incentives. Everything that we do in life is a response to an incentive. We do things in life because—or we make decisions, I should say—based upon what we deem to be in our best interest in the moment, either in the immediate or in the long term. We make short-term decisions based upon our long-term interests. Looking ahead, we do this often when we invest. We will take money that we could spend on something that we want now, that would delight us now, and we would save that or invest that or set that aside in some way in order to get something in the future that we think that we might enjoy in the future even more than what we might enjoy in the present. So we're always making trade-offs in the decisions that we make: how we spend our time, how we spend our money, what we do each and every day. It's all geared in some measure by incentives. We do those things that we deem to be in our best interest in the moment, or at least in our best interest at some point when we expect to get a payoff.

We endure in the short term all kinds of difficulties and sacrifices and pain, and we are willing to do this if we are convinced that the long-term benefit is worth the payoff. Athletes do this. This week is the NFL draft. And if you watch the NFL draft, as I monitor it and sometimes watch the first round, you will see a whole bunch of athletes, people who have spent their time and their energy and their effort exerting themselves and disciplining themselves and training themselves in the hopes that their name will be called sometime during the draft and there will be a payoff, that all that they have sacrificed is going to come back to them and pay rewards or dividends in the end.

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Entering into any professional sport is always a group of people that know people in their lives that—while they were on the court or on the field or sacrificing and training and being disciplined and exerting themselves and investing in what they viewed to be their future—they'll always have people in their lives who spent that same amount of time playing video games in the basement, chomping on Doritos, and not spending any time at all investing anything for any kind of a payoff. There are the short-term people and the long-term people. The people who are athletes, they are willing to adjust their diet and change their routine and sacrifice their spare time and spend their weekends putting forth the effort because they believe that there'll be a payoff. They're going to make the team or they're going to win the championship. They're going to get something that is worth the sacrifice in the short term. We see this with athletes.

We see it also in the medical procedures that you and I are willing to endure. We are willing to let somebody cut us open and put us to sleep (not in that order). We're willing to let people put us to sleep and then cut us open, and even go through the physical therapy, the pain of physical therapy, and change our diet, and sacrifice that pain in the short term if we have the hope that we can beat this disease or cure the pain or somehow make our life better, repair an injury.

I will give you a personal example. I tend to steer away from personal examples, but a couple of years ago when I had my shoulder operated on and I preached for a few weeks with my arm in a sling like this, I had to keep it immobile for six weeks. Well, during that six weeks, apparently my body created a lot of scar tissue so that when I finally started to go in for physical therapy, one of the things that the physical therapist had to do was stretch out my shoulder in an excruciatingly painful fashion. And I made very little progress for several weeks. I went in and visited the doctor again, and he said, “You are one of a small number of people whose body produces scar tissue abundantly and quickly.” So if you wonder, what does Jim do better than most of the population?—that is my thing. That's what I'm skilled at, apparently. I'm an overachiever in terms of scar tissue.

So the physical therapist, every week when I would go in, she would have to stretch my shoulder out, and the goal was to tear the scar tissue that had formed inside the joint. It was excruciatingly painful. Why was I willing to let her do that to me? Because at some point in my life after that I wanted to be able to raise my hand like this. Now, if I raise my hand in a class, I'll usually raise my right arm because I'm right-handed. But what if I lose my right arm in some accident? Not being able to raise your arm higher than this

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would have its drawbacks. So I was willing to let her tear scar tissue in my shoulder in the short term, as excruciatingly painful as that was—and it was—because I wanted the payoff of being able to raise my arm and function. Putting your arms above your head, apparently, I think, is kind of a nice feature of having two arms. We don't use it in our worship here very much because we're not charismatics, but there are other applications for using both arms above your head.

Sometimes we are willing to sacrifice and endure pain for the hope of the payoff. And not even the guarantee of the payoff, just the hope of the payoff. We're willing to gamble, if I can use that word. We're willing to sacrifice something and invest something in the hopes that there will be a payoff, even when that payoff is not guaranteed. We take the risk of losing something in the near term so that we can have the hope of gaining something greater in the long term.

The same mentality must be applied to the subject of God's discipline in our lives and the afflictions that He sends us. We endure pain in the short term. This is what verse 11 says: “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful” (Heb. 12:11). We endure this and we embrace this in our life in the near term. Why? In the hope that, or with the certainty that, “afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” in the lives of those who have been trained by that discipline. That is embracing something in the short term with the confidence that if God's Word is correct, if God's Word is true, if He's going to keep His Word, there is going to be, after the short-term sacrifice of the suffering in the midst of affliction, the sorrow, there's going to be, after that, the enjoyment of the peaceful fruits of righteousness. That's what verse 11 is about. Let's read it again. Verse 11. We looked at half of this last week. “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it [that is, by the discipline], afterwards [that discipline] yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

One of the peaceful fruits of righteousness in verse 10 is that we would share His holiness. That is something that God is preparing us for and doing in us in discipline. Another one is that we enjoy the fruit of that discipline. Even though the difficulty is real in the short term, the fruit is just as real in the long term. And the author here is contrasting what we experience in the short term (the sorrow) with what we get to enjoy in the long term (the peaceful fruit of righteousness). And all the way through the passage, he has been imploring us to understand that the difficulties that we face in this life are not indications of God's wrath upon us or His displeasure with us in that sense,

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but rather the discipline that we endure in this life is, in fact, an expression of God's love for us as He trains us for the life that is to come and for enjoying in this world the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

Last week we saw that the pain of discipline is our present experience. And this week, today, we're going to look at the last half of verse 11 and see that the product of discipline is our certain and future expectation. Now, last week I said something that I want to give a little bit of a clarification to because it might have struck some of you, particularly those of you who might have come since, say, the middle of January when we covered this subject. Last week, I talked about God scripting our lives and writing things into the story of our lives and appointing and sending things to us like illness, sickness, chronic pain, houses burning down, children dying, a spouse dying, and even a miscarriage. And I think that there was a visceral reaction on behalf of some of you, and that may be because you weren't here back in January when we covered this reality that the discipline that God sends into our lives is not because of something that we have done that deserves that. So if when you hear something like that, you're thinking in your mind, What have I done to deserve a miscarriage?—immediately you have framed discipline wrong. Discipline is training. God uses as training all of these adversities that come into our lives. But it doesn't mean necessarily that there is a one-to-one correspondence between something you have done and something bad that has happened to you. That's the wrong way to think about it. Because discipline is not an expression of God's wrath. It is not a punishment for your sin. If God dealt with all of us according to what we deserve, we would all be in Hell right now. That's what we deserve. God *doesn't* deal with us according to what we deserve. So discipline is not a punishment that God inflicts for some sin you have committed. We covered this back in January, and I don't want anybody to hear what I said last week and think to themselves, "Jim is suggesting that God is just up there punishing us with these things that come into our lives, and we're not even aware of what it is that we have done." Just want to reframe that, because I know that there are people here who are new, who were not here back when I laid all of that foundation so insufferably long ago.

The product of discipline as our future expectation. Now, this verse is structured around this contrast between how discipline is experienced by us in the present and what discipline produces for us in the future. You see that contrast in the word *yet*, or maybe some translations have *but* or *then again* or *and then* at the middle of verse 11: it "seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet [here's the contrast] to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

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Who are those who have been trained by discipline? I would remind you, it is only God's children who are trained by discipline. God does not discipline unbelievers. He is not training unbelievers in righteousness. He is not producing for and in unbelievers the peaceful fruits of righteousness. He's not allowing them to share in His holiness. This is a blessing, this is an intention of God that is strictly aimed at His children. We are the ones who get the blessing of discipline. And I want you to get used to that idea of the blessing of discipline. It is a blessing that is reserved only for those who are within the family. No other child in the world received the blessing of the discipline that I would give to my own children. That was my blessing to them. My gift to them was discipline. Likewise God does not pour out His discipline upon unbelievers. He pours out His wrath on unbelievers, His judgment on unbelievers, but not discipline. Discipline is God's work in the hearts of His people, His children, to train us in righteousness, to produce in us holiness, so that we'd share His holiness and so that we would enjoy the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

And notice that verse 11 describes those who have been trained by it. Notice that it doesn't use the word *discipline*. All the way through this passage, up in verse 5, down in verse 6, verse 7 twice, verse 8, verse 9, verse 10 twice, verse 11, the beginning of the verse has the word *discipline*—discipline has been his theme all the way through this, but this word *trained* is a different word. Notice it doesn't say “for those who have been disciplined by Him,” but “for those who have been trained by the discipline.” It's a different word. It's the word *gymnazo*. *Gymnazo*, from which we get our word *gymnasium*, describes being trained or undergoing discipline to practice or to exercise. It describes a rigorous exertion that is intended to hone skill or develop capabilities. That's what it describes. Those who have been “gymed” by it. G-y-m; I just realized I need to specify there. Those who have gone to the gym and been trained by the *gymnazo*, the training. That is what's being described. A gymnasium was a place of athletic training and rigorous exercise where discipline was inflicted, physical training, where athletes and people developing certain skills and honing abilities would go to have those skills and abilities honed and crafted and made precise so that they could compete in the exercises, so they could compete in the races.

This is not the word that is used for discipline. The word for discipline is *paideia*, and that includes training and child-rearing. We talked about the definition of this back in verse 4. I'll just remind you, it is a broader term that describes all kinds of instruction, training, teaching, even punishment. It describes tutorage and education, and sometimes just generically rearing or raising children is the idea. So it's a broad term.

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Discipline is a broad term which incorporates a lot of things, all designed to mold and shape and train and form children in the rearing process. And those who have undergone discipline, they are the ones who have been trained by it. Those are the ones who have been trained by it. There is a training aspect to discipline, and this is ultimately what it is that you and I are looking for in our own lives in terms of discipline. Not so much that we are embracing pain for the sake of pain, but that we are embracing discipline because it produces something in us and trains us for something. That's why we embrace it. Not because we love pain, not because we delight in difficulty, not because we receive joy from the tribulations itself, but because these things are intended by God for our training, for our equipping, to hone us and to shape us, to make us capable, to do something in us that is for our good and for His glory.

With that word *training*, the author returns to the athletic metaphor that he began up in verses 1 to 3. Remember, run your race with endurance. Run with endurance the race that is set before you, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, keeping your eye on the finish line. You're to run that race that God has laid out, the course that He has set for you. You are to do this. Then he begins to talk about the discipline, the rearing, and the training, yes, that is required for those who will run the race effectively.

So now he's just sort of capping—with this reference to training, he's capping now this athletic metaphor that he started back at the beginning of chapter 12. The same theme is being developed, and here it comes to the conclusion: for those who run their race, there is discipline that is involved in this. This discipline is itself the training for the race that God has laid out for you. This is why we embrace it. This is why we regard discipline in our lives as a blessing sent from God. This is a transforming way of thinking about affliction, suffering, persecution, hostility from unbelievers, hatred that the world heaps upon us and the scorn. We are to look at that and see it and receive it as God's blessing in our lives. Yes, this difficulty is real. Yes, the difficulty is painful. But this is God's training. He's disciplining us. And His only intention is love.

You and I are in a race, and discipline is not pain for the sake of pain. And even when I said, as last week, that in the midst of discipline, pain or sorrow is the point, I don't mean it's the point in terms of that is the only goal, that it's just pain for the sake of pain. But rather I mean the sorrow and the pain, the difficulty of it, is part of the intention of God in it, because it is through the difficulty and the sorrow that you and I are trained and disciplined.

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So, like children who will not learn from the loving discipline of their parents, if you and I refuse God's discipline and His chastisements and refuse to learn the lessons and pursue holiness, then He will send further discipline. Come to grips with that. If you will not heed the first chastisements, more chastisements will come. You think it's miserable now? Child of God, continue in your sin and you will learn new degrees of misery. God will sometimes scourge His children as what verse 6 says. He will goad us. He will afflict us until you and I embrace the very thing that He wants us to embrace, until we learn it, until we receive it. And the reason is not because He hates us, not because He is filled with wrath. The reason is because He loves us too much to leave us in our stiff-necked rebellion. Because He loves us too much to leave us in our stiff-necked rebellion.

He knows what sin does to us. He will do all that is necessary to purge that from our lives. This is why the author encourages a right response in verse 5: "Do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him." Will you respond, will I respond, to God's chastening with humility and obedience or hostility and obstinance? Will we seek to learn obedience and grow in grace or harden our hearts and resist His purposes? Will you respond in faith, trusting in a God who is sovereign and good? Or will you respond with insolence and pride and hard-heartedness and stiff-necked rebellion? That is the choice. That is what is before each and every one of us that endures God's discipline.

This is a revolutionary mindset that you and I have to have toward afflictions in our lives, that this is here for a purpose and God is doing something in it for my good. And so now the question is, what can I learn? What sin can I put off? What sin can I mortify? How can I pursue holiness in this? How can I finish this training exercise and be more useful to the Lord, more fruitful for Him, and draw closer to Him? Because it is not a purposeless pain. It's not an aimless discipline. It has a purpose. It has an aim. And it is training us for our race. God knows exactly what needs to happen to you and I for us to be fruitful and for us to be faithful and for us to mortify sin. And those are the very things that God sends into our lives to shape us and to prepare us for His usefulness.

So when does the fruit come? Look at verse 11. "Yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." It comes afterwards. Fruit is not instantaneous. The fruit of discipline is not instantaneous. Now, sometimes it is. And there are fruits in discipline that come immediately as a result of discipline. But generally speaking, the bulk of the fruit that you and I enjoy as a result of God's discipline is something that comes afterwards. It's later on. Discipline—the fruits of it

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are not always immediate. The fruits of discipline are not *only* immediate. They're not always immediate, and they're not only immediate.

Now, I don't think that the author intends here to rule out the possibility and the reality that there might be immediate fruit in the life of a believer as a result of discipline. You can think of ways in which suffering can immediately produce a fruit in your life.

Something bad happens, a tragedy strikes, you get bad news, and immediately you begin to pray. Immediately you begin to focus your mind and your heart upon Scripture, upon God's truth, upon disciplining your heart and your mind. You begin to pray in ways that you've never prayed before. That's an immediate fruit that comes out of the midst of discipline and affliction and suffering. And those are good fruits, but sometimes those are short-lived fruits. In other words, the fruit is there, and as soon as the affliction is gone, then we go right back to normal, don't we? Not praying as much, not seeking the Lord as much, not being as concerned about holiness in our lives as much. As soon as the affliction is lifted, the fruit vanishes. Well, if God is going to produce long-lasting fruit, He's going to produce in us the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

A mistake that many people make is they become deeply grieved when they do not see immediate results from discipline in their lives, because they undergo affliction and they want to see immediately, in the moment, something good that comes out of this. "I want to see what the Lord is doing, and I want to see all that the Lord is doing right now." But that is not how God works. Sometimes the connection between our suffering and our affliction and the fruit that comes from it can be years in the making. You don't plant a seed and immediately expect to receive fruit off that within a couple hours, do you?

Children do. Children do, right? Remember I said several weeks ago that children are foolish. When I would take my kids out when they were young, we would plant a seed, and within a few hours they would be out there looking at it, wondering why the seed didn't come up, maybe even a couple of days later, wondering, "Where's the seed? Where's the plant?" And I had to explain to them, "You need to have a long-term idea here of what is supposed to happen. It might be a couple of weeks before we see the beginnings of the plant, and it's going to be even longer before we see fruit off that." You don't prune a tree and expect it to produce fruit the next day. There's affliction, and then there can sometimes be a long period of time before you see the fruit of that affliction. You may not perceive an immediate improvement or profit in your life off the discipline that God sends to you in the moment. Get that carefully in your head. You

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may not see immediate improvement or profit in your life, but I can promise you discipline produces fruit in the long term. How can I promise that? Because Scripture says that afterwards that discipline yields the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

We can't always connect the dots between our suffering and affliction and the discipline and the fruit that it produces. I am positive—I could say without any hesitation; I would be willing to die for this truth—that there are spiritual peaceful fruits of righteousness, peace in my own life, that are present today that are the result of some affliction or difficulty that I have endured at some point in my Christian life. Possibly even from an affliction that I in this moment cannot even remember ever having. But that fruit is there. I'm not the same person I was twenty-five or thirty years ago, and neither are you. If you're in Christ, you're not the same person you were even last year. God is producing fruits in your lives all the time, and He is using affliction to produce those things. So I cannot always connect some peaceful fruit of righteousness that I enjoy in my life, my character, in my heart now directly with an affliction and say, “Well, this is tied to this.” Sometimes that's possible. Sometimes you can say, “I suffered this. Here are the three things that I learned, and here are the things in my life that are different as a result of me going through that affliction.” Sometimes that is the case.

But sometimes there is fruit in your life that is tied to a difficulty or an affliction, some act of discipline in your life that God brought into your life, and you can't necessarily even remember the discipline or the difficulty. And yet, God has produced fruit out of that. That is certainly the case. Sometimes fruit is immediate. I will acknowledge that. Sometimes fruit is immediate. But the point of the author is that we don't necessarily have a justification for expecting to see all of the fruit immediately. And we can always know that there are better and greater things to come in terms of the fruit of God's discipline.

Spurgeon, using the children of Israel and their time in Egypt and coming out of that in the Exodus, draws an interesting parallel to the immediacy of fruit. Listen to what he says. “The good of trouble is generally not while we are in trouble, but when we get out of trouble.” You just need to stop, *selah*. Meditate upon that for a few moments. “The good of trouble is generally not while we are in trouble, but when we get out of trouble. Yet, on the other hand, it sometimes happens that God can give us the jewels even before we leave Egypt, so that we can march out of the house of bondage with golden earrings hanging at our ears and covered with all manner of ornaments. But for the most part, however, it is nevertheless afterwards that this happens.”

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Remember the children of Israel coming out of bondage? They asked the Egyptians for treasures, and the Egyptians gave them, and they walked out incredibly wealthy, having been slaves for centuries? Spurgeon says sometimes that's what difficulty does. Sometimes in the midst of discipline, we walk out immediately with the jewels and the treasures that the discipline has produced. But we always know that, even in those times when we walk out immediately with treasures from our discipline, there's still greater fruit that is still yet to come in the future, because afterwards it yields the peaceful fruits of righteousness. So sometimes God does give you the jewels from discipline in the immediate, but He's always going to do even more in the future as you enjoy the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

In Psalm 119, verse 67, the psalmist says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word." Notice how he connects "before I was afflicted—my affliction—I went astray" and "now I keep Your word." The psalmist says, "Affliction has produced in me obedience." Because of the affliction, I have learned obedience. Also because of the affliction, he learned God's statutes. "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:71). So even when there is immediate profit to us in our discipline, there is still even greater fruitfulness afterwards from our discipline.

This is, in fact, what was true of the heroes of faith. Remember back in chapter 11, Abraham waited. He was promised a son. He was promised a land. He waited years to see that son of promise. And he died in the land, having never received the promise of that land. And Isaac followed and did the same thing, and Jacob, and then Joseph, all of whom lived their lives and never saw the fulfillment of that promise. And we look at Abraham and we say, "Man, there is a faith to emulate." He's one of the heroes of the faith. Here was a guy who endured through affliction and embraced God's discipline. Like Moses, Abraham was a man who "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter [this is describing Moses], choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward" (Heb. 11:24–26).

Later on in Hebrews chapter 11, "women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection" (v. 35). All those Hebrews 11 heroes of faith, they anticipated something greater in the future, and they were willing to endure in the present all manner of difficulties and sufferings and afflictions and discipline. Why? Because the reward, the

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payout, they were convinced, was greater than anything they would sacrifice in the present. And we look at their faith and we say, “That is magnificent.” We want to emulate until we're offered the chance to emulate, and then we say, “No, I'm done. No more affliction, no more discipline, no more difficulty.” You're not going to emulate the faith of Abraham and Moses and those who were willing to be tortured and not accept their release for a better resurrection—you can't emulate that faith unless you are put in a position where you can look to the reward and say, “I'm willing to endure in the short term whatever it is that the Lord has appointed for me so that I may enjoy the peaceful fruits of righteousness.” This fruit that is enjoyed comes after the conflict. After the conflict.

Now, what is the peaceful fruit of righteousness? I want to skip past for a moment the word *peaceful*, since that describes it. I will come back to that in just a moment. What is the fruit of righteousness? There are two ways to understand that phrase. The first is kind of a narrow sense of understanding it, and the second is broader. I'll give both of them to you. I'm not going to ask you to choose between the two because I think that the author can mean both of these things. I think that both of these things are true.

The first way of understanding this, the narrow sense, is that the fruit that he is describing is, in fact, righteousness. It is the fruit of righteousness. Righteousness is the fruit. These are the same thing. In other words, the fruit that is produced through our discipline is righteousness. Now, if that is what the author is describing here, he is not talking about the righteousness that makes us acceptable before God on judgment day. That's imputed righteousness. That's a righteousness that is not ours, that is credited to us at the moment of faith. In other words, that righteousness describes our standing before God. So it's not imputed righteousness. If that's what the author is describing, he's talking about practical righteousness, that is, holiness of life. It's righteous living that is in view. It would be akin to what he says in verse 14: “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification [or holiness] without which no one will see the Lord.” And so some have suggested that the righteousness here in verse 11 is basically the same thing as holiness that is mentioned in verse 14. You and I are to pursue peace with all men and holiness or sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

I find it interesting that in verse 14 where this becomes a command to pursue something, he has the words *pursue peace* and *pursue holiness*. And in verse 11 he has there *the peaceful fruit of righteousness*. So if righteousness and holiness are synonymous, then what we have here that God is going to affect in us through discipline

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(the peaceful fruit of righteousness)—he tells us in verse 14 to pursue these very things: peace with all men, and holiness without which no one can see the Lord. So if this is what is being described, then all he's describing here is righteous conduct that itself is the result of discipline. It's the fruit of discipline. And there is certainly a sense in which discipline produces this in our lives—righteous conduct. When we go through affliction, the point of the affliction is that you and I would mortify sin, that we would lay aside the encumbrances that keep us from running, and lay aside the sin that so easily entangles us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us. It is the putting off of sin that is the point. It is the goal of discipline. So it could be that the fruit here is itself a righteous conduct.

It could be understood in a second sense, which is a little bit broader. That is to say that it is the fruit that righteousness in our lives produces. In other words, as a result of discipline, you and I become more righteous in our conduct, and that righteousness in our conduct, in our behavior, practically speaking, begins to produce all kinds of other fruits. Like what? Like, for instance, love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control, the fruits of the spirit. So if that righteousness which has been imputed to us as a gift from God begins to take shape in our lives, practically speaking, and we begin to work out and live out our salvation and the righteousness that God has given to us, that is going to start producing all kinds of other fruits in our lives, which would be the peaceful fruits of righteousness: submission to God's will, mortification of sin, a heavenly-mindedness, trust and reliance upon God's grace, appreciation for the Scriptures and God's promises, a thankfulness, obedience, the pursuit of holiness, readiness for every good work. That type of fruit is produced by afflictions and discipline in our lives as God takes the one who has been made righteous by faith and begins to prune them for fruitfulness and effectiveness. Every vine that is in Jesus Christ will be pruned so that it may bear more fruit. That's the goal. Discipline is the pruning. It's difficult. It's painful. We get that, we understand that. But the end result is not just pain for the sake of pain. The end result is pain that produces fruitfulness, so that you and I can enjoy the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

And the very fact that affliction in the life of a Christian produces fruit of this nature, of this kind, is itself a testimony to the divine nature of what is going on in our discipline. Spurgeon says this: "Trials breed discontent, anger, envy, rebellion, enmity, murmuring, and a thousand other ills." That is, he says, naturally speaking. That's what he means. Trials produce these things, naturally speaking. You take somebody who has suffered, somebody who's not a believer, who has suffered horrible difficulties and trials in their

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life, and what does it produce? All of these things. “Trials breed discontent, anger, envy, rebellion, enmity, murmuring, and a thousand other ills; but God overruleth and makes the very thing which would make Christians worse to minister unto their growth in holiness and spirituality. It is not the natural fruit of affliction, but the supernatural use to which God turns it in bringing good out of evil.” The natural result of affliction is not humility and gentleness and patience and kindness and goodness and self-control and reliance upon God. That is not what is naturally produced by suffering. Naturally, suffering produces bitterness and anger and resentment and hostility and pride and stiff-neckedness. That is what it naturally produces. But the fact that these things can produce in Christians all of these fruits is a testimony that God is at work. So you see some gentle little church lady sitting on the pew who has gone through all kinds of afflictions. She is physically suffering all kinds of difficulties and trials that God has appointed for her, things that she has had to deal with. And yet, she's the most gentle, kind, meek person you have ever met. Tell me, how does that happen? That's a supernatural thing. It can only happen supernaturally. That's the work of the Spirit of God. The natural result is a hardness of heart and a stiff-neckedness and a bitterness over difficulties, because that's how the natural man responds to it.

So why is it described then as peaceful, this fruit of righteousness? All of these things are peaceful. I think that describes how it is that you and I enjoy it in the moment, as opposed to the discipline, which is sorrowful. You can probably think of few things in your life that you would describe as sorrowful and peaceful. Can you think of any? Where you thought, “Man, this was, this point in my life, a season of my life, was just sorrow upon sorrow upon sorrow, but boy, it was so peaceful and joyful.” Can you think of any example in your life? You probably can't. See, sorrow in the moment is what describes discipline. Peacefulness in the future is what describes the fruit that comes out of the discipline. So peaceful stands in stark contrast to the sorrow of the moment that we experience in the moment of the discipline, and it stands in contrast to the discipline itself. In discipline, we often are not at peace. Discipline does not produce peace in the moment that we are suffering. No child is at peace while being disciplined by their parents.

So think in terms of the types of hostilities that are described in the book of Hebrews that these early Christians were facing: persecution, reproach, anger and hostility from their enemies, from the world, being cast out of the synagogue, being excluded from their family gatherings, losing their possessions (as it says some of them had been seized and they accepted joyfully the seizure of their property, back in chapter 10). Does any of

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that sound like peaceful circumstances or situations in their lives? It's not. But that was what discipline was. Discipline is not peaceful. Discipline is painful. The fruit is peaceful. The fruit is something we enjoy later on when the discipline is gone, and we enjoy it in peace, and it brings us peace.

Discipline is itself a pledge of our peace with God because He only sends it to His children. And so when we experience discipline, we say, "Well, this is God's pledge that I belong to Him. He would not be doing this in me if I were not His child. And therefore I know that I am at peace with God." And you and I can be at peace in our soul, even in the midst of the conflict that is outside. We can suffer, we can sit in difficulty, in affliction, and say, "I will be at peace with this." We can be at peace in our hearts in terms of how we are before God, even in the midst of extreme difficulty. But when we come out of the discipline, the fruit that we get to enjoy from that is enjoyed peacefully.

One last observation I want to give you, and that is that in verse 11, the description there in its entirety is the opposite of sin. Notice that. See, discipline is intended to rid us of sin. Discipline is sorrowful in the moment but joyful in the future, pleasant in the future. Sin, on the other hand, is pleasant in the present and sorrowful in the future. These are polar opposites of one another. The description of discipline is the opposite of what sin gives us. Discipline is sorrowful and not joyful. Sin is joyful, pleasant, and then sorrowful later. Discipline produces in us peace and fruit and righteousness afterwards. Sin produces rottenness and destroys righteousness. Discipline produces it, sin destroys it. Discipline purifies the soul, whereas sin sickens the soul and rots it from the inside. The outcome of discipline is peace and life and fruit and joy and glory. The outcome of sin is death and barren souls and sorrow and destruction and the loss of everything that you treasure.

Discipline feels in the moment like you are going to lose everything and gain nothing. Sin is the opposite. Sin feels in the moment like you are gaining everything and you'll never lose it. And yet the payoff is exactly the opposite. With discipline, you feel like you're losing everything in the moment, but in the future, the payoff is enormous, because the glory that is to come as a result of that is more than you and I can possibly imagine. So discipline in the moment is difficult, but the payoff is huge. Sin in the moment is pleasurable and glorious, but the payoff is destruction and death and ruin and the utter loss of everything. So sin always feels in the moment like I'm gaining everything, but in the end, I lose everything, including my soul. These two are opposite, which is why

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discipline, one of the intentions of it, is that it would rid us of sin and purify our hearts. Because in the end, sin causes you to lose everything and you profit nothing from it.

And so you and I embrace discipline, that we might gain infinitely more. And we embrace discipline not because it makes discipline pleasant, but because it makes discipline profitable. Makes it profitable. Why would you, Christian, be struck with God's rod and profit nothing from it? You're going to be struck with the rod, you might as well profit from it. It might as well be to your usefulness and to your fruitfulness. Therefore, do not despise the discipline of the Lord.

I close with one last quote. This one's not from Spurgeon. In fact, I don't know who said this. I did some "internetting" this week and couldn't find out who originally wrote this, but I found it in John MacArthur's commentary, and he didn't give an attribution for this. He just said, "Someone has written." Now, it might be that the person's name is Someone, in which case this is an attribution. But here's what it says: "And so what do I say? I say let the rains of disappointment come, if they water the plants of spiritual grace. Let the winds of adversity blow, if they serve to root more securely the trees that God has planted. I say, let the sun of prosperity be eclipsed, if that brings me closer to the true light of life. Welcome, sweet discipline, discipline designed for my joy, discipline designed to make me what God wants me to be."

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