

Prologue

One of the prevailing thoughts inside of the Christian church is somehow to have a life marked by obedience. It comes under various appeals whether that obedience is holiness or works or fruit or whatever ware peddled for the growth of the confused and conflicted Christian. In a desire to live the victorious Christian life, the sincere but uninformed Christian follows the latest emotional stimulant with the hopes that their physical circumstances or their emotional darkness will be changed and lifted.

For me, such teaching that extends such promises are nothing more than the selling of “snake oil.” “Snake oil comes from the 19th-century American practice of selling cure-all elixirs in traveling medicine shows. Snake oil salesmen would falsely claim that the potions would cure any ailments.”¹

A continued tension in writing such a prologue is the strong desire not to be polemic against such spiritual atrocities. Yet, if such “remedies” are not what Paul refers to throughout his letters, then perhaps we are all to be dumb-founded by such a mishandling of biblical passages.

Does the JESUS SEED produce GOSPEL FRUIT? Absolutely, but to think such fruit is a joint venture with God is preposterous. The call to action in the biblical text is always a fruit of the gospel. Such actions are always attributed to the working of God and not the individual. What God gives to His people, He works in them and through them to those around them. It is always the work of God. Christian obedience is as inseparable from Christ as wet is to water, heat is to fire, or stink is to pig. You cannot and will not have one without the other. The Christ life **IS** the Christian life. Living the victorious Christian life is not us achieving anything; rather it is we believing his victory over sin and death has been imputed to our account and is the basis for our acceptance before the Father. To think otherwise is biblical foolishness, yet we sit debating obedience! Selling it as if it is marketable. We have made merchandise of living the Christian life. In the absence of perceived obedience [i.e. holiness], the appeal should not be, “try harder, do better,” but rather believe the gospel.

We grieve for anyone believing otherwise. Their gullibility is testament to their biblically illiterate life. We need not blame the duped, but shame on the pastors and elders of local churches that tolerate and promote such gibberish! It is not harmless to the soul nor is it innocuous. It is a blight to the church much like the bubonic plague spreading like a contagion, reaping catastrophic consequences.

What cure do we offer the confused and conflicted Christian? JESUS in all of His person and work! Friend, **JESUS works!** The primary premise of this short study seeks to lift from Paul’s Letter to Titus its MELODIC LINE. We are not fabricating or creating; we are declaring, teaching, and preaching Paul’s corrective to the confused and conflicted church in Crete. Paul accused the Cretan heretics of professing to know God, but by their very works denying Him (Titus 1:16). Why? Because **JESUS works!** Paul’s primary premise carries forward the entire storyline of the

Bible, *"The JESUS SEED always and inevitable produces GOSPEL FRUIT."* To think otherwise is to be misinformed or uninformed.

I do not desire to bring a scathing rebuke to the modern church since the problem is ancient. It is what Paul dealt with and confronted and its poison has continued to permeate the church. Such theology keeps the church in bondage to works righteousness. Paul offers the cure: **JESUS works**. This idea repeats itself throughout Titus. It is seen in 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:7, 8, and 14. Whatever "work" we do is His doing. Why, because the JESUS SEED always produces GOSPEL FRUIT. And the corrective is not appealing to try harder to do better in the production of GOSPEL FRUIT. The corrective is the SEED, not the fruit. There is no balance to be struck between one's justification and one's sanctification. You cannot have the one without the other. They are interdependent, but not equal acts. The one produces the other. They cannot be separated or reversed. Once God begins His work, He will finish it. You can no more oppose the work of God as stop an incoming tsunami or overwhelming avalanche.

Friends, let us drink deeply from Paul's Letter to Titus. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to push us past all of our previous theological presuppositions and misinformation. Let us surrender ourselves to the certainty of the Father's plan, the triumph of His cross, the celebration of His resurrection, and the sure work of the Holy Spirit. Let us hear afresh that **JESUS works**. The GOSPEL FRUIT of obedience and Christian holiness is nothing more or less than the product of the JESUS SEED. Moreover, you and I can no more add to such fruit, than we can cause the SEED'S germination. Both works are the work of God.

Therefore, without further ado, I humbly submit the reading of this text for your spiritual enrichment in order that you would grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=snake%20oil> For an intriguing explanation of "snake oil's history," see <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/08/26/215761377/a-history-of-snake-oil-salesmen>