

Known by Your Fruit

Matthew 7:15–20

- **Verse 15: Warning Against False Prophets**
 - Command: “Beware” – a continuous action, requiring ongoing vigilance.
 - False prophets’ appearance:
 - “Sheep’s clothing” – outward innocence and trustworthiness.
 - Inward reality – “ravening wolves” symbolizing greed and harmful intent.
 - Application: Stay cautious of those whose motives may not align with their appearance.
- **Verse 16: Recognizing Them by Their Fruits**
 - Key principle: “Ye shall know them by their fruits.”
 - “Know” (*epiginosko*): Full and thorough understanding.
 - Fruits: Represent teachings and their outcomes.
 - Rhetorical question: “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”
 - Emphasizes that good results cannot come from a corrupt source.
 - Cross-references: 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11; Titus 1:9-12.
- **Verse 17: The Nature of Good and Corrupt Trees**
 - Good tree:
 - Represents true prophets or teachers aligned with God’s truth.
 - Produces “good fruit” – morally excellent and beneficial.
 - Corrupt tree:
 - Represents false prophets or teachers with a deceiving nature.
 - Produces “evil fruit” – harmful and deceitful teachings.
 - Adjectives:
 - *Agathos* (good) – Nature of the tree.
 - *Poneros* (evil) – Diseased or wicked.
 - *Sapron* (corrupt) – Rotten and worthless.
 - *Kalos* (good) – Quality of the fruit.
- **Verse 18: The Impossibility of Contradictory Fruit**
 - Statement: “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”
 - “Cannot” – denotes an impossibility due to the nature of the tree.
 - Principle: A person’s character will consistently align with their actions.
 - Good character → good teachings/actions.
 - Corrupt character → corrupt teachings/actions.

- **Verse 19: Consequences for Unproductive Trees**
 - Outcome: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."
 - Symbol of judgment for spiritual barrenness and false teaching.
 - Imagery of divine retribution and removal.
 - Application: A warning of the consequences awaiting those who lead others astray.

- **Verse 20: Reiterated Principle**
 - Conclusion: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
 - Restates verse 16 for emphasis.
 - Believers are tasked with recognizing and avoiding false prophets.
 - Responsibility: Help others recognize and steer clear of deceitful teachings.