

Jesus 101

“Grace Thoughts”



IF THE SON SETS YOU FREE,
YOU ARE FREE INDEED!
JOHN 8:36

A short devotional to help get you excited about Jesus!

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” –John 15:2

In my early twenties, I directed a youth choir that eventually became a young adult choir. One of our favorite songs was “The Refiner’s Fire,” made popular by the Christian singer Steve Green. Looking back now, I realize that all of us were way too young to even begin to understand the meaning of what we were singing: “No matter what I may lose, I choose the Refiner’s fire.”* As adults we all eventually experienced brokenness, and these words became real.

Terms such as “refiner’s fire” and “divine pruning” make us a bit uncomfortable because we shy away from suffering. But what is the purpose of the pruning? In the Old Testament, Israel was often depicted as a vine (see Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15; 19; Hosea 10:1; etc.). God frequently observed that this vine (Israel) had become wild and fruitless. Now Jesus declares that He is the true Vine, His followers are the branches, and His Father is the vinedresser (John 15:1, 4, 5). The whole purpose of a vineyard is to produce grapes, and it cannot produce fruit without pruning; the purpose of our existence is to give glory to God and invite others to His kingdom, and only God knows how to bring this about. In this vineyard metaphor, there are only two groups of branches: the fruitless ones that are taken away and the fruitful ones that are cleansed or pruned (verse 2). Note that it is the fruitful branches that are pruned. There is a play of words in Greek between He takes (airei) and He prunes or cleanses (kathairei) that cannot be reproduced in English, but we are all either on one group or the other. The next verse (verse 3), makes it clear that we are cleansed by His Word. Let’s trust that the Vinedresser knows what we need to give Him glory. Our part is to surrender to His able hands. The Vine produces the fruit in the branches; the branches submit to the Vine and to the cleansing of the Vinedresser. Trust that in our brokenness we can give glory to God. And remember the cross, which reminds us of His infinite love; when we don’t understand His ways, we can trust His heart!

*Steve Green, “The Refiner’s Fire,” *The Mission* (Sparrow Records, 1989).