

# The Pruning Process

by David Wilkerson

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*David Wilkerson's sermon emphasizes the importance of the pruning process in spiritual growth and bearing fruit as believers in Christ.*

**Duration:** 55:45

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Sanctification"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares his personal struggles and striving to be holy, making promises and feeling overwhelmed by his own failures. He emphasizes the need for a fresh and living word from God, rather than relying on past experiences. The preacher then shares his newfound understanding of the vine and branches analogy taught by Jesus. He recounts his visit to a vineyard owner who helped him grasp the deeper truths behind this analogy.

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## Transcript

This morning, I want to talk about the pruning process. The pruning process, okay? John 15, let's read the first, well, let's read the first seven or eight verses. I'm the true vine, and my father's the husbandman.

Every branch of me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit he purges, it means prunes it, that it may bring forth more fruit. You're clean through the word which I've spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can you except you abide in me.

I'm the vine, you're the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me you can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he's cast forth as a branch, and is withered, men gather them, cast them into the fire, and they're burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, it's be done unto you. Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall you be my disciples.

I've been so wrapped up in this chapter for weeks and weeks praying about it, and now we've come to this phase, the pruning process. Heavenly Father, I pray that your word be right to the point. God, I pray that you anoint it.

I pray that you come upon me with special unction from on high, and Lord, change us by what we are. Lord, I've been changed by what you've been speaking to my heart, and I would like to have everyone

who hears this be changed in their thinking, in their lifestyle, and everything that we do in our approach to you. Lord, quicken us to hear the word.

Give us ears to hear what you're saying, Lord. Give us ears to hear. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen. Jesus said, Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. He sums up in one sentence our eternal purpose here on earth.

We're to glorify and bless God by bearing not only fruit, but more and more and more fruit until Jesus comes and until we're taken. What does it mean, fruit? Bearing fruit? Simply, I believe it means that we're to become more like Jesus. It's becoming more and more like Christ, entering into the righteousness by faith.

This Christ-like characteristic found in Galatians 5.22. You know, these are the nine fruits of the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. That's his divine nature, and that's what he wants us to become.

That's the fruit he wants us to bear. In Romans 6.22, the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace to them that make peace. See, fruit is righteousness.

He's looking for Christ-likeness in us or his righteousness. But he says not only here in the 15th chapter of John, not only are we to bear that, we are to give forth that fruit more and more on increase all through our life. The Christ-likeness is to increase.

We don't come into some static level place and we give our heart to Jesus. There's to be continual growth. There's a continual bearing of fruit richer, stronger, more plenteous.

This fruit has to grow. And growth can be stimulated only by pruning. In fact, vine dressers will tell you, in fact, there's a saying among vine dressers, growth follows the knife.

Growth follows the knife. Now, pruning is a process where there's a cutting away of parts of the vine or the tree, the branches, there's a cutting away to produce this growth. The dead branches are cut off immediately.

They're just one slip, the dead ones are cut off, they're gathered and they're burned, the scripture says. But this, in fact, the reason it died is because of a virus or a disease in it. And that virus and that disease for Israel was unbelief.

The Bible says clearly because of unbelief they were cut off. He pruned them right off. They have to come the way we do now by faith.

They have to be grafted back into the original vine. But you see, the process, those who bear fruit, they are pruned every single year. And I'm going to prove that to you.

It's an ongoing process. Pruning, by Jesus Christ among his saints, is not a one-time affair. Now, I wish it was, but it's not.

Now, pruning sounds rather scary, doesn't it? Knife cutting. We know also that a branch, when you cut a branch, it bleeds. The sap bleeds for a while.

In fact, it has to callous over, and it takes time for it to callous over, and there is a bleeding. We would consider it a painful thing, but that's not the concept of true pruning. In fact, until the Holy Spirit opened to me the true meaning of the pruning process, I thought pruning was God's way of cutting something evil out of me.

If something bad happened in my life or every time my wife got cancer or one of my kids got cancer, I thought, God must be pruning me. He's trying to get at something in me. He's trying to awaken me.

There's something he's trying to tell me, and I'm not getting it. He's pruning in every bad thing. If people lose their job, a lot of people have this idea that God is pruning because he's trying to get at sin or weakness in us.

He's trying to do something. But we forget that these are the good branches that have been bearing fruit. These are his favorite branches.

He is not chastening. Pruning has nothing to do with chastening whatsoever. Nothing.

And you'll see that as I go on, you see when a deep-seated lust erupts in us or something that we thought we had victory over, and then we wait for God to send a knife and cut something precious away from us. Maybe somebody near us gets cancer. Maybe there's an accident, and we say, oh boy, his pruning knife.

You've got it all wrong. That's not it at all. The Lord's teaching and the vine and the branch has so intrigued me.

For almost two months now, I've been doing everything to get a hold of this truth. I went to libraries, and I got books on vines, planting. I got graphs.

I had people who know the Internet to go on the Internet and get me everything on vines and branches and pruning and grafting. And I looked at the charts, and I was getting a lot of information. But this past week, I prayed.

I said, Lord, you've got to help me bear down on this. Lead me to somebody who owns a vineyard. And I got a call half an hour later from a friend of mine who knew I was searching.

He said, look, I know a gentleman who has a vine near my house. And I said, I'll be there in an hour. And I drove out to New Jersey.

This man has a vine. He has his own private little, I guess you'd call it a brewery. He has his own brand of wine, and he has quite a vineyard.

He's from the old country, and he's a very fine gentleman. Joseph just opened up, and I got a lesson on the vine and the branches. And it opened my eyes, and it all began to come together.

And let me, in a nutshell, try to tell you what I learned. And you see, I used to think, boy, you read Jesus, and he sounds so simple. You read Paul, and he's kind of complicated.

It almost made me sound like Paul was a little more educated than Jesus. You know, and yet, when you stop to think, Jesus created the vine. He knew the process.

He created the system, the root system. He created the process of pruning and grafting and everything. So, here in just two or three verses, he's talking about a world of incredible truth, if we just dig into it.

Now, it may not help you, but it's helped me. It's helping me in a marvelous way. Let me tell you what I've learned.

First of all, a mature vine consists of a root system, and that root system will go down as much as 40 feet. And the tips of those are open. They're almost raw, the tips of those roots.

And they draw the nutrients out of the soil. And out of that root system grows a trunk. Now, they build a trellis.

It could be, most of them are about three, four feet high, post with two wires, one here and one here. That trunk is trained to get to the trellis. And when it gets to the trellis, they tie it, and it separates.

It goes out into two arms this way, and most vines have two arms this way, and others have some two to four arms that stretch out. Now, that consists of the vine, the root system, the trunk, and the arms that are tied to these wires of these trellises. Now, that is the vine.

Jesus said, I am the true vine. Those nutrients, then, flow from the soil through these roots into the trunk and then out into the arms. That is the branch.

Now, God is the husbandman. He's the vinedresser. This gentleman, I said, Do you know what God calls you? He said, Well, I'm a vinedresser.

The Bible calls you a husbandman. He said, Good. That sounds good.

Jesus, God is the husband. He's the vinedresser. His arms represent a glorified Christ who is now seated at the right hand of the Father, prepared and ready to pour out His nutrients and His resources to everyone who is planted in the vine.

Hallelujah. He has every resource we need to produce fruit. He was planted, according to Isaiah, in dry ground as a tender plant.

He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, as a root out of dry ground. Israel was that dry ground. He came to these people, and they had rejected Him.

But the husbandman watched over that vine, and he watered it, and he cared for it, and he trained it. These vines have to be trained. You have to cut the shoots off when the shoots come out.

There are shoots that will grow up and turn around and try to make their own roots. That's flesh. And it has to be cut off.

Because those shoots will just turn right around, instead of shooting up, will shoot into the ground and try to grab those nutrients and try to be a little Jesus. So those are cut off. Isaiah said there's no form of comeliness, there's no beauty to Him.

Have you ever seen a vine before the fruit comes? Have you ever seen it? It's the ugliest thing you ever saw. A gnarled branch and these gnarled arms with nothing on them. But you see, when those buds, or when those arms reach out, they just look like they're dead branches, or dead, they call them leaders.

But those leaders come spring with little buds that break out on them. And those buds grow into branches. And off those branches, you see, the vine itself doesn't bear the fruit.

You will not find any hanging on the arms. You will find it hanging from the branches that come out. These buds break out and they're called shoots.

And they shoot out because they are carrying, they're getting the nutrients. Because inside the trunk, inside those arms are capillaries, or little tube-like veins that bring the nutrients out of the ground and feed the buds that become shoots or branches. That's you and me.

Who do you think buds us? How do you think we become a bud, a little child in Jesus? By simple faith in Christ Jesus, we are grafted into the vine. And there's a bud that springs out of that. And because there's life coming out of Jesus, the nutrients of Christ, everything we need.

He's all in all, the Scripture says. All we need for life and holiness. All of the attributes, all of the very nature of Jesus Christ becomes the power of God in us to produce fruit.

And these little buds have cells that develop and out of those cells, the clusters of grapes. And by the way, I learned that God, those nutrients produce an antifreeze in them so that it resists the freezing temperatures. You think when the devil comes in with his cold winds, you better have Holy Ghost antifreeze in you.

And it keeps it. And the Bible says if the nutrients, or rather the vine justices said if those nutrients are not being drawn, it turns to water and they freeze and die. You see the importance of staying in the power of the Holy Ghost? Because the Holy Ghost is antifreeze.

Uh-huh. You ready for some more? Okay. Now, those capillaries and those veins that are bringing life out of the ground, that's only half the story.

And I got so blessed when I read this in one of the books that I was studying about the vine and the branches. Because you see, it's a two-way street. Not only are there tubes and capillaries coming up, but when the clusters are formed and when the grapes and the leaves are on the branch and the fruit is coming forth, there are sugars that are produced in the grapes and in the leaves that go to other capillaries down and feed the roots.

Who is the root? Who's the root? Jesus is the root. Now, it's a wonderful thing to draw resources from the Lord. It's a wonderful thing to see, to know that we're growing in Christ.

We're becoming Christ-like. You should be more Christ-like this year than you were last year. And you can see that sometimes where last year you used to lose your temper and now you start and suddenly you pull back because there's some nutrients coming forth and you are drawing on His strength.

And it's a wonderful thing to say, Jesus is everything I need and you draw on His power. It's another thing to feed Christ. It's another thing to know that you produce compounds and sugars.

In fact, one vine dresser said it's a slew of compounds, a slew of sugars flowing back to the roots, giving nutrients and blessing the roots. Now, you say, that sounds like it doesn't fit my theology. But you see, in fact, the technical term is migration of nutrients.

They migrate back and forth. What a beautiful picture of life in Christ. Vine life consists of more than just drawing the resources of Christ.

Do you know that our prayers are incense to Him? David said, let my prayer be set forth before Him as incense. Remember, Jesus gave the parable of a master coming from the field and He doesn't say to the servant, sit down and eat and I'll feed you. You know what He said? He said, no, make ready wherewith I may sup first, gird yourself, serve me till I have eaten and drunken and afterward you shall eat and drink.

You see, He said, you're going to feed me first. You are going to pour something of your life into me. I'm going to sit down, I'm going to eat and I'm going to drink and then you're going to eat and drink.

That's the migration of nutrients. You see, when the Lord grafted me into Christ in the vine, He knew that I would have life. He knew that if I would just lean on Christ and abide in Him, that I would grow, I would bear fruit.

It's a natural process. It's a part of the design that He Himself created. But He also took for granted that while I'm drawing nutrients from Christ and I'm drawing resources from Him, I would at the same time be feeding Jesus.

I would be sending back to the roots that which blesses and enhances the root. See, there's something that flows out of us when we praise and worship Him. It's called fruit, yes, but this is sugar.

These are compounds of another world that we'll never understand. It's how Jesus is Himself drawing from His people something that glorifies and blesses and honors Him. As Song of Solomon 7.12 says, the bride is calling to her beloved, that's Christ.

Let us get up early and go to the vineyard and let's see if the vine is flourishing. Let's see if the tender grapes have appeared and the pomegranates are budding. For I will give thee there my love and our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for you.

And you know what the bride, the spouse, is saying to Jesus Christ the Lord? Yes, Jesus, my beloved, I am flourishing in your vineyard. Yes, I am drawing on your strength. I am bearing fruit by your grace.

You've given me life abundant. But now come and see what I've got for you. Come into the vineyard and see what I have prepared for you.

Christ speaking to His bride in turn in Song of Solomon 5.4.10 Song of Solomon 4.10 How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse. How much better is thy love than wine. Now you see, grapes produce wine.

But He's saying, yes, it's wonderful. I want you to bear fruit. I want you to be Christ-like.

I want you to be just like me. And I want your nature that flows out of the roots to be in you. I want you to be a testimony to a lost world, how I can save and keep from iniquity and the powers of hell and darkness.

I want you to be all of that. But more than all of that, be my love. Be my love.

Love me. You want to do for me? Yes, that's your eternal purpose here on earth. But in the process, what I am telling you, your love for me is better than the wine and the fruit.

I saw something in Song of Solomon that just melted my heart. It just broke me down. Song of Solomon 4.10 Also, Jesus turns to His bride and He says, the very smell, aroma of your garments.

He said, He was blessed. The smell of your garments, aroma like Lebanon. In the Greek, it's the fresh nose of Lebanon.

Something fresh, something life-giving, invigorating. He said, just the smell of your garments, the aroma. And what He's saying, there are people coming and going, people hustling all the world.

But I know when you're drawn near to me because there's aroma about you. There's something about you that I recognize. And everybody can be around you by the thousands, but I know you're coming to me.

I can smell it. There's an aroma. You know that the body, everyone that was given out, some people call it an odor.

Everybody has a different, frankly, just the smell, an aroma. I can tell, if I go to a closet and my wife puts some of her clothes and mixes them, I can smell those and I can pick out Gwen's dresses. I can pick out her clothes by the aroma.

I know the perfume she wears and I can pick it out. I know when Gwen's coming in the room. And you know, He's talking about our thoughts toward Him.

Through the day, you say, oh, I pray two hours. You can pray two hours and be less of an aroma than those who all through the day, their thoughts are going out to Him and He's sending out an aroma. And He said, I know you're reaching out to me on the subway, wherever you are.

You're reaching out to me, there's an aroma. And He said, that's fairer to me, that's better to me than all the wine. Boy, that just knows in my heart.

He knows every time I think about Him. He knows it in the middle of the day when thoughts are rushing and I'm busy and I just stop and say, oh, I love you, Jesus. I can't wait to get along with you, Jesus.

And He feels that He has that aroma. You have the aroma of Jesus. What are you feeding Him? Glory to God.

I learned also that every fruit-bearing branch is pruned every year. I learned that grapes can grow on a branch only one year. The fruit is produced only one year.

Now, this is something else. In John 15, to every branch that bear fruit, He pruned. Every branch.

Every branch. There is not a believer anywhere on the face of this earth that isn't being pruned. And pruned constantly.

Every year. Not one year. This is not talking about one year, but there are seasons that we go through of pruning.

The branch can produce fruit for only one year. Every fruit-bearing shoot or branch comes under the knife every single year of its life. Now, this gentleman told me that these vines can grow 100 years or more.

Some think it can grow 200 years. These vines can grow. But every branch bears fruit only one year.

And then it has to be pruned and cut off. After the fruit-bearing season, in the wintertime, the husbandman of the vineyard, the vinedresser, approaches the vine with his pruning knife, and he cuts the branch. This long branch that last summer was bearing all of this fruit, these wonderful clusters of grape, and they were hanging luscious, and it was green, it was beautiful.

Now, it's wintertime and it's dormant, and he comes with his knife, and that which last year bore fruit, he cuts it all the way back to four or five inches from the vine. With the only thing left is one or two buds. See, it's still a vine.

It's still connected to Jesus. But everything out there that last year bore fruit is cut away, it's gone, and it is burned. And if you go to the vineyard when they are pruning, and you were there last year, you saw all of those branches were bearing fruit, and here's a man chopping away, and an onlooker doesn't know what's going on will say, what a terrible thing he's destroying, he's ruining his vineyard.

No, no, no. He knows. Listen.

God could have made those branches to bear every year for a hundred, two hundred years, the same branch. But he didn't do it. And I'll tell you why he didn't do it.

To teach us some lessons. Do you know what the Bible says? There's a scripture in 1 Corinthians that says, it says, Muzzle not the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. And then Paul says, is he just talking about oxen? Is he giving us a lesson about oxen? No, he said, it's said all together for our sakes.

Don't muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Then Paul goes into the spiritual significance of it. And same as this, our God who created, there are ever-bearing trees and the same branches stay on and bear and bear and bear, but God did this.

He designed it this way because he teaches us spiritual lessons. So everything in nature, everything. We just take the time to investigate it, dig it out and find it.

You see, after one year, it's called old wood. That's the technical term. It's old wood.

And you have to have what is called rod renewal. You know what the rod renewal is? It's that little stump that's left. It's that little bud.

I was walking through the vineyard this past week, and he said, here, let me show you. This is the ugliest thing you've ever seen. These gnarled things, and they're little stubs.

That long, sticking out of the vine. And I said, where's the branch? He said, look down underneath. And I put it.

That thing looks dead. He said, wait till spring. Wait till spring.

And in the spring, that little bud is going to bear. It's the same branch. But out of that branch comes a renewal rod.

A new branch comes out. And what the Father says, here's this little rod. Because you see, we are those rods.

We are those branches, and we have a will, and we can think. So this little stub sitting there said, oh God, what are you doing to me? I was making such progress. I was learning the word of God.

I was deep in the word. Now I don't think I know anything. Look at me.

There's nothing left. I feel useless. I feel helpless.

What are you doing to me? I'm in a dry spell. And the Lord said, wait a minute. If you thought you bore fruit last year, if you thought you were Christlike last year, you'll just wait till next year.

I've got plans for you. You don't know. There's going to be a freshness and a newness.

I've seen those who don't yield to the pruning of the Lord. They want to continue with the old wood. But you see, if He doesn't prune that off, it keeps stretching further and further out the trellis, further and further away from the nutrients.

And if it's left, it's not cut off, and if there's not a new branch, if there's not a new touch, if there's not a new fresh touch from the Lord, it goes out until finally the grapes become sour, they become tiny, and finally it dies. It has to be new wood, new rod. Folks, I have seen pastors and Christians who have not submitted to the pruning of the Lord.

And I've seen what happens. I've seen them go their own way, and they get burned out. They wind up after years sitting in front of a television set, and all they have are memories of the time that they were fruitful.

They can tell you how God used them. They'll talk about the times of intercession. They'll talk about how they prayed, how they loved the Word of God, and how they're renewed day by day by faith.

Folks, I meet them everywhere I go. I meet these dead, dying branches. They have not been renewed.

They have not been cut back to the source of the nutrients. And God will do everything in His power to get you back to your first love. In Leviticus, the 25th chapter, don't turn to the 3rd and 4th verse, it says, The 7th year, of course, is when we go to be with the Lord.

That's the great Sabbath. There'll be no pruning then. But He said, for 6 years you're going to prune your vines, and the 7th year you rest.

And the Hebrew word there is zamar, and it comes from the root word means to prune, with rejoicing and singing and dancing. And I said, boy, that doesn't fit my theology at all. Here is a picture of a vine dresser, and he's got a knife and he's lopping away at the vine, and he's dancing and he's singing and he's rejoicing! How can he rejoice when he's cutting me? He's lopping it off! And he's singing, he's rejoicing, and he's dancing! You see, if we don't understand the process, if we don't understand that this is a loving thing that He does, it's one of the most loving things that He does, and it causes the heart of God to rejoice so much, because He knows the potential.

He knows what's coming when we yield to Him. But why is He rejoicing while He's pruning? He knows the law of the vine of the branch. God so created the vine system that it must be renewed every year.

He knows that come spring, that bud is going to grow into a shoot, into a rod that bears better fruit. It's going to be more disease resistant. It's going to be stronger than it's ever been.

And every time it goes out and bears fruit, and He prunes it, every time He prunes it, it gets stronger. It bears better fruit, sweeter fruit. Can you get the spiritual application that you can't live on last year's experience? You can't live last year's tapes that you heard.

There's got to be a fresh living Word. You have to have something for yourself. There has to be life flowing.

You have to be renewed. The nature of the spiritual life in Christ demands constant renewal. And God will do all kinds of surgery needed to cut us back close to Christ, close to the flow of life.

Otherwise, if we were left to ourselves, we would literally die. Now before I share with you what is pruned off, what is cut off, there's something you've got to see first of all. Let me talk about... Let me go right into it.

What is pruned? I've got to get to the point. What is pruned? What is God cutting? What's He removing with this pruning knife? Now, keep in mind, before I go any further, that He loves this branch. He loves these branches because He admired them.

He boasted in front of the devil and all of hell, Look, this they did with Job. Look at my servant. He plucked that fruit.

He lived on that fruit. It was a blessing. It went out to the whole world.

And He admired that fruit. So you know, it's a loving process that He's undertaking. Now, the whole pruning process is an act of love and rejoicing on His part.

Now remember, this fruit is produced in our flesh. Our flesh. We're really... The branches are our flesh, our human bodies, our physical bodies.

And that fruit is the righteousness of Christ by faith alone. He's trying to produce in us a righteousness not of our own making, our own doing. And pruning has to do with cutting away every thought, every human effort to produce a righteousness of our own.

Every thought, every act, everything we do to try to merit the goodness and the grace of God. That is what He is after. And His pruning knife is after that so that we are free to draw the nutrients that produce the true righteousness which is by faith alone.

Now, you think of Peter, for example. Here's a man who's mightily used of the Lord. Here's a man who loves the Word.

He loves his Savior. And he's full of zeal and ambition. And he tells the Lord, though all is forsaken, I'll never let you down, Jesus.

And you know the scene. And Paul or Peter must have been absolutely horrified. Here's a man who thought he could face anything.

He was the original can-do man. I can do it. I've got the Word.

I've been growing. I've been taught by the Master Himself. And this man is self-assured and he has a righteousness that he's achieved by his zeal.

And he can't believe it when he stands there before the Master and he's asked if he's one of them and he can't understand the cursing that comes out of his mouth as if to say, where did that come from? He had to be horrified when he heard those curses come out. And then those awful words. I don't even know the man.

How shocked he must have been. I thought I was further along than that. I thought I was a righteous man.

You see Peter then walking over the hills weeping and hauling on his face. What kind of a man am I? I'm washed up. It's all over.

I thought I had a future with Jesus. Now I'm undone. Where did it come from? This man was being pruned of all of his self-righteousness.

Now he's in a position where he can say, without Jesus Christ I can do nothing. And that's what Jesus says here in John. Without me you can do nothing.

You can't grow righteousness. You can have no fruit. Without my power, without the Holy Ghost, you can't do it.

You see Peter, now just the stub of a man. Nothing left but a bud of potential. And out of that sprang the mighty man that stood on the day of Pentecost.

You talk about a fruit-bearing man. Out of that stub of a man that lay repentant, looked at himself, I'm undone, and went back to fishing. That's the man that was renewed.

And that renewal rod stirred the whole world. Hallelujah. Glory to God.

Now, the Bible says we're proved that we may bear more fruit. Now, that doesn't mean more ministry, more busyness, greater activities, more evangelism, more works, more Bible reading. That's not what it's all about.

More fruit. Now listen to me closely. You won't understand this unless you listen very closely and ask the Holy Spirit to open your ears.

If fruit is the righteousness of Christ by faith alone and not by works, then more fruits... He said you're pruned so that you bear more fruit. More fruit is a greater revelation of the righteousness of Christ by faith. It's an ever-increasing revelation.

More fruit is... I'm going to show this to you. And if you'll get it, it'll bless your soul and you'll shop when you walk out of here this morning. I've been shouting ever since the Holy Ghost has been speaking to my heart.

You see, it's a greater, stronger commitment to yielding to this truth and becoming righteous in Christ's light not by my works, not by my sweat, not by the good things I do, but by faith in covenant promises that He's given to us. I'm bearing fruit when I'm trusting His Word that promises me that I am made righteous not by anything that I can do of my flesh. When you come to Jesus, you have nothing to offer Him.

You have nothing of goodness, nothing of merit. And until this becomes a bedrock belief, until you become unshakable, immovable in this truth, I want to talk about abiding. He said, He that abided in me, in I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing.

Now, that word abiding is not complicated. It means to make camp, to search and search for a place until you find it. And when you find it, you said, I'm going to settle here.

This is my home. I'm not going to move from here. No devil, no demon, no man can move me.

I've found what I'm looking for all my life. And folks, that is a revelation of how to become holy, how to become righteous and pleasing before God. And it once and for all wipes out every human effort to be righteous or holy.

When I abide in Christ, I've come to a settled place where I camp. I've found a place on this vine. I've found a place of truth, immovable, unshakable, and nothing will move me from it.

I am righteous before God through Jesus by faith in His finished work of the cross and nothing else, nothing, nothing. I've searched for years. I've set out seeking that place of life-freeing truth.

I've searched for years trying to be like Jesus, struggling and striving to be holy, making promises, weeping rivers of tears. I'd go out in the woods and throw myself on the ground and say, God, I don't know how or why I did it. Making impromises and couldn't it fulfill them? Standing before multitudes all over the world screaming at people and I did it earnestly because it came from the cry of my own heart.

Resist the devil, free from him. Be holy as I am holy and I would thunder. Resist the devil.

Fight your sin. Turn from it. And then go home and cry at night because I didn't have the ability, the knowledge, I had not found my camping place.

I had not found my abiding place. And then I'd have to look at my own failures and the eruptions of youthful flesh because I didn't have the secret, didn't have the knowledge, that camping place. I didn't have that abiding place in Jesus.

But I found it. I found it in the New Covenant. I found it in the New Covenant.

I found precious promises whereby I made a partaker of the nutrients of the vine. I found promises that I don't have to try to work up the fear of God because He made an oath, a sworn oath, a New Covenant to me, a promise that I, by the Holy Ghost, will plant my fear in your heart. You just camp here in this church.

You just believe in that. You camp on it. You say this is my truth.

I'll not let it go. He has promised to put His fear in my heart if I'll just follow Him. If I'll just love Him and seek His face, He, the Holy Ghost, will put His fear in my heart.

I don't have to invent it. I don't have to work it up. I don't have to read books about it.

His covenant promises says I will implant my fear in your heart. I will keep you from falling and present you faultless before His presence. I will cause you to walk in my ways.

I'll cause you to will and do of my good pleasure. The Holy Ghost in me will mortify all sin. He will take away the heart of stone, give me a heart of flesh.

He will deliver me from every snare of the devil. Folks, that is where I'm camping. I abide in that revelation.

Let the devil tell me anything he wants to, any lie. I have found my home. I've found my residence.

I'm abiding in the truth. You say, brother, what are you talking about? What does he prune? What's he trying to cut off? Everything having to do with trying to establish my own righteousness by works. And folks, he'll prune even the good things that you do, such as long hours of prayer, intense Bible reading, going through the Bible, intercession, witnessing.

When it begins to dawn on you that you have done such wonderful work for God that you've earned holiness points. I had a letter recently from a young man whose parents were missionaries for years and 40 years. Mother came home and she was stricken with cancer and was dying and he was about to throw away his faith.

He said, surely, 40 years of sacrificial service should count for something. Oh, he my Bible says that he remembers our good works. He remembers these things.

He keeps them account and he loves us and all that. But folks, there's no merit. You can pray all day long.

And if you think that's going to merit something that doesn't matter, we do these things because we love him. We are sending those nutrients back to the to the roots. We do that because that's the nature of our walk with God.

But there's no merit in that and he'll cut it off and kill. You wind up and your prayers for a while will not be answered. They don't get through because you have figured it all out.

That you have really touched God. You're a man of prayer and you lay hands on people and you're getting blessed and take a little bit of the glory and the Lord just chop it off. You'll wind up dry and empty and say, oh God, where are you? He's pruning you.

I saw a pruning recently. He prunes you right after you've had your most fruitful time. You're as high as you can be.

Praise God. I understand the covenant. I've got the full revelation of the covenant.

I'm happy. My marriage is so blessed I got it all figured out. Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy.

He came along. I am so cast down and for two weeks I'm sitting in Florida and say, Lord, I don't know anything. I couldn't remember a scripture.

Every sermon I'd ever heard I said, what? My wife and I had a misunderstanding and I said, I don't know her and she didn't know me. It was just a little thing. It lasted a few hours.

We had the fun of making up and enjoying that. It was a terrible time. Why is my soul cast down? Do you ever come to these places where you say, I've heard all these sermons and I don't think I remember them.

I don't know if I'm growing. I'm just... That's the best place God has ever had you. That's where He wants you.

You know what He's done? He's cut you back. There's a stub. You're just a stub.

But He's looking at you and He sees potential like He has never seen before. He said, you just wait. You just trust me.

Just abide. Remember the truth. The simple truth.

That I'm with you. The Holy Ghost is in you. The devil's not going to get you.

I'm going to keep you from the snares. Just hold steady. The spring is coming and you're going to bear fruit like you've never bore fruit in your life.

Hallelujah. In the middle of that time He gave me this message. Stand.

Hallelujah. God's doing something good in you. Blessed be His name.

Would you lift your hands and just love Him right now. Let's give Him sugar. Hallelujah.

Lord, we give You Jesus. We give You our love. We love You, Jesus.

Come on, folks. Lift your hands. In the annex.

In the overflow room. Everybody in the house. Let's just love Him right now.

From your heart. Let it flow. Lord, we love You.

We worship You. We thank You for Your mercy, Your goodness. We magnify Your holy name, Lord.

Hallelujah. You're not finished with any of us. Because you feel in all the struggle and all the effort that you've made you haven't been making much progress.

It's brought great discouragement to your heart because you feel almost, I've got to say, like a failure. Not accomplishing much. And there's some of you here that are backslidden.

You came in this morning not knowing what to expect. The Holy Spirit confronted you lovingly about your walk with Him. And the condition you're in right now in your spirit.

You have not been renewed in a long time. You need to be renewed You need to take a step closer to Him and let Him come. Let Him take the knife to it right now and step out of your seat and come here and in the annex go forward between the screens.

Don't block the screens but between the screens. If you're here now say, Pastor Dick, I know that I'm living on something in past experience with God but I haven't had a fresh touch. I need renewed.

I want you to get out of your seat and come and if you don't know Jesus or if you've been running from the Lord you've got a cold in heart. I want you to follow these that are coming. Up in the balcony just go to the stairs on either side and hear me when I turn just step forward and in the annex just step forward between the screens if you will please.

I'll pray for you and we'll leave the Lord for that touch. He wants to touch you. He will touch you.

He can touch you right now. Don't walk out of this church like you came in. Never be, you see this message will be history in just a moment.

The service will be history and that opportune moment that perfect moment will have been God. Come only as the Spirit draws you. If you feel that drawing of the Holy Spirit come close and make room for those that are coming if you will please.

Hallelujah. The presence of the Lord Jesus is here this morning. The Lord's precious and present with us right now.

Hallelujah. He wants to touch you. He wants you to you that came forward in the annex standing before the presence of the Lord and those here at this altar would you lift both hands just lift your hands to the Lord right now and would you pray from your heart Lord touch me right now.

Lord reach out your hand and touch me. I come to you Lord to be renewed. Lord I come to give you my heart in a fresh way.

Touch me Jesus. Anoint me with fresh oil today. Pray that prayer right now Lord.

I need a touch. I need quickened by the Holy Spirit. Lord I need something from you.

I want to give to you. I want my love for you to be renewed. Lord I want to feed you.

I come to your table now to minister to you Lord. I come to be ministering to you. Now pray this prayer with me.

Dear Jesus I'm hungry for you. I'm thirsty after you. Come and meet my hungry heart.

My praise help me Lord Jesus. My foolishness that some people could pray for 2, 3, 4 hours sometimes not the same aroma as those. I love to see people pray that time.

I try to pray as many hours as I can. But you see God's not interested in the clock. He's not interested in the hours.

It's that every waking hour every waking hour when you wake up even now when you're standing here when you go to have lunch today the thing that feeds him those sugars those nutrients are those constant thoughts that draw night to him and you keep saying Lord you can look around saying this is not the real world I'm not a part of it. Lord you're my love. It's the longing to be with him to be near him.

And then when you have when you take quality time to be alone with him that that that is the that is the intercourse that is the time between two lovers that precious time that quality time alone. But it's it's the knowing that when you're absent from the one you love they have your heart and your heart is going after them. If you're married if you have a sweetheart if you have a spouse you know what that's like.

Your husband your wife may be at work but if you really love them and you're anxious when they come home and your thoughts are that way even though you're doing house cleaning whatever it is your heart is with your spouse. Your heart should be with Jesus. Lord you have my heart.

You have my thoughts. You can do that in a business meeting. You can do that while people around you you can be on the subway people are pushing you're standing there just holding on while that thing is shaking and say Oh Lord I love you.

And the Lord said I I I feel it. You're feeding me. It blesses me.

The aroma of your garments. Lord help us to see that. Help us to feed you Lord.

And after we've fed you then let us drink to the full. Let us drink to the full. Hallelujah.

God you're good. God is good and God is faithful. We give you praise.

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