

**TODAY'S SERMON: 1 John 2 – Healthy Trees Bear Good Fruit**

Last week, we primarily focused on FAITH and its importance. This week, we will examine WORKS in more detail and how it relates to salvation.

**What does it mean to be “saved”?**

**1 John 2:3–6 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. <sup>4</sup> Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: <sup>6</sup> whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

1. **Ezekiel** says those who DO righteousness live. DO unrighteousness die.
2. **Rev 22** says Jesus, we repay according to our deeds
3. **Eph** says saved by grace through faith
4. **John** says Believe in Jesus
5. **Romans** says Abraham was justified by faith alone and NOT works.
6. **James** says works completed Abraham's faith.
7. **James** also says faith & works.

**As I said last week. The Reformation was centred on this very issue. AND John himself was refuting it in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and wrote the Epistle we have been working through.**

**Glossary of terms:**

- a. Knowing God, eternal life, salvation SAME.
- b. Saving Faith = belief, trust, hope, love, which produces good works/fruit/obedience

**A. Two Natures, Two Trees, & Two Types of Fruit**

Scripture uses the analogy of trees and vines throughout the OT and NT to demonstrate those who belong to God and those who do not. (Isa, Jesus, Paul, etc.)

**Picture 1 – Dead tree. Ephesians 2:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

- We are like this dead tree. Apart from Christ. We are dead in our sins.
- **Dead trees produce rot and disease.** (Mt 7:17b ... diseased tree produces bad fruit)

**Galatians 5:19–21 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**Genesis 2:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

**Romans 3:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

**Romans 6:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death,

**John 15:6 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. \*\*This signifies eternal judgment.

**Picture 2 – Alive apple tree. COMPARISON.** Dead vs Alive apple tree.

**Matthew 7:16-20 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

**Ephesians 2:5 (ESV)** ... made us alive together with Christ—

**Galatians 5:22–23 (ESV)** <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- **LAST WEEK:** Through FAITH in Jesus we are SAVED. We become like this tree – ALIVE.

**1 John 2:3–4 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. <sup>4</sup> Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

- IF you have been brought back to life. You will bear fruit. "Keep the Commandments".

**B. Our Works/Fruit CANNOT bring us back to LIFE! Matthew 7:** "Are grapes gathered from thornbushes?

**Picture 3 – Dressing up a dead tree** – What if we take leaves and apples and tie them to the dead tree? **What if I added even leaves and apples?**

**QUESTION:** Would that make this tree an apple tree? Or make it come back to life? **NO.** A dead tree cannot come back to life by putting green leaves and red apples on the outside!

**Matthew 7:15–20 (ESV)** <sup>15</sup> "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

- Sometimes the outside may look sheepish, and the inside is still rotten!

**Matthew 23:27–28 (ESV)** <sup>27</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's

bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

- The Pharisees look GOOD ON THE OUTSIDE... they were adorned with green leaves & red apples!
- **IN BOTH CASES – they neglected the fundamental ISSUE. KNOWING GOD – being RECONCILED TO HIM!**

**Matthew 7:20–23 (ESV)** Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. <sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’

- **WAIT.** But Jesus says “known by fruits,” then describes someone who is doing good works and isn’t SAVED!!!
- **THIS IS THE POINT HE IS MAKING.** Your good works don’t save you. You can’t take red apples and green leaves, attach them to a dead tree, and make it come back to life! (PERIOD).

<sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

**And we have reached a critical juncture in understanding SALVATION, FAITH, BELIEF, WORKS, OBEDIENCE, & FRUIT.**

**John 17:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Jesus said, “I never KNEW YOU.” FRUIT isn’t enough. You cannot dress up and dead tree in good works and be saved.

**PROBLEM:** How do you make a dead tree live again? You cannot pretend it’s alive. Nor can you dress it up enough to bring it back to life if it is already dead. It can only be chopped down and replaced.

**This is OUR problem.** We were, by nature, DEAD IN OUR SINS. NO amount of good works, dressing us up from the outside, can EVER make us come alive again!

The ONLY solution would be to cut us down and start over with something NEW.

**C. Jesus brings us back to LIFE – Jesus gives us a NEW Nature!**

**Romans 5:17–19 (ESV)** *For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.*

**Pic 5: burning tree with Jesus on cross: Romans 5:6–8 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— <sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**By NATURE, we were dead. Born that way.** We couldn't work our way back to life.

**Jesus' DEATH made a way for us to be REBORN. – given a NEW NATURE. We become a DIFFERENT TYPE OF TREE.**

**John 3:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

**John 3:5–6 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

- **Dead trees produce dead fruit! Jesus said we must be REBORN!**

**Titus 3:5 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

- **REGENERATED by the Holy Spirit!**

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

**LAST WEEK: It is by FAITH alone, not works, that we RECEIVE THE GIFT of SALVATION.**

**WHEN we put our faith in JESUS, our very NATURE changes. We are NO LONGER THE SAME TREE. The old is GONE. The new has COME.**

**The fruit comes, but this time, it comes from the INSIDE.** We produce good fruit because our NATURE has been changed through placing our faith in Jesus Christ.

***Luke 6:45 (ESV)*** *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

"Works (fruit) don't save us. Saving faith (in CHRIST) works (bears fruit)," why? Because what was dead and unable to produce fruit has now been BROUGHT to life, and what is ALIVE bears fruit in its season! ALWAYS.

**D. Our part in bearing good fruit (works)! We still have a choice.**

**John 15:4–5 (ESV)** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the

branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

**Where the TREE ANALOGY FAILS:** Trees bear fruit because of their nature. They do not have “FREE WILL”.

**We have FREE WILL.** We still have a choice! When we place our faith in Jesus for Salvation, He changes our NATURE. NEW CREATIONS! We become CHILDREN OF GOD (more on that in 1 Jn).

**But He does not remove from us the dignity of CHOICE. We get CHOICE in bearing FRUIT! Which is WHY we get rewards for OBEDIENCE and suffer loss for DISOBEDIENCE!**

**The difference from the Old to NEW:** We have been reborn! We are given a NEW heart and a NEW Spirit – the DESIRE to obey and the ABILITY to do so!

**Picture: winter, overgrowth, dead branches, healthy tree!**

**It is TRUE to say: Healthy trees produce good fruit! It is also true that healthy trees produce fruit in season. BOTH ARE TRUE.**

**It is TRUE to say: “those who KNOW GOD, OBEY GOD.” It is also true, “those who KNOW GOD, confess their sins”** (lack of fruitfulness OR dead fruits they produce!)

When we put our faith in Jesus, we become a new creation. We are given a new nature with both the desire and ability to obey. BUT we still have a sin nature! We are in the IN BETWEEN.

**Romans 7:15–25 (ESV)** <sup>15</sup> For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

**SANCTIFICATION IS A PROCESS. That is why John admonishes us to PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS and to CONFESS OUR SINS.**

1. **Winter – Seasons change:** Maybe you are sick, lost your job, or outside circumstances are affecting you. ABIDE – Pray, get into the Word! Worship! Deepen your ROOTS in FAITH.
  - a. **James 1:2** “count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. When your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow...” so FOCUS ON ROOT GROWTH.
2. **Overgrown limbs** – character needs work!
  - a. **John 15:1-4** Jesus PRUNES trees and branches that are bearing fruit so they can bear MORE fruit!

3. **Dead branches & rotten fruit!** Even LIVING trees can suffer limb death and rotten fruit!
  - a. **1 John 1:9** “confess your sins” **James 5:16** Confess to each other!
  - b. **Matthew 3:8** Jesus, “bear the fruit of repentance!” PRUNE YOUR TREE.
  - c. Dead branches left unattended can spread DISEASE to healthy parts of the tree!
  - d. Our sin is NO different. Left unchecked. Our SINFUL CHOICES can destroy our fruitfulness and lead us to a place where we REJECT JESUS ALTOGETHER.
4. **Healthy Trees – BEAR GOOD FRUIT.** We are CALLED to serve, to minister to others, to disciple people to Jesus, to love our enemies, to pray without ceasing...
  - a. **John 15:8 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> By this, my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.