

Growth in God's Way

by Phil Beach Jr.

As Christians, we suffer for the pleasure of God and for the benefit of others, and it is a process of growth and maturity that helps us become vessels of divine preparation.

Duration: 39:03

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 1:3

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Suffering for God's Glory"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes that our growth as Christians is ultimately for God's pleasure, not our own. He illustrates that suffering, while often bitter, produces fruit that delights the Lord and benefits others. The church is likened to a garden, where growth is essential, and we must shift our focus from personal gain to glorifying God through our trials. Beach encourages believers to embrace their struggles as opportunities for spiritual maturity and to become vessels of God's grace to others. He concludes with a call to patience and trust in God's cultivation of our lives for a divine harvest.

Transcript

What is a garden for? Whose pleasure? Why would I plant a garden? Is it for my pleasure? Whose pleasure is it ultimately for, now that we're Christians? The Lord's pleasure. Everything we're talking about this morning, everything that everyone has talked about this morning is testimony that is bringing pleasure to God's heart. All the fruit that comes out of suffering brings pleasure to God's heart.

It's not palatable to our own taste though, is it? It tastes bitter. It tastes very difficult. But it's producing fruit in our life that's pleasurable to whom? To the Lord.

We have to get over this mindset, and it's the world that gives us this mindset. We're in it for our own pleasure. We're not in it for our own pleasure.

We're not called Christians essentially for our own pleasure. We're called Christians, according to Ephesians chapter 1, for the praise and glory of His grace and His name and His honor. We're in it for His pleasure.

We exist for His pleasure. The Bible calls the church a garden and a vineyard, and gardens and vineyards are for the pleasure of the one who plants them, so that when the crop comes to maturity, the reaper can come and the owner of that vineyard, the owner of that farm, might take that fruit and enjoy it. And

therefore, the Lord is deriving much pleasure as He sees this fruit abounding in our life.

Now, I want to read a number of scriptures this morning, and you don't have to turn the tape on. Oh, it is. OK, good.

First of all, I'd like to point your attention to 2 Corinthians, and let's just keep in mind these words as we are considering all the wonderful testimonies this morning. You could hear the voice of God so clearly in everyone's testimony, Michael's and Tom's and Colette's and Gary's and Norman's, and you could just hear a symphony of praise, a symphony of testimony, and everything was harmonious, wasn't it? It was so wonderful to hear the harmonious sound of God flowing through each member here of the body of Christ, all bringing pleasure to God's heart. Now, keep in mind that essentially speaking, we are suffering, but it is not so much for our sake as it is for the pleasure of God and for the benefit of others.

We do benefit from suffering, but it is indicative of the human nature, of the sinful nature, to be preoccupied with the benefits that I am receiving. It contradicts the very nature of being a Christian. My, look at how spiritual I am becoming.

Look at how incredibly blessed I am. Look at what's happening in me. Now, don't feel condemned, because that is a natural reaction to the work of God in our life, and that's all right, that's good, but I think that part of the work of maturity is initially we're going to suffer and we're going to see what it's doing in us, and we're going to be thankful, but we're going to grow out of that.

We're going to grow out of that, and we're going to come to a place, hallelujah to God, we're going to come to a place where the sufferings that are abounding in our life, the things that we're going through as Christians are not so much going to affect our mind in that we're going to be overly enthused at what it's doing in us, as much as we are going to be overly enthused as to how it is affecting God. The pleasure that it's bringing to our Father in heaven, and additionally, it's going to affect us in a way where we are going to recognize that it is enabling us to be a blessing to others, so that the preoccupation of our mind as a result of the continued discipline that God is bringing in our lives as a group of saints is going to essentially be God-word and brother and sister-word. It's going to be toward the Lord and toward each other as opposed to how it's affecting me.

Now, this is something that the Scriptures support very wonderfully. 2 Corinthians is a most magnificent book. I recommend that you read it because 2 Corinthians was penned by the Holy Spirit through Paul, and 2 Corinthians reveals to us, listen closely, 2 Corinthians reveals to us what Paul was made of.

It reveals the inward gold that was in the life of a man who was under the disciplining hand of God. The book of 2 Corinthians is filled with gold. It is the divine nature being formed in an earthen vessel.

You touch the personality of Paul, you touch the kind of person he was, but in the midst of that personality, in the midst of that temperament, you see the beautiful heavenly qualities that God put in Paul that made him such a great man. So as we begin in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse number 3, I want to touch along this point regarding suffering and who it's really benefiting. I want you to see this so that you can understand that the purpose that God is accomplishing in your life through what you're going through, initially, you're going to be very excited about how it's affecting you personally, and that's alright.

But hopefully, as we go on with the Lord and as we mature, we're going to lose sight of how it's affecting us, and we're going to begin to get very excited about how it's affecting God, in that it is bringing pleasure

to God. Any kind of crop is ultimately grown for the pleasure of others. And ultimately, God calls himself the vine dresser.

He's the owner of the vineyard. And if God plants fruit, if God plants a crop, He ultimately is doing it because He longs for the day when that crop is mature, and He can enjoy the fruit of it. 2 Corinthians 1, beginning in verse 3, Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all of our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And listen now, and whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer, or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. So here, Paul was indicating that everything that he was going through was ultimately to benefit others.

He was suffering so that ultimately he would receive from God the comfort that comes to those who suffer, so that he was able to take that comfort and impart it to those who are suffering. So ultimately, Paul saw that his life was most profitable and most blessed when it was under the hand of God's discipline and it was able to be poured out into the life of others. Brothers and sisters, one of the most liberating fruits, one of the most liberating results of you coming into a continual life of suffering and discipline and God continuing this process of growth in our lives, is that ultimately we become vessels of divine preparation that are able to bless other people.

We can get involved in people's lives and we can contribute something of God in them. That is the most meaningful and the most blessed state to be. It is more blessed to give than receive.

Oh, so too often we only understand that Scripture as it relates to monetary, physical, material. It's more blessed to give than it is to receive. And we equate that to giving our money or giving our goods to people.

And while there is a place for that, oh, there is so much more. It is more blessed to give. It is more blessed to give of the divine life that God is bringing into you.

It is more blessed to be a giving member than a taking member in the body of Christ. You know, the body of Christ is essentially filled with two kinds of people, the givers and the takers. There are those Christians who are constantly giving of themselves, constantly giving of the spiritual treasure that God has invested in them.

And there are those members who are constantly taken. And I suppose there's a place for that in the body. But all too often, Christians that are takers never grow so that they become givers.

They just take and take and take. They take and take and take. And God wants all Christians to mature so that it is not just you living off of others, but that God works in your life and spiritual maturity can come in your life to the point where you can find yourself a giver.

Not so much giving your money or giving your monetary possessions, but you're giving the qualities, you're giving the characteristics that God has put in your life through suffering. You're giving love. You're giving kindness.

You're giving wisdom. You're giving a selfless, serving attitude toward others. And then that's when your life is really enriched, when you are giving, when you are pouring out into the lives of others what God has poured into you.

What a blessed place to be. So, this theme is throughout the Bible. 2 Corinthians chapter 4. 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse number 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed. You notice we've mentioned this in times past.

These are situations that are not comfortable. We don't like to be troubled on every side. We don't like to be perplexed.

We don't like to be persecuted. We don't like to be cast down. The things in our lives that make us feel or put us into this kind of a condition does not naturally taste good to us.

It is suffering. It is being in a place where we're being pressed at a measure. But the reason why is because of verse number 7. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

It is these kind of circumstances, trouble, distress, perplexity, persecution, and being cast down that weakens the earthen vessel. It breaks the earthen vessel. And the reason why God wants to break and weaken the earthen vessel is so that the excellency of the power of the treasure that's within the earthen vessel, and that's Christ, might be able to freely flow out through us so that that life of the treasure, that life of Christ might be able to pour out of us into the lives of others.

God's whole intention in your life this morning, beloved, if you're a Christian, is to get the treasure on the inside so much a part of your being so that it's flowing out of you and touching other people. In order to do that, He's got to keep the earthen vessel, that earthen part of you broken and weak so that it doesn't hinder the treasure from flowing out. That interprets everything you're going through today.

That is the divine interpretation to the mystery of suffering in your life today. If you're saying, Lord, why God is saying, so that the excellency of the power might be of me and not of you. If you're saying, God, why is God saying, because I don't want your earthen vessel to be so competent and so strong and so confident that it simply prevents my treasure from coming forth.

That's God's answer to your question today. Why? So that you might learn not to trust in yourself, but in God who raises up the dead. That's God's answer.

Why? For we which live, verse 11, are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you as though some strange thing has happened to you, but rejoice, Peter says. 1 Peter 4, verse 12, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to test you, which is to afflict you as though some strange thing happened to you.

Why do you think the Holy Spirit, listen carefully, why do you think the Holy Spirit includes in one sentence a fiery trial and thinking something strange has happened to us? I'll tell you why. Because every time we go through a fiery trial and every time we find ourselves being afflicted, we think something's wrong, don't we? We think something's wrong. We think something happened.

We think we've done something wrong. We think God maybe fell asleep. We can't understand why we're going through this difficult time.

We think something strange has happened. We think God has somehow made a mistake. And that's why the Holy Spirit so wonderfully combines the thought of think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you, but rejoice.

So you see, we're so preoccupied with thinking that something strange is happening or that something is wrong, we forget to rejoice. For we which live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. How is it that the believer is delivered to death for Jesus' sake? The believer is delivered to death for Jesus' sake in two ways.

Listen carefully. The first way is that we learn morning by morning to reaffirm with our mouth and in our hearts by prayer and by the Word of God that I am crucified with Christ. The first and initial way the believer is delivered to death with Jesus is by affirming with their mouth the truth of the Gospel that says, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

All things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. That means that I am delivered to death for Jesus' sake by making a verbal confession with my mouth every day, reaffirming the fact that as a Christian, I am crucified with Christ, I have been buried with Christ, I no longer live to myself, I no longer seek to do my own will, but I exist exclusively to do the will of God.

I reaffirm when I get up every morning. I'm not here to do my own thing. I'm not here to follow my own desires.

I'm not here to walk the drumbeat of this world, but I exist for the purpose of seeking to know the will of God and to do it. The second way that Christians fulfill the word of God which says we are delivered to death for Jesus' sake is that we go through fiery trials and difficulties and testings under the providential hand of God so that, as the Scripture says, verse 13, we might rejoice insomuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings that when His glory shall be revealed, we may be glad also with exceeding joy. So the first way we go through dying with Jesus daily is by affirming our identity with Him and affirming our divorce with the old man.

We've been divorced from the old man. We've died to the desires of the flesh. The desires of the flesh have not died in us.

They're there from time to time, but we deny them. We simply say, according to the word of God, I am risen with Christ. I am united to Christ.

I now, as a new creation in Christ, am committed by the power of Christ in me to follow the impulses of the Spirit of God and to walk in obedience to the word of God and to disown the desires of the flesh. Secondly, I am committed to allow the trials and the tribulations and the difficulties that I go through for Jesus' sake, I am committed to allow them to accomplish the purpose of God, which is to maintain a continued state of being broken in my earthly nature. That is, I'm not going to trust in my earthly wisdom.

As Colette was saying, I'm not going to trust in my brain power. I'm not going to trust in my ability to keep my life under control by my own wit and my own thinking. But I'm going to let this trial, I'm going to let this temptation, this affliction, this difficulty give me perspective.

And the perspective that I'm going to allow it to give me is that I am dependent upon God alone. That this earthen vessel is not going to be the source of my confidence, but it is God who will be my confidence. It is my dependence upon God.

It is my daily seeking after God. Jesus said, give us our daily bread. It is my daily, consistent dependence upon the working of the Word of God in me, the working of the Spirit of God in me, that I will trust in, as opposed to the ingredients that make up my earthly part that God says must be broken.

Now, we don't do away with the earthly. We don't cancel the earthly. We don't render it totally useless.

No, there's a place for the earthen vessel. There's a place for touch. There's a place for thought.

There's a place for being practical. But the place that it cannot hold is the place of being that which we lean upon or look to. We can't depend upon it.

So God in His sovereign wisdom lets the Christian be tested and tried and suffer with Christ so the earthen vessel is weakened and so that we might live by the power of God. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. Listen, so then death worketh in us, but life in you.

So what's the result of death working in you? Life in every person that you touch. As death works in you, now by death we mean what? What does the word mean when it's talking about death here? By death we mean that process working in your life under the leadership of God that is preventing you from trusting in anything other than God. That's what death is working in the Christian.

The power of God working in your life keeping you from trusting in anything but God and Christ's life in you. So therefore, when you find something working in your life and something happening in your life that is keeping you from getting a hold on things in your own power and forcing you to depend upon God, you should rejoice. You should thank God.

You should say hallelujah to God. Hallelujah, thank you Lord that I am enabled through this trial to distrust myself and to trust in the living God. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

Leap for joy if you find yourself in a place of humble dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Skip down to verse number 15. For all things are for your sakes that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.

Again, there's that same thought. All things are for your sakes. Whatever's happening in my life is for the sake of others and for the pleasure of God.

Whatever's happening in your life is for the sake of others and for the pleasure of God. All things are for your sakes. All things.

God is causing all things to work together for good. To them who are the called according to His purpose. There is nothing that is happening in your life that with God touching it and with you submitting to God cannot overall turn out to be a method or a procedure or a means through which more of Jesus is flowing through you and therefore you become a greater blessing to the body of Christ, a greater blessing to people you meet on the street and greater pleasure to God because the thing that brings pleasure to God is seeing all the beautiful attributes of His Son flowing in our life.

That's what brings pleasure to God. So just think of it right now, wherever you're at right now, whatever you've either gone through or what you're going through or what you're about to go through, God is intending it to be an opportunity for more of Jesus to burst through that earthen vessel of yours so that you could be a greater blessing to other people. If you would just pray that God gives you this mindset, your life would be so blessed.

Just to have that mindset. Think it not strange, beloved, concerning the fiery trial that's going to try you. Don't think it to be some strange thing when you find your earthen vessel is being broken up and shattered.

Don't think it to be a strange thing. Don't think something terrible has happened. But remember that God is wanting more of Jesus to come forth.

I'm going to stop in a few minutes. Listen to these Scriptures. In light of what we just got done talking about, all right? In light of what we just got done talking about, I want to invite you, if you would, to turn your Bible to verse number 26 of Mark chapter 4. Now, listen carefully for a few moments.

Let's just imagine as you turn your Bibles to Mark chapter 4, this is really important for us to understand. Let's just imagine a room full of children. Now, children love to play games.

I don't know about you, but I know as a child, I used to love to play house. That was my big game. My sisters and I would get together and friends on the block, and we would play house, okay? Now, check out this scenario.

There's truth in this illustration that I'm about to share with you. A truth that is very important for us to understand. Now, we're going to close.

When kids get together, the first thing we do, and this is what I did as a kid, is everybody starts saying, I'm going to be the father. I'm going to be the mother. I'm going to be the baby.

I'm going to be Uncle Fred. I'm going to be Aunt Lois. And everybody gets their parts.

And then after everybody gets their parts, they start playing the roles. Tommy becomes daddy. Jane becomes mom.

The three other ones become the three babies. One's a little baby. They dress it up like a baby.

Then Uncle Tom comes in. And all that is nice, and they play the game. Now, here's the problem.

Listen carefully. What's the whole problem with that whole scenario? Tom is not a daddy. Susie is not a real mommy.

And the three kids are not real babies to the mommy and daddy. And Jerry isn't Uncle Jerry. So the problem is that they're all playing role models, but none of them are truly what they're playing to be.

Why? Because the only way you become mommy is you grow into being mommy. The only way you become daddy is you grow into becoming daddy. You can only grow into becoming Aunt so-and-so or Uncle so-and-so.

So listen. They're playing a game whose reality only exists through growth. Now listen.

Mark chapter 4, beginning in verse number 26. And he said, so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the air, and after that the full corn in the ear.

But when the fruit is brought forth immediately, he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. In these few verses, God is telling us what the kingdom of God is like. The kingdom of God is based upon the principle of growth.

We can't pretend to be something. You can't get a committee together and put a church together. You can't get a committee together and put an evangelism crew together.

You can't put a music team together. You can't create a worship team. You can't create soul winning team.

You can't play role models in the church. That's the problem today in the church. We're getting together and we're trying to put everything together.

We're trying to say, all right, you're going to be this. You're going to, you can't put elders together. You can't create deacons.

You can't say you're going to be a preacher. You can't put things together. When you do, you're doing just like the kids.

I'm going to be mommy. I'm going to be daddy. I'm going to be the little baby.

That's what we're doing in church. I'm going to be the elder. I'm going to be the deacon.

I'm going to be the bishop. I'm going to be the worship leader. I'm going to be the cell group leader.

I'm going to be the Bible teacher on evangelism. You can't do that. Everything in the church has got to grow.

God has got to grow it. You've got to grow into eldership. You've got to grow into being a preacher.

You've got to grow into being a church where there's evangelism. You've got to grow. It's all based on growth.

The growth of Christ in a company of people who are weak in themselves, who are broken in themselves, and who are letting God discipline them, and nurture them, and grow them up. Everything about what God wants to do. Listen, God has given us a vision as a local church, but we can't put it together.

This whole vision of what God has given us is hanging upon growth. We're going to grow into the vision that God has. We can't make it.

We can't appoint it. We can't organize it. We can't decide one Friday night, we're going to do this.

We've got to continue to be subject to the work of the cross and the Word of God, and let God grow in our midst the thing that He is looking to find. Because God is a farmer, and everything in God's farm grows. So therefore, be patient, and let God continue to cultivate the soil of your life.

Let Him continue to uproot the weeds, and the stones, and the things in your life that aren't pleasing to Him. And I assure you by the authority of God's Word, that if you're patient, and you don't AWOL and jump over the fence because it gets too hot. This is prophetic now, beloved.

If you don't AWOL and jump over the fence because it's getting too hot, you're going to reap a harvest in your life. We're going to reap a harvest in our midst, but it's not going to be a harvest that is a fake harvest that men have done. It's going to be a divine harvest that God has done, and it's going to bring glory to Him, pleasure to His heart, and it's going to be a blessing that's going to be greater than what we could contain.

So may I encourage you this morning to hear what everyone said in testimony, to hear this short little exhortation from the Word of God this morning, and to rejoice in all the sufferings that you're going through. Be thankful and let God continue to weaken your earthen vessel so that greater light from Jesus Christ can shine in and through your life. And remember, be patient.

It takes time. It takes work. When a farmer goes out and plants, some quacky salesman might come up to him and say, hey, I got a plan for you.

I can tell you how to reap a harvest. The farmer looks at him 20 years as a farmer, says, get out of my driveway. Come on, I tell you how to do it in three easy steps.

Get out of my driveway. I'm a farmer. I'll tell you how to reap a harvest just the way I'm doing it.

Cultivate the land. Uproot all the garbage. Plant the seed.

Pray for rain. Pray for sun. And just be patient.

It'll happen. You can't tell me a plan. The plan has been ordained by God.

And likewise, in the church today, you can't come up with some quick program. You can't come up with some quick way. You can't come up with some three-point plan on how to become spiritual or how to put a church together.

It can only happen by the law of planting and harvest and sowing and reaping. And God sending rain and water. That's it.

And any other plan that you try and implement into a local church in order to accomplish what God wants is a plan from man. And it'll fail. So we got to be patient.

Keep praying. Keep letting the heavenly farmer cultivate his crop. And in due season, we're going to see the harvest.

And it's going to bring glory to God. And all of us are going to shout and sing and dance. Do you believe that? I hope you do because I do.

Father, thank You for the Word. Thank You for the testimony from all the saints today, all saying the same thing. We hear Your Word.

We believe Your Word. Thank You for encouraging us. And we look to You to perfect and complete what You have begun.

Father, uproot everything in our life that's not pleasing in Your eyes. Expose all darkness by the power of Your light. And bring mercy and grace to each one of us.

Change us, Lord. We are determined as Joshua and Caleb to go and possess the whole of what You've intended. And we ask, Lord, that You'll do it by Your power.

In Jesus' name, amen and amen. God bless you, each and every one of you.

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