

■■■■■■■■ - by Their Fruit

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of bearing good fruit as evidence of true discipleship and warns of the consequences of not doing so.

Duration: 1:00:35

Scripture: Matthew 7:16, Ephesians 2:8

Topics: "Chinese"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher uses an illustration of arriving late to emphasize the importance of understanding the fallen nature of man. He argues that men are not just sinners, but inherently evil. The preacher emphasizes the need for individuals to be covered by the blood of Christ in order to be saved on judgment day. He also highlights the significance of one's actions as a reflection of their faith, stating that true believers will bear good fruit.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles once again to Matthew chapter 7. Let's go to the Lord and pray. Father, I pray for your strength. That you would open up our minds and hearts to understand your word.

That you would give men good hearts that they might love it. That they might be drawn to Christ. Father, we need so much the work of the Holy Spirit.

Help us. In Jesus' name. In verse 16, Jesus says you will know them by their fruits.

Then he puts together something of an absurdity. He says, first of all, he says every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. And then he goes on and says, well, in verse 16, grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles are they? Now this is sort of the, I can almost see Jesus saying this with something of a smile on his face.

He's saying to those Pharisees and those who are listening to him. Now grapes, they're not, you don't find grapes on thorn trees, do you? You can almost hear the people say, well, no, of course not. Well, then you don't find figs on thistles either then, do you? I can just imagine them thinking this way.

Well, Jesus, you're a carpenter. And you probably really don't understand agriculture. But you're right.

Jesus, let me help you out here. If anyone comes to you and tells you they've got a fig tree and it's got thistles on it, don't you buy it. Because it's absolutely absurd.

It's impossible. You're never going to find figs on a thistle. You're never going to find grapes on something like that.

And then Jesus looks at them and says this. In the same way, it is absurd. It is ridiculous.

To say that you're my disciple, but you do not bear the fruit of the disciple. Please understand me. This is something that we have lost.

We think that somebody is something simply because they say it. And you can't argue with them. Because they said it.

It must be true. Jesus said no. I don't care what you say.

You can say you are my disciple. If you do not bear fruit of the disciple, you are not a disciple. Now again, we're not talking about perfection.

We're not saying that the only true Christians are those who perfectly bear fruit. No. What we are saying is this.

That Christians are feeble people. We all have our failings. The holiest man struggles with sin.

But when you really look at his life, you will see a difference. You will see fruit. Evidence of life.

Let's go on. There's an illustration that I've used many times. And it is helpful.

Imagine that I came here late. And all the preachers were mad at me. I show up a half an hour late.

And I walk in dressed like this. And they said, Brother Paul, you're late. Don't you appreciate being able to preach here? Do you just show up when you want to? And I say, oh brother, no, it's not like that.

When I was driving here, I had a flat tire. And I was taking the nuts off of the tire. And while I was doing that, one of them rolled out into the middle of the highway.

And I wasn't thinking. So I just ran out there. And I picked it up.

And when I stood up, there was a logging truck. It weighed 30 tons. It was going 120 miles an hour.

And it was only 5 feet in front of me. And it ran me over. And that's why I'm late.

They would look at me. And they would go, there's two possibilities. He's a lunatic.

He's out of his mind. Or he's a liar. And I go, no, I'm not a lunatic.

I'm not a liar. I got hit by a logging truck. What are they going to say to me? Brother Paul.

It is impossible to get hit by a 30-ton logging truck without it making some kind of change in your appearance. Well, let me ask you a question. What's bigger? A logging truck or God? How is it that you can say God came into your life? And there's no change.

Do you see? Jesus goes on. He says in verse 17. Every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

Listen to me. Jesus is not trying to be poetic here. He is not writing words just to sound pretty.

He's not making up a story. He's giving us a biblical truth. Every good tree bears good fruit.

Every bad tree bears bad fruit. You will know them by their fruit. You will know if someone is a disciple of Christ.

Not by what they say. By what they do. How they live.

This is a principle of Scripture. Now, if you go out to an apple tree, even a good, healthy apple tree, not every fruit is going to be perfect. Some of it might even be bad.

But the great majority of the fruit is going to be good. And you say it is a good tree. But if you go out to an apple tree and all the fruit is bad, it may have a few good apples.

But the great majority of all of it is just bad. You say it's a bad tree. Now, what kind of tree are you? If you look at your life, is the great majority of all your fruit just worldliness? You going your own way? Doing your own thing? Looking like the world? Acting like the world? The same desires of the world? Then you must be concerned.

You must be. I'm pleading with you to listen. Just look at the text.

And look what he says in verse 18. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit. Nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Now, look at this. Now, I'm going to show you that in Christianity, we only use one part of this. We will tell people who do not know Christ.

We'll tell them you can't work to be saved. Your fruit is not acceptable. Your works do not please God.

You need a new heart. You need to become a new creature. A sinner cannot bear fruit that's pleasing to God.

How come we also don't teach the other part that's pleasing? Not only a bad tree cannot produce good fruit, but a good tree can't produce bad fruit. Now, you say, well, Brother Paul, what are you saying? Again, I am not saying that the Christian is perfect at all. What I'm saying is this.

Those who have believed in Jesus have been born again. Now, that means almost nothing today. Because to be born again just simply means you're perfect.

To be born again means you prayed a prayer. To be born again means you made a decision. No! Born again has to do with the biblical doctrine of regeneration.

That a person who has truly believed has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. They have become a new creature with a new nature. And that new nature gives them new desires.

And those new desires drive them to righteousness. They cannot live the way they did before. Not only because God is watching over them, but because they really are new creatures.

Let me show you how it works. Man is more than his decisions. He's more than his actions.

He's more than just his will. Man has a nature. Or a heart.

If the nature of a man is fallen and evil and the Bible teaches that we were all born with such a nature. One of the hardest things for us to come to grips with is this. We don't have a problem with saying that men are sinners, do we? But here's what we have a problem saying.

Men really are evil. That sounds different, doesn't it? You see, sinners, we can almost laugh at that term. Yeah, everyone's a sinner.

Men are sinners. But only Hitler's evil. No.

Men are evil. I love these songs that say if only the world was led by children. If the world was led by children we'd be in World War III right now.

Do you have to teach a child how to lie? Do you have to teach a child to be selfish? No. Do this. I don't know how to do it, but it's an experiment.

Take a child. Put toys around the child. Let the child play.

And find out which toy the child really likes. Then pick out the toy that the child is not playing with at all and doesn't want to play with. Pick that toy out.

Bring in another child. Set it in front of the child. Give that second child the toy.

And World War III starts. The toy that the child didn't even want, now they want it more than anything. This is where war comes from.

This is us. We are a fallen people. And you say, well, I'm not Hitler.

It's only because the grace of God has restrained your evil. Because if God let our evil just go full reign, the world would be destroyed and there would be no hope for redemption. God restrains the evil of man so that he might do a work of salvation.

That's what Romans 1 is about. See, when you study Romans 1, a lot of people have a really bad misunderstanding of Romans 1. Because in Romans 1, it lists all these horrible sins. Let's just go there for just a second.

I want to show you something. Romans 1. Verse 29. Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, their gossip, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful.

And although they know the ordinance of God that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do they do the same, but they also give hearty approval to those who practice them. Now, many people think this, that when a society starts doing this, the judgment of God will fall on them. You've probably heard that.

The judgment of God is going to fall on the United States of America because of these things. The judgment of God is going to fall on Canada and Europe because they practice these things. No, that's not

what this passage is teaching.

Not at all. This passage is teaching this. The fact that these sins describe our culture, it means that God has already judged our nation.

You see, the great sin of Romans 1 is not all these sins. The great sin of Romans 1 is found in verse 21. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened.

What the Bible is saying is this. A group of people, although they know God, they do not honor Him as God. They do not give Him the respect of God.

They do not worship Him as God. And they turn to their own ways. That's the great sin.

That's what brings judgment. And the judgment is this. God turns men over to the evil of their own heart, so that they begin to do all the things you see that we mentioned.

As you read through this, you see that all these things are in North America. All these things are in the United States and are growing every day. All these things are in Canada and are growing every day.

What does that mean? God's already judged the nation because they did not honor Him as God or give thanks. He turned them over to follow the evil of their own heart. And He is removing His restraint from them, so that they will keep getting worse and worse and worse until they are destroyed.

That's what's happening. But even in the midst of that, of already having judged the nation, He is still saving people. Our countries are not going to be judged.

They have been judged. And though there may be a revival or something, it will only delay the disaster. It will not stop it.

Jonah's preaching in Nineveh, the people repented. Several decades later, they were still all destroyed. You will see the end of the West because we are a godless people.

We have been turned over and we will be conquered. But even in the midst of that judgment, God is saving people. That's why you better not put your hope in anything but Christ.

The decree has already gone out. Judgment has fallen. It may be delayed, but it will not be stopped.

So fear, and turn to Christ while there is still time. Because not only does this happen to countries, it happens to individuals. Although you had the opportunity to know God, you did not honor Him as God, nor give thanks.

And He turns you over to your own heart. And when that happens, it's over. Do you see why this is so serious? Do you think that this Christianity thing was only serious in Bible times? Do you not realize that the same nations that were destroyed in Bible times did the same thing we are doing now? Do you not realize that God has not changed? Do you not realize that God has not changed? They sacrificed babies to a false god.

We kill thousands every day through abortion because they get in our way. God did not spare those nations. He will not spare this one.

Nor the one just south of it. Nor any other nation that turns its back on God. There's a passage in the Scripture that is both beautiful and terrifying at the same time.

And it is this. God will give you the desires of your heart. God gave the Pharisees the desire of their heart.

They wanted the glory of men. God gave it to them. And then they died and went to hell.

You want to be free to live in your sin. You do not want to follow the God of your parents. God will give you the desire of your heart.

But sin is a terrible master. If you want to be turned over to it, so be it. But you will hate the day you were born.

Let's go back to Matthew 7. He says in verse 18, A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. He's talking about natures. Let me show you how it works.

An evil heart has evil affections. It loves what is evil. And that desire for evil pushes the man to do evil things.

You can't escape who you are. Martin Luther wrote a book many, many centuries ago called Bondage of the Will. And what he's basically saying is this.

He deals with the question, does man have a free will? Let me put it this way. Man has a free will. He doesn't have a good one.

Man is free to do as he pleases. But because his heart is evil, it pleases him to do evil. Man is in bondage.

His will is not free. It's enslaved to his wicked heart. He does according to his heart.

That's why he hates God. And the only way to be freed from that wicked heart is through Jesus Christ. Let me give you an example that Spurgeon used often.

Let's say that we have a pig in the back of the church. And two men have got him tied down so he can't run. And then I put a plate of the finest food in Toronto right here.

Cantonese food. And then over here I put a bucket of garbage. And I say, let the pig go.

What's the pig going to do? It's going to run to the garbage. Why? Because he's a pig. That's what pigs do.

That's what pigs love. So he sticks his head in the garbage. And he loves it.

And he's not ashamed. Now, what can change that? Religion could grab the pig and force it to eat over here. But he'll hate what he's eating.

And if he can escape, he'll go right back and eat the garbage. That's what religion does. But let's say that I had the power to change that pig into a man.

I'm not going to have to pull his head out of the bucket. He's going to pull his own head out of the bucket. He's going to start vomiting up the very things he was delightfully eating.

Who taught him to do that? Nobody. Didn't have to. Men don't eat that stuff.

They can't eat that stuff. They can't keep it down. And then when he turns around and sees you, he'll be filled with shame.

If you're a Christian, I just described your conversion. We have the heart of a sinner. We love sin.

We'll pass by God. We'll pass by the things of God. We don't want them.

We run straight to the garbage of the world. We stick our head in there. And we eat, and we eat.

And we are unashamed. But God, through the Holy Spirit, comes and regenerates our heart. We become new creatures.

We can't stand it. We throw our head out of that bucket. We vomit up the world.

And we come over here to eat. We taste and see that the Lord is good. Because our heart's been changed.

Do you see that? Has that happened to you? You know, if we have a coyote who's eating a lot of sheep, we can fix the problem really easy. Just shoot the coyote. That solves the sheep's problem.

But it doesn't solve the coyote's problem. Another thing we could do is catch the coyote. Put him in a cage.

He no longer eats sheep. But he wants to. And he chases back and forth in that cage.

And he looks for any loop, any area where he can sneak through. That's a person who has a little bit of religion. But their heart's not been changed.

They look nice on the outside. But they hate righteousness. They want to go back to the world.

And they look for every opportunity where they can justify their sin. There's only one other thing. We can change the coyote.

And give him a new nature. Where he loves righteousness. Because his heart has been changed.

Has your heart been changed? Do the things of God bore you to death? Are you totally unconcerned about the things of God's Word? Would you rather be involved in all sorts of ungodliness? If someone begins to talk about Christ, you become disinterested. But if someone begins to talk about the things of the world, your heart jumps. You need to be very concerned.

Why is that? Look at verse 19. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. This is Jesus.

C.S. Lewis said something very important. There was a philosopher in England who said one thing very important. You have to deal with Jesus as he is.

Don't say that he's a good man. Unless you're going to believe what he says. Don't take part of Jesus.

Take him all. Does Jesus love? He died for sinners. But look what he says in 19.

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. There is a hell.

There really is a hell. And some of you are really going there. Do you understand me? And the only thing to save you is Christ.

Do you think if Jesus did not believe in hell, he would have died for sinners? Why did he die suffering the judgment of God so that we wouldn't have to? There really is an eternal judgment. One of the hardest things to do is to be a preacher. Do you know why? When you look out over a congregation, you realize that some of the people that you're looking at will spend an eternity in hell.

Did you know that you appear in the Bible? There's actually a description of you in the Bible. Did you know that? There's one time in the Bible when actually the Apostle John sees you. Really? Would you like to know where it is? Chapter 20.

Verse 11. Then I saw a great white throne, and him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead.

Great and small standing before the throne. John saw you. This is you.

John saw you. He saw you there. You're going to be there.

So am I. Do you really think this is all make-believe? Maybe some of you ought to hope that Jesus is not really the Son of God. Because if He is, it can mean terrible things. He says He saw you standing there.

The great and the small. No matter how great you are on this earth, you will stand there. No matter how small you are, you will not be so insignificant that you can hide.

You will be there. And you will give an account for every word, every thought, every deed. And if you are not covered by the blood of Christ on that day, there will be no place found for you.

And that's why Jesus says in Matthew 7, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. And then He says, so then you will know them by their fruits. Notice this.

He begins verse 16 with, you will know them by their fruits. He ends verse 20 with, so then you will know them by their fruits. Do you think He is trying to tell us something? He said, you will be known by what you do.

You can yourself know if you are a Christian by what you do. If I go into a bar somewhere, I will find people doing terrible things. And I will ask them if they are a Christian.

And they will say, yes. And I will say, why? And they say, because I believe in Jesus. And I ask Him to come into my heart.

Jesus says, you will know them by their fruits. This is what He says. Now can a Christian fall into drunkenness? Yes.

Can he live there? No. And can he do so without shame? No. Because he is a new creature.

You will know them by their fruits. Now verse 21. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter.

In the Hebrew mind, when He wants to emphasize something, He repeats Himself. For example, in Isaiah 6, God is holy, holy, holy. In the book of Proverbs, you see a similar thing.

The wicked shall not live in the land. The wicked shall be cut off. It is saying the same thing twice.

To give emphasis. And what Jesus is saying here is this. Not everyone who emphatically declares Me to be Lord will enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Many of you don't even emphatically declare Him to be Lord. But you are Christian because you prayed a prayer. You don't confess Him as Lord before friends and family.

You don't live for Him as Lord. But Jesus said, not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Well, who will enter the kingdom of heaven? The one who does the will of his Father.

This is not saying that we go to heaven because we are obedient to the will of God. This is not saying that we are saved by our works. We are saved by faith alone.

What it is saying is this. The evidence that we really have believed and that we really have been changed is that our life is marked by doing the will of God. And when we fail, it breaks us and leads us to repentance.

And we keep going on. Jesus says in 22, many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons and in your name perform many miracles? Now this is very interesting. He is talking about the false prophets.

They also say Lord, Lord to Him. They preach. They supposedly cast out demons.

They supposedly perform miracles. And yet they are going to hell because you know them by their fruit. The question is not did they cast out demons.

The question is did they love their wife? Did they bear the fruit of the Spirit? Did they walk in humility? It is not the activity as much as the character. Just because a man has a big ministry does not mean he is Christian. This proves it.

But here is something even more interesting. If the true Christian, now this will never happen, this is just an example. If a true Christian were standing before God and God made him a Christian, and God made a mistake and said, depart from me, I never knew you.

Would the true Christian say what these people are saying? But Lord, I did all this good stuff. I mean I preached. I cast out demons.

I did miracles. I had a TV ministry. I had a big church.

Would a true Christian argue that way? Or would a true Christian say this? But Lord, I have always known I was a sinner. And I know that I am worthy of judgment. That my best works are like filthy rags.

But Lord, I thought I trusted in your Son. I clung to Him. That is my only hope.

Do you see the difference? It is like the old hymn writer said, I have nothing in my hands. I bring simply to the cross I cling. What is one of the greatest evidences of being Christian? The iron workers who build the tall skyscrapers.

When they build the really tall buildings, there are men who have to work up there. And before there were safety rules, they would walk on small pieces of wood and metal just a thousand feet up in the air. And I

have heard stories about men who were working way up in the air.

And it didn't bother them at all. But then one day they are walking and they slip. They are going to fall several hundred feet.

But right before they fall, they grab onto a piece of metal. They grab a hold of a post or a beam. They are so terrified to let go of the beam that other men have to break their hands to make them let go.

They have such fear that they know their only hope is that beam. That's what it means to believe in Jesus. You cling to him.

You do not let him go. When my children were little, my little daughter is not very strong. She is only about this tall.

When it thunders at night, she gets scared. I go to her door. She is running out of the room.

She grabs a hold of my leg like a steel vice grip. I cannot pry her off of my leg. I have to walk around for the next three days with my daughter on my leg.

She knows this is her hope. She will not let him go. Dr. Piper gives a good illustration.

Imagine that you wake up one day. You went to bed at night. You wake up.

Your back is against a solid rock wall. You are standing on a ledge about this wide. You look down.

You see through the clouds down to the ground. You are going to be scared. And then the wind is blowing about 60 miles an hour.

The snow is hitting you in the face. You are so terrified you can hardly move. But you know you must.

So you begin to work your way down the ledge. Every second you know you are going to die. And then all of a sudden there is an opening.

There is an opening in the wall. And you move around. And you find that there is a cave.

It is about four or five feet deep. And you leap in there. A team of horses could not pull you out of there.

No way are you going back on that ledge. You are staying here. That is what it means to believe in Christ.

They do not have that kind of faith. They do not really need Christ. They have miracles.

Works. A true Christian is not that way. He clings to Christ alone.

And let us look in verse 23 to finish. And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me.

You practice lawlessness. He says, I will declare to them. The very one who died for sinners.

The very one who held out his hand all day long to you. The very one who called for you to come. But you would not.

He is now your judge. And he says, depart from me. I never knew you.

I never knew you. If I go to the White House. And I try to go inside.

They are not going to let me. And if I say, but I know Barack Obama. I know President Obama.

They are still not going to let me. But if President Obama comes out of the White House. And he says, I know Paul Washer.

I am going in. You say you know Jesus. Does Jesus know you? Because that is the question.

Now the word know here carries with it the Hebrew idea. It means fellowship. Intimacy.

Friendship. Jesus will look at them. And he will say, you did not walk with me.

We were not friends. We did not have fellowship together. Depart from me.

I never knew you. But Lord, Lord. There must be some kind of a mistake.

No. I never knew you. Depart from me.

Where? Hell. What is hell like? I do not know. Whatever terms are used in the scriptures.

They are only the words of men. Even though inspired. Our language cannot describe it.

Regarding heaven. The Bible says ears not heard. Eyes not seen.

The same can be said of hell. Depart from me. I never knew you.

And then he says, you who practice lawlessness. This is interesting, isn't it? He does not say, you who do not believe in me. Because they all claim to believe in me.

He says, you who practice lawlessness. What does he mean? The word literally means, to live without law. To summarize its meaning, let me say this.

Depart from me. You who claim to be my disciples. But you lived as though I never gave you a law to obey.

You did what was right in your own eyes. You bore your own fruit. And it was bad.

Salvation is by faith alone. Not of works. Lest any man should boast.

But if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. And our faith is evidenced by what we do. If anyone says they are a sinless Christian.

They are deceived. All of us fail in many ways. Our best day would not earn us heaven.

It is true that the older you get in the Lord, the more sanctified you become. But also the more sin you begin to see. So we are not talking about perfectionism.

We are not talking about legalism. We are saying simply this. Those who have truly believed in Jesus Christ.

Will follow him. Sometimes it will be three steps forward and two steps back. But they will follow him.

They will not be separated from him. They will seek to bear good fruit. By relying upon his grace and power.

When they fail, they will repent. And they will keep walking. Father, thank you for your word.

And I pray Lord that we would understand and obey it. And that all might come to know you. In Jesus name.

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