



Fruit of Righteousness Part 1

When a plant or tree bears fruit, it means there is evidence of life flowing within it. Not only is there proof of life but we also know right away that the process, from seed germination to fruit maturity, worked.

In like manner, as believers in Christ, we too will bear much fruit sooner or later, since the life of Christ Himself is now flowing within us permanently. We were recreated totally new in our Spirits and made totally righteous by grace. This means that the righteousness we now possess was not given because of any works of righteousness we had done but received by faith in Christ.

James 2:17

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Since man is so naturally engraved with the idea that works makes us righteous, many who read through the Epistle of James with the wrong heart end up misinterpreting it and contradicting the Gospel that Paul preached so elegantly in his epistles. Know that the Epistle of James and the epistles written by Paul do not contradict each other.

What the apostle James is trying to say is the gift of righteousness is always accompanied by works. In other words, grace effectively works in us and through us.

By no means should this be interpreted as faith plus works equals salvation or righteousness. Nothing can be further from the truth. Rather, Jesus plus nothing is the only formula that will save you and make you righteous. This formula is the power to produce works and prove that your faith is not dead in the sight of man.

A great man of God says it in this manner:

- “Truly, if faith is there, the believer cannot hold back...he breaks out into good works.” - **Martin Luther**

These works are not the works of the Law but good works. The difference is, the works of the Law are works to try to become more righteous in the sight of God and try to appear more holy in the sight of man. The apostle Paul calls these *dead works*.

However, good works are a result of already being righteous by faith in the sight of God and a genuine desire to have relationship with God and serve people.

When no good works are visible, it goes against the very nature of a believer in Christ. Good works are something that should be expressed through us as a result of being righteous by gift. If no good works are never visible, the apostle James calls this *dead faith*.

James 2:19-20

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!
But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Let's be clear. Believers in Christ do not have dead faith.

Only those who profess to be believers in Christ but never really believed in Jesus Christ as God and Savior are the one's who have dead faith. In other words, they are not really believers in Christ. One way to know is they do not show any fruit or evidence whatsoever.

In the context, the apostle James was writing to Jews. These Jews professed to be believers in Christ, yet they continued to fallback on the Law of Moses and temple sacrifices. They believed in God yet not in Jesus Christ. The point James is trying to make is people say they believe in God but even demons believe there is a God. To put it in another way, believing there is a God is not enough to be a believer in Christ. One must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of all our sins.

These Jewish brethren professed to be believers in Christ but were not. They did not have any fruit because they were not really believers in Christ. They had dead faith.

James 2:24

You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

The apostle James is saying that we are made righteous by works in the sight of people. This should never be interpreted as we are made righteous by works in the sight of God.

The people cannot see our heart but only our good works to testify that we are truly believers in Christ. In other words, if you are truly a believer in Christ, sooner or later, you will demonstrate the fruit of righteousness.

In the context, the apostle James chooses Abraham as an example of being justified by works in the sight of people. In Genesis chapter 15, Abraham was made righteous by faith, before doing any good work. It wasn't until 30 years later that Abraham offered Isaac on the alter. In other words, if Abraham was righteous by works in the sight of people when he offered Isaac, then it took time for the grace of God to work in his heart.

Likewise, it takes time for the believer in Christ to produce good works. By no means should this be taken to judge believers in Christ for not producing good works in our timing. Many demand from new believers in Christ immediate fruit, but even for Abraham it took time for God's grace to work through him. Grace works slowly but surely.

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