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Do Troubles Push you Toward God?



Part 33 (020217AM)

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Do troubles and trials push you toward God - or away?

OUR FATHER HAS A 3-PART PLAN

Our Father the Vinedresser - He chastens us as needed; He prunes us as needed; He invites us as needed - all so we will be more fruitful. This morning our Father the Vinedresser is here. He is looking at us.

- If we are cast down in the mud of sin **He chastens us** and spiritually lifts us back up into the sunlight of fellowship. Chastening is something you feel as emotional anxiety, frustration, or distress. **What used to bring you joy now doesn't; you feel unfulfilled at church, critical of Christian friends, and "on the outs" with God. When you pick up the Bible, it feels like a lead weight instead of a welcome relief.**
- If we are flourishing with external growth but not producing much fruit (by giving, sowing and reaping, spirit walking, flesh denying and so on...as we saw last time) **He prunes us** by cutting away at our rambling growth until we bear more fruit. The pruning[1] knife is always painful, but it's always worth it. And what exactly is our Father's pruning knife? Is it pain, troubles, trials, loss, suffering, sadness, or frustrations? No, because of Christ's words in [John 15:3](#) which explains that the pruning knife is the Word of God. The key to abiding is abiding in His Word. God's pruning knife is His Word, and He seems to use it often during trouble, distress, or setbacks. Have you ever noticed how much more sensitive you are to the Word of God when trouble comes? Have you ever noticed that, when you have a particular need or problem, certain verses will leap off the page? That's the Spirit of God applying them to your heart.
- And finally if we are fruitful and bearing more fruit, at special times **He invites us** to allow Him to even more prune in our lives until we bear MUCH FRUIT! In his Secrets of the Vine Wilkerson suggests another truth[2]: *If your life bears a lot of fruit, God will invite you to abide more deeply with Him.* His purpose is not that you will do more for Him but that you will choose to be more with Him. **Only by abiding can you enjoy the most rewarding friendship with God and experience the greatest abundance for His glory. Abiding is all about the most important friendship of your life. Abiding doesn't measure how much you know about your faith or your Bible. In abiding, you seek, long for, thirst for, wait for, see, know, love, hear, and respond to ...a person. More abiding means more of God in your life, more of Him in your activities, thoughts, and desires.**

25 REASONS CHRISTIANS[3] are chastened and pruned

PUSHED TOWARD GOD

1. CHASTENING & PRUNING GROWS THE FRUIT OF PATIENCE: [Romans 5:3](#) And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; [James 1:3-4](#) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. [Hebrews 10:36](#) For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.
2. CHASTENING & PRUNING HARVESTS THE FRUIT OF JOY: [Psalm 30:5](#) For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning; [Psalm 126:5-6](#) Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. 6 He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.
3. CHASTENING & PRUNING GAINS US THE FRUIT OF MATURITY: [Ecclesiastes 7:3](#) Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better; [1 Peter 5:10](#) But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

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4. CHASTENING & PRUNING DEVELOPES THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: [Hebrews 12:11](#) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

5. CHASTENING & PRUNING SILENCES THE DEVIL: [Job 1:9-10](#), 20-22 So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land; 20 Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

6. CHASTENING & PRUNING TRAINS US IN GOD'S WAY: [Psalm 119:67](#) Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word; [Psalm 119:71](#) It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

7. CHASTENING & PRUNING MAKES OUR LIVES PURE: [Job 23:10](#) But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold; [Psalm 66:10-12](#) For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined. 11 You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. 12 You have caused men to ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water; But You brought us out to rich fulfillment; [Isaiah 1:25](#) I will turn My hand against you, And thoroughly purge away your dross, And take away all your alloy; [Isaiah 48:10](#) Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction; [Proverbs 17:3](#) The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the Lord tests the hearts; [1 Peter 1:7](#) that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

8. CHASTENING & PRUNING CULTIVATES CHRISTLIKENESS: [Hebrews 12:9-10](#) Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ; [1 Peter 4:12-13](#) Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ; [Philippians 3:10](#) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; [2 Corinthians 4:7-10](#) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

9. CHASTENING & PRUNING MAGNIFIES GOD: [Psalm 50:15](#) Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me. "; [John 9:1-3](#) Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him; [John 11:4](#) When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it. "; [John 21:18-19](#) Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish. " 19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me. "; [Philippians 1:19-20](#) For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

10. CHASTENING & PRUNING PROMOTES VICTORY: [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#) And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

11. CHASTENING & PRUNING MAKES US AGREE WITH GOD WHEN WE DO SIN: [Judges 10:6-7](#) Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord ...and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. [Judges 10:15](#) And the children of Israel said to the Lord, "We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray." [Psalm 32:3-5](#) When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin; [Hosea 5:15](#) I will return again to My place Till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face, In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me. "; [Hosea 6:1](#) Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up; [2 Chronicles 15:3-4](#) For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; 4 but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them.

12. CHASTENING & PRUNING REMINDS US OF HOW GOD HATES SIN: [1 Peter 4:17](#) For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (If the branch is heading away from God the pruning stops that downward spiral)

13. CHASTENING & PRUNING PROVES THAT OUR SONSHIP IS GENUINE: [Hebrews](#)

12:5-6 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

14. CHASTENING & PRUNING LETS US SEE WHAT WE REALLY ARE: [Job 42:5-6](#) "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. 6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

15. CHASTENING & PRUNING GROWS OUR PRAYER LIFE: [Isaiah 26:16](#) Lord, in trouble they have visited You, **They poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them.**

16. CHASTENING & PRUNING ALLOWS US TO BE AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS: [2 Corinthians 6:4-5](#) But in all things **we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,** 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; [1 Thessalonians 1:6-7](#) And you became followers of us and of the Lord, **having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,** 7 so that **you became examples** to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

17. CHASTENING & PRUNING CERTIFIES US AS COUNSELORS TO OTHERS: [Romans 12:15](#) **Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep;** [Galatians 6:2](#) **Bear one another's burdens,** and so fulfill the law of Christ; [2 Corinthians 1:3-5](#) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 **who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.** 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

18. CHASTENING & PRUNING EXPANDS OUR GOSPEL WITNESS: [Acts 8:1-5](#) Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. 4 **Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.** 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them; [Acts 16:25-34](#) But at midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.** 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, **what must I do to be saved?**" 31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household; [Philippians 1:12-13](#) But I want you to know, brethren, that the **things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,** 13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; [2 Timothy 4:16-17](#) At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, **so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear.** Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

19. CHASTENING & PRUNING PROVES WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS: [2 Corinthians 2:14](#) Now thanks be to God who always **leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place;** [Romans 8:35](#), 37 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 37 **Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**

20. CHASTENING & PRUNING HELPS US SEE GOD MORE CLEARLY: [Job 42:5](#) "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, **But now my eye sees You.** [Romans 8:14-15](#) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." , [Romans 8:18](#) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with **the glory which shall be revealed in us.**

21. CHASTENING & PRUNING PUSHES US CLOSER TO GOD: [1 Peter 4:14](#) If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ; [2 Corinthians 12:10](#) Therefore **I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

22. CHASTENING & PRUNING EQUIPS US FOR A GREATER MINISTRY: [1 Kings 17-18](#); [John 12:24](#) Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; **but if it dies, it produces much grain.**

23. CHASTENING & PRUNING GAINS US CHRIST'S REWARD: [Matthew 5:10-12](#) **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you; [Matthew 19:27-29](#) Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, **we have left all and followed You.** Therefore what shall we have?" 28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 **And everyone who has left houses or**

brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. ; [Romans 8:16-17](#) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together;** [2 Corinthians 4:17](#) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

24. CHASTENING & PRUNING PREPARES US FOR THE KINGDOM: [2 Thessalonians 1:5](#) which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, **that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;** ; [2 Timothy 2:12](#) **If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.** If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

CHASTENING & PRUNING DECLARES GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY: [Romans 8:28](#) And we know that **all things work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (NKJV) [Romans 8:28](#) And we know that **in all things God works** for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (NIV); [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but **God is faithful**, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. [Psalm 66:10-12](#) For **You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us** as silver is refined.¹¹ You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. 12 You have caused men to ride over our heads; **We went through fire and through water; But You brought us out to rich fulfillment.;** [Genesis 45:5-8](#) But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 **So now it was not you who sent me here, but God;** and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. [Genesis 50:20](#) But as for you, **you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good**, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

[1] John MacArthur, Jr., *How to Get the Most from God's Word*, (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing) 1997.

[2] Bruce Wilkinson, *Secrets of The Vine*. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p. 50-59.

[3] Drawn from and adapted out of H. L. Willmington, *Willmington's Book of Bible Lists*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1987.

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