

# Awake Thou That Sleepest - the Pruning Shears

by Phil Beach Jr.

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*God's pruning process is a necessary step in our spiritual growth, helping us to become more fruitful and mature in our faith.*

**Duration:** 27:46

**Scripture:** John 15:2, Hebrews 12:11, James 1:2

**Topics:** "Christian Life", "Trust in God's Process", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the necessity of spiritual pruning in the Christian life, illustrating how God uses trials and tribulations as His pruning shears to enhance our fruitfulness. He explains that while we may initially rejoice in our spiritual growth, God's inspection often leads to unexpected challenges that can feel painful and confusing. Beach encourages believers to trust in God's wisdom during these times, recognizing that pruning is an expression of His love and care, ultimately preparing us for greater responsibilities and deeper intimacy with Him. He shares a powerful testimony of transformation through faith, highlighting the journey from despair to hope and the importance of relying on Jesus amidst life's difficulties.

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## Transcript

Woe unto you that are full. I'm going to read an article written by K.P. Yohannan, who is the president and founder of Gospel for Asia. This is a newsletter that I got.

Listen carefully. This is a word from the Lord for you and I this morning. This fits right along with... This is going to interpret what is going on in your life.

I'm sure that if given opportunity, everybody here could stand up and testify about the things that are happening in your life, the good things, the trying things, the difficult things, the confusing things, the things that you are happy about, the things that you're sad about, the things that you're downright angry about, the fears that you have of the past, the fears that you have of the present, the apprehensions you have of the future. Everybody, I'm sure, could share something very profitable. But now I'd like to say to you that no matter what it is that you're saying, no matter what it is that you have to say, this message along with others that will be coming is going to interpret what's going on in your life.

So listen carefully as I read this and receive it as a word from the Lord that will help you continue along and not faint in your Christian journey. The title of this article, it's only a one-page article, and it's a five-minute article. Here comes God with the pruning shears.

You are so excited. For the first time in your Christian walk, you have discovered a fruit of the Spirit in an area of your life where you'd struggled for years. Just when you'd almost given up, you read John 15, verse 5. He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit.

Suddenly, you understand that the whole concept of fruit-bearing was so simple. Staying in Jesus, letting His life flow through you, and the fruit would naturally grow. Now it has actually happened.

You are rejoicing, and you can't wait to show the new fruit to your Heavenly Father. To your great joy, He lets you know that He will soon come to inspect the branch in your life that has produced the fruit. You can hardly wait for His arrival and suspect that He will surprise you with a certificate or a reward for doing so well.

But to your utter bewilderment, when He arrives, He carries nothing but a pair of big pruning shears in His hand. What is He planning to do, you say? Somehow you get the feeling that His idea of inspecting your fruit-bearing branch doesn't exactly match your own expectations. John 15, verse 2, tells us what God has in mind whenever He discovers fruit in our lives.

That He comes as a result of abiding in Jesus. Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes that it may bear more fruit. This means that He will not leave us alone, but instead is determined to make us even more fruitful.

His strategy is to begin a very deliberate pruning process by allowing us to encounter troubles, tribulations, and difficulties. These adversaries serve as His shears and pruning knife. That doesn't sound like anything we would choose for ourselves.

Often our biggest concern is how much God is planning to cut off of our branch. But let me tell you about the tea plantations in my native India. Thousands of acres are covered with beautiful, lush, deep green plants.

But if you were to visit these same tea estates during a certain time of the year, you would immediately think that something had gone very wrong. Instead of thriving bushes with healthy growing leaves, you would only find naked little stumps with a few bare branches clinging to them. They look dead and hopeless.

All their beauty is gone. If you were to search for answers, you would find laborers with sharp knives and shears going from tree to tree and mercilessly cutting nearly everything off. Others continually haul away truckloads of green, leafy branches.

In the end, you would stand in a very barren place. This, beloved, is pruning. When God puts His knife to our branches and begins to slice off the parts that must go, we often experience great loneliness, low emotional feelings, and pain.

Pruning actually creates a temporary dry spell in our spiritual life, very similar to those barren tree stumps in the tea plantations. Watchman Nee calls it the dark night of the soul. Very often we feel confused and we fail to understand what is going on.

We pray, but God doesn't seem to hear. We fast, but our situation stays the same. We repent of every imaginable sin we could have committed, but find no answer.

Discouraged and frightened, we conclude that something is terribly wrong with our spiritual life. This is the most dangerous time during the pruning process and the one most often used by the enemy to trip us up. He intends to deceive us into thinking that we have backslidden, lost God's grace, and should quit serving God.

Or he tries to convince us to create a counterfeit spiritual life to compensate for what we think we have lost. If we believe him, we will generate all kinds of carnal, fleshly activities so no one will discover that God's presence has left us. But all the while, nothing is wrong with our spiritual life and we haven't lost anything.

We are just going through a pruning process. If we could only recognize the hand of God that holds the knife, then we would be able to do the right thing. Trust in his wisdom, humble ourselves, and honor him by walking in faith rather than sight.

Then we would be able to accept the wilderness, the cutting, discipline, loneliness, and the pain as necessary preparation for the future when God intends to entrust us with much more responsibility and fruit. Most of all, we would be able to see God's love in all this. God's greatest concern is that our inner life keep pace with the task he has assigned for us.

Unless our character changes, our nature is transformed, and we come to know the Lord much more deeply, we will only become proud and arrogant when God uses us in a greater way. In light of this, pruning is an expression of God's love and care for us. It ultimately prevents us from becoming spiritual casualties.

Here comes God with the pruning shears. Beloved, the pruning shears are in our midst, in our lives. Let them work in you that which is needful in order to possess a heart that is pure, holy, after God, emptied of all the joys and pleasures that this world can give, and thirsting and hungering for nothing more or nothing less than Jesus Christ, our righteousness.

Amen. Amen. May the Lord do it in our lives.

Father, thank you for your presence this morning. Thank you for this word from your heart. We receive this, Lord, and we trust, O God, that you'll take this word and write it deeply in the center of our spirit and upon our minds and help us, Lord, rather than despair, trust you and live by faith and not by feeling, and do what is right in the eyes of your Son.

And we commit this whole pruning process into your hands, for you are the master pruner and you know exactly what is needful in order to cause us to bear much fruit, more fruit, and that that fruit might remain and be to your honor and your glory. If you want special prayer because you feel the pruning hooks in your life, just lift your hand and we'll all pray together. In the presence of God, you feel the pruning hook.

You feel the shears. You have felt the pain. You've known the discouragement.

You've tasted the darkness. You've despaired. The very thoughts of your heart have been revealed through this article and you too thought to give up or maybe to generate religious activity to compensate for the dryness.

Father, hands lifted up to you. Lord, we look to you. I pray, God, that through the power of the Holy Spirit, you would impart to each person here whose hands are lifted to you a special measure of your grace.

I pray, first of all, for peace, peace to come in the midst of this painful process. Secondly, Lord, I pray that the spirit of fear and torment would be overcome in the name of Jesus Christ. We cast out the spirit of fear and torment and anxiety.

And thirdly, Lord, I pray that in the midst of this pruning, in the midst of this pain, you would in your own special way bring assurance to each one that you are with them and that if they will endure this season, they will see fruit that they have never imagined possible in their life. Thank you, Lord. Let's just begin to call upon his name.

Let's begin to quietly call upon his name. Lord, we call upon your name, the name of Jesus, Lord. We thank you, Lord.

We receive by faith this living word this morning. We recognize, Lord, that it's addressing every single one of us, that it's actually interpreting right now our life. We've come, we've said, Lord, some have said even here this morning, God, I don't understand what's going on.

You've said that. Perhaps within the past 24 hours, you've said, Lord, I don't understand what's going on. And now God has just spoken to you and has said, This is what is going on.

Submit to my hand. Do not fear. I am with you.

I will lead you. I will guide you. Don't let the past torment you.

Don't let the future be a fear. Trust me. The way to increase is taking away.

And though God is taking away things in your life right now, and though God has restrained you and has put his hand of restraint on your life, the end will be more fruitfulness than you could have ever conjured up in all of your plans. Listen, don't be surprised if God changes your plans. Listen, this is prophetically.

Listen, please, beloved. Just let God's word get into your heart. Don't be surprised if God changes your plans.

Don't despair. If you're going in a certain direction and all of a sudden you find yourself on a 180 and you're going in another direction, don't despair. God knows what He's doing.

Trust Him. Trust Him today. Cast your fears and your anxieties upon Him today.

My God, my God, my God. God is saying to somebody, I know better than you. Listen, I know better than you do.

Do you believe that God is your Father? Do you believe that He loves you more than any human being could possibly love you? He knows what's best for you. He knows the path that He has chosen for you. Lord, I pray that every single person here You would place Your hand upon.

You would work this special discipline and scourging in their life. And I pray, Lord, that everyone here would receive from You this assurance in their heart that You're working. You're playing.

Let's sing this song now, beloved. And let's just let the Holy Spirit continue this work. Call out to Him now.

Call out to Him now. Call out to Him. Call out the name of Jesus to Him.

This is going to be part of the series that we're going to have available when it's through Awake Thou That Sleepest. The message on pruning was on tape and this now is going to be on tape. And I trust it will be a source of blessing.

This is an article from the same magazine, Scent. September-October 1999 edition. Like I said, it'll only take about five or so minutes.

But listen to this and see not if it stirs your heart. Candra Das has built a good life for himself. And now at age 53, he felt quite satisfied and secure.

His village was small but very beautiful. And the fertile soil produced abundant crops of rice, coconuts, and mangoes. He and his neighbors were diligent workers and as a result had become quite wealthy through the fruit of their labors.

Candra and his wife, Jay, had reared four healthy children and the oldest three were already on their own with good jobs. Candra could be assured that he and Jay would be well cared for in their old age. What gave Candra prominence in his village was his position as a Hindu priest.

The very fact that he was a Brahman from the highest caste in India commanded the utmost respect from everyone in his community. Candra was very devoted to his religion and had a special place in his home for several idols which he would worship daily. But Candra's fame really came from his reputation as a fortune teller.

Every Friday night around 10 p.m. the devotees would begin to arrive at the local temple bringing with them all sorts of things demanded by their gods including roosters and goats to sacrifice and offerings of lemons, coconuts, flowers, and incense. Candra had a few requirements of his own but the worshippers were desperate to pay a high price for his service sometimes as much as 500 rubies about three days wages. After the sacrifices were made and the offerings placed before the idol Candra would go into a trance for about 30 minutes dancing, jumping, and swaying as the demon god took control of his body.

Then the spirit would speak through Candra's voice to the worshippers who knelt before him. The ritual would finally be over around midnight and the devotees would leave satisfied that their offerings had brought them what they came for. Because Candra's fortune telling had a high accuracy rate he became an extremely wealthy and highly respected spiritual leader.

His followers came from all over the surrounding region and would return again and again willing to pay him even more than he asked. But as his wealth and reputation skyrocketed Candra didn't realize that his carefully crafted and controlled world was actually a trap. In reality he was a slave to the powers of darkness who were out to deceive, use, and destroy him.

All he trusted in would come soon crashing down around him. One day Candra suddenly felt pain shoot through both legs. A few days later it increased and spread to his hands.

By the time a month had passed he was completely paralyzed on his right side and constantly in pain. Confused, desperate, and afraid he asked the Hindu high priest to come and sacrifice goats and roosters on his behalf in hopes that their blood would somehow appease the angry gods and give Candra favor once again. But nothing seemed to work and Candra remained paralyzed and in pain.

Candra and Jaya traveled to the highest rated hospitals in the state hoping to find a reason for his illness and a cure. Candra underwent all sorts of scans, tests, and x-rays. One chief physician personally checked Candra's body inch by inch but absolutely no physical reason for his paralysis or his pain could be found.

At last the doctors told him listen Candra, we have done our best. Only your gods can heal you now. All you can do is go and pray at their feet.

Candra heard of a Hindu priest eighty miles from his home who was reputed to cure all kinds of sicknesses. He knew it would probably be his last chance. So he and Jaya made one more grueling and long journey.

Candra found himself lying prostrate before a priest begging for mercy sent from a silent idol, chanting and praying sacred words, sacrificing roosters and goats and offering lemons and coconuts. Candra who had once been such a mighty priest was now himself just another desperate devotee. We heard that word desperate earlier didn't we? Something about being desperate.

Hoping to receive an answer to all his troubles but none came. He returned home a broken man. Heard that too didn't we? Candra knew that his death was near.

He was unable to eat or drink and except for Jaya, his family had abandoned him to his fate. The reputation he built for himself had totally crumbled. His money was useless.

His devotees had all vanished. The God he worshipped so faithfully had turned on him. He had never really been in control.

He had been the pawn all along. It was into this very low point in Candra's life that the true and living God shone his light. Near your village, someone told Jaya, there lives a pastor, a man of God who prays for sick people.

When I read this in my car a few days ago and I got to that place, I began to weep. And I said, thank God, there's still men and women of God who call on the name of Jesus. Grasping at one last hope, Jaya walked nine miles, this is his wife, to find Joseph, a native missionary who was pastoring one of the Gospel for Asia's local churches.

She told him her husband's story and of his urgent need for healing. Moved with compassion, Joseph began to share the love of Jesus with Jaya and how his precious blood shed on the cross of Calvary, not the blood of roosters and goats, could give her and child an eternal life. This was the first time Jaya had ever heard the Gospel message and she realized that it was exactly what she'd been searching for.

She really accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior and received a peace that she had never known. Jaya returned home right away and joyfully shared the message of the Gospel and her newfound salvation with her husband. The next Sunday, Contra and Jaya traveled to the Believer's Church and attended their first church service.

After the service, Pastor Joseph prayed for Contra. To Contra's utter amazement, the Lord instantly healed him. After months of agony and torture and pain, the pain left his body and he began to freely move his arms and legs.

Joy filled his heart and tears flowed down his face as he realized what God had done for him. The same day, Contra gave his heart to the Lord. For the first time in his life, he felt true freedom from the chains of sin.

He was no longer enslaved to the powers of darkness. Instead, he became a willing and joyful servant of Jesus Christ. After Contra and Jaya returned home, they immediately destroyed all their idols.

They were also baptized as a public testimony of their desire to follow Christ and live for Him alone. The couple began to read the Bible, discuss the truths they learned, and made a habit of praying together regularly. Today, Contra and Jaya are pillars in the Believer's Church.

The miracle in Contra's life has been obvious to the entire community. And everywhere he goes, Contra unashamedly shares about Jesus Christ, His mercy and His power to heal and to save. As a result of his testimony, others in his household and village have also believed and received salvation.

Some in the community, however, hate Contra and have shunned him and his family. But Contra no longer cares about his reputation, his money, as he once did. He continues to read his Bible and draw strength from his times with the Lord in worship and prayer.

He finds his happiness in Jesus, the true and living God. Hallelujah to God. Isn't that a riveting story? There's more too, I tell you.

There's more. We'll get the address of that magazine and make it available. And I recommend you call or write and ask for the newsletter.

As you can see, it's packed with good stuff. So packed. Praise the Lord.

It's about 12-15 or so. I have nothing more from the Lord to share. Does anyone have any testimony or anything that they'd like to share at this time?

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