

## JOHN 15:1-5 (NASB)

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

**2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.**

Again we learned last time that:

1. Branches are Believers
2. In Me means Being Safely and Securely Hidden in Jesus Christ because His blood covers us.
3. Fruit is Fruits of the Spirit i.e. Holy Spirit motivated and produced fruit.
4. He takes away - airō (ī-rō) - to raise up, elevate, lift up

What happened at this time is the farmer or the Vine Dresser would come through and he would lift up the branch that was struggling to produce fruit, maybe set it on a rock or prop it up with something so that it could get sun and get nourished. But He might have to be careful initially as that branch might be too far down and out of the sunlight it can only be moved a little at a time without damaging it, might need to be a gradual process.

God through the Holy Spirit is constantly trying to redirect us to focus on His Son. To turn into the sunlight in our metaphor.

We are going to continue talking today about how that process looks. In order to talk through that process we have to look at and understand the rest of the verse.

**and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.**

**Prunes** - to cleanse, of filth, impurity, etc

Pruning is the process of cleaning a branch. Getting things off of the branch that might inhibit fruit production from the branch.

*Pruning essentially means removing parts of something that are unwanted or not needed.*

*Now, in Israel many of the grapes that are grown are grown actually on the ground. As you go through the Eshcol valley and the areas around the Eshcol valley where the finest grapes are grown, you will see these huge trunks of the grapevines. And they are maybe six feet long, and you'll see them lying on the ground, propped up on one end by a rock...But as the fruit is developing, as it is getting ripe, the vinedressers will go through the vineyard and they will pick up these great bunches of grapes and they will wash them and clean off the dirt and all. And they'll cleanse them in order that the fruit might ripen to perfection...*

*Now, Jesus is taking a picture that is very familiar with the people, as they had seen the people out there washing the branches and washing these bunches of grapes that they might produce more fruit.*

- Chuck Smith

What is the process as Jesus is laying it out for us in relation to the branch?

UNFRUITFUL BRANCH    BRANCH LIFTED UP    BRANCHES ACCEPTANCE OF THE SUNLIGHT  
PRUNING OR CLEANING

So what do we really see Jesus talking about here? He is talking about a process. He is talking about the process of sanctification! Here is how it looks for us:

UNFRUITFUL BELIEVER    OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED TO TURN BACK TO THE SON  
REPENTANCE    ONGOING CLEANING OF A FRUITFUL AND GROWING BRANCH

The Prodigal Son

**Luke 15:11-24 (NASB)** 11 And He said, "A man had two sons (branches). 12 "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. 13 "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. 14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. 15 "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. 17 "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" 20 "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

**Unfruitful branch** = The Prodigal **Son**. Notice that he is a son. This is how scripture refers to believers. We are referred to as His children as sons and daughters. Unbelievers are not referred to in this way.

**Romans 8:14 (NLT)** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

**Galatians 3:26 (NASB)** 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

**24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again...**

What does Jesus say the Father does with unfruitful branches? He takes them away.

**"He takes away"** again in the Greek literally means to "raise up or elevate." When a Vine Dresser was raising or elevating the branch they are **repositioning or changing the branches environment or circumstances** for the purpose of getting them into the light with the hope that the branch will accept the sunlight and receive nourishment.

**Using the example above with the Prodigal Son let's review "He Takes Away". How was God utilizing circumstances to get the boy into the light?**

**14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that**

**country, and he began to be impoverished.** (NATURAL DISASTER & NO MONEY).

An opportunity to turn to his father...does he?

**15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country.** He looked to his own understanding and he turned to himself to figure it out.

**Proverbs 26:11-12 (NASB)** 11 Like a dog that returns to its vomit Is a fool who repeats his folly. 12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

**15 ...and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.**

This should have shaken the boy into reality. Feeding swine for a Jewish person, even being around swine was unlawful. (THE LAW WAS USED & HIS EXTREME HUNGER).

**When God is repositioning us to get us into the sunlight He is trying to do something. What is He trying to do? He is trying to get us back to being a fruitful branch. He is trying to get us back to abiding in the vine.**

## **REPENTANCE & PRUNING EXPLAINED**

**REPENTANCE** - to change one's mind or to **turn**.

Notice in the tabernacle:

**Exodus 30:18 (NASB)** 18 "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it.

- Bronze represents judgement and suffering.
- The entire laver was bronze - His sacrifice covered all of the judgement that we ought to receive for past, present and future sins. Because of this we are able to continually repent and be clean in His sight.
- Where the laver was located - between the tent of meeting and the altar.

**1 John 1:9 (NASB)** 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Psalms 19:12 (NLT)** How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults.

**and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.**

**Prunes** - to cleanse, of filth or impurity

We see repentance and Pruning when Christ washed the apostles feet:

**John 13:5-10 (NASB)** 5 Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 So He \*came to Simon Peter. He \*said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." 8 Peter \*said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." 9 Simon Peter \*said to Him, "Lord, then

wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." 10 Jesus \*said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." Notice Peter in verse 8 "Never shall You wash my feet!"

In Peter's eyes perhaps this is too **menial** a task for Christ. Christ is above doing this for him.

Jesus' response is stern:

**Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."**

If **we** do not allow **Christ to wash us** we have no fellowship with Him. We do not take part in the process of being cleaned other than submitting (repenting) and allowing Him to wash us.

## **REPENTANCE & PRUNING IN PRODIGAL SON -**

**17 "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;**

What do we see...repentance! **He came to his senses.**

We also see that he acknowledges to himself that his father's way is better. Notice what he is going to say to his father:

**19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men." make me as one of your hired men**

Notice the son's brokenness. Being in his father's family isn't something he can now grasp for himself. He would just as soon be a servant for his father.

**Psalm 51:3-4 (NASB)** 3 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. 4 Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.

**When we grasp who we are in relation to Him.** We see just how very, very small we are and just how very, very big He is. When we grasp this we see just **how unworthy we really are** to be called his children.

**20 "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.**

**Luke 15:20 (KJV)** And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was **yet a great way off**, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

**Great** - unusual or considerable in degree.

In other words he was a tremendous distance away, you could certainly conclude that he was not within eyesight of his father.

**13 "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country...(distant means far off)**

**WHAT'S THE POINT?** (GOD SEES OUR HEART...NOTICE THE SON HASN'T SPOKEN TO THE FATHER VERBALLY YET...GOD SEES OUR HEART).

**Psalms 139:4 (NASB)** 4 Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all.

**Ran** - this is the only place in scripture where God is pictured as running.

21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

## **PRUNING**

**22 "But the father said...**

Notice the **father cuts his son off** and he doesn't let him continue to speak. What's great about this passage of scripture is that **we know what the son was going to say next... (verse 19) "19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."**

The father cuts him off and begins speaking. It is almost as if he is saying "No, **you are not a hired hand...you are so much more valuable** than that, **you are my son!**

**1 John 3:1 (NASB)** 1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

**and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.**

In the example of the prodigal son, **who** put the robe, the ring, killed the calf etc? The Father did, the boy didn't put the robe on himself or put the ring on himself or kill the calf himself. The Father did it!

Remember what Jesus said to Peter: **Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."**

**The Father cleaned him up...He pruned him.** Did it mean the son wasn't going to have to work anymore? No! Only now the son's motives and desire to work for his father change.

As we take time to understand the process that the Father has laid out for believers in this passage by viewing it through the parable of the Prodigal Son we begin to understand a little more of His character. As I begin to understand His character more and more I find myself changed. He changes my attitude about what He is doing inside of me.

**Philippians 2:13 (NASB)** 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

**and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.**

Why does God do this? We see in the last part of the verse:

**So we will bear more fruit for Him!**

**As He works on me I become a branch that matures and produces fruit upon fruit upon fruit for Him.**

**Like a branch it is from the inside out that He changes us.**

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NASB)** 16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.