

# “Defining & Discerning Biblical Fruit”

## Matthew 12:33

September 13, 2020

**INTRO:** Let me ask you a couple follow up questions...

1. Where do apples come from? (A: apple trees)
2. What about this bag from the store?
3. How do you know? **How can you be sure?**
  - a. Natural or Plastic?
  - b. If natural... “good” or “rotten” apples?
4. Today... learn how to define & discern *biblical fruit*

**TEXT:** Matthew 12:33

*“Either make the tree good, and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit.”*

**CONTEXT:**

- Series: Gospel-Gardening...
- Proverbs 29:18... **Macro & Micro warning!**
- Sermons... from “Roots” to “Fruits” to “Boots”
- Miracle... Muscle... (Grudem/Sproul)... Metamorphosis

**BIG IDEA:** *Fruit defining & discerning is the first lesson every disciple needs to learn!*

## PREVIEW:

- A. Understanding Biblical Fruit
- B. Inspecting Biblical Fruit (next “Dissecting Fruit”)

**T/S:** Today we’ll be blessed with the insights of **Jonathan Edwards** from **275 years ago...**

## TEXT:

### Matthew 12:33

*"Either make the tree good, and its fruit good,  
or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt;  
for the tree is known by its fruit.*

## I. UNDERSTANDING

- A. Fruit
- B. Understanding itself
- C. Inspection process

### Understanding FRUIT:

Fruit is the evidence, presence, and/or byproduct of a source-seed & it’s particular root system... and growing season. - JDP

## Understanding UNDERSTANDING:

**The most crucial question for the human race is this, what are the distinguishing marks of the people who enjoy God's favor, *those who are on their way to heaven?***

So much good and so much bad are mixed up in the church!  
...Many admired Christ for a time, but few  
were faithful to the end.

This mixture of false religion with true religion has been Satan's greatest weapon against the cause of Christ. This is why we must learn to distinguish between true and false religion, between emotions and experiences which really come from salvation, and imitations which are outwardly attractive and plausible, but false.

**Satan deludes people into thinking they are holy, when they really are hypocrites.**

False teaching... destroys Christianity far more effectively than outright enemies can do...

It is vital that we do all we can to understand true religion.

## Understanding INSPECTION/INTERPRETATION:

1. *We must be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,*  
see Romans 12:11.

2. No spiritual truth ever changed a person's attitude or conduct, unless it aroused his or her emotions.
  
3. Scripture everywhere places true religion mainly in our emotions, in fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, and zeal... *Titus 2:14 = "Christ gave himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."*
  
4. The right way is neither to reject all emotions, nor to approve all, but to distinguish between them. We should approve some, and reject others. ***We must separate between the wheat and the weeds.***
  
5. God has given us emotions for the same purpose as all our other powers, to serve man's chief end, his relationship with God. *Yet how common it is for human emotions to be taken up with everything except spiritual realities! In matters of people's worldly interests, their outward delights, their reputation, and their natural relations, in these things, their desires are eager, their love is warm, and their zeal is ardent. Yet how insensitive and unmoved most people are about spiritual things! Here their love is cold, their desires are sluggish, and their gratitude is small.*

## II. INSPECTING

- Maybe – Maybe not...
- True & Trustworthy – but not always visually...

### A. **Maybe – Maybe not...** (Do not count on it!)

1. Strong & lively emotions...
2. Emotions that create a great affect on the body...
3. ...Produce great warmth & readiness to discuss Christ...
4. If we did not produce them by our own efforts...

*An experience which does not come from ourselves  
might have come from a false spirit.*

5. If they come with a Bible verse (Satan tried vs. Jesus)
6. If there seems to be love in the emotions...

*Unfortunately, love can be imitated.*

Scripture teaches that people can seem to have Christian love without being saved. Read Matthew 24:12-13. This shows that if we have a love which does not endure to the end, but grows cold, we will not be saved.

Many Jews who praised Jesus so highly and followed him day and night without food, drink or sleep later grew cold and did not endure.

7. If we experience many kinds of feelings & emotions...

Picture someone whom Satan comes to and deceives into thinking that God has forgiven their sins. Let us suppose Satan deceives that person through a vision of a man with a beautiful smiling face and open arms. The sinner believes this is a vision of Christ. Or perhaps Satan deludes him with a voice saying, "Son, your sins are forgiven..." which the sinner thinks is the voice of God. So, the sinner believes he is saved, even though he has no spiritual understanding of the gospel.

What a variety of emotions would come into this sinner's mind! He would be full of love for his imaginary savior, whom he thinks has saved him from hell. He would be full of gratitude for his imaginary salvation. He would feel an overwhelming joy. His emotions would move him to talk to others about his experience. It would be easy for him to be humble before his imaginary God. He would deny himself and zealously promote his imaginary religion, while the warmth of his emotions lasted.

8. If comfort & joy seem to follow in order...

***A fear of hell & conviction of sin are two different things!***

*Satan can produce a false conviction of sin, a false fear of hell, and a false humility before God. Why should he not then produce a false joy in the gospel, as we have seen he can do?*

Scripture alone is our infallible guide to true & trustworthy religious belief and practice.

9. They cause us to spend much time in Christian works...

10. If they cause us to praise God with our mouths...

Israel sang God's praises at the Red Sea, but they were soon worshiping the golden calf.

11. If they produce an assurance of salvation...

*Satan is the best friend of false assurance, because it places the false Christian completely in his power.*

There are 2 kinds of false Christians. Those who think they are Christians because of their mere external practice of morality and religion. These people often do not understand the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Then there are those whose assurance comes from false religious experiences/works.

***A faith lacking spiritual light is not the faith of the children of light, but the delusion of the children of darkness. (John 6:40; 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6)***

Those who insist on living by faith without spiritual experience & obedience have absurd ideas of faith. What they really mean by faith is simply believing that they are saved. **That is why they think it is sinful to doubt their salvation, no matter how dead and worldly they are.**

12. Just because they make a great sounding testimony

No Christian can infallibly distinguish between true and false believers... ***Even the wisest Christian can be deceived.***

**T/S:** Talk proves nothing. We must judge by the fruit, by the lasting results in people's lives. *The way professing Christians live is the best proof we have of their sincerity & salvation.*

## **B. True & Trustworthy** – (but not always visually)

1. True spiritual emotions arise from spiritual, supernatural, & divine influences on the heart. (The **MIRACLE** in mMm)

*The Holy Spirit within Christians produces results which are in harmony with the Spirit's true nature. (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13)*

*The effects which the Holy Spirit produces in true Christians are different from anything men can produce by natural human powers. **True spiritual emotions arise from supernatural influences.***

*The Holy Spirit gives us evidence that we are God's children, by dwelling in us, leading us, and inclining us to behave towards God as children of the Father.*

The witness of the Holy Spirit is not some spiritual whisper or immediate revelation. It is the holy effect of God's Spirit in the hearts of His believers, leading them to love God, hate sin, and pursue holiness. Again see **Romans 8:13-16.**

*Terrible harm has resulted from thinking that the Holy Spirit's witness is a kind of inward voice, suggestion or declaration from God to a man, that he is loved, forgiven, elect & so forth.*



***How many lively but false emotions have arisen  
from this delusion!***

2. The object of spiritual emotion is the loveliness of spiritual things, not our self-interest.

*Men may love a God of their own imaginations,  
when they have no love at all for the One true God!*

***Anything is lovely to a selfish person...  
if it advances his or her self-interest.***

*True love begins with God and loves him for his own sake...  
Self-love begins with self, and loves God in the interest of self!*

3. Spiritual emotions are based on the moral excellence of spiritual things.

*True Christians love spiritual things for their holiness.*

4. Spiritual emotions arise out of spiritual understanding.

*We need to understand Scripture intellectually and taste  
the holy beauty of that meaning with our hearts.*

***Spiritual understanding sees what is actually in Scripture; it  
does not make a new meaning for it! Making a new meaning  
for Scripture is equivalent to making a new Scripture***

5. Spiritual emotions bring a **conviction** of the reality of divine things.

*A person can only see and feel the desperate depravity of his own heart, if the Holy Spirit gives him the ability to taste the sweetness of holiness and the bitterness of sin.*

6. Spiritual emotions always exist alongside spiritual humiliation.

*Spiritual humiliation is the essence of Christian self-denial.*

*Proud hypocrites pretend to be humble...*

7. Spiritual emotions always exist alongside a change of nature.

*A person who says he has experienced conversion, but whose religious emotions soon die away, has his actions speak against him much louder than any religious experiences or claims may speak for him.*

8. True spiritual emotions differ from false ones, in promoting a Christ-like spirit of love, humility, peace, forgiveness and compassion.

*Scripture is quite clear about the absolute necessity of forgiveness, love, and mercy, as qualities in the character of every Christian.*

*Scripture knows nothing of true Christians who have a selfish, angry, quarrelsome spirit. No matter what a person's religious experiences may be, he has no right to think himself truly converted if his spirit is under the control of bitterness & spite.*

9. True spiritual emotions soften the heart, and exist alongside a Christian tenderness of spirit.

*False emotions may seem to melt the heart for a time, but in the end they harden it.*

***Such people do not accept Christ as their Savior FROM sin. They trust in him as the savior OF their sins!***

*They think Christ will allow them the quiet enjoyment of their sins... and protect them from God's displeasure. (Jude 4 & Ez. 33:13)*

10. True spiritual emotions, unlike false ones, have a beautiful symmetry...

*Christ's compassion for the people's **souls** moved him to teach them, and his compassion for their **bodies** moved him to feed them. **BE 1 John 3:18!***

11. True spiritual emotions produce a longing for deeper holiness, but false emotions rest satisfied in themselves.

*The more a true Christian hates sin, the more he desires to hate it, and grieves that he still loves it so much.*

12. The fruit of true spiritual emotions is Christian practice.

**Christian practice means 3 things:**

A. Biblical basis for behavior

B. Holiness is #1 priority

C. Perseveres to the end.

*The sign of the genuine Christian is that he perseveres through problems & difficulties & remains true to Christ.*

*“Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*  
(Revelation 2:10)

*Christ is not in the heart of the Christian as a dead Savior, but as a risen and living Savior in His temple.*

*If an unconverted person tries to live a Christian life, it is like throwing a stone upwards. Nature finally prevails, and the stone comes down again.*

*The softened heart & tender spirit of the true Christian make him painfully sensitive to sin, creating a profound influence & impact on the way he lives his life.*

13. Christian practice is the chief sign to others of a convert's sincerity.

Matthew 7:16 is clear...

*By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?*

Nowhere does Christ say, you will know the tree by its leaves and flowers.

*Everything we say is worthless, if it is not confirmed by what we do. See James 2:14.*

*Words are cheap. It is by costly, self-denying, Christian-practice that we show the reality of our faith.*

***We cannot be certain how far an unconverted person can go in an outward appearance of Christianity.***

14. Christian practice is a sure sign of conversion to a person's own conscience.

when Christ says, by their fruits you will know them, this is in the 1st place a rule for judging others, but Christ also wants us to judge ourselves by this rule, *as the next verse makes clear.* Listen to Matthew 6:21... ***“not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father in heaven.”***

*Christian practice includes both the inward motives and the outward actions!*

*If we ignore God's clear emphasis on Christian practice,  
and stress other things as tests of sincerity,  
we are on our way to delusion & hypocrisy.*

*True religious experience is where we love God, and our love  
makes us choose him, and obey him, and stand by him in all  
difficult and testing situations.*

*I have not said that our practice is the price of God's favor. It is  
the sign of God's favor. God accepts us as righteous because of  
Christ's obedience, not ours.*

*We are united to Christ by faith alone.*

*What a lot of trouble the church would have escaped if  
Christians had kept to what Scripture teaches  
about a true experience of salvation!*

## **REVIEW:**

- Miracle
- Muscle
- Metamorphosis

## **CLOSE:**

**2 Corinthians 13:5**

*Test yourselves **to see if you are in the faith;**  
examine yourselves!*

*Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus  
Christ is in you-- **unless indeed you fail the test?***

**Let's PRAY!**