

## Sadness (and pruning in the Spirit)

D E Wasake Esq.

November 2020

### This message covers

- The purpose of pruning in the process of bearing the fruit of the Spirit
- Understanding the sadness, we see around us and within us
- God's actual solution to dealing with sadness.

### Information notice board

- 1) **About me.** Before I became a devoted Christian, I spent 20 years of my life being a hedonist – one who seeks pleasure for the sake of it, yet Love also brought pain! Since God humbled me to turn me into his servant and I got baptized in May 2017, he has enabled me to overcome sin ruling my life and to live by the Holy Spirit. You can read my full testimony [here](#):
- 2) **About these series.** The Lord Jesus gave me a single word “Blossom” as I was praying for a word for this season and series. This word will define a series of 12 topics he has also given me to tell his church about and build Christian character in his Holy Spirit. This lesson is one of those messages, but what does it mean to blossom?
- 3) **Pray for us!** Without the Lord, our effort is in vain. Pray that we remain faithful, humble servants.
- 4) **Subscribe to our [YouTube Channel](#)** and keep up with our videos which support the website.
- 5) **Looking for a ministry to partner with (pray, volunteer, give, subscribe to)? Consider supporting:**

<https://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/>

After sharing the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus said “Go and do likewise.” That is the mission of Samaritan’s Purse – to follow the example of Christ by helping those in need and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel.

*The above ministry/website has not paid us to provide this recommendation and so the views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of the ministry promoted above. Likewise, the views therein do not necessarily reflect those of this ministry.*

## Basics

The COVID- 19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on us. We are not only dealing with sickness, death, income insecurity, but our mental health is suffering and bringing about sadness and depression. I have for example recently lost a friend and member of our church, who committed suicide. Top of her career, she has now left behind a grieving husband and a two-year-old son. As we continue praying for this family, we also thank God that there appears to be hope for a vaccine to bring some light, to bring an end to the suffering and sadness.



We are coming to the end of the season called Blossom. We have been on a journey to understand the Fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5 as follows:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5: 22 -23 (NIV)*

If this is the fruit of the Spirit, why then did the Spirit ask me to cover sadness as one of the topics and yet sadness is not part of the fruit? It's because sadness is a very much a part of the process of the fruit bearing process and sadness is akin to the pruning of an orange tree – which we are using as an example to demonstrate how a Christian blossom. The bible in fact explains the connection between fruit and pruning as follows:

*“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” John 15:2 NIV*

It therefore follows that EVERY Christian who has the Holy Spirit and the Fruit of the Spirit will undergo pruning. But what does Pruning through sadness look like?

[Now in these series of which this message is part 11](#), we are using an analogy of an orange tree growing to describe how a Christian matures in the Holy Spirit to the point of bearing lasting fruit, including being pruned through sadness.

So, when growing an orange tree from a seed, over the 5 years, there are 6 key stages it goes through:

1. Planting
2. Sprouting
3. Growing
4. Blossoming (Flowering)
5. Pollination
6. Bearing Fruit

So, pruning an orange tree is absolutely critical.<sup>i</sup> This pruning typically takes place just before blossoming time (flowering) or just after fruit start coming. If left unpruned, the orange tree's growth can go out of hand, because the unpruned branches and stems can block light for others. Additionally, as trees grow, there are often dead, damaged or diseased parts, these need to be removed. So Pruning orange trees can improve aeration and increase light through the canopy, thus improving fruit quality and yield.

When pruning, the farmer usually uses sterilised shears to cut off part of the branch. For larger branches however, a saw may need to be used. I wonder if the trees feel pain when this is taking place?

Luckily for an orange tree, pruning doesn't need to take place all the time, but what is the connection between pruning and sadness?

## Examples from the bible: Sadness and joy in the Spirit

The bible makes it pretty clear that those who are walking with the joy of the Spirit will go through suffering and therefore inevitably sadness. Some of this process is actually a form of discipline or “spiritual pruning.”

The bible says: *“because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son.” (Heb. 12:6)*

About the ways God “prunes”, there are many and various: sickness, hardship, loss of material goods, slander and persecution, loss of loved ones, grief in relationships, and war. God allows troubles, **EVEN when we are walking righteously** to prune off the things in our lives that drain away our energy and rob us of our capacity to bear fruit.<sup>ii</sup>

The primary way therefore that God prunes his children is hardship and the bible says:

*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? Hebrews 12: 7 (NIV).*

But why the sadness? Why the pain particularly if someone has been born again and is living in the Spirit? Aren't we co – heirs with Christ, seated with him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6) and so meant to partake of his glory?

Romans 8, in various places describes this tension or pulling in two directions of the glorious Spirit, who brings joy and new life on one hand as Galatians 5: 22 shows and suffering and thus sadness in the present world on the other hand:

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; **if so be that we suffer with him**, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8: 16-18 (KJV)*

We see the tension in the verses:

- Those with the Spirit are children of God and so heirs – meaning they inherit the riches of Christ (v 16);
- But to become heirs, we need to suffer, with Christ – so that we can be glorified with him (v 17); and
- the suffering in the present age is just a phase or a tunnel and is nothing compared to the glory we will receive with Christ.

This tension of life in the Spirit means that a Christian's life is like Christ - a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief<sup>fii</sup>, and yet he was also full of the Spirit which caused him to instead find Joy/Delight in the fear of the Lord<sup>iv</sup>.

It means we as Christians recognize that: the world is groaning, we are groaning, the Holy Spirit is groaning. This is because - the world is under a curse and yet the Spirit brings us joy and so we have hope to overcome. The bible still in Romans 8 shows this as follows:

**1. Against its will, all the world is under a curse which brings sorrow – sadness.**

*Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay Romans 8: 20 (NLT).*

**2. Believers, only have a small sample of future glory, in the meantime we groan to be released from suffering**

*And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. Romans 8: 23 (NLT).*

### 3. But - the Holy Spirit helps us during the times of our suffering.

*And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. Romans 8: 26 (NLT)*

#### What does a Christian do in light of these things?

One writer asks<sup>v</sup>: So, what do we do? Live in agony? Face every day and each new disappointment with yet another set of tears? End it all? Or, ignore the pain, pretend it doesn't exist or matter, and live in a state of numbness or search for pleasure?

No, the solution is this:

We can honestly acknowledge the sadness around us while choosing to be hope-filled and joyful at the same time. We grieve with those who grieve; including ourselves. In fact the bible says:

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1: 3 – 4 (NIV).*

## Our generation: avoiding sadness causes depression

Psychologists tell us that our generation has an incorrect problem with avoiding sadness.<sup>vi</sup>

*Our tendency to avoid sadness is almost instinctive. From a very young age, we try to avoid sad feelings. As adults, we're quick to shush wailing babies or offhandedly say to sobbing children, "Don't be sad. Cheer up. You're fine. Stop crying."*

*Sadness is often mistakenly confused with depression. Unlike depression, sadness is a natural part of life and is usually connected with certain experiences of pain or loss or even a meaningful moment of connection or joy that makes us value our lives. Depression, on the other hand, can arise without a clear explanation or can result from an unhealthy, non-adaptive reaction to a painful event, where we either steel ourselves against our natural reaction to the event or get overwhelmed by it.*

*When we feel sadness, it centers us. In general, when we recognize our emotions and allow ourselves to feel them in a healthy and safe capacity, we feel more grounded, more ourselves and even more resilient. On the contrary, suppressing emotions can actually make us feel more depressed.*

*The problem is that we can't selectively numb pain without numbing joy.*

*When we suppress "negative" emotions, we lose touch with our adaptive emotions like love, passion, warmth or desire, and, therefore, lead a much more deadened life. When we feel our feelings, our lives have meaning, texture, depth, and purpose.*

It seems therefore that the Spirit in his wisdom shows us that a Christian who is full of the Spirit should embrace sadness, together with joy – first because a lot of the sadness from hardship is a result of the discipline of the Spirit as pruning. Second, with this knowledge, they can use their own sadness and suffering to help others, suffering from depression, as well as hardship and other troubles – war, hunger, poverty, persecution, those troubles which can bring great sadness.

But we keep our eyes on the end of the story:

Whether the sadness is a result of discipline, pruning or even just as a result of the curse on the world, we remember:

*Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. Romans 8: 18 (NLT)*

And this:

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8: 28 (KJV).*

We take heart that our great Lord and Jesus is not absent from us in suffering. When he was on this earth and saw the grief experienced by Martha and Mary and all those who lost their friend and brother, Lazarus, he wept. <sup>vii</sup> He also said he was the resurrection and the life and then raised Lazarus from the dead, proving that the sadness of this world does not have the last laugh.

When he left this earth, he sent us his Holy Spirit and all those who put their trust in him and repent of their sins will receive his Holy Spirit to help in this life of sadness but will also be raised to life by this same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.

That is the hope of the Christian and so even in sadness, we can say:

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4: 4, NIV)*

**Amen.**

## Next steps

Read Romans 8 to help you get a full picture of the tension of living the Spirit filled life. For you to successfully be “pruned” you need to spend time in the word of God, “which is a two-edged sword – judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” <sup>viii</sup> Together with that and the knowledge you have learned from psychology you will:

- Understand that the suffering and sadness we see is not God’s original plan.
- See that while we are groaning, the Spirit of Jesus is helping us in our weakness.
- Choose not to numb sadness – which can lead to depression but instead experience it, having hope that all this will eventually end when we are co- heirs with Christ.
- Be comforted in your own sadness, having received strength from Jesus and then comfort others.

## Let us pray.

How can I pray for you?

- You are a believer but sadness is overcoming you. You need the Lord’s help to be filled with Hope.
- You used to be a believer, but are a prodigal son/daughter. Nevertheless, the Lord has pruned you with hardship as a discipline so that in sadness you can perhaps return to him.
- You have never received the gift of Christ, being eternal life and neither have you received his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who gives you joy as a fruit, to help you overcome the sadness in this world.

Write to me so I can pray further for you: [dwasake@shaweleroad.com](mailto:dwasake@shaweleroad.com) Be blessed. END.

## Notes

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/fruits/oranges/pruning-orange-trees.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://spiritualray.com/spiritual-pruning>

<sup>iii</sup> See Isaiah 53: 3 (NLT)

<sup>iv</sup> See Isaiah 11: 1- 3 (NIV)

<sup>v</sup> <https://peregrineministries.org/a-spirit-of-sadness/>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/compassion-matters/201507/the-value-sadness>

<sup>vii</sup> See John 11: 1 - 43

<sup>viii</sup> See Hebrews 4: 12