



# THE VINE & the Branches

Part 6: What the Bible  
Says About Fruit



Almost everyone, it seems, has some kind of ambition in life. Most people appear to have some measure of an internal desire – sometimes minimal, sometimes moderate, sometimes inordinate - to accomplish something great, to separate themselves from the masses, to attain a high or notable position, or to rise to a prominent position of influence. The desire to be well-known, powerful, or famous seems to flow from our natures.





“Aspiration is a pure upward desire for excellence, without side-references; ambition is an inflamed desire to surpass others.”

- W. R. ALGER



# *Coram Deo*

When we are pursued by the Holy Spirit (effectual calling), however, we are given a new heart (regeneration), are organically joined to Christ (justification, adoption, and mystical union), and begin a new process (sanctification) of learning to die to self and live for the glory of God. Not only do our attitudes and behaviors change, but our selfish ambitions begin to fade *coram Deo*.



***The Prodigal Son***

Rembrandt van Rijn

The Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg





# R.C. Sproul's Explanation of *Coram Deo*

“Recently a friend asked me in all earnestness, “What’s the big idea of the Christian life?” He was interested in the overarching, ultimate goal of the Christian life. To answer his question, I fell back on the theologian’s prerogative and gave him a Latin term. I said, “The big idea of the Christian life is *coram Deo*. *Coram Deo* captures the essence of the Christian life.”

This phrase literally refers to something that takes place in the presence of, or before the face of, God. To live *coram Deo* is to live one’s entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.

To live in the presence of God is to understand that whatever we are doing and wherever we are doing it, we are acting under the gaze of God. God is omnipresent. There is no place so remote that we can escape His penetrating gaze.”



# Paul's Ambition

In one of his most memorable statements, the Apostle Paul introduced the subject of ambition by indicating that he preferred to be “absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:8). He had seen the resurrected Christ and longed to be with Him. Pulled in two directions, he spoke about staying versus going: “Therefore also we have as our **ambition**, whether at home or absent, **to be pleasing to Him**” (II Cor. 5:9). In a similar way, he wrote to the Romans urging them to present their bodies a living and holy sacrifice, **well-pleasing to God**” (Rom. 12:1). And to the Ephesians, his exhortation was passionate: “**Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord**” (5:10). For Paul, the goal and the motive of the Christian walk was to be well-pleasing to God.



# Nearing Gethsemane

As Jesus continued His allegory with the Eleven, He reiterated what He had been consistently teaching them over the previous 3½ years: that the seed must die before it can bring forth life; that they must count the cost of their own discipleship; that they must serve rather than be served; and that they must learn to die daily. In short, Jesus spoke about the Father being glorified when they were earnest about fruit-bearing. Their fruit would also be proof that they were Jesus' disciples.

Similarly, Paul had shared openly with the Ephesian elders: **“I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself**, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).





John 15:7-8

“If you abide in Me,  
and My words abide  
in you, ask whatever  
you wish, and it shall  
be done for you. By  
this is my Father  
glorified, that you  
bear much fruit and  
so prove to be My  
disciples.”



# Our Fruit-Bearing Glorifies the Father

**“By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit...”** (Jn. 15:8). Glorifying God, as Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1889) suggested, “is nothing else but our commitment to lift up His name in the world and magnify Him in the eyes of others...It consists of four things: appreciation, adoration, affection, and subjection.” It means “to place God at the highest level in our thoughts and to reverently esteem Him.”

God comes to each one of us looking for fruit that He might be glorified. Suppose that upon inspection, He found no fruit, as depicted in Jesus’ parable? “A certain man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and did not find any” (Lk. 13:6). Or, instead, what if He found an *abundance* of fruit?



# A Father Who Can Be Pleased



What kind of fruit is the Father looking for? What is the nature and character of the fruit which pleases Him?



# Grape Varieties

There are “thousands of grapevine varieties grown throughout the world...Each different grape variety has its own particular character, defined by flavor, color, berry size, phenolics, and the balance of sugars and acids contained in the fruit.”





# Red & White Wine Varieties

- Concord
- Cayuga White
- Sauvignon
- Gewürztraminer
- Catawba
- Chardonnay
- Malbec
- Pinot Blanc
- Delaware
- Seyval Blanc
- Merlot
- Pinot Gris
- Baco Noir
- Traminette
- Pinot Noir
- Riesling
- Chambourcin
- Vidal Blanc
- Sangiovese
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Chancellor
- Vignoles
- Syrah
- Sémillon
- Frontenac
- Barbera
- Zinfandel
- Maréchal Foch
- Cabernet Franc
- Chardonnay
- Norton
- Cabernet
- Chenin Blanc





# The Importance of Environment

- “Exactly how a grape variety’s characteristics manifest in finished wines is dependent on many factors, the most important of which is the ***terroir*** – soil and microclimate within the vineyard – viticulture management practices and the chosen winemaking technique.”
- The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines “environment” as “the social, political, or cultural circumstances in which a person lives, especially with respect to their effect on behavior, attitudes, etc.”
- A question we may ask ourselves is, “How has my environment shaped my thoughts and beliefs which are contrary to, or aligned with, God’s revelation as preserved for us in God’s Word?” In other words, do we have the mind of Christ about the nature of our fruit?



# A General Understanding of Fruit

- “Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, **that we might bear fruit for God**. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body **to bear fruit for death**” (Rom. 7:4-5).
- The gospel has come to you “just as in all the world also it is **constantly bearing fruit and increasing**, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth” (Col. 1:6).
- John the Baptist: “Therefore **bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance**” (Mt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8).

# A General Understanding of Fruit

- Repentance involves an “inward change which expresses itself outwardly in God-glorifying conduct” (Hendriksen).
- “A good tree cannot produce **bad fruit**, nor can a rotten tree produce **good fruit**” (Mt. 7:18).
- “So then, you will know them by their **fruits**” (Mt. 7:20; 12:33; Lk. 6:43-44).







# Fruit Varieties in the New Testament

1. The Greek word for fruit occurs 66 times in the New Testament.
2. “John uses *karpos* (fruit) 8 times in 15:1-16, and twice only (4:36; 12:24) in all the rest of his Gospel.” (Leon Morris).
3. There are three kinds of fruit that the Father is seeking to cultivate in us: (1) the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22); (2) the fruit which comes as a result of our sharing the gospel with unbelievers (Rom. 1:13); and the fruit of righteousness (Phil. 1:11). Or, to say it another way, the **fruit of our character**, the **fruit of our evangelistic efforts**, and the **fruit of good works**.



# Three Fruit Varieties

The Fruit of Our Character

The Fruit of Evangelism

The Fruit of Our Good Works



# One: The Fruit of Character

- “Having been filled with the **fruit of righteousness** which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11).
- “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and **good fruits**, unwavering, without hypocrisy” (James 3:17).
- “Walk as children of light (for the **fruit of the light** consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)” (Eph. 5:8-9).
- “But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).



# What Is Character?

“As traditionally understood, from the Hebrews and Greeks onward, character is the inner form that makes anyone or anything what it is – whether a person, a wine, or a historical period. Thus character is clearly distinct from such concepts as personality, image, reputation, or celebrity. It is the essential ‘stuff’ a person is made of, the inner reality and quality in which thoughts, speech, decision, behavior, and relations are rooted. As such, character determines behavior just as behavior demonstrates character.”



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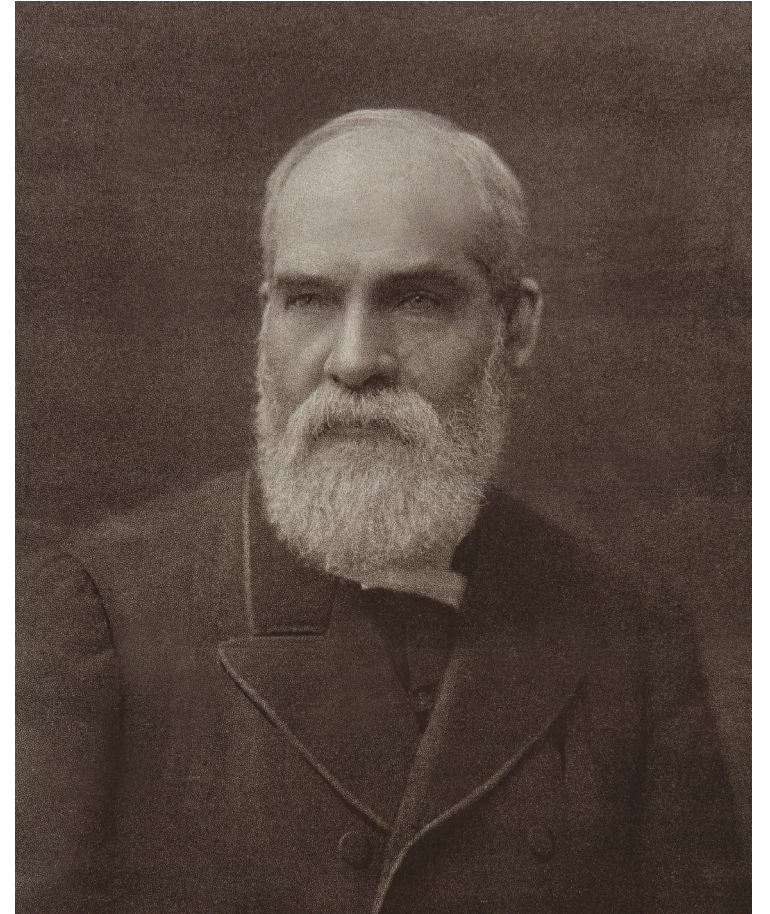
## Two: The Fruit of Evangelism

- “And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented this far) in order that I might obtain some **fruit** among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles” (Rom. 1:13).
- “But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean **fruitful labor** for me; and I do not know which to choose” (Phil. 1:22).
- “The **fruit** of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30).

# A.B. Bruce on the Meaning of *Fruit*

“The fruit He looks for is the spread of the gospel and the ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God by the disciples, in the discharge of their apostolic vocation. Personal holiness is not overlooked; but it is required rather as a means towards fruitfulness than itself the fruit. It is the purging of the branch which leads to increased fertility.”

- *The Training of the Twelve*



**A.B. Bruce**  
1831-1899



# Three: The Fruit of Our Good Works

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- “...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing **fruit in every good work** and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).
- “Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit (**fruit**) which increases to your account” (Phil. 4:17).
- “I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the **fruit of his deeds**” (Jer. 17:10).





## Seasonal Fruit

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”





“The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him” (Ps. 92:12-15).

