

Acts 22:20

And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.

“Man, I am not making one bit of difference for the Lord. I am just wasting my time by sharing Jesus with others and my ministry seems so unfruitful.”

How many of us feel like that sometimes? If you have been feeling that way, let me give you one encouraging word from the bible.

† **1 Corinthians 3:6-7** *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.*

“Well, that’s all fine and dandy, but if I am planting or watering, why am I not seeing an increase or fruit?”

Good question and the answer I have is *“I don’t know.”* *“Well, that’s not very encouraging,”* you may be thinking. Just hang in there, and know that my answer is an honest answer, because we do not always know why we cannot see fruit right away. But just because you can not see fruit right now, does not mean that no fruit will ever come. Even James says in the bible to:

† **James 5:7-8** *Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

Also, when you read the bible, it is usually obedience that we remember godly men for, and not always for the amount of fruit they had. Case in point, today’s verse which says: ***“And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.”***

Now if you do not know who this Stephen was that Paul is talking about here. He was the first recorded martyr after Jesus rose from the dead, in the book of Acts.

† **Acts 7:57-60** *Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

Paul (Saul) in today's verse was including what happen earlier to Stephen in the book of Acts as part of Paul's testimony; Therefore, if you think about it, Stephen had planted a seed in the heart of Paul which eventually grew into faith in Jesus Christ, and Paul's salvation.

But think about this, Stephen never got to see Paul being saved, but even though he didn't, I believe that what Stephen did will be added to his account of rewards that he will receive in heaven, even though he never saw the fruit of the seed that he had planted or watered. But not only for Paul's conversion, but simply the encouragement his death has given to thousand of thousands of believers, who have been encouraged to keep on keeping on, even if it means death. When we think of these things, we should be encouraged.

Think of it this way, what if you are outside, eating an apple and decide to dig a little hole and plant the seed from that apple into the ground. After you did, you just walked away, and because you walked away, it would mean that you never watered it or tended to it. Now, what if you came back several years later to that same spot, and noticed that an apple tree had grown there, and people were picking apples off of it and eating them, all because you decide to plant an apple seed into the ground, and simply let God take it from their?

I wonder when we get to heaven, if we will find out that we have planted many seeds or watered many seeds that others had planted into the heart of someone, and we let God take it from there. I believe that we will discover that we were doing the Lord's work and people were saved because of how the Lord used us, even though we never saw the fruit produced from it while we were here on the earth.

✠ **1 Peter 5:3-4 (NLT2) *Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.***