

## ***The Fruit of the Spirit***

# ***The Fruit of the Spirit Is Righteousness***

Lesson #11 for March 13, 2010

Scriptures: Matthew 5:6; 23:25-28; John 13:34,35; Romans 3:28; 8:4; 10:3,4; Galatians 3:6; Ephesians 5:9; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:1-3.

1. The focus of this lesson is true Christian righteousness. Now that we have finished the list of characteristics noted in Galatians 5:22,23, looking elsewhere, we find these words: "For it is the light [the Spirit] that brings a rich harvest of every kind of goodness, righteousness, and truth." (Ephesians 5:9, *GNB*) Based on this verse, our next two lessons will be about righteousness and then truth.
2. Could you explain to a nonbeliever what righteousness is? Traditionally, Seventh-day Adventists have described righteousness as having two parts: the imputed righteousness of Christ—meaning what Christ has done for us—and the imparted righteousness of Christ—meaning what He does in us through the Holy Spirit to transform us into His image. (*Great Controversy* 555—"It is a law of the mind that by beholding we become changed.") Hopefully, it is clear in our minds that both of these forms of righteousness come from Christ and Him only. They come to us through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.
3. After describing why Jesus had to die, (Romans 3:25-27) Paul stated very clearly, "For we conclude that a person is put right with God only through faith, and not by doing what the Law commands." (Romans 3:28, *GNB*) "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law." (Romans 3:28, *NASB*). **Notice clearly that three times these verses talk about God's righteousness before they say anything about making us righteous! Why would God's righteousness need to be demonstrated? Is this to remind us that we are a part of the great controversy?** What does that mean to you? Could you explain it to a young child? There should be no question about the fact that God is very happy to see us live righteous lives. Could we actually live like Jesus? (Psalms 11:7; Proverbs 15:9; Romans 8:4; Matthew 6:33; 1 Peter 2:24) Does "His righteousness" equal "what He requires of you"? Three questions are raised by reading these verses: 1) What are the deeds of the law? 2) How do they relate to the "righteous demands of the law"? 3) How do we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Law, by nature, has no mercy.
4. If we keep in mind that "Faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a Person well-known. . ." it should help us to answer these questions.
5. Human beings live surrounded by sin and tend to like their sins while not liking sinners very much. By contrast, God hates the sin but loves the sinner. If we recognize this great truth, does it tempt us to depend on "cheap grace"? How does that contrast with "deeds of the law"? Does obeying the law have any place if we "accept Christ"?
6. Read Romans 8:4. Do we clearly understand what the law requires? Do we recognize that a true faith-relationship with God, that is, truly becoming friends of God, is a transformational experience? In order to do righteous deeds, we must be righteous people. While we understand the statements of Scripture that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23, 1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:9,10) and that any attempts on our own part at righteousness are nothing more than filthy rags, (Isaiah 64:6) do we understand how to establish and maintain faith in Jesus Christ? How do branches stay connected to the Vine? (John 15:1-5) There are billions of people who profess to be Christians! What does it mean to put God first in your life? Does this have anything to do with tithe-paying, Sabbath-keeping, or obeying other aspects of the law?

7. Doesn't God know what is best for me to do? Doesn't He want that for me? Why don't I then do what He wants for me, since it is for my best good? What is the problem here? Do we need to be born again? What does that mean? Is this mystical or even magical?
8. Is Satan happy to see us developing a faith-relationship with Christ? What does Satan do when he sees us trying to establish a true faith-relationship with Jesus Christ?
9. It should be apparent that most of the characteristics that we have studied so far involve our relationship to other human beings. How are those related to our relationship to God? How does a true righteousness-by-faith relationship with God impact our relationship with our fellow human beings?
10. Explain in your own words why righteousness—true righteousness—comes only through Jesus Christ. “For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-Law for everyone who believes in him.” (Romans 10:4, *Phillips*) Paul began the section that we call Romans 10 by discussing the do-it-yourself religion of the Jews. As a former Pharisee of the Pharisees, (Philippians 3:5) what do you think Paul had in mind when he said those words? Why is it completely impossible to develop true righteousness as a do-it-yourself project? Was Paul thinking about the tenth commandment? What changed Paul? A bolt of lightning and three years of study in the wilderness caused Paul to look at the issues from a different perspective—a paradigm shift!
11. Have we learned what it really means to hunger and thirst after righteousness? (Matthew 5:20) Jesus had some strong words for those who try to develop their own righteousness! (Matthew 23:25-28) Could that include us?
12. When we break down the plan of salvation trying to understand each individual step, it is easy to understand “imputed righteousness” as something done completely by God and that we do not have anything to do with it. Martin Luther was absolutely convinced that justification was “by faith alone.” (Romans 1:16,17) But if Christ could save every one of His children without that person doing anything at all, wouldn't He do so? Aren't we all His children? Don't we have to do a lot of good works in order to be saved? What is the relationship between justification—which is by faith alone—and salvation which means healing? Does salvation include more than justification alone? Is sanctification required?
13. If we look to the life of Christ and understand why He came and why He had to die, and if we spend enough time on those topics so that we understand them—allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us—does it actually make a change in our behavior? What is the relationship between the great controversy and my behavior?
14. Read Romans 5:10-12,17-19. Is that a description of original sin? The Roman Catholic Church has taught that when Adam sinned, we all became guilty. Thus, they say that it is necessary for babies when they are first born to be sprinkled or baptized, otherwise they cannot be saved. Furthermore, Mary, the mother of Jesus, had to be born through a process called “immaculate conception” so that her body could be sinless enough to carry within itself the developing Jesus. What is your understanding of “original sin”? Notice that Paul said that we all became sinners not because Adam sinned but rather because we follow his example! It is true that as a result of Adam and Eve's sin, we have been separated from God (the real definition of sin—Isaiah 59:2) and removed from the Garden of Eden. Was Jesus born with any propensity to sin? If Adam's sin made us all sinners, why doesn't Christ's righteousness and sinless life make us all righteous? Adam chose, and we get to choose! Notice that Romans 5:12 says that we become sinners because we join him!
15. Abraham is regarded as one of the great examples of faith. How do you understand Genesis 15:6 and Galatians 3:6? Is the transformation that takes place when we accept Jesus Christ

a legal adjustment of our status in God's sight? Or is it a true change? (James 2:23)

16. So, if we all recognize that we truly are sinners, what needs to happen to heal us? How did God "deal with sin"? (Romans 8:3)
17. When God met the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, He tried to explain to those former slaves how to live good, righteous lives. Even before God had explained what He wanted, they replied, "All that the Lord has said we will do"! (Exodus 19:6; 24:3,7) Even after God explained things, they still asserted twice that they would do His will. Their history proves the truth of the matter. Their first covenant promise that they would obey proved a failure. But later, God stated clearly that He would come down; and if we relate to Him correctly, He would make the necessary adjustments in our lives and our thoughts and even in our characters. (Jeremiah 31:31-34) How does that actually work? Only He can do it!
18. While God promised that He will look upon us just as if we had never sinned, it is also true that the growing relationship will manifest itself in righteous actions in our lives. (1 John 3:7) We will actually become like Jesus. (1 John 2:3-6)
19. Righteousness is right doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged. Our characters are revealed by what we do. The works show whether the faith is genuine.—Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 312.
20. **The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey.** When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. *Christ's Object Lessons* 97,98 (1900)—Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, pages 97, 98.
21. A sullen submission to the will of the Father **will** develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. [If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints.] Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. *MS 20*, 1897 (*MR # 970*); *Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897, par. 11; *12MR* 236.1; Section in [ . . . ] omitted in *That I May Know Him* p. 120. Emphasis added.
22. Referring to our spiritual fathers, the Jews, Ellen White wrote:

The Jews prided themselves upon their knowledge of God and the divine law (Rom. 2:17-20) but in actuality they were refusing to conform to God's will....  
**No obstacle to salvation by grace is so great as the self-righteousness of a sinner.**—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 595.
23. The Bible tells us clearly that it is necessary to completely surrender to God's plan for our lives.
24. Is it difficult to live the Christian life? Is it difficult to live a righteous life? Is it necessary to live a righteous life in order to be saved? If we surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit, when does self-control take over? Is self-control ever safe?
25. Read 1 John 5:1-3. This passage seems to suggest that the Christian life consists of loving

the Father which will lead us to love the Son which will lead us to love the children of God—all our neighbors and friends—and even our enemies?—which will result in our keeping the commandments which John says is not difficult. Do you agree with this conclusion? We cannot be forced into keeping the commandments. We cannot even force ourselves into keeping the commandments as noted in the quotations above. So, how do we successfully learn to keep the commandments?

26. What is the key to righteousness and salvation? Our *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* suggests it is turning to the substitutionary power in the death of Christ on our behalf. What does that really mean? It comes from letting sinners know that their sins can be forgiven and focusing on Christ's life and death which accomplished that. How does that work?
27. So, is your love for God real? What is the evidence for that reality?
28. Anyone who has been a Christian believer for a period of time has certainly recognized that there is a continuum between those who believe the Christian life is one never-ending battle and those who believe that all one has to do is accept what Jesus has done on their behalf by His birth, life, death, and resurrection. Where do you fit on that continuum? Are you convinced that the Christian life is easy? Or perhaps is it very difficult?
29. We have spoken about Christian disciplines such as Bible study, prayer, and witnessing. Are those an essential part of the Christian walk? Are they required for salvation? Take a few moments in the quiet to give yourself a grade on your Christianity. What would that grade be?
30. It is not enough for us to believe that Jesus is not an impostor, and that the religion of the Bible is no cunningly devised fable. We may believe that the name of Jesus is the only name under heaven whereby man may be saved, and yet we may not through faith make Him our personal Saviour. It is not enough to believe the theory of truth. It is not enough to make a profession of faith in Christ and have our names registered on the church roll. "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by [313] the Spirit which He hath given us." "Hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments." 1 John 3:24; 2:3. This is the genuine evidence of conversion. Whatever our profession, it amounts to nothing unless Christ is revealed in works of righteousness.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312,313.
31. Have we learned how to stay in the middle of the road—avoiding the ditches of "cheap grace" on the one side and "legalism" on the other? Which is the greater liability for you personally?
32. This lesson has focused on the righteousness which can become ours as individuals. Is it possible to belong to a righteous community or church or Sabbath school class? Is there such a thing as group righteousness?
33. Will those who constitute God's true people at the end of time share a common faith and righteousness? How would you describe their faith and their righteousness? Do you think it is possible that one day you could be among them? What do you need to do to get ready?

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