

Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness  
Hebrews 12:1-11  
(Part 2 of 2)  
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

- I. **Introduction:** Today's message is the conclusion of a 2 part series covering the first 11 verses of Hebrews chapter 12. As such, if you missed the 1<sup>st</sup> message I encourage you to obtain a copy as these 2 messages will be complimentary to one another. Some of you will recall the 1<sup>st</sup> segment was titled "The Chastening of the Lord." And there we saw that the Lord's chastening (the corrective measures brought through the providential afflictions and trying circumstances) appointed by God the Father in love for all of His children (and only for His children) is the means God uses to produce in them what verse 11 of our text calls "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." And that, "The Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness," is the title of today's message.
- A. This fruit is produced by God in (and for the benefit of) every true believer – every member of the household of faith. As with most things of value, this benefit comes at a cost. And this fruit of righteousness cost no less than the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, His obedience unto death on the cross whereby He established righteousness, the perfect satisfaction He rendered to the justice of God on behalf of all for whom He lived and died. The merit of that glorious cross accomplishment, His very righteousness, is imputed (or charged to the account) of all for whom He lived and died. And as we see in Hebrews 12, each and every one of them shall experience the peaceable fruit of His righteousness.
- B. And as I mentioned in the previous message, I believe it will help our understanding of this passage if we will keep in mind God's words through Paul to the Romans in Romans 8:28, where he wrote, "***And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.***" And all these things (which includes the chastisements from God) – all work together for good for each and every one of God's adopted children in Christ, the called according to His purpose, those in whom God the Holy Spirit produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness.
- II. **Hebrews 12:1-11:** Now, in the 1<sup>st</sup> segment of this series, as I read these verses I made quite a few comments which I won't repeat today, at least not to that same level of detail. But since it has been a few weeks, let's do read once again these verses, beginning in Hebrews 12:1 where we read...

- A. Verse 1-3: *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses*, <Referring back to the Old Testament saints listed in the previous chapter who endured in the faith due to God's faithfulness to them through their various trials, afflictions, and difficulties, with those examples in mind...> *let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us*, <doubt or unbelief> *and let us run with patience* <i.e. so as to endure...> *the race that is set before us*, <sup>2</sup>*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* <sup>3</sup>*For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.* Continuing in verse 4 he says...
- B. Verses 4-7: *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* <sup>5</sup>*And ye have forgotten* <Or a better translation would be "Have you forgotten...> *the exhortation* <or encouragement > *which speaketh unto you as unto children*, <quoting from Proverbs 3, saying...> *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:* <sup>6</sup>*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* <sup>7</sup>*If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?* Verse 8...
- C. Verses 8-10: *But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers*, <i.e. – speaking of all of His children, but if you are without this chastisement...> *then are ye bastards, and not sons.* As I mentioned in the 1<sup>st</sup> message, none of His children are exempted from chastisement. No chastisement = not in the family. Continuing in verse 9 he adds... <sup>9</sup>*Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh* <earthly fathers> *which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?* <sup>10</sup>*For they* <our earthly fathers> *verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure;* <i.e. – as they judged best in their wisdom, fallible though it was> *but he* <the infallible, all-wise heavenly Father> *for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*

I remind you again that the essential holiness of God is not a communicable attribute. The attribute of holiness (the perfection of all of God's character attributes) only belongs to Deity. Rather we partake of the holiness which is in Christ, received out of His fullness. We partake of it or enter into fellowship with it, in communion with God as we see our holiness in Christ by God-given faith. The only holiness that believers have is His holiness, based upon His righteousness imputed or charged to our accounts. The Bible tells us that God sees His children in Christ as holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable. Believers, sinners like you and me, are described that way in Col. 1:22, showing how real their oneness (their union) is with their sinless Substitute before the holy justice of God. And when God uses our difficulties (His chastening) to remind us of that holy standing in Christ, we partake of His holiness. And then in verse 11 he declares...

D. Verse 11: *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.* The afflictions believers endure under the chastening of the Lord do not at all seem to be a matter of joy. This chastening consists of that which believers naturally grieve over – circumstances that we would not choose for ourselves. Yet the very things true believers grieve over (the Lord’s chastisements) are included among the all things that work together for the good of God’s children. As I said in the previous message, faith believes that and patience will have us experience it.

III. Review from Part I: Now in that previous message, I emphasized the obvious conclusions that can be drawn from this passage. Specifically, that this peaceable fruit of righteousness is (1) produced in all the children of God and (2) only in them and (3) that by God’s appointed means – by the chastening of the Lord. And since both believers and unbelievers experience difficulties and afflictions, it’s obvious that we can only distinguish between them (believers and unbelievers) or judge the tree (so to speak) by the fruit that is yielded afterward, not by the trying circumstances themselves. As the scripture declares, God causes it to rain on both the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45).

IV. Peaceable Fruits of Righteousness: So let’s talk about that fruit – the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

A. In Isaiah 61, God’s children are called “...*trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.*” (Isa 61:3b). The Bible also tells us that none but a good tree can bring forth good fruit (Matt 7:16-20). Likewise, none but a tree of righteousness can bear fruits of righteousness. In the fullness of time, the Lord Jesus Christ came and established a perfect righteousness for His people, (God’s children who were planted by God the Father in Him, God the Son). Christ took into union with his Deity a sinless humanity so that He (the God-man mediator) might, in the place of (as a Substitute for) all the adopted children that the Father chose and gave to Him – that He might render for them a perfect, sinless obedience even unto the death of the cross.

That satisfaction to justice He made, having been put under the law to redeem His sheep, is His righteousness – that which all must have if they are to stand acceptably before the presence of a holy God. Christ lived and died for these trees of righteousness (that were planted in Him, made one with Him) to do for them what they could not possibly do for themselves – and this all so that God alone might receive all glory, not the sinner. It’s all His doing, not theirs. God doesn’t save anyone because of anything they do. He doesn’t save you because you believe. If you believe, it’s because the Lord has already saved you and given you His blood-bought gift of faith.

- B. We see something of this design in Paul’s letter to the saints at Philippi where he wrote to the believers in chapter 1, beginning in verse 9: **“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; <sup>10</sup>That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; <sup>11</sup>Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”** Notice here that these fruits of righteousness are declared to be by Jesus Christ, and unto the glory and praise of God. Again, the trees of righteousness are manifested in that, through the God-given eyes of faith, they see Christ as all of their righteousness, (His doing, not theirs), whereby God receives all glory and praise.
- C. God tells us through His word that the guilt (or demerit) of all their sins were imputed (or charged) to Christ so that He might bear the penalty due unto them. And likewise, for all these whose sins were imputed to Christ, they have imputed or charged to their accounts the very merit of His obedience unto death, His perfect righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). He died for sins He had no part in producing and that they may possess a righteousness they had no part in producing. And thereby, as we read in Ephesians 1, they are accepted in the Beloved, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Having His righteousness, they stand in Him complete, or perfect. That is what it means to be justified. It is to be declared righteous, not guilty. As we read in Romans 5:9 sinners are **“...justified by His blood...”** And then in the first verse of that chapter (Romans 5:1) we read, **“Therefore being justified, <Comment on moving comma> by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”** – the peaceable fruit of His righteousness.
- D. The peaceable fruit of righteousness speaks collectively of all the benefits of being made one with Christ and the communion with Him that results for sinners who have been reconciled unto God, for whom peace was made. You may have noticed from Philippians 1:11 that “fruits” – the fruits of righteousness as mentioned there was plural. And Paul expressed his desire that they be filled with the fruits of righteousness just as he wrote to the believers at Ephesus about being filled with the Spirit.

So the fruit of righteousness would include the fruits of the Spirit which are only produced in those who are one with Christ and declared righteous in Him before God – all His children whom He loves and chastens.

- E. The Bible sets forth the analogy of Christ as the vine and His children as the branches. In John 15, beginning in verse 1 we read where Christ said, **“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. <Meaning farmer or vinedresser in this case> <sup>2</sup>Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”** He purges or prunes the branches to bring forth more fruit, for our profit. And the chastening of the Lord may well be likened to this pruning.

Skipping down to verse 4 He adds, ***“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”*** The branch must be one with the vine before it can live and grow. We must be one with Christ in His life and death – and so we partake of that righteousness (come into fellowship with it) in the same sense we partake of His holiness – seeing Christ’s righteousness as our only righteousness.

F. And then the branch abiding in Christ by the influence of God the Holy Spirit will be made fruitful in those fruits of the Holy Spirit which are cited in Galatians 5:22-23 where we read, ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup>Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*** And consider those verses along with what Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:9, ***“(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)”*** That is, it is all from the essence of God, derived from the perfection of Christ who is our goodness, righteousness, and truth. The life of faith is lived out of His fullness.

G. The believer then brings forth fruit that is to the glory of God. And it is all peaceable fruit for it is produced in consequence of the covenant-love of the Godhead, by which (1) God the Father is revealed as the God of peace, and (2) God the Son as the One who made peace, the Peacemaker, and then (3) when God the Holy Spirit breathes life into the spiritually dead sinner and enables him or her to see how this peace was made for them by faith in belief of God’s Gospel, he gives them joy and peace in believing (Rom 15:13). Again as I quoted from Romans 5:1, being justified, by faith believers have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. How do Chastisements Produce this Fruit: As I noted in the previous message, enduring chastisements is akin to the believer’s bearing of His cross, enduring a burden that we naturally would find undesirable. Whatever cross is sent the believer’s way; he or she can know that it is sent to promote their communion with God, not hinder it. In Hebrews 12 believers are encouraged to not despise but rather esteem the chastening of the Lord, to lay aside every weight (anything that would hinder us) as we run with patience (or endure) the life of faith – anything that would hinder us or distract us from what should be our primary focus – looking unto Jesus as the author and finisher of the faith. And we can see various ways God might use our afflictions (His chastening) to rid us of those things that would hinder or distract us from being constantly aware of the debt of eternal gratitude we owe to our Lord and Savior, to have our minds on things above rather than the things of this world. So, let’s consider some examples of how the Lord’s chastening might produce peaceable fruit of righteousness.

A. Outward Trials or Difficulties: First consider those outward trials or difficulties that believers endure as chastisements from the Lord. Through James we are told of some of the benefits that befall us as fruits of His righteousness in chapter 1 where he wrote, “***My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*** <again temptations here referring to trials or testing> <sup>3</sup>***Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*** <sup>4</sup>***But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire*** <as in complete, complete in Him>, ***wanting nothing.***” (James 1:2-4). God uses our various difficulties, trials, and testings to wean us from our reliance on the things of this world, so as to grow in our reliance upon (and our love for) Him.

So trying times test and prove our faith and by them our faith grows and with it our assurance of salvation as the believer finds no lasting, permanent relief or comfort except in that peaceable fruit of righteousness. We’re reminded that nothing else will do for us. And faith then worketh patience (or endurance). Faith believes God’s promises, even against sense and feelings. In fact, faith is proved to be at its strongest when one is faced with the most trying of circumstances. Faith believes God and as such, it sees the trials as being what God’s Word declares – as a product of the Father’s love for His children. And patience says, “I will bear it.” By patience we actually come to experience God’s love afterward, as it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

And so as James puts it, we can see that the trying of our faith that has us patiently waiting upon the Lord to see all the good He has in store for us can be applied to every difficulty or trial the believer experiences under the chastening of the Lord. And we experience these blessings afterward – whether that means we will see it in this lifetime (as we often do as the trials are over) or whether it’s in the hereafter. Faith knows it to be so because faith believes God and knows the faithful God who so promises.

B. Now think about when things are going well for you, when you’re not enduring some difficulty but rather are prospering in one way or another. Prosperity in whatever form can be a curse, whether we’re prospering financially, rich in friendships, prosperous in our health, rich in love or in family relationships – whatever. And there is nothing wrong with these things in and of themselves. Good and prosperous circumstances are naturally desired by all of us and are to be enjoyed, but always with an appreciation and recognition of where and from whom all our blessings flow. We know this from the whole of scripture: The believer is to find his or her chief happiness in that which they have as objects of God’s love.

As Paul wrote to the believers at Colosse in Colossians 3:1, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup>For ye are dead, and your life is hid <protected, safe and secure...>with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”*

And so we should strive to be sure we don't find our enjoyment in any temporal thing or circumstance of this world if it would distract us from focusing upon and enjoying God's love for us. And that distraction often shows up when we allow other interests to cause us to neglect the means God has appointed for our spiritual growth and nourishment – the study of His word, prayer and meeting together as we are this morning to worship. This is one of the primary means whereby the true children of God are refreshed in the knowledge of what we have as objects of God's eternal love for us. There should be no rival to that; however, due to remaining sin, that is indeed difficult for us, particularly in times of prosperity.

But if God providentially brings about difficult circumstances in the life of a true believer to get our attention, remember it is in no sense punishment for our sinful neglect. Christ was punished for all the sins of all His dear children. Rather, as today's text teaches we are exercised by the loving chastening of our heavenly Father – corrected for our profit – for our own good!

C. Let's consider how God might use various difficult circumstances. First...

1. Poverty – What if God strips you of your wealth, be that whatever it is. What if you suddenly lose your job or unexpected expenses arise that put you in a real tough financial situation, maybe to the point of being destitute. That's grievous, but if you're one of God's children, by God's grace through faith you can know even that is for your own eternal good. It could be the Lord's mercy in putting someone in poverty as the means of improving their love for (and reliance upon) their untold spiritual riches – made poor outwardly to enrich us spiritually and have us rely more on Him who promises He will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory. He might use poverty to make more real our eternal reliance upon Him for all things – upon Him in whom believers are spiritually rich beyond imagination. Why, we have the eternal inheritance from the King of Kings!
2. Health – What if the believer experiences poor health, perhaps an incurable disease, or continual pain? You know if we live long enough, most of us are likely to see our health decline as these bodies of sin and death age. Perhaps the Lord will use our declining health to make us more submissive to His sovereign will. Our sickness, even our bodily death, is due unto man's sin. Perhaps God will use such afflictions to humble us further and see even clearer what we are and what we deserve as totally depraved sinners apart from God's grace in Christ. And seeing that makes you value Christ all the more.

Some of you know that I have some constant back pain that is wearing on me. And the restriction it's placed on me being able to enjoy all the things I enjoy most in this life has been a painful, but stark reminder to me that all this world has to offer is temporary at best. And so I'm painfully reminded to find my comfort (the only comfort and pleasure that will last) not in that which I enjoy by sight and sense in this world, but in the perfect, spiritual standing I enjoy in Christ, the peaceable fruit of His righteousness. This life and all it has to offer is just a vapor. As one old writer put it, "Happy sickness, which promotes spiritual health." I know some of you are dealing with much more serious health issues than me and I don't pretend to know God's specific purpose in those things. I just know this: If you're truly trusting in Christ alone for all of your salvation, then whether in this life or in the eternal hereafter, these difficulties that are all appointed in love for your good and for God's glory, will afterward, without fail, all yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. God said it and by His gift of faith we believe it.

3. Persecution – in the previous message I mentioned the persecution endured by that "cloud of witnesses," the saints listed in Hebrews 11. The Bible teaches that all believers (at least to some extent) suffer persecution over their identification with God's Gospel. The doctrine of Christ, the Gospel, often becomes a point of contention among our closest friends and family. But many of the believers cited in Hebrews 11 and elsewhere in the Bible are examples of how their persecution did not hinder their spiritual joy. We have it so much better in our generation than many of our forefathers in the faith due to the religious freedoms our generation has enjoyed.

No doubt our persecution over the Gospel in our day is typically light compared to those who were imprisoned or even martyred for their faith. Yet, I know that, be it ever so slight when compared to those who suffered greatly in the faith – that still when you suffer persecution over your identification with God's Gospel, if it's from your family or your close friends, it doesn't seem so light at the time. But like the Apostle Paul, believers should count it joy to be worthy to so suffer for Christ's sake. And the joy of that privilege is experienced after we've gone through it. That's one affliction that we can know is the chastening of the Lord for only the children of God suffer that. There are those who have been martyred for all sorts of religious beliefs, but only the children of God suffer persecution for righteousness sake – over their identification with God's Gospel of sovereign grace.

I know some of you are familiar with the story of Paul and Silas, how they were beaten and thrown into prison at Philippi only to be made so mindful of the joy they had in their identification with Christ and the privilege of being able to suffer for Christ, their Savior. You can read about that in Acts 16 where it tells us that at midnight, after having been beaten, thrown in jail and their feet put into stocks they were praying and singing praises unto God. So God makes even persecution profitable, for the good of His children if it's due to their identification with Christ and God's one way of salvation through Christ, based upon His imputed righteousness.



4. Injustice – Consider if God providentially causes you to suffer some injustice, perhaps even something authorized or orchestrated by the government? Given the rapid rate at which our national government is currently growing and seeing how rapidly we’re moving to a more socialistic (and possibly even a less free) society, who knows but one day your property or whatever wealth you may have accumulated (not your income, but what you already own) might be more heavily taxed or even seized for the “common good.”

I hope not, but the believers written to in the book of Hebrews lost their worldly goods. But consider how God used that for their good. In Hebrews 10:34 they were commended being told, “<You> *took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*” Their loss heightened their sense (and their enjoyment) of what they had awaiting them in heaven – that which will last forever – the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

This life is short while eternity (forever) is a long time. And yet our priorities (the things we focus on) often fail to reflect that fact. Far too much of our attention is on that which will be gone before you know it, and that at the neglect of focusing upon and thinking on those things which are above, which will endure forever. Again quoting from that same old writer, “It is truly profitable to part with the world for Christ and to give up its joys for His!”

5. Death – Consider the death of a loved one, particularly if it’s someone who dies before their time (as we would see it). Tragically, believers (like everyone) sometimes lose a near or dear loved one. We’ve been studying the book of Job in our 10 o’clock hour. Job, an object of God’s everlasting love, lost all his children and all that he had, including his health – and that under the providential oversight of God. And as tragic as his circumstances were, they ultimately worked together for his good, afterward, producing in him the peaceable fruit of righteousness. God declares that and faith believes it. What if one of your most cherished loved ones is taken from you? Think of the sorrow! Believers aren’t exempt from the grief and sorrow that accompany such losses, yet believers do not sorrow as those without hope. As the hymn writer put it, “Their hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” That can’t fail! That’s sure and certain! As believers, we have a brighter future no matter what! And that brighter future is with the Lord in heaven’s glory where there is no more sorrow, nevermore!

And so by God's grace we bow to God's sovereignty at such times in spite of our sorrow. We know as Job said, "***And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.***" (Job 1:21).

Now I don't pretend to know with any certainty just how such tragic things might all work together for the believer's good, yet I can see how they might be used by God to remind me anew of how nothing (no person, no circumstance – nothing) is to rival my love to God. God deserves to be first and He will ultimately allow nothing to rival that in the hearts of His people. And that is for our eternal good. And so while we may experience grief, due to our love for God (and solely owing to His grace in having first loved us) we patiently submit and acknowledge just as Eli did to when Samuel brought him the bad news about God's judgment upon his house for not having restrained his sons' evil doings. Eli simply replied to Samuel, "***...It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.***" (1 Samuel 3:18b). The believer is able to bow to God's sovereignty in all things because of God's grace, God having already made us willing to bow to that which none of us would by nature, apart from His saving grace. Believers bow to His sovereignty in the salvation of sinners, having been born of the Spirit and given faith to truly believe Him when He declared that He'll have mercy on whom He'll have mercy (Rom. 9:15). We worship a big God who is in total control and we bow to that, His sovereignty, in all things.

VI. Closing: Now all who hear this message, whether sons (true children) or bastards (to use the language of our text) – everyone suffers grievous afflictions and difficulties. And most all folks who have even a passing interest in religion look to that faith for relief in times of troubles. But is your faith the faith of God's elect – the faith of His dear children? Are your difficulties chastisements appointed by God in love for your eternal good? Well, do you see yourself as standing right (accepted) before God on the basis of something that has proceeded from you – your exercise or profession of faith, your decision to receive or accept Christ as your personal Savior? In short, is it something you've done or some decision you've made that others wouldn't? Is that the sort of faith that you believe distinguishes the saved from the lost?

Or instead is your confidence derived from having been so convinced of sin that nothing but the doing and the dying of a suitable Substitute in your place will fit your need, seeing the vital necessity that the perfect righteousness of God be put to your account, and that owing solely to God's sovereign mercy and grace in Christ the Savior – in other words, not at all acquired due to something done by, in or through you, the undeserving sinner? According to God's Gospel that would describe the blood-bought gift of faith that distinguishes God's adopted children in Christ (the saved) from the lost.

Remember: The tree is known by its fruit. Are you a tree of righteousness that God planted in Christ? How can you know? Well, belief of God's Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed is the 1<sup>st</sup> recognizable peaceable fruit of righteousness delivered to God's children. For by faith they discover the perfect peace that has been made for them so as to reconcile them unto their heavenly Father. As God's children turn to Him in faith, they turn away in repentance from ever having imagined that a holy and just God could have saved them based upon any contributing factor they, a sinner, could produce. By faith they truly see that nothing but the blood of Jesus could wash away their sins!

For true believers, the difficulty endured in this life (the Lord's chastening) identifies them as His sons, not bastards, because of that which it produces in them by God the Holy Spirit. In John 16 (John 16:13-14) we're told that the Spirit always points God's children solely to Christ their Savior in whom they have eternal life, and that based solely on His imputed righteousness – the very righteousness of God which is revealed through this preached gospel, whereby they have peace and joy in believing – the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.