

# The Fruits Or Results Of Faith

The written Word has much wonderful teaching about what the fruit or results of faith will be in our lives. The type of fruit on a tree or bush is a result of what type the tree or bush is. An apple tree produces apples. A thorn bush produces thorns.

Similarly, a person with saving faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour will produce the fruit of Holy Spirit-empowered good works. Such good works *do not cause* the person to be saved. Instead, these Spirit-inspired good works are the *result* or *fruit* of their salvation by God's grace through faith.

## Saving faith results in obedience

No human can be saved merely by attempting to obey God by their own self-efforts (see Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5). But some have used this wonderful truth to create one of the most wicked heresies in the history of the Church. This is the idea faith and obedience to God are somehow two opposites that do not work together in our Christian walk. James 2:14-26 challenges this evil notion. This is especially when these verses show Abraham and Rahab's faith in God was expressed in obedience.

Obedience is *not a part* of saving faith, but a wonderful *result* or *fruit* of it.

## Hebrews 11

Hebrews 11:1-40 is a wonderful chapter on faith and the fruit of faith – good works. Hebrews 11:2 reveals that by faith in God, various people “*obtained good testimony*”. In the original Greek, the word “*testimony*” means “bear witness to”.<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 11:2 introduces some of the fruits of faith in the lives of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab and others mentioned in the rest of the chapter.

When referring to the fruits of faith in the lives of believers mentioned earlier in the chapter, Hebrews 11:39 says, “*And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith...*”

## Obedience is a post-conversion fruit of submission to Jesus' Lordship

The Protestant Reformers rightly taught: “We are saved by *faith alone*, but *faith* is *never alone*.” True saving faith always results in real though imperfect obedience to His commands after conversion.

In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter said God the Holy Spirit sanctified us – set us apart from sin and the world's rule and dedicated us to Himself for His eternal use and purposes – so we could obey Him: “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...*”

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<sup>1</sup> Vine, page 681.

Our faith will never result in perfect obedience to God's commands every day, as James 3:2 shows. But James 2:14-26 reveals a faith that has no obedience to God's known will resulting from it, is a dead faith that will save no-one. James 2:14-17 says: ***“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”***

2 Corinthians 10:5 commands believers to aim continually to think in submitted obedience to how Jesus Christ thinks: ***“Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”***

Romans 1:5 and 16:26 use the expression ***“obedience to the faith”*** in the New King James Version or ***“obedience of faith”*** in the New American Standard Bible. These two verses either show that saving faith relates partly to submission or obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ or one of the main post-conversion *consequences* of faith is obedience to God's known will. Bauer says it is debatable whether ***“obedience”*** in Romans 1:5 and 16:26 is used in the sense of ***“obedience to the message of faith”*** or ***“obedience which springs from faith”***.<sup>2</sup>

## **Abraham's faith produced fruits of obedience**

In Genesis 26:5, God said the following about Abraham: ***“Because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws”***.

This is a remarkable statement considering:

- The Law of Moses had not been given then.
- God's requirements, commandments, statutes and laws were not written down in any other form at that time.
- Abraham had an inherited sinful nature.
- He had been a pagan idol-worshiper before his conversion (see Joshua 24:2).

This Genesis 26:5 statement about Abraham obeying God's commandments, laws and so on is not a claim he earned God's grace and salvation. This verse instead, like Hebrews 11:8, 11:17 and James 2:20-33 show Abraham's faith after conversion was a living one which resulted in obedience. Hebrews 11:8 states: ***“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”***

Genesis 18:19, 26:4, Hebrews 11:8, 11:17 and James 2:20-24 also show the modern cheap grace attitude to Abraham – the idea Abraham had great faith but little emphasis on obedience to God – is nonsense.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page 837.

## A true living faith always leads to good works

The New Testament contains many verses which reveal a living dependent faith in Jesus Christ will result in good works or “*works of faith*” (see 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11). James 2:18 states: “*But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*”

Ephesians 2:8-10 teaches: “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*”

Titus 3:8 says: “*...these things I want to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.*” In the original Greek, the expression “*affirm constantly*” means “to state something with confidence and *certainty*”.<sup>3</sup>

In Titus 3:8, Paul was here telling Titus to insist with absolute certainty that those who have believed in God should continue to do good works. Paul was not saying we earn salvation by good works – something he opposed in Titus 2:4-5. But neither was he saying God does not care whether believers do good works or not after conversion.

## Relationship between saving faith and love

It is crucial we have a right understanding of the relationship between saving faith and love. The first step in doing this is identifying two common drastically wrong teachings in the Church about the relationship between these two:

- The first claims we are saved by faith plus acts of love. This is basically the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and many legalistic Protestants.
- The second argues we can be saved by a pitiful type of faith that does not express itself in any love towards God and other people after conversion. This is the position of the most extreme types of easy believism Protestants.

It is unbiblical to say we are saved by faith plus acts of love. This is equivalent to the false legalistic idea we are saved by faith plus good works. But note Galatians 5:6 shows faith in Jesus Christ *works* or *expresses itself in love*: “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*” John 5:1 and James 2:5 link having faith in God to loving Him.

Romans 5:5 shows God’s love has been poured into the hearts of all believers by the Holy Spirit. 1 Timothy 1:14 reveals true Christians have both His faith and love within them: “*And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*” Such God-given faith cannot help resulting in expressions of the associated God-given love.

It is true no believer will love God in a perfect sense, but to suggest people can have faith which saves them and no love for God is a *doctrine of devils*.

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<sup>3</sup> Louw and Nida, page 425.

The only possible exception to this are people who turn to God and Christ at the point of death. Such people may not have time to express love for God. This is unless we say their turning to God is an act of love for Him in their hearts.

In 1 Corinthians 16:22, Paul says anyone who does not love God the Son – the Lord Jesus – is *cursed*: “***If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed...***” A person who is eternally cursed is not saved.

Hatred of God is the nature of unbelievers, not believers. Believers can be tempted to hate God. They can even develop resentments towards Him. But true believers will sooner or later turn from such resentments and will not allow these to harden their hearts against Him.

The normal attitude of saved believers is expressed in 1 John 4:19: “***We love Him because he first loved us.***”

## **In summary**

A living saving faith believes the promises of the Word of God about salvation through Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection and receives Jesus as Lord and Saviour. But it also *results* in imperfect though real manifestations of:

- love for God.
- love for other people.
- a desire to obey God by His grace and power.
- and aiming to do good works that He has prepared for us to do.

## Bible Study Questions

1. Is obedience a part of saving faith or a result of it?
2. What does the expression “***obtained a good testimony***” in Hebrews 11:2 mean?
3. Explain what Genesis 22:5, Hebrews 11:8, 11:17 and James 2:20-23 teach about Abraham’s obedience to God.
4. What does Titus 3:8 teach about good works?
5. What in Revelation 3:1-3 did Jesus warn the members of the Church of Sardis about in relation to their good works?
6. Are we saved by faith or by faith plus acts of love? Give verses to support your answer.
7. What does 1 Corinthians 16:22 teach?