

Names of God from the Bible

42 – The Gardener

All God's Names are eternal names – so He is still The Gardener for us today.

Reading: John 15:1-17

Over the years that I have been a Christian and listened to many sermons drawn from this passage in John's Gospel, I can't actually remember many, if any, that were focused upon God the Father's role. Usually, they concentrated on Jesus and the importance of us remaining attached to the Vine.

There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with that perspective. Jesus is indeed the Vine and without Him or being connected to Him, we can do nothing. Fact. End of discussion.

However, we should also consider how Jesus began His discourse. Whilst He declared that He was the Vine, He also established that His Father is The Gardener. They work in harmony. They have a single objective. They both desire that we are fruitful. Isn't that wonderful and humbling at the same time?

We also need to remember that fruitfulness in God's eyes is not related to materialism, wealth or worldly success. It has nothing to do with what we can do for God. It is all about obedience, love, service to others and how we can be involved with bringing the Kingdom of God to earth.

As Paul writes in Ephesians 2: 10, *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* We don't do good works in order to gain or achieve our salvation or righteousness before a holy God. No, we are saved by grace, through faith alone. However, once we are saved, forgiven and set free, God reveals His plan for our lives, which inevitably involves good works and serving others.

Please note in both places the phrase 'in' Christ is used. Jesus said, *"Remain in Me"* and Paul wrote we are *'created in Christ Jesus'*. There is tremendous significance in that phrase. It confirms that we can do nothing good outside of our relationship with Christ. Before we are saved, before we are 'in Christ', nothing we do is of eternal significance or value. It's only "in Christ" that we can bear fruit that will last.

So God the Father is watching over us to see if we are bearing fruit. If we aren't, He will prune us, remove those things that hamper growth, to ensure we are able to become fruitful. How often in my life The Gardener had to come and prune things off my life in order that I become more fruitful for His Kingdom.

It includes anything and everything that gets in the way of my total dependency upon Christ Jesus, my Lord. Some of the things were good and fruitful in some ways; however, they were not allowing me to be as fruitful as God wanted me to be. God's intention is always growth and more fruitfulness.

It's interesting that as I am writing this, my grapevine is growing. It's growing so fast right now that almost daily I have to examine and prune it for maximum fruit bearing. Some of the tendrils will not produce any grapes so I have to prune them away. However, I have had to prune those tendrils that are bearing grape clusters so that all the goodness goes into the grapes, rather than those metre-long tendrils!

Names of God from the Bible

At the end of Jesus' life on earth, He told a story of the gardener (landowner) who planted a vineyard and rented it out to tenants. They beat, killed or stoned the servants the gardener sent to receive his dues. In the end, he sent his son. The tenants, however, took him, threw him out of the vineyard and murdered him.

Yes, God was The Gardener and Jesus, The Gardener's Son. God is the final Judge.

What does that name mean for us today

Not only is there a Day of Reckoning when all we have done on earth will be judged by God, but God is also constantly looking at our lives to see if we are bearing fruit. God's ultimate desire is that we become more and more like Jesus and so He will do all He can to make that happen.

Prayer

Thank You, Father, for reminding me that You are The Gardener and that You expect me to be fruitful. By Your Holy Spirit, please help me to walk in Your ways and follow the plans You have for my life, without getting side-tracked or giving up. Please make me as fruitful as You want me to be. Amen.

Additional Readings

- Matthew 21:33-45
- James 5:7-12
- John 20:1-18

Questions

1. What characteristics of God as The Gardener are significant to you?
2. Has God revealed Himself in this way to you? How and when?
3. How does Jesus fulfil that name?