

# The Fruit of the Spirit Is Righteousness<sup>1</sup>



## SABBATH—MARCH 6

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Matthew 23:25–28; Romans 3:28; Romans 8:4; Romans 10:3; Galatians 3:6; 1 John 2:3–6; 1 John 5:1–3.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for what is right. They will be filled’ ” (Matthew 5:6, NlrV).

**LAST WEEK WE FINISHED OUR STUDY ON NINE BRANCHES OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (GALATIANS 5:22, 23).** The next two weeks we will study two more fruit: “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth” (Ephesians 5:9, NKJV). In this verse, Paul talks about “goodness,” but he also adds righteousness and truth. This week we consider what this “righteousness” means.

We understand righteousness in two ways. First, there is the imputed righteousness of Christ. This means what Jesus has done for us. This is the righteousness that covers us and that is our title to heaven. Second, there is the imparted righteousness of Christ. This means what He does in us, through the Holy Spirit. This righteousness changes us into His image (likeness). Righteousness has two parts. But it is all really one righteousness—the righteousness of Christ. Without this righteousness we would have no hope of salvation.<sup>2</sup>

1. righteousness—God’s character that is given to us; holiness.

2. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

**SUNDAY—MARCH 7****RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NECESSARY  
(Matthew 6:33)**

After reading Romans 3:28, Psalm 11:7; Proverbs 15:9; 1 Peter 2:24, Romans 8:4; Matthew 6:33; and 1 John 2:29, respond to the following questions:

- If the law cannot make us right with God, then how can we be made righteous (holy)?

- We know that God hates sin but loves sinners. Then what wrong decisions (choices) must we not make?

- What does it mean: “We can do everything the law requires. Our sinful nature no longer controls the way we live” (Romans 8:4, NIV)? Can we ever keep the law well enough to meet its demands? Or does Paul mean something else? If so, what?

- How should our lives be changed when we first search for the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

- What does it mean “to do righteousness”? Can we be righteous without *doing* righteousness? Explain your answer.

**MONDAY—MARCH 8****DO-IT-YOURSELF  
RIGHTEOUSNESS (Romans 10:3)**

What do you think Paul was talking about in Romans 10:3? Who are these people? How might these people try to establish their “own righteousness”? Why is that impossible when we know they have a human nature?<sup>3</sup>



God hates sin but loves the sinner.

A “do-it-yourself” project is one in which a person does or makes something (as in woodworking or home repair). He or she does not have any professional training. The do-it-yourself project is something that a person does himself or herself. We sometimes think of a successful person as a self-made man or woman. But the Bible says that “do-it-yourself” righteousness is impossible. There is nothing we can do of ourselves to be righteous before God. It is true even if we try hard to be righteous before

3. human nature—any of the qualities or aspects of humans (men, women, and children) that make us who we are. Without God, our natures are sinful, fallen, selfish, proud, unkind, and so on.

God. Our righteousness is as “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Trying to make yourself righteous often puts you on the wrong path.



Our righteousness is as filthy rags.

**How does Jesus explain in Matthew 5:20 and Matthew 23:25–28 the problem that comes from those who try to make themselves righteous?**

The important thing for Christians to understand is how fully dependent they are upon Christ for their righteousness. What makes them holy before God is what Christ has done for them. It is not what they do for Christ. When someone forgets that truth, he or she will be tempted to become self-righteous and proud. The scribes and Pharisees<sup>4</sup> were perfect examples of how that happens. They were very worried about what people would think about them. They forgot what really was important.

**In what ways might you be guilty of the same sin as the scribes and Pharisees? How might this trap be more “hidden” than we think?**

## TUESDAY—MARCH 9

### CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Romans 5:17)

**Write in your own words what Paul is saying in Romans 5:17–19. How are we under God’s sentence? And how do we become righteous?**

**According to Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23, the righteousness of Jesus is a gift. So then, how do we get it?**

In Romans 5:19, notice the words *disobedience* (breaking the law) and *obedience* (keeping the law). One man’s disobedience, Adam’s, led to all of us becoming sinners. This is basic Bible teaching. Adam’s sin caused the human<sup>5</sup> race (group) to fall into sin. Every day we are all living with the results. No one has escaped.

But the same verse also talks about obedience. Whose obedience? Christ’s obedience, of course! He alone has the righteousness needed for salvation.<sup>6</sup> This is the righteousness given to all those who will “receive the rich supply of God’s

4. scribes and Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus’ day who believed a person must keep God’s law to be saved.

5. human—having to do with men, women, or children.

6. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.



The righteousness of Jesus is a gift.

grace”<sup>7</sup> (Romans 5:17, NIV). Indeed, in that same verse, Paul says those who receive this grace get “the gift of righteousness.” Notice, it is a gift. As a gift, it must be unearned and be undeserved. The moment it is earned or deserved, it is no longer grace (Romans 4:4).

But it is not a gift given to everyone unconditionally (without limit). The righteousness of Christ is not automatically given to everyone. Paul is clear. The gift comes to those who will receive it. It is given to those who claim it by faith—such as Abraham, who believed God, and it was “accounted [awarded] to him for righteousness” (Galatians 3:6).

**Do you really understand what it means to be saved by faith? How well do you understand the idea that it is only the righteousness of**

**Jesus given to you by faith? This lets you stand righteous before God. What can you do to better understand this wonderful gift, which is the foundation<sup>8</sup> of the gospel?<sup>9</sup>**

### WEDNESDAY—MARCH 10

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS AND OBEDIENCE (1 John 2:29)

We are covered by the righteousness of Christ. But that righteousness must be shown in our lives. Righteousness is not an agreement between God and the believer. It also becomes real in the life of the person who has it. How carefully we should listen to John’s words: “Dear children, don’t [do not] let anyone lead you down the wrong path. Those who do what is right are holy, just as Christ is holy” (1 John 3:7, NIV).

**What might we be deceived (fooled) about concerning what it means to be righteous?**

Righteousness is the fruit of the Spirit that is tied to obedience. To some people, obedience does not come with salvation by faith. Sometimes one might be told, “You have accepted Jesus as your Savior. Now, will you not accept Him as the Lord of your life?” The suggestion seems to be that our obedience to the will of God and

7. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

8. foundation—the basis on which an idea or belief rests.

9. gospel—the good news about Jesus that saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.

our salvation are two separate issues. That is a very wrong understanding of what salvation is. John wrote that living a righteous life is a true example of those who have salvation.

**What is John's point in 1 John 2:3–6?**

If we discuss the subject of obedience, someone will say that we are not saved by works. There can be no doubt that Lucifer's obedience to the will of God did not put him into heaven. But we must remember that it was Lucifer's disobedience that caused him to be thrown out of heaven. The same can be said for Adam and Eve. Their obedience did not put them into the Garden of Eden. But it was their disobedience to the will (plan) of God that caused them to be put out of the Garden.

"Righteousness is right doing. It is by their actions that all will be judged. Our characters<sup>10</sup> are shown by what we do. The works show whether the faith is true."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*,<sup>11</sup> page 312.

**How well do you show the fruit of righteousness in your life? What practices might you need to give up that stop you from having the fruit of righteousness in your life? (Be careful not to make excuses for them!)**

10. characters—who people are; all that people do, feel, and think are what people are made of.

11. *Object Lessons*—lessons that use an object or a thing to teach a spiritual (holy) truth. Most often the object comes from nature, such as a flower, animal, tree, or seashell. But the object used to teach the lesson might be man-made instead.

12. sacrifice—the act of giving up something of value, such as time or money or a life, to save or help someone or something.

13. Substitute—someone or something that takes the place of another person or thing. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

**THURSDAY—MARCH 11**

**THE RIGHTEOUS LIFE  
(1 John 5:1–3)**

**How does John tie in the love of God with the love that other fellow believers have and with keeping the commandments? Why would he connect all these together?**

"The man who tries to keep the commandments of God, just because it is his duty, will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God become a burdensome duty, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle inside the Christian. It comes from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The key to all righteousness is loyalty [staying true] to our Savior. This will lead us to do right because it is right. This is also because right doing is pleasing to God."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 97, 98.

And what better way to inspire a desire to be loyal to God than through thinking about His great sacrifice<sup>12</sup> for our good on the cross? There is no power in telling people that they have to keep the law. The power comes in pointing people to Jesus and to His death as our Substitute.<sup>13</sup> The power comes from letting sinners know that

their sins can be forgiven through Jesus. And they need to know that they can stand perfect before God in the robe of Christ's righteousness.

Love of God (not the fear of hell) should be the power that inspires our lives. Nothing will cause us to love God more than focusing on the Cross and on the riches and promises that are ours through it!



Nothing will cause us to love God more than focusing on the Cross!

**Do you really love God? If so, how do you know? (Might you be deceiving yourself?) What do you do or say that shows this love is real? In other words, what proof is there that this love is real?**

### FRIDAY—MARCH 12

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Believing that Jesus and the Bible are not fakes is not enough. We may believe that Jesus’ name is the only way we may receive salvation. But at the same time, we

may not do enough to make Him our personal Savior through faith. It is not enough to believe the theory<sup>14</sup> of truth. It is not enough to make claims of faith in Christ and have our names listed on the church roll. ‘Those who obey his commands remain joined to him. And he remains joined to them. How do we know that God lives in us? We know it because of the Holy Spirit He gave us.’ ‘We know that we have come to know God if we obey his commands.’ 1 John 3:24; 1 John 2:3 [NirV]. This is the true proof of conversion.<sup>15</sup> Whatever our beliefs are, they mean nothing if Christ is not shown in works of righteousness.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 312, 313.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How can we avoid the trap of legalism, which means thinking that our works will save us? Or the trap of cheap grace, which means thinking that our works have nothing at all to do with our salvation? How do we keep the right balance between these two? Into which ditch are you likely to fall, cheap grace or legalism?
- ② What is the danger of having our lives driven by the desire to do good works? What can this lead to? How can we avoid it?
- ③ Think of a person you know who seems to be “righteous.” What is this

14. theory—an explanation of how or why something happens.

15. conversion—the process of obeying and following Jesus after accepting Him as Savior.

person like? How does he or she act? How does he or she treat people? What does this person talk about? What can you learn from this person?

④ We tend to think of righteousness as belonging to each person. This is correct. But is there such a thing as group righteousness? Can our church group be “righteous”? If

so, how? How would a “righteous” church group appear? How does yours compare<sup>16</sup> with the ideal<sup>17</sup> you have for the group?

⑤ Suppose salvation by faith means more than just making a claim of faith in Christ and having our names listed on the church roll. Then what does it really mean to be saved? What is “faith,” according to the Bible?

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16. compare—to show how two things are the same.

17. ideal—an idea or plan of something perfect, used as a standard or model for the way a thing should be.