

A Pastor's Heart

Encouragement from Pastor McGill

Endure the pruning process

John 15:1-2

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 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.

When I gave my life to the Lord, my primary motivation was to not to go to hell. When I was growing up, we had the fire and brimstone messages from the revival preachers. They would come in and preach heaven down. They preached with a fire and passion during revival that was different than our weekly services. When they finished preaching I knew that I didn't want to go to hell. They were instrumental in putting the fear of God in me. I thank God for sending the old revival preachers because they literally scared "hell" out of me and inspired a desire in me to go to heaven. I certainly was a babe and was only drinking milk during this time. I was relieved to be going to heaven and in my ignorance, I did not really think I had to deal with God until I actually got to heaven. Nobody told me about this pruning process that Jesus is speaking about in this passage of scripture.

Many believers wish for the "thief on the cross experience." They want to live their own life the way they want to live it, accept Jesus at the end of their life, die and go to heaven for all eternity. They would never have to endure, submit, fast, pray, suffer, sacrifice, be persecuted, live by faith, love enemies and forgive people who have wronged them. These things and more must be endured by the believer along this journey. Once we become born-again, our lives no longer belong to us and we can no longer live the way we want to live. We must live our lives to please God. God has created us and expects us to be fruitful for Him.

When we examine the text, Jesus uses the word **every** when identifying the branch that does not bear fruit. This verse includes all believers; he leaves no one out. The branches that are not fruitful are removed. The branches obviously refer to people. The branches are removed because God is not wasteful. There is nothing that He created that does not give. The sun, moon, water, fire, grass, birds, bees, flowers and the trees all give. When we as people stop giving, we cease to function in our created role and stand in jeopardy of being removed by God. Jesus states that the Father does the removing. I thank God for his mercy because He certainly could have removed me many times in my life.

Jesus also states in the text that when we bear fruit for God that we are pruned so that we can bear even more fruit. This is the pruning process that every believer must endure. It is human nature to take the path of least resistance. We have a natural

inclination to always look for the easy way out. There is nothing easy about being pruned. Pruning is very painful. The Greek word for purgeth used in the text is kathairo. This word means to cleanse from filth and impurities, this is often done by fire and by cutting. In **Hebrews 4:12**, we know that the word of God is alive and sharper than any two-edged sword. The word of God cuts both ways and sometimes we are being cut in order to bear more fruit and it does not feel good. God takes His Son and uses Him (the Word) to whip us into shape. That's why it's important to attend a good local church where the Word of God is preached without compromise. God also prunes us by allowing us to go through the fire. He will allow us to experience heart aches, pain and difficulties in order for us to be able to bear more fruit for Him. The fire is definitely hot and it is not a pleasant experience; however, if we endure, God will ultimately get the glory out of this experience. Remember God's grace is sufficient while you are enduring. Joseph had no idea he was being pruned by God when his brothers sold him into slavery. He was then accused of attempted rape by his master's wife and imprisoned. Joseph finally realized at the end of his journey that it was God's plan all along for him to go through the fire in order to bear fruit for God.

There are four reasons I want to give you for pruning.

1. **Pruning trains the believer.** Discipline is accomplished through pruning. You cannot be a disciple without discipline.
2. **Pruning maintains the health of the believer.** Things that are not kept clean become dirty and contaminated and eventually become sick, wither away and die.
3. **Pruning improves the productivity of the believer.** The healthier you are, the more productive you will be.
4. **Pruning restricts the wrong growth.** Cancer grows but it is not good growth. Your head should never outgrow your heart. When this happens, it is the wrong kind of growth. Pruning will keep your head small and your heart large.

Praise God for the pruning process. In the pruning process, you are being prepared to bring glory to your Father in Heaven. If you are being pruned, this is not the time to complain, run away or seek the path of least resistance. This is the time to submit, renew your mind and endure the pruning process. Make it a great day.

Blessings and Peace

Pastor McGill