

## The Difference Between Root and Fruit

### Scripture Reading — Ephesians 2:1-10

*It is by grace you have been saved ... not by works, so that no one can boast.  
Ephesians 2:8-9 —*

The English politician William Wilberforce is best known for his efforts to end slavery in the British Empire. It was a decades-long struggle, but abolition was finally accomplished.

Wilberforce not only had great determination; he was able to discern spiritual truth. He was perplexed that many who considered themselves Christian supported the slave trade, which he believed was in opposition to Christian faith. In response he wrote *A Practical View of Christianity* to show the danger of making good behavior the basis for salvation.

Can you imagine a politician today calling for social reform by making direct appeals to Christian doctrine? That's what Wilberforce did. He rightly pointed out that good works do not create new life in Jesus; they demonstrate it.

People who consider themselves "good" but do not abide in Christ are placing more trust in their own work than in God's. But the only possible result is nominal Christianity—surface-level goodness without internal renewal. That's why Jesus called the Pharisees, who were undoubtedly very good people, "whitewashed tombs" (Matthew 23:27).

Obedience is the fruit, not the root, of being accepted by God. Work hard at being good, but always remember that your good works "show the incomparable riches of his grace."

### Prayer

*Lord, sometimes I forget that the good works I do are the result of your grace. Forgive me for robbing you of your glory. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

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