



Daily Verse and Comment

[John 15:2-6](#)

(2) Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (3) You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. (4) Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (5) "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (6) If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

New King James Version

In [John 15:2](#), [Christ](#) describes two distinct actions on the part of the Father: "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." These two actions are 1) taking away unproductive branches and 2) pruning productive ones. Both actions involve cutting, but the reasons for and the results of God's cutting are quite different.

1. Concerning the cutting of *unproductive* branches, the apostle John uses the verb *airo* (*Strong's* #142), which means "to take up," "to bear," "to remove."
2. Concerning the cutting of *productive* branches, he uses the verb *kathairo* (*Strong's* #2508), obviously related to *airo*. So, there is a play on words here, like "bear" and "forbear," but the *airo/kathairo* wordplay is not apparent in an English translation.

Kathairo means much the same as *airo*, but with a major difference in nuance or connotation. The emphasis with *kathairo* is on *the cleansing that results through removal*, while the emphasis with

airo is simply on *removal*. Think of *kathairo* this way. When we use soap and water to wash a floor, we are *removing* dirt. No question about that. But more important to us is the fact that we are *cleaning* the floor. Of course, both removal and cleansing are taking place, but we are most interested in the *consequence* of the removal, that is, the cleaning.

In [John 15:3-6](#), Christ elaborates on His Father's two actions: Removing (*airo*) unproductive branches and pruning (*kathairo*) productive ones. Concerned that His disciples understand that they are clean as a result of His Father's action, He focuses first on pruning (*kathairo*), keying in on its cleansing aspects: "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" ([John 15:3](#)).

The adjective "clean" here is from the Greek *katharos*, obviously a word closely related to the verb *kathairo*. It means "blameless," "pure," "clean," "free of [sin](#) and guilt." Its first use is in [Matthew 5:8](#), "Blessed are the [pure in heart](#), for they shall [see God](#)."

In verses 4-5, Christ continues His comments about the vine and the branches with a remarkable example of irony—irony to the point of paradox. Just how does a Christian experience cleansing? Not by separation, but by remaining *unified* with the Vine. Is there a contradiction between the idea of cleansing by removal (*kathairo*)—pruning—and Christ's admonition that we *abide* tenaciously in the Vine? No, there is not. It is all a question of who does what. *We* do the abiding, as Christ here commands that we do. [God](#) does the cutting.

The apostle Paul's comment in [Colossians 3:10](#) (*Good News Translation*) points out God's role in maintaining the vitality of His people: "This is the new being [the new man] which God, its Creator, is constantly renewing in His Own image, in order to bring you to a full knowledge of Himself." The pruning-cleansing (*kathairo*) mentioned in John 15 is one of the ways God constantly renews or maintains the new man. It is an ongoing creative act on God's part. Through His pruning, He strengthens the committed Christian, the one who resolutely clings to the Vine. The one who "endures to the end" the trials sent his way will be saved ([Matthew 10:22](#)).

With [John 15:6](#), Christ returns to a discussion of that other action performed by His Father, "taking away" (*airo*) nonproductive branches: "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned." This action does not result in their cleansing, however, but in destruction. In His comments to the [church at Laodicea](#), Christ uses an even stronger verb than *airo* to describe the cutting away of unproductive branches: "I could wish that you were either cold or hot! But, since you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I intend to spit you out of My mouth!" [Revelation 3:15-16](#) (J.B. Phillips' paraphrase).

The unproductive branches experience removal, suffering loss at the same time—annihilation. They do not experience cleansing. We should do nothing that would put God in a frame of mind where He "intends" to detach Himself from us—whether by vomiting us from Him or through cutting us off as unproductive branches. To avoid rejection by God, we need to abide in Christ, connected to the Vine.

That is our responsibility. We must take no action that signals to God a lapse of our clinging-commitment—no action that has the effect of separating ourselves from Him. Examples of such actions include failing to attend [Sabbath](#) services consistently or becoming remiss in daily prayer and Bible study. As we gradually become more unproductive, perhaps imperceptibly at first, we begin to droop, withering. Because of our lackluster approach—our Laodicean attitude toward God, which may initially be neither hot nor cold—God ultimately cuts us off, separating us from Himself. The result is catastrophic.

Conversely, the productive branches—those Christians committed to remaining attached to the Vine, not permitting "any root of bitterness" ([Hebrews 12:15](#)) to develop as a result of God's correction (or trimming)—experience cleansing, something far more desirable than burning. As we approach [Passover](#), let us remember that God cleanses as He prunes. We need to be careful not to take any action that damages the fellowship we have with the Father, His Son, and each other, a fellowship made possible through enormous sacrifice on the part of the God Family.

— Charles Whitaker

To learn more, see:
[Pruning and Cleansing](#)

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