

EVERYDAY LIFE

Friday, September 5, 2008

"God planted a garden . . . there He put the man He had formed." Genesis 2:8 NKJV

"Every garden reflects its gardener, for better or worse."

My thoughts today continue as, **"Ouch, that hurts!"**

Pain avoidance! I think you - along with everyone of us - come from the manufacturer with that capacity. People often refer to a threshold for pain. I don't have one! I not alone don't like pain; I don't even want temporary discomfort. How about you?

Recently, at an appointment, the dentist obviously noticed my tensing up and asked me if I was feeling pain. I was tense and prepared even at just the possibility of pain. **Sometimes you and I are prone to even avoid pain that would help and benefit us.**

Now let's consider how this relates to spiritual life. The athlete says, *"No pain; no gain!"* The investor says, *"No risk; no reward."* We understand that. **God says, "No pruning; no fruitfulness."** Do you think God means that? Would you ever really want God to just leave you as you are?

Jesus plainly understood this principle of spiritual life and growth. *"I am the True Vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that doesn't produce fruit, and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more."* John 15:1-3 NLT. God's faithful pruning displays His love and hope for you, not His disapproval. He knows what needs to be removed - what is to your loss and harm - so that what remains can be more bountiful.

What kind of garden would you have without pruning shears? Not a very good one. Not a very healthy one. Not a very fruitful one. Pruning is not cruel or hurtful. **It is the expression of the gardener's care and pleasure in her garden.**

Pruning is with clear purpose and expectation: for greater beauty and fruitfulness. In the best of gardens, growth can become misdirected. Last year's growth can rob the plant of nutrients necessary for this season's new growth, blossoms or fruit.

Every garden reflects its gardener, for better or worse. When you see a yard well trimmed and manicured, its shrubs and landscape perfectly formed, what are your thoughts about the persons who live there? You accept that they enjoy and care about their home and desire it to be beautiful inside and out. But what if the yard is overgrown, the landscaping poorly done and ill maintained? Then what do you assume?

Your life may wrongly reflect the One whose loving care you refuse. If every plant had the power of volition, would they shun the pruning shears or welcome them. **A plant has neither understanding nor choice, but you and I do.** And we should know better than to refuse His loving hand.

"For (earthly parents) disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but the Lord disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." Hebrews 12:10-11 NAS.

God loves you too much to leave you as you were. Sometimes "ouch" is what you feel, but the hurt will be healed and you will rejoice.

My prayer is for you to want and welcome His touch, even when it hurts for the moment.

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