

God Is Pruning Me

In John 15, Jesus said that he was like a vine and his disciples were like branches. In verse 2, he said the branches would be “cleansed” (ASV) or “purged” (KJV). The Greek word *kathairo* here means “to clean or purge by pruning”. Jesus said his disciples would be cleansed by pruning.

God is the divine vinedresser and Jesus is the vine. Why are disciples pruned? They are pruned to improve growth quality (Galatians 5:22-23), to train the plant (Romans 8:29), to remove decay and maintain health (Colossians 3:5ff), and to control direction (2 Peter 1:5ff; 3:18).

What, in addition to his word (Jn. 15:3), does God use to prune his followers? He uses challenging tests (Genesis 12:1ff), he uses personal loss (Job 1-2; 2 Corinthians 4:16ff; 12:7-10), he uses church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:5-7), he uses inward division (1 Corinthians 11:19; 1 John 2:19), and he uses outward persecution (Hebrews 12:3-13).

God, the divine vinedresser, knows what he is doing (Psalm 80:8-14). God prunes us because he loves us (Hebrews 12:6) and he is waiting for the precious fruit to come forth in us (James 5:7).

Friend, what are you made of (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)? Will you allow God to prune you today so that you can be a better person? Better to be pruned to grow, than to be cut up to burn! - *Chris Reeves*

Sentence Sermons

- Life is not so much about where you are, but where you are going.
- Don't just be thankful, be thankful.
- God is not opposed to men making money; just money making men.
- You can measure the size of a man by what makes him angry.
- It is better to debate a question without settling it, than to settle a question without debating it.

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

“Even As” God Forgave You

and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.
- Ephesians 4:32 -

The New Testament clearly teaches that we are to have a forgiving attitude and be willing to forgive others (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13). Also, forgiveness of others is absolutely necessary to be forgiven ourselves. Jesus said that if we want to be forgiven by God, we have to be willing to forgive others ourselves (Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 11:4).

However, when Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 that we are to forgive others, he stated one very important condition regarding our forgiveness. He wrote that we are to forgive others “even as” God forgives us. That is, we are to forgive others “in the same manner” as God forgave us. This raises the question, How does God forgive us? How is this done? Consider six characteristics of God’s forgiveness that we are to have even in ourselves as we forgive others.

God Forgives Willingly

No one has to force God to forgive. He forgives mankind willingly, lov-

ingly, and mercifully (2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 1:9). We too must be willing to forgive out of a sense of mercy and love in our heart for others (Matthew 5:7; 18:33,15; Acts 7:60; James 2:10-13; 1 Peter 4:8).

God Forgives Aggressively

God does not have to be poked and prodded to forgive. He takes the first action to forgive (John 3:16). We too must take the initiative to forgive when necessary, going to the person and seeking reconciliation (Matthew 5:23; 18:15-17).

God Forgives Absolutely

God forgives sin completely and without reservation. He covers sin and hides it (Psalm 31:1; 51:9; 85:2). We are told in the Bible that he removes sin far away (Psalm 103:10-12), he puts it behind him (Isaiah 38:17), he blots it out (Isaiah 44:12), and he buries it (Micah 7:19). We too must forgive completely, not partially, when necessary (Ephesian 4:31-32).

God Forgives Limitlessly

There is no sin that God will not forgive. God forgives without limit (Rom. 5:6-10). We too must forgive without limit when necessary (Matthew 18:21-35).

God Forgives Permanently

God forgives sins and never brings them up again (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17). We too must forgive permanently and not bring up the offense(s) again (Colossians 3:13).

God Forgives Conditionally

It may surprise many that God actually forgives conditionally. Many people have been told over and over about God’s “unconditional love” and God’s “unconditional forgiveness”. This is not according to scripture. God forgives sins upon the condition of repentance (Psalm 32:5; Mark 4:12; Acts 3:19). We will be forgiven by God when we fulfill God’s conditions. The sinner who needs forgiveness need to repent and be baptized (Lk. 23:34 with Acts 2:37-38; see Colossians 1:14 with Colossians 2:12-13). The sinning Christian who needs forgiveness needs to repent, confess, and pray (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9). We too forgive others when they meet the condition of repentance (Luke 17:3-4; see 2 Corinthians 2:7 with 2 Corinthians 7:9-11).

To be forgiven ourselves, let us all forgive others “even as” God forgave us. - Chris Reeves