

the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

(John 15:1-5)

As with plant husbandry, so, too, it is with humans: there are varying intensities of pruning. At the most benign end is the pruning that tweaks the mind to shift from an intention that has not yet been acted upon. In that level of pruning is activity such as this.

And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.

But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, LORD, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.

And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

(Genesis 20:1-7)

At the other end of purging is a person's separation in hell. Because this has external evidences, we will apply the word, strife, to that pruning. Yes, we are aware that; to use the word, strife, may be perceived as being one of the most severe underestimations that are possible. For us, it is not either, an underestimation, or, an understatement; because, for us, hell is the place of any separation from the uplifting principles of God, at varying levels of torment.

The most common image of hellish anguish is that which is in the piercing pain of total separation from the uplifting principles of God. We need to be careful when we try to apply that image too broadly; for, to think only of total separation as being the only qualification that can be applied to hell is too narrow an application for the power that is in the concept. We need to adopt an image of the use of that word which is similar to the word, cancer. The word, cancer, is applied to a wide spectrum of severities of outcomes.

Let us take that broader approach, as applied to the word, hell, as we seek to understand the use of the concept, total separation as it relates to hell.

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It seems appropriate to say that, hell is durational total separation; wherefore it (was) is a place of significant damage. Here is a parable about the breadth of the damage that is hell.

*There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.*

*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom:*

*the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*

*But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

*Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

*Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.*

*And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*

*And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

(Luke 16:19-31)

As we study other Scripture, we discover that, the rich man was experiencing durational total separation from God's principles of grace and redemption. Total separation from God's principles is a place that is of divine permanence, only. We say, divine permanence, because God can terminate that residency, as He will, and extract the thing from that environment. Indeed, the Father God is able to extract anything from anywhere, according as He ordains. This is the way it is because; the power of the LORD

God is everywhere. As the Psalmist proclaimed, here . . .

*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*

*If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

(Psalm 139:7-12)

Thus, because God is everywhere (omnipresent), and because God possesses Power that can accomplish any righteous thing (omnipotence); therefore, by application of His knowledge of all things (omniscience), the LORD God controls the duration's beginning and ending. This is a very important consideration in understanding God's ordinances as pertains to all existence. In Scripture, it is highlighted in this pronouncement about a lesser form of separation than total separation, which was ordained in this fashion . . .

*I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

(Psalm 16:7-10)

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Returning to the greater form of separation--durational total separation--please know that; there is a separation that is beyond that one, in its greater intensity. However, that more intense separation is a very rare thing to happen, in reality. Actually; we believe that, there is the only Scripture that announces a total separation of this sort, as from the principles of God. We will explore that Scripture in its four parts.

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First, here is an introduction of the nature of the participants.

*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*

(Matthew 25:31-33)

To qualify the participants, there is the statement that describes those that are excluded from any possibility of separation.

*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

*Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*

*And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

(Matthew 25:34-40)

Following the exclusion clause, so to speak; there is an inclusion cause for the candidates of separation.

*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.*

*Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?*

*Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

(Matthew 25:41-45)

Finally, Scripture gives the statement about the outcomes for both portions of the separation of Matthew 25:31-33; starting with the ones that are included in the separation.

*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*

(Matthew 25:46)

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Please note that; total separation from the presence of God is only separation from the uplifting principles of the way of the LORD. Also, note the nature of the entities that enter greater, almost total separation, which is described in the portion of Scripture recorded in Matthew 25:41-45. These are not human souls.

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The separation unto hell that is strife for mankind is a voluntary thing. Therefore, this would be a case of the stripes coming to you that you deserve for what you have done. Additionally; as in compensation for those voluntary actions, the pruning that occurs in that place is dependent on overcoming either arrogance or ignorance. No, it is not purgatory; for, there is nothing you, or anyone else, can do to alleviate what you feel. You must wait for the LORD. No, it is not just a matter of, undoing a choice that has been made. When we are at a place of, separation as in hell; then, we have willfully rejected, and totally disavowed, the way of the LORD. Among the rooms that are in that place is this one.

*The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying,  
Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.*

(Ezekiel 12:1-3)

Also, among the rooms in the place of tormenting separation is this one.

*Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?  
And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.  
For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

(2 Thessalonians 2:5-12)

And, too, another of those rooms is this one.

*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

(Romans 1:28-32)

During the course of the Old Testament, these rooms were occupied by various portions of the congregation of Israel. Chief among these occupants were several of the kings of Israel. A historical example of such a time of residency in one of the rooms is presented in this passage of Scripture . . .

*And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.*

*And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead?*

*And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.*

*And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith?*

*And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.*

*And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.*

(1 Kings 22:19-22)

But, of course; not everything of the nation of Israel was in those rooms. There was a portion that was set aside to begin the process of reestablishment of the original planting that had been done by the LORD. And, in its season; the portion that remained, after the pruning, was given the nutrients that it needed to replenish what had been removed. First, this was done from the original planting only, by inward growth in the congregation of Israel--and, we will explore that more, next. Later, growth was accomplished from the outside; in a process that we will present, later. In preparation for the next, here is some Scripture on the remaining portion of Israel, after the pruning.

*And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, And said, O my God, I am ashamed and*

