

**The Branch-Life of the Believer**  
**Lesson 7: THE PRUNING KNIFE**

**Already Ye Are Clean Because of the Word I Have Spoken Unto You - John 15:3**

**I. Introduction**

- a. Within the notion of pruning there are **two parts** of the action: The first is the purpose of the Husbandman and the second is His method or the tool that He uses to accomplish His desire.
- b. As to the purpose, God purifies **all true** Christians so that they may be more fruitful.
- c. In pruning He takes away that which hinders our fruitfulness; He teaches us; quickens us; revives us; makes us more pure in motive and **in life**.
- d. He accomplishes His purposes through the **experience** of the believer; experience that takes us through both defeats and triumphs, by affliction, and all types of suffering and circumstances that facilitate our maturation.
- e. At the end of experience the result is that we have learned; learned in our soul and in our spirit. The core of our spiritual being is changed and we are **transformed**. This is the result of pruning.
- f. He accomplishes this learning by the subtle **influences** of his Spirit in sanctifying us, purifying our motives, teaching us the beauty of holiness, and inducing us to devote ourselves more to him.
- g. The pruning knives in the hands of our heavenly Husbandman are of different types. While there are many available for His use, the one referred to by Jesus in this passage is the **Word of God**. John 15:3 *Already Ye Are Clean Because of the Word I Have Spoken Unto You -*
- h. The Word of God in the hands of the Husbandman is sharper than any two-edged sword, that pierces even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and is quick to **discern** the thoughts and intents of the heart.

**II. The Word of God as the Pruning Knife**

- a. Jesus points our attention to the Word of God as the pruning knife when He says: "Ye are **already clean**, because of the word I have spoken unto you."
- b. What Jesus meant by His statement was that by His teaching about the spiritual Kingdom of God, He had pruned their **desire** for objects which would have bound their affections, and which would have rendered them unfruitful. John 6:67-69 *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? <sup>68</sup> Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. KJV*
- c. The disciples had been **disciplined** by the word which He spoke. In their souls and in their spirits they had effectually interacted with His words.
- d. It is only when experience of any type leads to **interaction** with the word that it becomes a blessing and a material part of our spiritual identity in Christ.
- e. In other words, the disciples had been spiritually **exercised** to desire godliness and the things of God more than the things of this life. 1 Tim 4:7-8 *"exercise thyself rather unto godliness. <sup>8</sup> For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." KJV*
- f. **Knowledge** alone does not produce this effect. The Word of God, to be causally effective, must be worked into us at a level that will produce a lasting spiritual affect. 1 Cor 8:1-2 *Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. <sup>2</sup> And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. KJV*
- g. Not even Paul's thorn in the flesh could become a blessing until Christ's word had made him **see** the danger of self-exaltation, thus making him willing to rejoice in infirmities. 2 Cor 12:9 *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. KJV*
- h. The lack of this heart-cleansing through the word is the reason why affliction and suffering is so often **unsanctified**. Failure to grasp the application of Scripture to personal experience often leaves the soul angry and bitter but not better.
- i. The words of Jesus applied to the experience of the disciples worked deep into their spirits life changing truths that stayed with them and guided their footsteps. They were learning to **abide** in His word.
  1. They understood the importance of **self denial**. Matt 16:24 *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. KJV*
  2. Jesus had changed their view of **this life** itself. Matt 16:25 <sup>25</sup> *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. KJV*
  3. He had taught them and they had **grasped** what He meant by forsaking all. Luke 18:28 <sup>28</sup> *Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. KJV*

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4. He had taught them and they had learned that their relationship with Him was **not like** any other human relationship. Matt 10:37 <sup>37</sup> *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. KJV*
5. He had disclosed to them and condemned their ever-present **assertion** of self. Matt 20:25-27 *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. <sup>26</sup> But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; <sup>27</sup> And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: KJV*
- j. From the opening of His ministry in the Sermon on the Mount to His words of warning in the last night, His word had tried and **cleansed** them.
- k. As He humbled their pride through His teaching, and reproved their lack of love, they were effectually exercised unto godliness and they began to **abide in Him**.

**III. The Cleansing of the Word of God in the Life of the Believer**

- a. It is as the soul of the believer gives up its own **thoughts**, and yields itself heartily, humbly, patiently, to the teaching of the word by the Spirit, that the Father will do His blessed work of pruning and cleansing. Ps 119:113 *I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. KJV*
- b. This is necessary because of the way that the self is so quick to **mix** with our spiritual work causing the work of the Spirit to be hindered. Ps 51:2 *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. KJV*
- c. Let us who would know all the Husbandman can do for us, all the Vine can bring forth through us, seek earnestly to **yield** ourselves heartily to the blessed cleansing through the word. Ps 119:9 *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. KJV*
- d. Let us, in our **study** of the word, interact with it and receive it deep in our spirit as a fire that melts and refines us, and as a hammer that breaks and opens us up. Jer 23:29 *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? KJV*
- e. Let us abide in the word and allow it to work in us as the sword that lays bare and **slays** all that is of the flesh. John 6:63 *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. KJV*
- f. All who are branches of the true Vine, each time you read or hear the word, wait first of all on Him to **use it** for His cleansing of yourself as a branch. Ps 139:23-24 *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: <sup>24</sup> And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. KJV*
- g. **Set** your heart upon His desire for more fruit. Mark 4:20 *And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred. KJV*
- h. We must trust Him as Husbandman to work the word into us for His glory and our fruitfulness that His promise and His purpose will be **fulfilled in us**. 1 Thess 5:24 *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. KJV*

**IV. Application**

- a. The Word of God is understood by us on various levels. The key variable that moves us from one level to the next level of depth is the degree to which we **interact** with the word.
- b. One way that we might think about our interaction with the Word of God on various levels of understanding is that it runs from no understanding to living it. For example:
  - We may **See** the words as lines on a page
  - We may **Read** the word as we might read any other literature
  - We may **Contemplate** the word, thinking about how it applies to self
  - We may **Study** the word to understand its technical and linguistic meaning
  - We may **Abide** in the word, spiritually drawing our very life from its meaning and application
- c. How would you assess your own **usual** interaction with the Word of God?
- d. What is it that keeps you from interacting with the Word of God on a deeper level?
- e. What will you do about it?