OVERVIEW

Mark 11:11-21 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not [yet]. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard [it]. And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry [any] vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard [it], and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

Christ cursed the fig-tree because it bore not fruit. Thus he would teach that God is not pleased with his human agencies if in their lives they utterly fail to fulfil the purposes for which they were created. Through the help provided, man, in his fallen nature, can do the very things God expects him to do. He can walk and work and live by faith in the Son of God. The Lord draws man close to his side, to walk with him, to work with him, and to teach him how to overcome temptation. With every temptation there is a way of escape, by walking humbly with God. {RH, April 15, 1909 par. 7}

TEXT: John 15:5 I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

1. THE MEANS—GRACE

Ephesians 2:8-10 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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness. . . . The idea that it is necessary only to develop the good that exists in man by nature, is a fatal deception. “The natural man receiveth
not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:14. . . . Of Christ it is written, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men”the only “name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” John 1:4; Acts 4:12. . . . {OFC 69.7}

Paul the apostle . . . longed for the purity, the righteousness, to which in himself he was powerless to attain, and he cried out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?” Romans 7:24, margin. Such is the cry that has gone up from burdened hearts in all lands and in all ages. To all, there is but one answer, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. {OFC 69.8}

Christians, remember that you are "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." Men are watching you, to see the effect of your religion. Sinners are to be saved, not alone by the preaching of the Word, but by lives that reveal the power of Christ's grace. We are to represent Christ as Christ represented the Father. Do you realize that you are to work the works of Christ, that you are to live His life? God desires your heart to be cleansed from everything unchristlike, that you may be able to speak words in season to the weary. Live very near the mercy-seat. Then you will be enabled to reflect the light of Christ's example. It is His desire that you shall be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." {ST, March 26, 1902 par. 1}

No human being can work for God in His own power. Christ says, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Those who surrender body, mind, and spirit into the hands of God, to be controlled by Him, will see of His salvation. {ST, March 26, 1902 par. 2}

2. **THE LINK—FAITH**

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

The faith mentioned in God's Word calls for a life in which faith in Christ is an active, living principle. It is God's will that faith in Christ shall be made perfect by works; He connects the salvation and eternal life of those who believe, with these works, and through them provides for the light of truth to go to all countries and peoples. This is the fruit of the workings of God's Spirit. {HP 109.3}

We show our faith in God by obeying His commands. Faith is always expressed in words and actions. It produces practical results, for it is a vital element in the life. The life that is molded by faith develops a determination to advance, to go forward, following in the footsteps of Christ. {HP 109.4}

We have been taken as rough stones out of the quarry of the world by the cleaver of truth and placed in the workshop of God. He who has genuine faith in Christ as his personal Saviour will
find that the truth accomplishes a definite work for him. His faith is a working faith. . . . We cannot create our faith, but we can be colaborers with Christ in promoting the growth and triumph of faith.  {HP 109.5}

The faith that works by love and purifies the soul produces the fruit of humility, patience, forbearance, long-suffering, peace, joy, and willing obedience.  {HP 109.6}

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Some conscientious souls, on reading this, immediately begin to criticize their every feeling and emotion. But this is not correct self-examination. It is not the petty feelings and emotions that are to be examined. The life, the character, is to be measured by the only standard of character, God's holy law. The fruit testifies to the character of the tree. Our works, not our feelings, bear witness of us.  {HP 131.2}

3. THE FRUIT—WORKS AND OBEDIENCE (FAITH PERFECTED)

Matthew 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them

James 2:22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

Genuine faith will be manifested in good works; for good works are the fruits of faith. As God works in the heart, and man surrenders his will to God, and cooperates with God, he works out in the life what God works in by the Holy Spirit, and there is harmony between the purpose of the heart and the practice of the life. Every sin must be renounced as the hateful thing that crucified the Lord of life and glory, and the believer must have a progressive experience by continually doing the works of Christ. It is by continual surrender of the will, by continual obedience, that the blessing of justification is retained. {NL 28.1}

Those who are justified by faith must have a heart to keep the way of the Lord. It is an evidence that a man is not justified by faith when his works do not correspond to his profession. James says, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made perfect?" (James 2:22). {NL 28.2}

The good tree will produce good fruit. If the fruit is unpalatable and worthless, the tree is evil. So the fruit borne in the life testifies as to the condition of the heart and the excellence of the character. Good works can never purchase salvation, but they are an evidence of the faith that acts by love and purifies the soul. And though the eternal reward is not bestowed because of our merit, yet it will be in proportion to the work that has been done through the grace of Christ. {DA 314.2}

Goodness is the result of divine power transforming human nature. By believing in Christ, the fallen race he has redeemed may obtain that faith which works by love and purifies the soul from all defilement. Then Christlike attributes appear: for by beholding Christ men become changed
into the same image from glory to glory, from character to character. Good fruit is produced. The character is fashioned after the divine similitude, and integrity, uprightness, and true benevolence are manifested toward the sinful race. {ML 54.3}

The Spirit that reveals, also works in him the fruits of righteousness. Christ is in him, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." [John 4:14.] He is a branch of the True Vine, and bears rich clusters of fruit to the glory of God. What is the character of the fruit borne?--The fruit of the Spirit is "love," not hatred; "joy," not discontent and mourning; "peace," not irritation, anxiety, and manufactured trials. It is "long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." [Galatians 5:22, 23.] {GW 287.2}

Those who have this Spirit are earnest workers together with God; the heavenly intelligences co-operate with them, and they go weighted with the spirit of the message that they bear. They speak words of solid sense, and from the treasury of the heart bring forth pure, sacred things, after the example of Christ. {GW 288.1}

The faith that does not produce good works does not justify the soul. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). . . . {NL 28.3}

While we are to be in harmony with God's law, we are not saved by the works of the law, yet we cannot be saved without obedience. The law is the standard by which character is measured. But we cannot possibly keep the commandments of God without the regenerating grace of Christ. Jesus alone can cleanse us from all sin. He does not save us by law, neither will he save us in disobedience to law. {ST, July 21, 1890 par. 7}

4. THE HARVEST--JUSTIFICATION

Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Grace is unmerited favor, and the believer is justified without any merit of his own, without any claim to offer to God. He is justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who stands in the courts of heaven as the sinner's substitute and surety. But while he is justified because of the merit of Christ, he is not free to work unrighteousness. Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit. Where faith is, good works appear. The sick are visited, the poor are cared for, the fatherless and the widows are not neglected, the naked are clothed, the destitute are fed. {AG 182.2}

Christ went about doing good, and when men are united with Him, they love the children of God, and meekness and truth guide their footsteps. The expression of the countenance reveals their experience, and men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus and learned of
Him. Christ and the believer become one, and His beauty of character is revealed in those who are vitally connected with the Source of power and love. Christ is the great depositary of justifying righteousness and sanctifying grace. {AG 182.3}

REFLECTION

I was shown the churches in different States that profess to be keeping the commandments of God, and looking for the second coming of Christ. There is an alarming amount of indifference, pride, love of the world, and cold formality existing among them. And these are the people who are fast coming to resemble ancient Israel, so far as the want of piety is concerned. Many make high claims to godliness, and yet are destitute of self-control. Appetite and passion bear sway; self is made prominent. Many are arbitrary, dictatorial, overbearing, boastful, proud, and unconsecrated. Yet some of these persons are ministers, handling sacred truths. Unless they repent, their candlestick will be removed out of its place. The Saviour's curse pronounced upon the fruitless fig-tree is a sermon to all formalists and boasting hypocrites who stand forth to the world in pretentious leaves, but are devoid of fruit. What a rebuke to those who have a form of godliness, while in their unchristian lives they deny the power thereof! He who treated with tenderness the very chief of sinners, he who never spurned true meekness and penitence, however great the guilt, came down with scathing denunciations upon those who made high professions of godliness, but in works denied their faith.—Vol. 4, p. 393. {GW92 22.2

The Lord has placed every human being on test and trial. He desires to prove and to try us, to see if we will be good and do good in this life, to see if he can trust us with eternal riches, and make us members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. {ML 54.4}

There is no limit to the good you may do. If you make the Word of God the rule of your life, and govern your actions by its precepts, making all your purposes and exertions in the fulfilling of your duty a blessing and not a curse to others, success will crown your efforts. You have placed yourself in connection with God; you have become a channel of light to others. You are honored by becoming co-laborers with Jesus; and no higher honor can you receive than the blessed benediction from the lips of the Saviour: "Well done, good and faithful servant." {ML 54.5}