**The Fruit of Righteousness**

*James 3:18*

**Introduction**

1. The Christian life began with a hunger for righteousness, and should continue that way – **Matthew 5:6**
2. The Christian should prioritize righteousness in his life – **Matthew 6:33**
   1. He is not a member of the kingdom for any other reason than that he desires righteousness, and seeks to serve God’s righteous cause – **Romans 6:18; 14:17**
   2. This way of life is not merely a preference, or a choice made for being a better person and having a better life, but for doing right before God.
3. We live in a world that has devalued righteousness – **cf. Amos 6:12**
   1. This to the extent that the lines are often blurred – **Isaiah 5:20**
4. We need to seek the proper standard of righteousness, i.e. God’s righteousness and pursue it relentlessly – **1 Timothy 6:11**
5. The Seed
6. **James 3:18** – ***“And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (NASB)***
   1. I.e. righteousness is the fruit in general, but fruit comes from the sowing of a seed.
   2. Context – **James 3:17** – wisdom from above – the seed which produces righteousness is only from God.
7. ***“Seeking to establish their own righteousness”***
   1. **Romans 10:1-4** – the Jews sought righteousness, but not according to God’s standard.
      1. Sought it by the Law – **Romans 9:30-33** – rejected Jesus.
      2. Law is just (righteous) – **Romans 7:12**
      3. Law only – **Galatians 5:1-6** – bondage because no offering for sin – Christ is the offering, estranged by turning to Law of Moses.
         1. **Romans 6:14** – in Christ, not only law (**cf. 1 Corinthians 9:21** – under law toward Christ), but especially grace (provision for sin).
         2. By faith through grace (depending on Jesus’ blood) – **Romans 11:6** (not perfect keeping of law, but justification through forgiveness)
   2. The Jews made the mistake of seeking righteousness where it could not be found. God is the one who determines how a man is to be righteous before Him, and He revealed that it is by faith in Jesus – **Romans 1:16-17**
      1. Inclusive of all the gospel entails – ***“law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).***
8. Only God’s Word Produces Righteousness
   1. **James 3:18** – sowing seed to produce righteousness.
   2. Desire to produce righteousness – **James 1:20** – not accomplished by man’s wrath.
      1. Rather, man must be swift to hear God’s word – **James 1:18-19, 21** – this produces the righteousness of God. (In it God’s righteousness is revealed – **Romans 1:17**).
   3. **1 Peter 1:22-23; 1 John 3:7, 9** – it is the word of God which is the certified seed for making a man righteous.
   4. NOT: The will of man; tradition; keeping only part of the law; conscience of man (must be learned); thoughts of man (“I think/feel”); etc.
9. The Sowing
10. **James 3:18** – the seed must be sown.
11. ***“Sown in peace by those who make peace”***
    1. Peace is the goal – ***“those who make peace”***
    2. Peace is the manner of sowing – ***“sown in peace”***
    3. Goal:
       1. Peace with God – **James 4:4** – enemies of God, but the gospel brings peace.
          1. Peace with God is the result of righteousness – sin separates, righteousness allows peace.
       2. Peace between man – **James 4:1-3** – wars and fights coming from worldly wisdom (**3:14-16**).
          1. Peace through the cross – **Ephesians 2:14-16** (Jew and Gentile)
          2. Peace by prioritizing unity, and for the unity of the Spirit – **Ephesians 4:3**
          3. NOT PEACE FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE, AND AT THE EXPENSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESSS – **Romans 12:18**
             1. Sometimes impossible to be at peace – **Matthew 10:34; Luke 12:51** – Prince of Peace came to bring a sword of division.
             2. Peace only through God’s righteousness, not separate from it.
    4. The manner of sowing the fruit of righteousness in an effort, in part, to make peace – ***“sown in peace”*** (what does that look like?)
       1. We are to be peacemakers – **Matthew 5:9** (who hunger for righteousness – **v. 6** – must coexist)
       2. Avoiding offense? – **Galatians 5:11** (Why Galatian’s putting up with preaching circumcision? – not from Paul – His persecution is because of his message which offends.)
          1. Judaizing teachers – **Galatians 6:12** – circumcise to avoid offending Jews to avoid persecution.
          2. Sowing in peace does not equal avoiding offense.
       3. Sowing in peace? – **1 Timothy 1:8-11; 2 Timothy 4:2** – preaching Gospel which exposes sin.
          1. In proclaiming such controversial truths, and rebuking people for sin, was Paul failing to “sow in peace?”
          2. **Jeremiah 1:9-10** – sin must be taken away for righteousness and peace to exist. (**cf. James 1:21**)
             1. Not peace where there is no peace – **Jeremiah 6:14**
          3. Who is the troubler of Israel? – **1 Kings 18:17-18** (Elijah preaching truth and doing Lord’s will did not bring the trouble, but Ahab’s sinful leadership did).
       4. Avoiding the negative (sin is always negative, can’t talk about it without any negativity), uncomfortable conversations, bringing shame to the sinner, etc. DOES NOT RESULT IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND DOES NOT PROMOTE PEACE.
12. The Pruning
13. When the seed of God’s word is sown, and the soil receives it, God gives the increase and by faith the fruit of righteousness is produced.
    1. It is God’s will that such righteousness persists.
    2. Bearing the fruit of righteousness is not a one-time thing, but a lifetime commitment.
    3. Yet, God works in us – **Philippians 2:13**
    4. He prunes us that we produce more righteousness in accordance with His will.
14. The Need for Pruning
    1. **John 15:1-3** – God prunes the fruit bearing branches.
       1. Bearing fruit does not happen through negligence and inactivity.
       2. Bearing fruit requires constant attention, and the elimination of things which inhibit growth and fruit bearing.
       3. **(v. 3)** – this occurs through His word.
          1. **(v. 2)** – Prunes – *kathairō*; from 2513; to cleanse, i.e. (specially) to prune (STRONG)
          2. ***“clean”*** – *katharos*; of uncertain affinity; clean (literally or figuratively) (root of “prunes” in v. 2) (STRONG)
    2. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – pruning by doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness.
       1. **2 Corinthians 13:5** – self-examination by the word – “the faith” – object.
       2. **James 1:21-25** – correcting what the mirror reveals. (Only way the word can save is if one removes the sin the word reveals.)
    3. There is another way God seeks to prune us 🡪
15. Pruning by Chastening
    1. Hebrews’ hardship – **Hebrews 10:32-39** – suffering persecution.
       1. Before – early in their faith they endured.
       2. Now – they are wearing down and shrinking back in faith – NEED ENDURANCE.
    2. Explanation – **Hebrews 12:5-11** – Father’s chastening.
       1. God is allowing this to happen to shape them spiritually.
       2. Chastening – *paideia* – 2) whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, especially by correcting mistakes and curbing passions. (THAYER)
          1. Not necessarily for doing wrong – **Hebrews 10:32** – from beginning when faithful.
          2. However, refining by fire – **1 Peter 1:6-7** – “if NEED be”
       3. Hardships and adversity have a way of strengthening those who trust in God.
          1. **Hebrews 12:11** – produces the fruit of righteousness – yet through pain.
    3. **Romans 5:3-5** – rejoice in tribulations because it helps us grow.
    4. Walking by faith does not mean avoiding all adversity but trusting in God to be able to use such for our good – **Romans 8:28** – through the pruning process of trials.
       1. Sometimes we struggle to see how such difficulties could be used at all.
       2. We must always understand God is not the cause, BUT GOD HAS THE POWER TO SEE US THROUGH AND HELP US – **2 Corinthians 12:9**

**Conclusion**

1. We must desire the fruit of righteousness in our lives, but must understand the proper source, method of sowing, and process of pruning/refinement necessary for such fruit to grow.
2. In all areas, it is God who makes the fruit of righteousness possible. We must not lean on our own understanding, but trust in Him and His word.