

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” (Matt. 7:17)



Bearing Fruit

The Lord Jesus often spoke in parables. He used lessons from the physical world to teach important principles about the hope of salvation. In Matthew 7, he teaches that men may be wolves in sheep's clothing, or they may be like corrupt trees that do not bring forth good fruit. Bearing good fruit in the Lord's vineyard is what perfecting our faith through works is really all about.



In the Parable of the Sower the word of God was represented by the good seed that fell on various types of soil. (See Matt. 13:3-23) We are all in this parable. Some

may be like the soil by the wayside, others like those that receive the seed on stony ground, having no depth for the seed to root and prosper. Some may also be like the seed that was choked out by the thorns and weeds, that we too often allow to clutter our lives. Hopefully, we will learn to be like the good ground that receives the Word of God planted in our hearts and *“beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*

Jesus used his lesson about the fruit of the good tree to teach us how important it is to be **DOERS OF THE WORD**: *“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”* (Matt. 7:20-21)

(Paraphrase- Ephesians 2:8-10)

**By Grace are ye saved through a perfected faith,
a faith that is manifested in action,
bearing good fruit, doing God's will,
not our own.**

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Things Concerning

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

Volume 8 No 9 (Reference October 2003 Vol.6, no.10)

G5-09

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph 2:8-9)

Salvation by Grace?

There has been an ongoing debate between religious scholars over the question of salvation; is it by works, or by grace through faith? The verse from Ephesians 2 (quoted in the top box) would appear to answer the question without contest. However, as too often is the case in Bible study and interpretation, we tend to answer the matter before we consider all of the evidence.

In this same chapter in Ephesians, for example, the verse which follows the quoted verses reads: *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Eph. 2:10)

When we read all of these verses together, we understand that we are saved by grace through faith, so that we will walk in good works. Is that a contradiction? God's Word does not contradict itself. We must study the entire subject before we can fully understand the proper scriptural balance between faith and works.



Faith made Perfect by Works

One of the best scriptural definitions about this necessary balance between faith and works is found in the writings of James. He tells us in chapter 2, verse 17: *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”* He adds this conclusion at the end of the chapter: *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”*

His point is clarified in the same chapter (verse 20-23): *“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”*

Works then, are the natural by-product of a true faith. The Master said that a good tree is known by its fruit. We can profess to have much faith, but if there is no fruit to manifest our faith, then our faith is vain. It is not a perfected faith and therefore it is not a saving faith.

“And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”

(Gen. 15:6)

The Faith of Abraham

Abraham is considered to be the father of all of the faithful. His example and his story provide valuable insight into Bible teaching about faith and works. Genesis 15 records the story about Abraham being blessed by God for his unquestioning faith. Abraham was 75 years old when God first promised that he would have a child that would be his heir. Many years passed without a child being born, and his wife Sarah was now well beyond the normal age to bear children.

God restates his promise in this chapter, assuring him that he and Sarah would have a child, and that their descendents would be innumerable, even as the stars in the heavens. Abraham was totally reassured by God's renewed promise. We are told that *“he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”* (Gen. 15:6)

This statement is a very brief explanation of the Bible principle that salvation is based on perfected faith. Many jump to a wrong conclusion when they read these words, usually because they fail to consider the entire counsel of God. The words in Genesis 15:6 are quoted a number of times throughout scripture, and when we consider all of the related context, we learn some significant things about the meaning.

The entire 4th chapter of Romans speaks of the faith of Abraham and it quotes the words from Genesis 15:6. (Rom 4:3) We learn from the latter part of this 4th chapter that Abraham did more than believe...**he was strong in faith, fully persuaded and therefore it was imputed unto him.**

“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” (Rom. 4: 19-22)

James provides additional insight about the words in Genesis 15:6. *“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”* (James 2:20-24)

When Abraham believed and God counted his faith unto him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6), Abraham had already demonstrated his faith. (See Heb. 11:8) God also knew that Abraham's faith was strong and that he would remain obedient, no matter how difficult the challenge. God knew that Abraham's faith would be therefore perfected, and that He would be able to ensure the fulfillment of His promises. (See Genesis 18:17-19, James 2: 21-23)

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:1-2)

God is Merciful and Gracious

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him... But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.” (Psalm 103: 8-17)

The 103rd Psalm has a beautiful message. It tells us about the great mercy and the grace (undeserved kindness) of the Almighty God. We depend on this grace because we are weak and because we sin.

But this grace must never become a crutch. We must never presume that God will extend this grace unto us no matter what we do, no matter how often we sin. *“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”* The answer to this question must be NO!!

The Goodness of God

God extends His grace unto us for a purpose. He is not willing that any perish in their sins and He hopes that all will come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) He sends us His goodness to lead us to repentance. (See Romans 2:4)

His mercy and grace is not for those who continue in sin. If we read the 103rd Psalm very carefully (noting some of the underlined words as quoted above) we will see that there are **qualifiers** for receiving the grace of God. The Lord pities His children, (that is) “them that fear him.” We must demonstrate our respect for God and His offer of grace by refusing to continue in sin.

The mercy of the Lord and His imputed righteousness (being counted righteous through perfected faith) is for those that “keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.” (Psa. 103:17-18)

The Grace of God

God's grace has been provided to teach us to live godly lives, filled with good works that will glorify Him. (Matt. 5:16)

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.” (Titus 2:11-15)