

"Beware Of False Prophets"

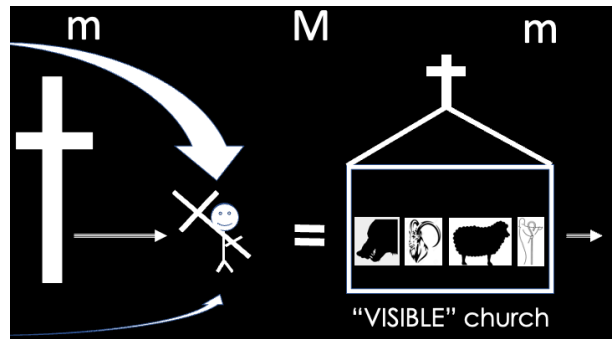
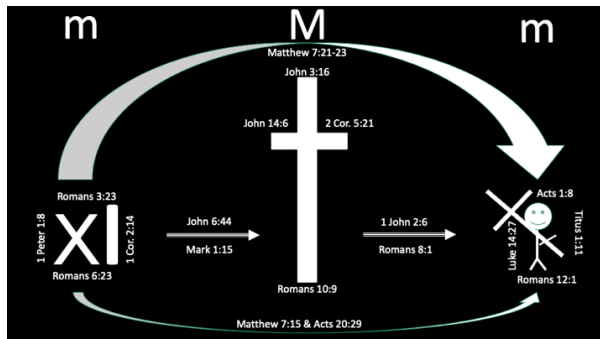
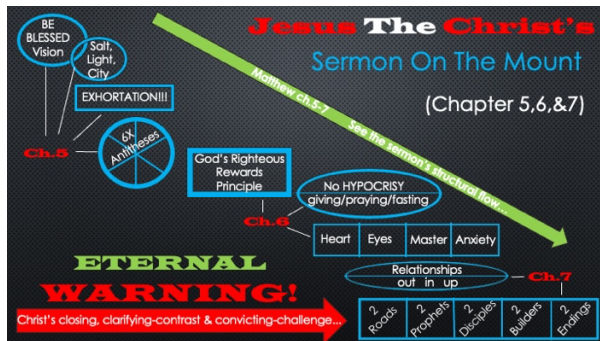
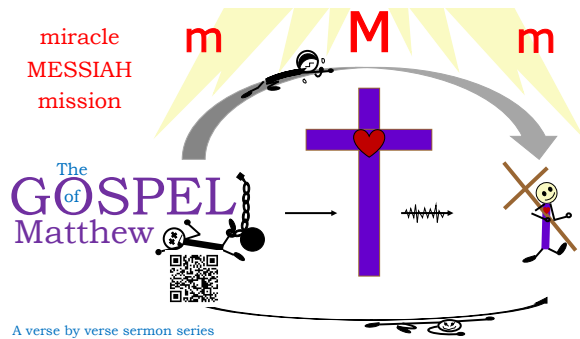
Matthew 7:15-20

October 5, 2025

INTRO: *Whose Word, will, & ways are you learning, loving & living?*

PRAYER

CONTEXT:



BIG IDEA: Watch out!

Beware all sheepish, false prophet *wolves!*
You will recognize them by their (**biblical**) fruits.

(last time... Matthew 7:13-14)

“ETERNAL LIFE’S ‘WAY’ IS ONLY AS WIDE AS CHRIST’S CROSS.”

PREVIEW:

1. Warn ALL!
2. Watch Out!
3. Wake Up!
4. Watch Out!

T/S: *What’s the most dangerous trip you’ve ever taken?*

(Our lives are eternally dangerous journeys thru a fallen, sin-sick, religious world!)

TEXT: Matthew 7:15-20

15“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16**You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17**So, (in the same way) every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. **18**A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **19**Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20**Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits.

I. WARN ALL!

vv.15

¹⁵ *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."*



Matthew 7:15

Beware
of **false**
prophets...

- Jesus The Christ

□

**THEY ARE
TOUR-GUIDES
ON THE
BROAD/MIDDLE
ROADS THAT
LEAD TO HELL!**

BEWARE:

➤ *"Beware" is by definition a deliberate warning!*

- **DANGER**
- **DECEPTION**
- **DESTRUCTION**

THE VERB ADDRESSES THE HEAD (UNDERSTANDING TRUTH), THE HEART (CHERISHING TRUTH), AND THE HANDS/WILL (ACTING ON TRUTH).

The verb frames Christian living as intentional watchfulness...

Peter warns us of the dangers that Satan poses to God's people: *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8). According to the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, "sober" (Greek *nepho*) is a verb found in the New Testament only in the figurative sense, implying **"sober watchfulness."** In addition, "vigilant" (Greek *gregoreuo*) means **"to keep awake, to watch** (literally or figuratively)."

Combining "sober" and "vigilant" paints an interesting word-picture for us. *When a person is heavily intoxicated, he wants nothing more than to sleep it off, so it is impossible for the sleeping drunkard to be vigilant about anything.*

The message for us is that we must be attentive to our physical and spiritual condition so that we do not become spiritually intoxicated. **This type of person is exactly the kind whom Satan seeks.** If we enter this state, then we make ourselves a prime target to be devoured by the "roaring lion."

FALSE PROPHETS:

➤ What does *"false"* mean?

- **NOT TRUE**
- **Wrong**
- This is a **black** or white word...
- While motive & sincerity may impact accuracy, neither is required to define or describe what is true and what is "false."

- What is the definition of a “prophet”?
 - **Biblical prophets are those who proclaim to speak on behalf of the God of the Bible.**
 - “Biblical” prophets are either true or false.
 - **NOTE:** a biblical prophet’s true designation is based on their relationship to The Truth, that is, God and God’s Word, will, & ways!

- Thus, “*false prophets*” are:
 - **Dangerous**
 - **Deceived / Deceiving**
 - **DILUTING**
 - **DEFERRING**
 - **DISTRACTING**
 - **DOWN-PLAYING**
 - **DEVASTATINGLY DIVISIVE**
 - **Destructive**
 - They tunnel under the cross to lead others to jump over the cross.
 - *They champion middle-road sinning.*
 - They lead Sardis & Laodicean churches.

- *Beware the deceived & the deceivers who are deceiving others with deceptive doctrines.*
 - **Examples:**
 - Pharisaical, superficial religiosity...
 - Marginalizing God’s truth-in-love “rails”
 - Managing the silver-rule hypocritically
 - Wide gate, easy-believism accessibility
 - Wide road, Laodicean, lukewarm-loving
 - Easy living, “cross-optional” christianity
 - Popular, consumeristic, crowd-building

A false prophet is a person who claims divine inspiration or revelatory-authority while actually speaking from a source other than God.

**SCRIPTURE PRESENTS SUCH INDIVIDUALS AS
CONSTANT THREATS TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD,
COUNTERFEITING GENUINE PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN
ORDER TO MISLEAD, EXPLOIT, OR OPPOSE THE TRUTH.**

INWARDLY:

Mark 7:21

"From within, out of men's hearts, come evil..."

**THIS UNDERSCORES THE NECESSITY OF
REGENERATION, NOT MERELY
REFORMATION.**

Look beyond looks, see the real realities God sees!

Sin's cure must reach our core!

RAVENOUS:

**A PREDATORY HEART THAT WILL VIOLATE
RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE, AND COMPASSION IN
ORDER TO SATISFY ITS SELFISH APPETITE.**

a posture opposed to the character of God

In Matthew, “ravenous” illustrates the danger of disguised evil. False prophets do not merely mislead; they devour. The word paints a wolf tearing prey, warning disciples that doctrinal error often rides on the back of predatory self-interest.

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST MUST RESIST SYSTEMS AND PERSONAL PRACTICES THAT SEIZE RATHER THAN SERVE.

WOLF:

both external persecutors and internal deceivers.

Matthew 7:15 and Acts 20:29 identify wolves with corrupt teachers who arise from within ecclesial structures. They are not primarily secular persecutors but professing believers whose doctrine and lifestyle devour the unsuspecting. Their danger lies in religious deception...

Jesus' commission in Matthew 10:16 / Luke 10:3 acknowledges the church's precarious position

Evaluate all teachers/teaching by Scripture, not charisma.

II. WATCH OUT! vv.16a

16 *You will recognize them by their fruits.*

How is it that the Creator, King, & Christ over all creation can compel, command, & commission His faith-family so clearly... and yet, receive a cultural response by those who claim His name, that is so disrespectfully & unappreciatively heretical?

- Answer: False prophets preaching false gospels in false churches to false converts (cf. Rev. 2&3)
- When those fakes take over & become majorities, they begin to stain the name & witness of Christ's true Church in the world.
- From there, they shift to contrasting the message being sent & shown to the world at large... diluting, compromising, & ultimately befriending the world and its ways.
- **Eventually, the fakes become outspoken adversaries and attackers of the authentic.**
- They do that because the contrast between the two group's definitions of righteousness and Christianity is undeniable, forcing one to be recognized as wrong, if in fact either of them are truly, biblically, & missionally right.

YOU WILL KNOW/RECOGNIZE:

Intensive, relational knowledge: *a progressively deepening discernment* & grasp of Christ, truth, and people.

VIDEO: *"Why Is Sound Doctrine So Important?"*
GotQuestions.org (4:46)

- Step 1: God's Word commands "sound doctrine"
- Step 2: The Gospel itself requires sound doctrine.
- Step 3: What we believe impacts how we behave...
- Step 4: Sound doctrine uplifts our peace, love, life.
- Step 5: Wrong doctrine is a *broad-road* map to hell.

FRUIT: (see our "Gospel Gardening" series... #28-35 sermons on *"fruit"*)

FRUIT threads the New Testament with a call to visible, God-glorifying productivity.

ANCHORED IN CHRIST THE VINE, NURTURED BY THE SPIRIT... CHRISTIAN FRUITFULNESS UNITES DOCTRINE, DISCIPLESHIP, AND DOXOLOGY IN ONE LIVING TESTIMONY TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

The fruit of holiness & righteousness is produced by grace and aimed at eternity.

VIDEO: *"The Key To Bearing Christian Fruit"*
GotQuestions.org (3:04)

- Step 1: God's loving grace & Spirit give/gift fruit.
- Step 2: Praying, abiding, & obeying are critical...
- Step 3: Test ourselves against God's Word, will, way
- Step 4: No *"middle road"* hypocrisy or compromise
- Step 5: Repeating our repentance & His refinement

*Sheepish, false-prophet, ravenous-wolf-fruit
is usually easy, popular, broad-road-heresy that comes
disguised in ear-tickling, man-centric, “middle road”
pragmatism, compromise, & rationalizations.*

VIDEO: *“How To Spot False Prophets”*
GotQuestions.org (4:04)

- Step 1: Study God’s Word, will, & ways.
- Step 2: How does the person treat Jesus?
- Step 3: Is the true, full Gospel championed?
- Step 4: Is righteousness evident in their life?
- Step 5: Repeat... praying, abiding, & obeying!

T/S: Think about just how much of the Bible is corrective, exhortation, & all out warning! (Consider 1st John, Hebrews, Jude, etc.).

III. WAKE UP!

vv.16b-19

*Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from
thistles? [17](#)So, (in the same way) every healthy tree bears
good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. [18](#)A
healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased
tree bear good fruit. [19](#)Every tree that does not bear
good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

- Jesus is once again shocking His hearers...
- Jesus is advancing additional absolute contrasts.
- Jesus is eliminating loopholes & all wiggle room.
- Jesus is stating the obvious to point out that to ignore His warning is to embrace the absurd.

A. *Trees bear fruit... if they don't, they're sick or dead.*

- a. Jesus is clear: **dead trees are thrown into the fire.**
 - i. The fire is akin to “destruction” in vv.13-14
 - ii. The fire is eternal, with weeping & gnashing
 - iii. **The fire is hell.**
- b. Jesus is linking kingdom citizenship to fruit...
 - i. **Good** or **bad fruit** = **God** or **Satan's kingdom**
 - ii. Jesus is **NOT** preaching a works-salvation...
 - iii. By grace, good Gospel trees bear good fruit!

B. *Not all fruit bearing trees are healthy...*

C. *Healthy trees bear good fruit & cannot bear bad fruit.*

D. *Diseased trees bear bad fruit & cannot bear good fruit.*

- “good” #1 & “good” #2 are different Greek words.
 - Good #1 = intrinsically, at the “DNA” core
 - Good #2 = extrinsically, in use & application
- “bad” #1 & “bad” #2 are different Greek words.
 - Bad #1 = intrinsically
 - Bad #2 = extrinsically

BEWARE!

Watch Out!

Sweet tongues often sour hearts!

What tickles ears poisons souls.

GOOD #1

WHAT INTRINSICALLY ORIGINATES FROM GOD AND
IS EMPOWERED BY HIM, THROUGH FAITH.

Jesus declared, "No one is good except God alone"

(Mark 10:18)

James 1:17

*"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down
from the Father of the heavenly lights."*

GOOD #2:

*FOR APPEARANCE OR USE; ATTRACTIVELY
GOOD; GOOD THAT INSPIRES (MOTIVATES) OTHERS
TO EMBRACE WHAT IS LOVELY (BEAUTIFUL,
PRAISEWORTHY)*

Because God is the ultimate standard of καλός,
whatever bears this quality reflects Him.

John 10 : *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down
His life for the sheep"* (John 10:11). both noble character and
sacrificial action.

Contrasted with Evil or Worthless

Galatians 6:9: “Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not give up.”

“Test all things. Hold fast to what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

Fruitfulness, therefore, authenticates discipleship.

“FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF THE FAITH”
(1 Timothy 6:12)

I have fought the good fight”
(2 Timothy 4:7).

BAD #1:

rotten, putrid, worthless, corrupt, unwholesome

in Scripture it marks lives, deeds and speech
unfit for the kingdom.

Holiness is not an optional extra but the very sap
of the kingdom life.

The cross becomes the ultimate sorting, where the Sinless One absorbs humanity's rot to impart His righteousness.

CORRUPTION CANNOT COEXIST WITH KINGDOM LIFE.

BAD #2:

what is morally corrupt, injurious, and actively hostile toward God's design.

it is the antithesis of divine goodness.

The cross and resurrection secure removal from the dominion of evil and promise the believer ultimate protection ([John 17:15](#)).

CUT DOWN:

DIVINE SEVERITY AND KINDNESS: [Romans 11:22](#)

HOLINESS REQUIRES SEPARATION:

OPPORTUNITY BEFORE FINALITY

ἐκκόπτω embodies the Biblical principle that God's kingdom tolerates no enduring fruitlessness or corruption.

IN GRACE HE WARNS; IN JUSTICE HE REMOVES.

THROWN:

JESUS REPEATEDLY USES THE VERB TO DEMAND
RADICAL AMPUTATION OF SIN: *"If your right eye causes you
to sin, tear it out and throw it away"* ([Matthew 5:29](#)).

The willful hurling of the offending member teaches
that discipleship entails decisive, once-for-all
action against personal wickedness.

The alternative—being **“thrown into hell”**

*"If anyone was not found written in the Book of Life, he
was thrown into the lake of fire"* ([Revelation 20:15](#)).

FIRE:

**Fire most frequently functions
as the emblem and instrument
of God's holy wrath.**

Hebrews 10:27

“a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire”

“Unquenchable fire” ([Mark 9:43](#))

“Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” ([Matthew 25:41](#)).

The picture culminates in Revelation, where the ungodly are finally consigned to “the lake of fire” ([Revelation 20:14–15](#)).

Purification, Refinement, and Reward

Fire does not only destroy; it also purifies.

Christ’s Mission and Apostolic Authority

Jesus declares, *“I have come to ignite a fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!”* ([Luke 12:49](#)).

**THE SAYING POINTS BOTH TO HIS PURIFYING WORK AND
THE DIVISION THE GOSPEL INEVITABLY BRINGS.**

Hebrews 12:29, quoting Deuteronomy, ***“our God is a consuming fire,” calling for reverence and awe.***

VIDEO: *“What Does Dying To Self Mean?”*
GotQuestions.org (3:46)

- Step 1: It is the true essence of Christ-like living...
- Step 2: It is a core essential of being “born again.”
- Step 3: It is a one-time event AND life-long process.
- Step 4: It is a non-negotiable per Jesus The Christ.
- Step 5: It IS Christ’s litmus test for true Christianity.
- Step 6: It is the symbolic key to Christian baptism.
- Step 7: It is the narrow gate & way of life in Christ.
 - It initiates Christ’s living IN the Christian...
 - It changes everything inside & out (2 Cor 5).
 - It transforms lukewarm-ism to hot-living.

NOW... let’s go back to the most trustworthy of ALL preachers, teachers, prophets, & proclaimers – Jesus The Creator, Jesus The Christ...

Let’s get our inspiration & instruction form the eternal Plumb Line, the True North, the Definer & Defender of ALL “truth in love.”

Let’s see how He & His Word, will, & ways align with our current & cultural church messaging & methodologies...

IV. WATCH OUT!

20 *Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits.*

- Don't miss the ***“thus”***!
- False prophets tell people what their itching ears want to hear... (2 Timothy 4:3)
- False prophets lead deceived followers down many different “middle road” deceptions.
- **GIVING WIDE-WAY PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT WILL ONLY LEAD THEM TO THE WRATH OF GOD.**

Let's define & describe these categories, character traits, & characteristics biblically, culturally, & personally... then we'll see where each road/way takes us.

	<u>NARROW</u>	<u>MIDDLE</u>	<u>BROAD/WIDE</u>
Bible	<i>God's Word</i>	<i>Good Book</i>	<i>Superstition</i>
Truth	<u>God & Word</u>	<u>Relative</u>	<u>Only Subjective</u>
Love	<i>God & Word</i>	<i>Emotional</i>	<i>Self-defined</i>
God	<u>Biblical Trinity</u>	<u>church god</u>	<u>No/wrong gods</u>

Jesus	<i>Christ / Lord</i>	<i>lord in name</i>	<i>"Good teacher"</i>
"Man"	<u>Depraved/Lost</u>	<u>Not perfect...</u>	<u>Basically good...</u>
Grace	<i>God's gift to give</i>	<i>Reward given</i>	<i>Luck / karma</i>
Mercy	<u>God's patience</u>	<u>Earned favor</u>	<u>Kindness</u>
Sin	<i>Inherent/Hell</i>	<i>Not that bad</i>	<i>Just a word...</i>
Confess	<u>Gospel required</u>	<u>Religious-step</u>	<u>Unnecessary</u>
Repent	<i>Gospel required</i>	<i>Mere Remorse</i>	<i>Unnecessary</i>
Restore	<u>Gospel exclusive</u>	<u>Man empowered</u>	<u>Man's option</u>
Authority	<i>2 Tim. 3:16</i>	<i>Personal choice</i>	<i>Self-willed</i>
Mission	<u>Glorify God!</u>	<u>Be moral & nice</u>	<u>Be happy</u>
Priorities	<i>Faithful Obey</i>	<i>Do mostly good</i>	<i>Self-rule</i>
Message	<u>m M m</u>	<u>Go to church...</u>	<u>Y.O.L.O.</u>
Methods	<i>Word, will, way</i>	<i>Religious Morals</i>	<i>Pragmatics</i>
Measures	<u>Word, will, way</u>	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>Feels/Looks</u>
Unity	<i>Miracle/Mission</i>	<i>Superficial</i>	<i>Utility</i>
Passion	<u>Hot/Cold</u>	<u>Lukewarm</u>	<u>No Matter</u>
Faith	<i>Fruit of Spirit</i>	<i>Conditional</i>	<i>Ungrounded</i>

Obey	<u>No matter what!</u>	<u>99% is okay</u>	<u>Unbiblical</u>
Hypocrisy	<i>Damnable</i>	<i>Manageable</i>	<i>Unmoved...</i>
Prayer	<u>To One true God</u>	<u>Powerless</u>	<u>Misguided</u>
Ministry	<i>BE His Hands</i>	<i>Busy Hands</i>	<i>Bad Hands</i>
Serving	<u>Christ-likeness</u>	<u>churchiness</u>	<u>Self-serving</u>
Worship	<i>Vertical Praise</i>	<i>churchy-singing</i>	<i>Self-worship</i>
Outreach	<u>Fish for men!</u>	<u>church programs</u>	<u>Recruiting</u>
Develop	<i>Sanctification</i>	<i>churchy trophies</i>	<i>Bigger/More</i>
Discipleship	<u>commanded</u>	<u>unnecessary</u>	<u>Brainwashing</u>
The Gospel	<i>Eph. 2:1-10</i>	<i>"be happy"</i>	<i>"Nonsense"</i>

REVIEW:

Remember the structure & stream of Christ's witness:

1. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin...
2. He has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets...
3. He has come to fulfill all righteousness...
4. He has come to bring the kingdom of heaven...
5. Only real righteousness will enter His kingdom...
6. He declared His blessed vision & descriptions...

7. He confronted, convicted, & clarified His mission.
8. He boldly disqualified religious hypocrisy...
9. He summarized His teaching for added clarity...
10. Here He offers His 2nd of 5 closing warnings.

Don't miss the 35 contrasts in this passage alone...

- Commanded vs. Complacent
- Beware (spiritual warfare) vs. Ignore/Disregard
- False vs. True (prophets)
- Prophets vs. Deceivers
- Come to you vs. Wait for you
- Wolves vs. Sheep/Shepherds
- Inwardly vs. Hypocrisy
- Ravenous vs. Harmless
- Sheep's clothing vs. Wolf's fur
- You can/will vs. You can't/won't
- Recognizable vs. Unknowable
- Them vs. Us (1st John; Acts; James; Hebrews; Jude; Titus)
- By their fruits vs. By anything else
- Rhetorical questions vs. Answerable questions
- Grapes vs. Thorns/Thornbushes
- Figs vs. Thistles
- Every/ALL vs. Occasional/Some
- Healthy vs. Diseased/Sick
- Fruit-bearing vs. Barren
- Good (fruit) vs. Bad (fruit)
- Impossibilities vs. Guarantees

- (another “every/all” vs. occasional/some)
- Good trees vs. Bad trees
- Healthy trees vs. Diseased trees
- Respond to trees vs. Ignore trees
- (another “evaluation” vs. ignoring)
- Cut down vs. Cultivated
- Thrown into vs. Thriving
- Fire vs. Family
- Eternal vs. Temporary
- Thus vs. No Exhortation
- Warned vs. Caught off guard
- You vs. Them
- Will recognized vs. Be deceived
- By their fruit vs. By ANYTHING else!

**How obedient, narrow, counter-cultural,
un-popular & hard *(hated, slandered, & persecuted)*
are you being called to?**

*Anyone who leads you to believe or accept that a
disobedient, wide-way, culturally-attractive,
crowd-pleasing, & easy walk with Jesus is OK....
is **exactly who Christ is warning you about!***

I promise you... that's NOT Christ's way!
(Luke 14:27)

Most of the time, the false prophets know better than to outwardly, overtly contradict God's Word, so they compromise and pervert His will & ways to unsuspecting or immature church goers/watchers...

They tend to champion 1 of 2 lanes on the broad-road that Jesus said leads to destruction: 1). the lie that is the lukewarm & sinfully rationalized "middle road;" OR 2). the over-promising & under-producing charlatan's path of hyper-sensationalizing & demonically perverting the Holy Spirit's promises, purposes, power, & presence.

CLOSE:

"Everybody loves Jesus
until they learn what He really said." - David Platt

Read v.15a, then 16a, then v.20 to see the BIG IDEA.

**Think about how good Judas
was at being bad... being a false
prophet wolf & witness...
Watch out & BEWARE who
you listen to & follow.**

PRAYER

WORSHIP:

First Things First & Walk With Jesus

STUDY NOTES:

Matthew 7:15

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
4337 [e]	Προσέχετε Prosechete	But beware	V-PMA-2P
575 [e]	ἀπὸ apo	of	Prep
3588 [e]	τῶν tōn	the	Art-GMP
5578 [e]	ψευδοπροφητῶν, pseudoprophētōn	false prophets,	N-GMP
3748 [e]	οἵτινες hoitines	who	RelPro-NMP
2064 [e]	ἔρχονται erchontai	come	V-PIM/P-3P
4314 [e]	πρὸς pros	to	Prep
4771 [e]	ὕμᾱς hymas	you	PPro-A2P
1722 [e]	ἐν en	in	Prep
1742 [e]	ἐνδύμασιν endymasin	clothing	N-DNP

4263 [e]	προβάτων probatōn	of sheep;	N-GNP
2081 [e]	ἔσωθεν esōthen	inwardly	Adv
1161 [e]	δέ de	however	Conj
1510 [e]	εἰσιν eisin	they are	V-PIA-3P
3074 [e]	λύκοι lykoi	wolves	N-NMP
727 [e]	ἄρπαγες. harpages	ravenous.	Adj-NMP

“BEWARE”

4337. prosechó

Topical Lexicon

Root sense and scope

προσέχω **centers on deliberate, continuing attentiveness.**

Whether translated “pay attention,” “beware,” “devote,” or “take heed,” **it always demands an active, focused response** rather than casual notice.

THE VERB ADDRESSES THE MIND (UNDERSTANDING TRUTH), THE HEART (CHERISHING TRUTH), AND THE WILL (ACTING ON TRUTH).

Call to vigilance against doctrinal error

Jesus employs προσέχω repeatedly in His warnings about leaven—symbolic of corrupt teaching.

- [Matthew 16:6](#): *Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees & Sadducees.*

- [Matthew 7:15](#); [Luke 12:1](#); [Matthew 16:11–12](#) echo the same burden.

Sound doctrine is preserved not merely by
possessing truth but by constant watchfulness
lest falsehood seep in.

The Master's command shapes apostolic practice: Paul counsels Timothy, "Pay attention to myths and endless genealogies" ([1 Timothy 1:4](#)) and urges Titus to avoid "Jewish myths and the commands of men who reject the truth" ([Titus 1:14](#)).

*The imperative is proactive—error must be identified
and resisted before it takes root.*

Protecting personal integrity and motives

Jesus widens the verb's range to self-examination. [Matthew 6:1](#):

"Be careful not to perform your righteous acts before men to be seen by them." Here προσέχω **EXPOSES HYPOCRISY THAT SEEKS HUMAN APPROVAL** rather than the Father's reward. [Luke 17:3](#) admonishes disciples to watch themselves lest bitterness flourish; [Luke 21:34](#) warns against dissipation, drunkenness, and the cares of life that dull spiritual perception. The verb therefore guards both doctrine and devotion.

Shepherding oversight of God's flock

Paul charges the Ephesian elders: *"Keep watch over yourselves and the entire flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers"* ([Acts 20:28](#)). Pastoral care demands the same vigilance Jesus required of His disciples. Leaders must first watch themselves, then the sheep entrusted to them. Paul applies the principle to deacons, who must be "holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience" ([1 Timothy 3:8](#)).

Right oversight springs from personal attentiveness to truth.

Devoted listening that births faith

In Philippi “the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message” and **Lydia “paid heed to what Paul said”** ([Acts 16:14](#)). In Samaria the crowds “paid close attention to what was being said by Philip” ([Acts 8:6, 10, 11](#)). Such receptive attentiveness is the fertile soil in which the gospel germinates. [Hebrews 2:1](#) reinforces the point for believers: **“We must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.”** The opposite of προσέχω is spiritual drifting—gradual, often unnoticed, departure from anchoring truth.

Scripture as prophetic lamp

Peter declares, **“We have the prophetic word confirmed, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place”** ([2 Peter 1:19](#)).

THE VERB FRAMES SCRIPTURE AS A LIGHT REQUIRING CONTINUOUS, CONCENTRATED REGARD UNTIL THE DAWNING OF CHRIST’S RETURN.

The early church’s high view of the written Word flows naturally from this charge; canonical writings were preserved, copied, and taught because the saints were commanded to προσέχω to them.

Historical and liturgical outworking

Early Christian gatherings featured public reading of Scripture ([1 Timothy 4:13](#)) to which believers applied προσέχω. Justin Martyr’s second-century description of worship—reading, exhortation, and prayer—mirrors the apostolic pattern. The verb undergirds the historic lectionary tradition, mid-week **catechesis, and expository preaching: all are corporate mechanisms designed to help the church “pay attention.”**

Spiritual warfare and eschatological urgency

Because **the world system seeks to dull watchfulness**,

προσέχω stands as a bulwark against last-days deception and despair.

Luke 21:34 *ties vigilance to readiness*
for the Son of Man's appearing.

[Hebrews 7:13](#) (a rare perfect tense, προσέσχηκεν) notes that priests “devoted themselves to the altar” under the Law—yet that undivided attention finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ, our eternal High Priest. **New-covenant believers are likewise summoned to undivided attention to Him.**

Pastoral application

1. **Cultivate habit.** Regular intake of Scripture, prayerful reflection, and accountability foster the attentiveness [Hebrews 2:1](#) demands.
2. **Guard doctrine.** Churches must evaluate teaching, literature, media, and worship lyrics against the apostolic gospel.
3. **Examine motives.** Service performed for applause forfeits heavenly reward ([Matthew 6:1](#)).
4. **Watch for drift.** Small compromises accumulate; προσέχω is preventive maintenance for the soul.
5. **Shepherd well.** Elders imitate the Chief Shepherd by guarding both flock and self ([Acts 20:28](#)).

Summary

προσέχω calls every believer—disciple, leader, congregation—to an alert, sustained, and responsive gaze upon God’s Word, God’s people, and one’s own heart. The verb frames Christian living as intentional watchfulness until faith becomes sight.

“FALSE PROPHETS”

5578. pseudoprophétés

Topical Lexicon

Concept and Definition

A false prophet is a person who claims divine inspiration or revelatory authority while actually speaking from a source other than God.

SCRIPTURE PRESENTS SUCH INDIVIDUALS AS A PERENNIAL THREAT TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD, COUNTERFEITING GENUINE PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN ORDER TO MISLEAD, EXPLOIT, OR OPPOSE THE TRUTH.

Old Testament Roots and Continuity

While the Greek term appears only in the New Testament, the phenomenon is well-established in **THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES. DEUTERONOMY 13:1-5 AND JEREMIAH 23:9-40 INSIST THAT A PROPHET WHO CONTRADICTS REVEALED TRUTH OR WHOSE PREDICTIONS FAIL MUST BE REJECTED AND PUNISHED.**

Jesus and the apostles assume this background, treating New Testament false prophets as the spiritual heirs of those earlier deceivers.

Distribution in the **New Testament**

The word occurs (11) eleven times, spanning the Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation. It is applied to:

- Unnamed deceivers in Jesus' Olivet Discourse ([Matthew 24:11](#); [Matthew 24:24](#); [Mark 13:22](#))

- Religious figures lauded by society but condemned by Christ ([Luke 6:26](#))

- A specific individual, Bar-Jesus, opposed by Paul ([Acts 13:6](#))

- **HERETICAL INFLUENCERS WITHIN THE CHURCH**

- ([2 Peter 2:1](#); [1 John 4:1](#))

- The **eschatological accomplice of the beast** ([Revelation 16:13](#); [Revelation 19:20](#); [Revelation 20:10](#))

Identifying Marks

1. APPEALING APPEARANCE – *“They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves”* ([Matt. 7:15](#)).

2. POPULAR ACCLAIM – *“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers treated the false prophets in the same way”* ([Luke 6:26](#)).

3. MIRACULOUS SIGNS – *“False christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders”* ([Matthew 24:24](#)).

4. DOCTRINAL CORRUPTION – They *“introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them”* ([2 Peter 2:1](#)).

5. ETHICAL LICENSE – Their ministries are marked by greed, sensuality, or self-promotion (compare [2 Peter 2:2-3](#)).

Methods of Deception

- **DISTORTING SCRIPTURE** ([2 Peter 3:16](#))
- **COUNTERFEIT SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS** ([Revelation 13:13-14](#))
- **FLATTERING MESSAGES THAT PLEASE THE FLESH** ([2 Timothy 4:3-4](#))
- **SYNCRETISM** with occult practices, exemplified by sorcerer Bar-Jesus ([Acts 13:6-10](#))

Relationship to False Christs and False Teachers

False prophets overlap with false christs (those claiming messianic identity) and **false teachers (who corrupt doctrine)**. All three categories cooperate in satanic opposition to Christ, but the false prophet is distinguished by the claim of direct prophetic revelation.

Divine Verdict and Eschatological Role

The ultimate false prophet, the beast's spokesperson, "was captured... Both of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur" ([Revelation 19:20](#)). **Final judgment is irrevocable: "they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" ([Revelation 20:10](#))**. This climactic fate underscores God's unchanging resolve to vindicate His word.

Pastoral and Personal Application

Believers are commanded,

"Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits"
([1 John 4:1](#)).

Discernment involves:

- Measuring every claim against the canon of Scripture.

- Evaluating moral fruit ([Matthew 7:16-20](#)).
- Depending on the illumination of the Holy Spirit ([John 16:13](#)).

The church must expose and refute deception ([Titus 1:9-11](#)) while maintaining confidence that truth will ultimately triumph.

CLOTHES

1742. enduma

Topical Lexicon

Overview

Strong's Greek 1742, ἔνδυμα, designates the articles of dress worn on the body and, by extension, any outward covering that reveals something about the wearer's identity, status, or condition. While the word itself appears only eight times, each context enriches the biblical theology of clothing—contrasting external appearance with internal reality, everyday provision with divine righteousness, and earthly garments with eschatological glory.

Occurrences in the Gospels

- [Matthew 3:4](#) presents John the Baptist in “clothes...made of camel's hair”. His rough garment underscores prophetic austerity, calling Israel to repentance rather than to admire worldly fashion.
- [Matthew 6:25, 28](#) and [Luke 12:23](#) teach that “the body [is] more than clothes,” redirecting disciples from anxious preoccupation with material needs to faith in the Father's care.
- [Matthew 7:15](#) warns of false prophets who arrive “in sheep's clothing,” illustrating the danger of deceptive appearances that mask predatory hearts.
- [Matthew 22:11-12](#) places ἔνδυμα at the center of the wedding-feast parable. The missing “wedding clothes” symbolize the absence of true righteousness; mere attendance without transformation incurs judgment.
- [Matthew 28:3](#) records the angel at the tomb whose “clothes were white as snow,” a visual testimony to the resurrection, purity, and heavenly authority.

Historical and Cultural Background

In first-century Judea ordinary dress consisted of an inner tunic (χιτών) and outer cloak (ἱμάτιον). Quality of fabric, color, and cleanliness signaled social rank. Wedding garments were normally provided by the host, ensuring equality among guests. Prophets often adopted distinctive attire—haircloth, leather belts, or mantle—to dramatize their message (compare [2 Kings 1:8](#); [Zechariah 13:4](#)).

Theological Themes

Righteousness versus ritual.

The wedding-feast episode demonstrates that entry into the kingdom requires more than invitation; it demands the righteousness God Himself supplies. [Isaiah 61:10](#) anticipates this: “He has clothed me with garments of salvation, and wrapped me in a robe of righteousness”.

Provision and trust.

Jesus links clothing to daily dependence on God. As the Father dresses the lilies “better than Solomon in all his glory” ([Matthew 6:29](#)), believers are assured that obedience and seeking the kingdom take priority over material concern.

Authenticity.

Sheep’s clothing on wolves confronts the church with the need for discernment. Genuine fruit, not religious costume, validates a prophet.

Resurrection glory.

The angelic garment at the empty tomb prefigures the radiant clothing promised to the redeemed ([Revelation 3:5](#); [Revelation 19:8](#)). Earthly garments fade; heavenly garments are unblemished and eternal.

Prophetic and Eschatological Resonance

The motif of clothing threads from Genesis, where sin produced shame and required covering, to Revelation, where the Bride is granted “fine linen, bright and clean” ([Revelation 19:8](#)). ἔνδυμα snapshots this redemptive arc: garments of animal skins, priestly vestments, prophetic sackcloth, the spotless apparel of saints—all converge on Christ, whose seamless robe ([John 19:23-24](#)) and glory-filled transfiguration garments ([Mark 9:3](#)) affirm Him as both Provider and Pattern of true righteousness.

Implications for Ministry

1. Preaching and teaching must expose the insufficiency of external religiosity while exalting the righteousness provided in Christ.
2. Pastoral care should cultivate trust in God's provision, freeing believers from bondage to material anxiety.
3. Discernment ministries must look beyond appearances, testing doctrine and character against Scripture.
4. Worship and discipleship can highlight the hope of immortal, undefiled garments, motivating holiness and evangelistic urgency.

Practical Application

- Examine motives: Are spiritual activities genuine devotion or mere “wedding clothes” of self-made piety?
- Model simplicity: Adopt financial and lifestyle habits that reflect reliance on the Father rather than status signaling.
- Encourage assurance: Remind believers that, in Christ, they are already “clothed with power from on high” ([Luke 24:49](#)) and will be arrayed in incorruptible glory at His return.

“**Ἐνδύμα** thus serves as a vivid reminder that what is worn outwardly mirrors, challenges, or proclaims inward realities. From the camel-hair prophet to the white-robed angel, Scripture calls every believer to be found in the wedding hall, clothed in the righteousness of the King.

INWARDLY

2081. esóthen

Topical Lexicon

Usage Overview

Strong's **2081 occurs (12) twelve times**, uniformly describing that which is "inside," "from within," or "inward." Whether exposing hypocrisy, revealing the seat of sin, portraying domestic life, or unveiling heavenly glory, **the word presses readers to look beyond appearances to the realities God sees.**

Jesus' Teaching on Authentic Righteousness

1. [Matthew 7:15](#) – *False prophets appear "in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."*

THE TERM CONTRASTS DECEPTIVE OUTWARD GENTLENESS WITH A PREDATORY INNER NATURE.

2. [Matthew 23:25–28](#) – **Fourfold use in Christ's woes exposes religious leaders** *who cleanse "the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence" and who appear "beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones."*
3. [The Lord insists that righteousness must begin within; only then can the outside be truly clean.](#)

Moral Corruption Originating in the Heart

[Mark 7:21, 23](#) – *"For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality..."*

JESUS OVERTURNS RITUAL NOTIONS OF DEFILEMENT, LOCATING SIN'S SOURCE IN THE INNER PERSON.

THIS UNDERSCORES THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION, NOT MERELY REFORMATION.

Domestic Illustration of Dependence on Grace

[Luke 11:7](#) – In the parable of the persistent friend, the sleeping father answers from within the house, highlighting both the intimacy of the relationship and the initial barrier to aid. Persistent prayer moves the One who dwells “within” to open the door.

Hypocrisy Unmasked in Table Fellowship

[Luke 11:39–40](#) – When the Pharisee marvels that Jesus did not ceremonially wash, Christ exposes inner uncleanness: *“Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness”*. The focus returns to God’s priority—the heart.

Pastoral Conflict and Inner Turmoil

[2 Corinthians 7:5](#) – “Conflicts on the outside, fears within.” Paul distinguishes external opposition from internal anxiety, validating the emotional weight carried in ministry and the sufficiency of divine comfort (7:6).

Heavenly Realities in Apocalyptic Vision

[Revelation 4:8](#) – The four living creatures are “full of eyes around and within,” portraying perfect, all-sided perception in unceasing worship.

[Revelation 5:1](#) – The seven-sealed scroll is written “inside and on the back,” emphasizing completeness and divine authorship; nothing is left unwritten within the purposes of God.

Theological Significance of the Inner Life

1. True righteousness proceeds from a transformed heart ([Jeremiah 31:33](#); [Romans 2:29](#)).
2. Sin’s root lies within; external law exposes but cannot cure ([Romans 7:22–23](#)).
3. The Holy Spirit indwells believers, creating an inner sanctuary ([1 Corinthians 6:19](#)).
4. Worship acceptable to God is “in spirit and truth” ([John 4:23](#)).

Practical Ministry Applications

- Preaching and counseling must aim at heart transformation, not mere behavioral adjustment.
- Self-examination guards against the subtlety of hypocrisy; leaders especially must heed Christ's woes.
- Pastors should acknowledge "fears within" and seek comfort from God who "encourages the downcast" ([2 Corinthians 7:6](#)).
- Corporate worship should foster sincere, undivided devotion, mirroring the heavenly pattern of praise "around and within."

Historical Reflection

Early church fathers employed 2081 to warn against Gnostic dualism—affirming that the inner and outer person must be consistently aligned in truth. Medieval mystics drew on the term to emphasize interior prayer, while Reformers stressed justification that begins within by faith yet manifests outwardly in works.

Implications for Contemporary Discipleship

Believers are called to guard the heart, cultivate integrity, and pursue holiness that flows from the indwelling Word and Spirit. The twelve occurrences of 2081 collectively remind the church that God's gaze penetrates "within," that sin's cure must reach the core, and that eternal glory is already written on the inside pages of His sovereign scroll.

HOWEVER

1161. de

Strong's Greek 1161, δέ, appears approximately 2,810 times in the Greek New Testament. Though often rendered "but," "and," or "now," **its real force is to mark a transition**—sometimes contrasting, sometimes sequential, always purposeful. Understanding its use helps modern readers trace the flow of biblical argument, narrative, and exhortation, revealing the inspired authors' careful movement from one thought to the next.

Grammatical and Stylistic Function

- Post-positive conjunction: almost always the second word in its clause, allowing the initial word to carry emphasis while δέ quietly signals the relationship.
- Range of nuance: mild contrast ("but"), simple continuation ("and"), contextual spotlight ("now").
- Rhythm and pacing: δέ punctuates sentences, producing the biblical writers' characteristic cadence, especially evident when reading aloud in Greek.

Textual and Exegetical Significance

Failing to observe δέ can flatten a passage's structure; noticing it often reveals:

1. A deliberate contrast of ideas ([Galatians 5:22](#), "But the fruit of the Spirit...")
2. A narrative pivot ([Matthew 4:4](#), "But Jesus answered...").
3. A soft transition that threads events together ([Acts 2:43](#), "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles." The δέ that opens [Acts 2:43](#) connects the wonder to the preceding fellowship without interrupting the flow).

Usage in the Synoptic Gospels

- Matthew often positions δέ to highlight messianic fulfillment. [Matthew 1:18](#): "Now (δέ) the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way." The conjunction brings prophetic expectation directly into historical realization.
- Mark, known for vivid immediacy, uses δέ to slow his characteristic "immediately" (εὐθύς) pace, drawing attention to teaching moments ([Mark 4:40](#)).
- Luke balances historical narration and theological insight. [Luke 24:38](#): "But He said to them, 'Why are you troubled?'" δέ shifts from astonishment to assurance.

Usage in Acts

Acts employs δέ more than any other New Testament book. Luke uses it to:

1. Link geographic expansion: "But (δέ) you will receive power... and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ([Acts 1:8](#))

2. Signal fresh episodes within one speech or journey ([Acts 16:40](#)).
3. Contrast human decision with divine guidance ([Acts 5:29](#)).

Usage in Pauline Epistles

Paul's logic turns on δέ to:

- Contrast flesh and Spirit ([Romans 8:9](#)).
- Transition from doctrine to doxology ([Ephesians 3:20](#)).
- Move from indicative to imperative ([Colossians 3:1](#)).

In [Galatians 2:20](#) Paul places δέ twice: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but (δέ) Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up (δέ) for me." Each δέ completes the gospel-centered contrast.

Usage in Johannine Writings

John prefers stark contrasts—light versus darkness, truth versus lie. δέ frequently marks these dichotomies:

- [John 1:12](#), "But (δέ) to all who did receive Him..."
- [1 John 1:7](#), "But (δέ) if we walk in the light, as He is in the light..."

In Revelation, δέ balances judgment with promise ([Revelation 2:17](#)).

Revelatory Pattern in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Texts

When δέ appears in quotations of Hebrew prophecy, it often mirrors the Hebrew waw-consecutive, maintaining narrative continuity while introducing climactic fulfillment ([Matthew 12:17-18](#); [Isaiah 42:1](#)).

Theological Emphases Signaled by δέ

1. Grace over law: [Galatians 3:11-12](#).
2. Life over death: [Romans 6:23](#), "For the wages of sin is death, but (δέ) the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
3. Hope over despair: [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#).
4. Divine initiative over human inability: [Ephesians 2:4-5](#).

Preaching and Teaching Implications

- Observing δέ allows preachers to honor inspired structure, helping congregations follow the Spirit-intended flow.
- In counseling, δέ moments supply gospel "turning points"—moving from problem to provision.
- Bible teachers can train students to mark δέ in personal study, sharpening observation skills.

Historical Reception and Translation

Early English versions alternated “but,” “and,” and “now,” sometimes omitting δέ when English style seemed to require fewer conjunctions. Modern essentially literal translations, including the Berean Standard Bible, more consistently preserve it, aiding readers’ awareness of the inspired text’s connective tissue.

Summary

**ALTHOUGH δέ IS SMALL,
SCRIPTURE’S MESSAGE TRAVELS ON ITS HINGE.**

Whether contrasting darkness with light, death with life, or law with grace, δέ steadily guides readers through revelation’s unfolding story, ensuring they neither miss a pivot of truth nor lose the narrative thread that binds Genesis to Revelation.

RAVENOUS

727. harpax

Topical Lexicon

Meaning and Scope

Strong’s Greek 727 portrays a person who seizes what is not his—an extortioner, pillager, or rapacious swindler.

The idea moves BEYOND PETTY THEFT TO A PREDATORY HEART THAT WILL VIOLATE

RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE, AND COMPASSION IN ORDER TO SATISFY SELFISH APPETITE.

In Scripture the word is morally weighted; it exposes a posture opposed to the character of God, whose law protects the weak, vindicates the oppressed, and requires honest dealings ([Leviticus 19:35-36](#); [Deuteronomy 24:14-15](#)).

Occurrences in the New Testament

1. [Matthew 7:15](#) – *“Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”*
2. [Luke 18:11](#) – “The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, *‘God, I thank You that I am not like the other men—swindlers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.’*”
3. [1 Corinthians 5:10](#) – “I was not including the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, for then you would have to leave the world.”
4. [1 Corinthians 5:11](#) – “But now I am writing you not to associate with anyone who claims to be a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a verbal abuser, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.”
5. [1 Corinthians 6:10](#) – “nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor verbal abusers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

Narrative Function in the Gospels

IN MATTHEW, “RAVENOUS”
ILLUSTRATES THE DANGER OF
DISGUISED EVIL. FALSE PROPHETS DO
NOT MERELY MISLEAD; THEY DEVOUR.
THE WORD PAINTS A WOLF TEARING
PREY, WARNING DISCIPLES THAT
DOCTRINAL ERROR OFTEN RIDES

ON THE BACK OF PREDATORY SELF-INTEREST.

Luke records the Pharisee's self-righteous prayer. By contrasting himself with "swindlers," he unwittingly exposes his own pride, proving that moral comparison cannot justify anyone before God (cf. [Romans 3:23](#)).

Pauline Emphasis in 1 Corinthians

Writing to a fragmented congregation surrounded by vice, Paul twice lists "swindlers" among sins that necessitate church discipline ([1 Corinthians 5:10-11](#)) and once among vices that bar entrance to the kingdom ([1 Corinthians 6:10](#)). Three themes emerge:

- Gospel boundaries – The church must distinguish itself from the world by refusing fellowship to unrepentant predators who claim Christ yet exploit others.
- Equality of sin – Extortion is cataloged with idolatry and sexual immorality; economic oppression is as serious as the sins that churches more readily condemn.
- Transformation – The very next verse declares, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed..." ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#)). The grace that saves also reforms financial and relational ethics.

Historical and Cultural Background

In the first-century Roman world, economic abuse thrived under tax farming, patronage, and corrupt magistrates. Jewish tradition equally despised such behavior: prophets decried those who "trample on the poor" ([Amos 2:7](#)) and "devour widows' houses" ([Isaiah 10:2](#)). Against that backdrop...

the New Testament word evokes both Roman legal alarms and Hebrew prophetic outrage, calling believers to embody the justice of the kingdom.

Theological Significance

1. Holiness – God's nature is generous and just; predatory greed contradicts His holiness and profanes His people ([Leviticus 19:2](#)).

2. Love of Neighbor – Extortion violates the second great commandment by turning neighbors into commodities to be exploited ([Matthew 22:39](#)).
3. Kingdom Ethics – Inclusion in the coming kingdom is tied to ethical renewal now. Persisting in swindling proves a heart unmoved by grace ([1 John 3:10](#)).
4. Divine Retribution – Scripture assures that unrepentant oppressors face judgment ([James 5:1-5](#)), underscoring the moral order of God’s universe.

Pastoral and Disciplinary Application

- Church leadership must guard the flock from financial predators, whether in pulpit, pew, or parachurch enterprise.
- Discipline aims at restoration. A “swindler” who repents must find open doors for reconciliation and restitution ([2 Corinthians 2:7-8](#); [Luke 19:8-9](#)).
- Teaching on stewardship should stress contentment ([1 Timothy 6:6](#)), honest labor ([Ephesians 4:28](#)), and generosity ([2 Corinthians 9:6-8](#)) as antidotes to the rapacious spirit.
- Accountability structures—clear financial reporting, plural leadership, and transparent benevolence—help prevent abuse within ministries.

Warning Against Spiritual Predation

[Matthew 7:15](#) links false prophecy with rapacity. Doctrine and ethics are inseparable; teachers who distort truth often exploit people. Testing spirits ([1 John 4:1](#)), examining fruit ([Matthew 7:16](#)), and holding leaders to high standards ([Titus 1:7](#)) protect the church from wolves.

Hope of Redemption

The Corinthian correspondence shows that even extortioners can become saints. “You were washed... you were sanctified... you were justified” ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#)). **Zacchaeus stands as a living parable:**

once a chief tax collector, *he pledged fourfold restitution*, and Jesus declared, “Today salvation has come to this house” ([Luke 19:9](#)). Grace not only forgives but transforms predators into benefactors.

Contemporary Relevance

MODERN SWINDLING MAY APPEAR IN PREDATORY LENDING, EMBEZZLEMENT, FRAUDULENT MINISTRY FUNDRAISING, OR EXPLOITATION OF VULNERABLE LABORERS. THE BIBLICAL PROHIBITION REMAINS URGENT: FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST MUST RESIST SYSTEMS AND PERSONAL PRACTICES THAT SEIZE RATHER THAN SERVE.

Missional integrity demands a reputation for fiscal transparency and sacrificial generosity, reflecting the Savior who *“though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor”* ([2 Corinthians 8:9](#)).

Summary

Strong’s Greek 727 confronts the temptation to enrich self at another’s expense and calls God’s people to honest, generous, protective love. The term slices through outward religiosity to expose the heart, insists on disciplined purity within the church, and magnifies the redeeming power of the gospel that can turn the most rapacious soul into a channel of blessing.

WOLF

3074. lukos

Topical Lexicon

General Meaning and Symbolism

THE WOLF REPRESENTS PREDATORY THREAT, CUNNING FEROCITY, AND DESTRUCTIVE INTENT TOWARD THE COVENANT PEOPLE OF GOD.

Scripture consistently employs the image to contrast the vulnerability of the faithful (“sheep”) with the danger posed by both external persecutors and internal deceivers.

Old Testament Background

Wolves appear in early prophetic poetry ([Genesis 49:27](#)), wisdom imagery ([Proverbs 30:29–31](#)), and judgments against corrupt leaders ([Ezekiel 22:27](#); [Zephaniah 3:3](#)). These references furnish a conceptual backdrop in which **wolves personify ruthless oppression and unrestrained appetite**, preparing readers to recognize the same spiritual menace in the New Testament.

Occurrences in the New Testament

- [Matthew 7:15](#) *warns of “false prophets...inwardly...ravenous wolves,” exposing hypocrisy masked by piety.*
- [Matthew 10:16](#) and [Luke 10:3](#) frame apostolic mission: *“I am sending you out like sheep (or lambs) among wolves.”* The juxtaposition highlights dependence on divine protection and calls for sanctified prudence.
- [John 10:12](#) **twice pictures the wolf scattering the flock when the hireling flees**, sharpening the contrast between hired labor and the Good Shepherd.
- [Acts 20:29](#) records **Paul’s prophecy to the Ephesian elders: “savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock,”** prefiguring the doctrinal battles of the post-apostolic era.

Contrast between the Good Shepherd and Wolves

[John 10](#) develops the antithesis. Wolves destroy; the Shepherd lays down His life ([John 10:11](#)). Wolves scatter; the Shepherd gathers ([John 10:16](#)). The image magnifies Christ's sacrificial guardianship and exposes any leadership that abandons the vulnerable.

False Prophets and Apostate Teachers

[Matthew 7:15](#) and [Acts 20:29](#) identify wolves with corrupt teachers who arise from within ecclesial structures. They are not primarily secular persecutors but professing believers whose doctrine and lifestyle devour the unsuspecting. Their danger lies in deception; they may “look” religious (sheep’s clothing) yet deny the gospel’s transforming power.

Missionary Vulnerability and Divine Provision

Jesus' commission in [Matthew 10:16](#) / [Luke 10:3](#) acknowledges the church's precarious position in a hostile world. The instruction to be “shrewd as

serpents and innocent as doves” balances strategic discernment with moral purity. Dependence on worldly power is rejected; instead, disciples rely on the Spirit, hospitality, and the Shepherd’s promise of ultimate vindication.

Pastoral Oversight and Church Discipline

Paul’s charge in [Acts 20:28-31](#) tasks elders with vigilant watchfulness:

1. Guard personal doctrine and life.
2. Protect the flock through teaching the whole counsel of God.
3. Confront and remove wolves when necessary ([Titus 1:10-11](#)).

In practice, this demands catechesis, apologetics, and corrective discipline rooted in Scripture.

Eschatological Expectation

[Isaiah 11:6](#) foresees a messianic age when
“the wolf will dwell with the lamb,”
signaling the final removal of predatory hostility.

**UNTIL THEN, BELIEVERS ANTICIPATE CONFLICT, BUT THEY
LOOK TOWARD THE CONSUMMATION WHEN CHRIST
SUBDUES EVERY ADVERSARY.**

Practical Ministry Considerations

- ***Evaluate teaching by Scripture, not charisma.***
- Cultivate congregational discernment through expositional preaching.
- Foster shepherding relationships that know, feed, and guard the flock.

- Pray for boldness and patience when confronting wolf-like opposition.
- Remember that the battle is the Lord's.

Ultimate security rests in the Chief Shepherd ([1 Peter 5:4](#)).

Summary

Strong's Greek 3074 portrays wolves as perennial threats to God's people—embodied in persecution, false doctrine, and spiritual exploitation. The motif calls believers to vigilance, wisdom, and unwavering trust in the Good Shepherd, whose sacrificial care ensures the flock's final safety and the wolves' inevitable defeat.

Matthew 7:16

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
575 [e]	ἀπὸ apo	By	Prep
3588 [e]	τῶν tōn	the	Art-GMP

2590 [e]	καρπῶν karpōn	fruits	N-GMP
846 [e]	αὐτῶν autōn	of them	PPro-GM3P
1921 [e]	ἐπιγνώσεσθε epignōsesthe	you will know	V-FIM-2P
846 [e]	αὐτούς. autous	them.	PPro-AM3P
3385 [e]	μήτι mēti	Not	IntPrtcl
4816 [e]	συλλέγουσιν syllegousin	do they gather	V-PIA-3P
575 [e]	ἀπὸ apo	from	Prep
173 [e]	ἀκανθῶν akanthōn	thorns	N-GFP
4718 [e]	σταφυλᾶς staphylas	grapes,	N-AFP
2228 [e]	ἢ ē	or	Conj
575 [e]	ἀπὸ apo	from	Prep
5146 [e]	τριβόλων tribolōn	thistles	N-GMP

4810 [e]	σῦκα; syka	figs?	N-ANP
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FRUITS

2590. karpos

Topical Lexicon

Agricultural Background and Biblical Imagery

In the agrarian world of ancient Israel, “fruit” was the visible proof of a healthy tree or vine. Orchards, vineyards, and grain fields dominated the landscape, making καρπός an everyday reminder that life, labor, and blessing come from God. The law’s first-fruits offerings ([Exodus 23:19](#)) and the prophets’ frequent vineyard parables furnished a theological framework in which **physical produce symbolized covenant faithfulness or failure** ([Isaiah 5:1-7](#)).

When the New Testament writers invoke καρπός, they draw from this shared backdrop.

Literal Produce in the Gospels

A handful of passages employ καρπός for actual agricultural yield. Jesus approaches a fig tree “finding no fruit on it” and pronounces judgment ([Matthew 21:19](#); [Mark 11:14](#)), dramatizing Israel’s barrenness. Workers in parables seek “fruit” at harvest ([Matthew 21:34](#); [Mark 4:29](#); [Luke 20:10](#)). Such references ground the word in concrete reality while preparing hearers for its spiritual extensions.

Fruit as Evidence of Spiritual Identity

Repeatedly, fruit discloses the nature of the tree. **“Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit”** ([Matthew 7:17-18](#)).

This principle undergirds Jesus' warnings against false prophets ([Matthew 7:15-20](#)) and His demand for integrity: ***"By your fruit you will be recognized"*** ([Matthew 12:33](#)).

Believers' works reveal their regenerated nature; counterfeit disciples may profess loudly yet remain fruitless.

Fruit and Repentance

John the Baptist's clarion call—***"Produce fruit worthy of repentance"*** ([Matthew 3:8](#); [Luke 3:8](#)) — places ethical transformation at the heart of conversion.

Repentance is not merely emotional regret; it yields observable righteousness.

Trees failing to produce are "cut down and thrown into the fire" ([Matthew 3:10](#); [Luke 3:9](#)),
anticipating final judgment.

Abiding in the True Vine

The most concentrated teaching appears in [John 15](#). **Eleven times** καρπός surfaces as Jesus urges His disciples to "remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself... so neither can you" ([John 15:4-5](#)).

Fruitfulness is impossible apart from union with Christ; conversely, abundant fruit glorifies the Father and proves true discipleship ([John 15:8](#)).

The fruit envisioned includes character, obedience, prayer-driven results, and disciple multiplication ([John 15:16](#)).

The Spirit-Produced Character

Paul distills Christian virtue into the nine-fold “fruit of the Spirit” ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

Unlike the plural “works” of the flesh, this singular fruit depicts a unified Christlike life wrought by the Spirit— *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”*

[Ephesians 5:9](#) adds *“the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth,”* linking ethical conduct to the believer’s new identity.

Fruit of Righteousness and Holiness

[Philippians 1:11](#) *prays that saints be “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.”*

Hebrews echoes, asserting that *God's loving discipline "yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it"* ([Hebrews 12:11](#)).

[Romans 6](#) contrasts former "fruit" leading to death ([Romans 6:21](#)) with present fruit "leading to sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life" ([Romans 6:22](#)).

Thus,

holiness is fruit both produced by grace and aimed at eternity.

Fruit of Ministry, Giving, and Worship

Missionary labor is envisioned as a harvest:

Paul longs to "reap some fruit among you also" ([Romans 1:13](#)) and regards the Gentile collection for Jerusalem as "this fruit" ([Romans 15:28](#)).

Generous giving accrues spiritual profit: "Not that I am seeking a gift, but I am looking for **fruit** that may be credited to your account" ([Philippians 4:17](#)).

The author of *Hebrews* calls praise "*the fruit of lips that confess His name*" ([Hebrews 13:15](#)), **widening the term to include verbal worship.**

Prophetic and Eschatological Outlook

James counsels patient endurance like "the farmer waiting for the precious fruit of the earth" ([James 5:7](#)), while [Revelation 22:2](#) envisions the tree of life "bearing twelve kinds of fruit" for the healing of the nations. **The trajectory of Scripture moves from Eden's forfeited fruit to the New Jerusalem's everlasting supply, depicting complete restoration.**

Pastoral Applications

1. EXAMINE ROOTS, NOT MERELY RESULTS: lasting fruit arises from genuine union with Christ.

2. PURSUE SPIRIT-FILLED OBEDIENCE; moral effort alone cannot reproduce the fruit of the Spirit.

3. VALUE EVERY ARENA OF FRUITFULNESS—character, converts, generosity, praise—as integral to Christian maturity.

4. REMEMBER ACCOUNTABILITY: the Owner seeks fruit in its season; stewardship now anticipates reckoning later.

5. HOPE CONFIDENTLY: despite present toil, a harvest is assured, culminating in the eternal orchard of Revelation.

Summary

Whether literal crops, ethical deeds, Spirit-wrought virtues, evangelistic outcomes, or sacrificial gifts, καρπός threads the New Testament with a call to visible, God-glorifying productivity.

ANCHORED IN CHRIST THE VINE, NURTURED BY THE SPIRIT, AND DESTINED FOR ETERNAL DISPLAY, CHRISTIAN FRUITFULNESS UNITES DOCTRINE, DISCIPLESHIP, AND DOXOLOGY IN ONE LIVING TESTIMONY TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

YOU WILL KNOW

1921. epiginóskó

Lexical Summary

epiginóskō: To know, to recognize, to perceive, to understand fully.

Original Word: ἐπιγινώσκω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: epiginóskō

Pronunciation: eh-pee-ghee-NO-sko

Phonetic Spelling: (ep-ig-in-ocē'-ko)

KJV: (ac-, have, take)know(-ledge, well), perceive

NASB: know, recognized, recognize, learned, understand, ascertain, aware

Word Origin: [from [G1909 \(ἐπί - over\)](#) and [G1097 \(γινώσκω - know\)](#)]

1. to know upon some mark, i.e. recognize
2. (by implication) to become fully acquainted with, to acknowledge

see GREEK [ginosko](#)

HELPS Word-studies

1921 epiginóskō (from 1909 /epí, "on, fitting" which intensifies 1097 /ginóskō, "know through personal relationship") – properly, *apt, experiential knowing, through direct relationship*.

This knowing *builds on* (*epi, "upon"*) the verbal idea and hence is defined by the individual context.

Example: 1 Cor 13:12: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will *aptly-experientially know* ([1921](#) /epiginóskō) to the extent ([2531](#) /kathōs) I also have been *aptly-experientially known* ([1921](#) /epiginóskō)."

[Believers then will *personally* (aptly) know the Lord throughout the aeons of eternity – in keeping with *the extent* (Gk *kathōs*) they allowed Him to *personally* (aptly) know *them* here on earth.

"Been known" is the passive form of [1921](#) /epiginóskō (aorist indicative, *epegnōsthēn*), indicating that the level we will experientially know (enjoy) God in eternity will "match" the level we *were known by Him in this life* (see also P. Hughs at 2 Cor 1:13).

1097 (*ginōskō*) is used once in this verse, and [1921](#) (*epiginóskō*) twice. Both uses of [1921](#) (*epiginóskō*) work in conjunction with the Greek adverb, [2531](#) /kathōs ("to the extent of)." The "appropriate (apt)" knowledge matches the envisioned "contact" (note the root, [1097](#) /ginōskō, "first-hand knowing").]

Topical Lexicon

Overview

Strong's Greek 1921 (epiginōskō) expresses an intensive, often relational knowledge: the movement from mere awareness to full recognition, acknowledgement, or discernment.

Its occurrences sweep from immediate, sense-based recognition in the Gospels to profound theological insight in the Epistles, portraying a progressively deepening grasp of Christ, truth, and one another.

Recognition of Jesus' Person and Works

In the Synoptic narratives the verb underscores moments when Jesus' identity or authority becomes unmistakably clear. After healings at Gennesaret, "the men of that place recognized Jesus" ([Matthew 14:35](#)), rushing to Him for wholeness. The Emmaus disciples' hearts burn as "their eyes were opened and they recognized Him" ([Luke 24:31](#)), situating epiginōskō at the pivot between despair and resurrection faith. Such episodes reveal that **true recognition of Christ is divinely granted yet demands human response.**

Discernment of Character by Fruit

Jesus applies the verb to moral testing: "By their fruit you will recognize them" ([Matthew 7:16, 20](#)). The instruction equips believers to evaluate prophets and teachers by observable

outcomes, linking recognition to ethical evidence and safeguarding the flock from deception.

Apostolic Insight and Evangelistic Credibility

In Acts, epiginōskō illustrates the credibility of the church before a watching world. The Jerusalem crowd “recognized him as the same man who had sat begging at the Beautiful Gate” ([Acts 3:10](#)), authenticating the apostles’ miracle.

Authorities “recognized that they had been with Jesus” ([Acts 4:13](#)), conceding an undeniable transformation.

Sailors in crisis fail to “recognize the land” ([Acts 27:39](#)), contrasting human uncertainty with apostolic certainty derived from divine revelation.

Pastoral Discernment and Congregational Relationships

Paul urges the Corinthians to esteem faithful workers: “Therefore recognize such men” ([1 Corinthians 16:18](#)). Mutual recognition fosters unity and affirms Spirit-wrought service. Likewise, the participle in [2 Corinthians 6:9](#) (“known, yet regarded as unknown”) highlights apostolic authenticity misread by the world but accurately discerned by spiritual eyes.

Doctrinal Depth and Redemptive Knowledge

Epiginōskō shades into epignōsis (full knowledge) in the Epistles, stressing the transformative comprehension of gospel truth. *The Colossians “heard and understood the grace of God in truth” ([Colossians 1:6](#)), a recognition*

bearing fruit and growth. False teachers in [1 Timothy 4:3](#) stand opposed to *“those who believe and know the truth,”* **MARKING SAVING RECOGNITION AS THE DIVIDING LINE WITHIN THE CHURCH.**

Warning against Rejected Knowledge

Peter exposes apostasy: “It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then to turn away” ([2 Peter 2:21](#)).

[Romans 1:32](#) portrays humanity that “although they know God’s righteous decree,” still embraces sin.

EPIGINŌSKŌ THEREFORE CARRIES SOLEMN ACCOUNTABILITY; FULLER LIGHT INTENSIFIES JUDGMENT WHEN SPURNED.

Future Consummation of Knowledge

The hope of perfected recognition shines in [1 Corinthians 13:12](#): “Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” Present partiality yields to eschatological completeness, assuring believers that God’s exhaustive knowledge of them will be mirrored in their perfected knowledge of Him and His purposes.

Historical and Ministry Significance

Across centuries the church has leaned on epiginōskō to articulate assurance of salvation, criteria for discernment, and the balance between divine revelation and human responsibility. Early creeds, Reformation emphasis on verbum Dei, and contemporary discipleship all trace the path from initial awareness to mature recognition.

Pastoral ministry today continues to call congregations from superficial acquaintance with gospel facts to deep, relational knowledge that

bears fruit, guards against error, and anticipates the day when *"we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."*

Matthew 7:17 ►

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
3779 [e]	οὕτως houtōs	So	Adv
3956 [e]	πάν pan	every	Adj-NNS
1186 [e]	δένδρον dendron	tree	N-NNS
18 [e]	ἀγαθόν agathon	good,	Adj-NNS
2590 [e]	καρπούς karpous	fruits	N-AMP
2570 [e]	καλοὺς kalous	good	Adj-AMP
4160 [e]	ποιεῖ, poiei	produces;	V-PIA-3S
3588 [e]	τὸ to	-	Art-NNS

1161 [e]	δὲ de	but	Conj
4550 [e]	σαπρὸν sapron	the bad	Adj-NNS
1186 [e]	δένδρον dendron	tree,	N-NNS
2590 [e]	καρπούς karpous	fruits	N-AMP
4190 [e]	πονηροὺς ponērous	bad	Adj-AMP
4160 [e]	ποιεῖ· poiei	produces.	V-PIA-3S

GOOD #1

18. agathos

HELPS Word-studies

18 *agathós* – **inherently (intrinsically) good**; as to the believer, [18](#) (*agathós*) describes **WHAT ORIGINATES FROM GOD AND IS EMPOWERED BY HIM IN THEIR LIFE, THROUGH FAITH.**

Topical Lexicon

Scope and Range of New Testament Usage

The ἀγαθός word-group portrays what accords with God's character and promotes His purposes. It can describe moral virtue ([Romans 7:12](#)),

beneficent action ([Galatians 6:10](#)), wholesome condition ([Luke 8:15](#)), material blessing ([Luke 1:53](#)), or eschatological reward ([John 5:29](#)). Context decides whether the nuance is ethical, practical, relational, or eschatological, yet every use is tethered to the conviction that true “good” is defined by God and revealed in His Son and word.

The Absolute Goodness of God

Jesus declared, “No one is good except God alone”
([Mark 10:18](#)).

THIS FOUNDATIONAL ASSERTION SAFEGUARDS THE TRANSCENDENCE OF DIVINE GOODNESS AND SETS THE STANDARD FOR EVERY OTHER USE. God’s goodness is:

- **Creative:** “God saw that it was good” ([Genesis 1](#), LXX).
- **Providential:** “He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good” ([Matthew 5:45](#)).
- **Redemptive:** “He works all things together for good to those who love Him” ([Romans 8:28](#)).

James 1:17 gathers these threads:

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.”

Jesus Christ and the Question of ‘Good Teacher’

When the rich ruler addressed Jesus as “Good Teacher” ([Luke 18:18](#)), the Lord replied, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone” ([Luke 18:19](#)). Far from denying His deity, Jesus pressed the ruler to recognize that acknowledging His goodness entailed confessing His divine identity and authority. The passage anchors New Testament christology in the absolute goodness already ascribed to God.

Goodness and the Law

[Romans 7](#) highlights the Law’s inherent goodness while exposing human inability:

- “So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good” ([Romans 7:12](#)).
- “What is good became death to me? Certainly not!” ([Romans 7:13](#)).

The Law reflects God’s moral goodness, yet can only condemn the sinner who lacks the Spirit’s life. Thus “the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us” ([Romans 8:4](#)) through the gospel.

Good Works Prepared for Believers

Salvation is “not by works” yet “for good works”:

- “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” ([Ephesians 2:10](#)).
- Scripture equips “the man of God... for every good work” ([2 Timothy 3:17](#)).
- Believers are to “learn to devote themselves to good works” ([Titus 3:14](#)).

Good works are the Spirit’s fruit ([Galatians 5:22–23](#) implied), evidence of faith ([James 3:13](#); [1 Timothy 5:10](#)), and a witness that silences critics ([1 Peter 2:15](#)).

Good Conscience and Integrity in Ministry

A “good conscience” safeguards authentic ministry:

- Paul before the Sanhedrin: “I have lived before God in all good conscience to this day” ([Acts 23:1](#)).
- The goal of instruction: “love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith” ([1 Timothy 1:5](#)).
- Baptism appeals to God “for a good conscience” ([1 Peter 3:21](#)).

Integrity, transparency, and ethical consistency flow from the regenerated heart.

Good Soil and Receptivity to the Word

The parable of the sower distinguishes “the seed on good soil” ([Luke 8:15](#)). Such hearts:

1. “hear the word,”
2. “retain it,”
3. “by persevering produce a crop.”

Fruitfulness arises not from innate human quality but from God’s preparatory grace, illustrating how goodness is both received and reproduced.

Good Things: Material and Eschatological Dimensions

- Temporal blessing: “He has filled the hungry with good things” ([Luke 1:53](#)).
- Wealth’s stewardship: the rich fool’s “many good things” ([Luke 12:18–19](#)) warns against hoarding.
- Eternal reward: “those who have done good will rise to a resurrection of life” ([John 5:29](#)); “each will receive what is due for the things done in the body, whether good or bad” ([2 Corinthians 5:10](#)).

Thus present gifts are to be enjoyed with gratitude and invested with eternity in view.

Doing Good to All

Christian ethics extends goodness beyond the household of faith:

- “Let us do good to everyone, and especially to the family of faith” ([Galatians 6:10](#)).
- “See that no one repays evil for evil, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all” ([1 Thessalonians 5:15](#)).
- Even slaves are urged to be “submissive... not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust” ([1 Peter 2:18](#)).

Active benevolence reflects God’s common grace and opens doors for gospel testimony.

Goodness in Pastoral Encouragement

New Testament writers repeatedly encourage believers with the prospect and presence of goodness:

- *“May the Lord... establish you in every good work and word”* ([2 Thessalonians 2:16–17](#)).
- *“May the God of peace... equip you with every good thing to do His will”* ([Hebrews 13:20–21](#)).
- *“I am confident that He who began a good work in you will continue to perfect it”* ([Philippians 1:6](#)).

Pastors and teachers draw on these promises to nurture confidence, perseverance, and joyful service.

Summary

Every occurrence of ἀγαθός in the New Testament converges on one theological axis: God is good, and He purposes to share and display that goodness in creation, redemption, sanctification, and consummation. From the Law's demands to the Spirit's enablement, from Christ's perfect life to the believer's daily walk, goodness is both the divine standard and the gracious gift that shapes the life and hope of the people of God.

PRODUCES

4160. ποιέó

Topical Lexicon

The Dynamic Scope of ποιέω in the New Testament

Chosen by the inspired writers almost six-hundred times, ποιέω stands behind an enormous range of activity—creation, covenant obedience, miracle, sin, worship, pastoral labor, and eschatological consummation. Whether rendered “make,” “do,” “produce,” “practice,” or “cause,” the verb always stresses purposeful action. Its frequency and flexibility show that biblical faith is never mere contemplation but an embodied, God-directed way of life.

Creation and Providence

In [Acts 17:24](#) Paul declares to the Athenians, “The God who made the world and everything in it is Lord of heaven and earth.” By echoing [Genesis 1](#), ποιέω locates the gospel within God’s creative sovereignty. [Hebrews 1:2](#) likewise credits the Son “through whom He made the universe,” uniting cosmology with Christology. Even the angelic proclamation of [Revelation 14:7](#)—“Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of waters”—shows that creation language remains evangelistic and eschatological.

Covenant Obedience and Moral Choice

Jesus presses ποιέω into ethical service: “Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother” ([Matthew 12:50](#)). The Sermon on the Mount culminates with the wise man “who hears these words of Mine and does them”

([Matthew 7:24](#)). Paul applies the same verb to civil righteousness—magistrates reward “the one who does good” ([Romans 13:4](#))—and James cites it for whole-law obedience ([James 2:10](#)). Thus ποιέω links hearing and doing, confession and conduct.

Sin and Lawlessness

Negative uses expose rebellious practice. [John 3:20](#) notes that “everyone who does evil hates the light,” and [1 John 3:4](#) equates “practicing sin” with lawlessness. [Romans 1:32](#) indicts a culture that “not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who do them.” The same verb that celebrates obedience unmasks depravity, sharpening moral accountability.

The Works of Christ

The Gospels spotlight ποιέω for the Savior’s redemptive mission. Jesus testifies, “The works the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works I am doing—bear witness about Me” ([John 5:36](#)). His earthly ministry is summarized in [Acts 1:1](#) as what He “began to do and to teach,” an unfinished program extended through His body, the church ([Acts 1:8](#)). John piles up the aorist forms to catalog specific signs (for example [John 2:11](#); 9:6; 11:45), culminating in the narrative’s purpose statement: “Jesus performed many other signs... that you may believe” ([John 20:30-31](#)).

Miracles and Signs

When the crowds exclaim, “He has done all things well” ([Mark 7:37](#)), ποιέω voices wonder at divine intervention. Peter tells Cornelius that Jesus “went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil” ([Acts 10:38](#)). The verb shows that biblical miracles are deeds, not illusions—tangible intrusions of the kingdom.

Sacrificial and Priestly Dimension

[Hebrews 7:27](#) contrasts Christ’s once-for-all offering with priests “who did this daily.” In 9:25 the Levitical high priest “entered annually to make atonement.” ποιέω highlights both repetition under the old order and finality under the new. The cleansing accomplished (ἁμαρτιῶν ποιήσας) situates Calvary as decisive divine action.

Discipleship and Ethics

Jesus’ pattern-setting act at the Last Supper reveals the verb’s formative power: “I have set you an example so that you should do as I have done for you” ([John 13:15](#)). Paul applies the same logic pastorally, urging believers, “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus” ([Colossians 3:17](#); cf. 3:23). The verb fuels imperatives to generosity ([Luke 12:33](#)), evangelistic compassion ([Jude 1:23–25](#)), and perseverance in well-doing ([Galatians 6:9](#)).

Evangelistic Ministry and Apostolic Record

Luke summarizes missions reports with ποιέω: “They described all that God had done through them” ([Acts 14:27](#)). Paul defends his apostleship by reminding the Corinthians, “Did I commit a sin... because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I humbled myself... so that you might be exalted” ([2 Corinthians 11:7](#)). The verb frames both the content and the method of gospel labor.

Corporate Worship

The Lord’s Supper command employs ποιέω: “Do this in remembrance of Me” ([Luke 22:19](#); [1 Corinthians 11:24-25](#)). Here doing equals commemorating the covenant meal, binding liturgical practice to Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice and ongoing presence.

Eschatological Fulfillment

Revelation repeatedly warns of counterfeit deeds (13:13-16) and commends faithful ones (22:14-15). God “will make all things new” ([Revelation 21:5](#)), translating ποιέω into cosmic renewal. [Romans 9:28](#) quotes Isaiah to promise that the Lord “will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness,” showing that divine action will culminate history.

Pastoral Application

[1 Thessalonians 4:10](#) gently exhorts, “We urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.” Ministry fruitfulness, moral purity, and mutual edification all flow from Spirit-empowered doing, never from meritorious striving ([Titus 3:5](#)). [Ephesians 2:10](#) integrates grace and works: “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life.”

Representative Passages by Theme

Creation: [Acts 17:24](#); [Hebrews 1:2](#); [Revelation 14:7](#)

Obedience: [Matthew 7:21](#); [Matthew 12:50](#); [Romans 13:4](#)

Sin: [John 3:20](#); [Romans 1:32](#); [1 John 3:4](#)

Christ’s Ministry: [Acts 1:1](#); [John 5:36](#); [John 20:30](#)

Miracles: [Mark 7:37](#); [Acts 10:38](#)

Sacrifice: [Hebrews 7:27](#); [Hebrews 9:25](#)

Discipleship: [John 13:15](#); [Colossians 3:17](#)

Worship: [Luke 22:19](#); [1 Corinthians 11:24](#)

Mission: [Acts 14:27](#); [2 Corinthians 11:7](#)

Eschatology: [Revelation 21:5](#); [Romans 9:28](#)

In every dimension of redemptive history—from the making of the cosmos to the making of disciples—ποιέω anchors Scripture's call to active, obedient faith.

GOOD #2

2570. kalos

Lexical Summary

kalos: Good, beautiful, noble, excellent, honorable

Original Word: καλός

Part of Speech: Adjective

Transliteration: kalos

Pronunciation: kah-LOS

Phonetic Spelling: (kal-os')

KJV: X better, fair, good(-ly), honest, meet, well, worthy

NASB: good, better, fine, what is right, beautiful, commendable manner, excellent

Word Origin: [of uncertain affinity]

1. (properly) beautiful
2. (chiefly, figuratively) good
3. (literally) valuable
4. (morally) virtuous

{for appearance or use, and thus distinguished from G18, which is properly intrinsic}

HELPS Word-studies

2570 *kalós* – **ATTRACTIVELY GOOD; GOOD THAT INSPIRES (MOTIVATES) OTHERS TO EMBRACE WHAT IS LOVELY (BEAUTIFUL, PRAISEWORTHY);** i.e. well done so as to be winsome (appealing).

Topical Lexicon

Semantic Range and Nuances

Strong's 2570 gathers ideas of intrinsic excellence, moral beauty, suitability, and beneficence. **Unlike ἀγαθός, which often stresses benevolence, this word accents worth that is recognized and admired.** The term therefore moves easily between aesthetic, ethical, and practical spheres, allowing Scripture to describe actions, objects, persons, and outcomes as "good" in God's sight.

Association with God's Character

The adjective frequently points back to the goodness of God Himself. *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).*

Because God is the ultimate standard of καλός, whatever bears this quality reflects Him.

[John 10](#) applies the term directly to Christ: **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep"** ([John 10:11](#)). Here the word signals both noble character and sacrificial action.

Moral and Ethical Dimensions

[Romans 12:17](#) exhorts believers to "give thought to do what is right in the sight of everyone" (καλὰ), making visible conduct that even unbelievers can recognize as honorable.

[1 Peter 2:12](#) *urges Christians to maintain "good conduct among the Gentiles, so that..." unbelievers may glorify God.*

In [James 4:17](#) the adjective *defines sin by omission*: “*Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*” [καλός](#) therefore delineates a positive moral obligation.

Good Works and Christian Witness

[Matthew 5:16](#) frames good works as evangelistic: “*Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*”

Titus underlines their strategic value for church life and mission: “*Those who have believed God should be careful to devote themselves to good works*” ([Titus 3:8](#)); such works are “excellent and profitable for the people.”

[Hebrews 10:24](#) calls believers to “**CONSIDER HOW TO SPUR ONE ANOTHER ON TO LOVE AND GOOD DEEDS.**”

Contrasted with Evil or Worthless

Many texts set 2570 over against κακός or φαῦλος. [Galatians 6:9](#): “*Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not give up.*” [Romans 7](#) contrasts law’s goodness with indwelling sin: “I agree with the law that it is good” ([Romans 7:16](#)). The word thereby serves eschatological discernment: “**Test all things. Hold fast to what is good**” ([1 Thessalonians 5:21](#)).

Fruitfulness Metaphor

PARABLES OF THE SOWER AND OF THE NET use καλός to describe productive soil and select fish ([Matthew 13:8, 48](#); [Mark 4:8, 20](#); [Luke 8:15](#)).

The adjective characterizes what receives **the word, perseveres, and yields a harvest**.

It also identifies trees by their output: “Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit” ([Matthew 7:17](#)).

Fruitfulness, therefore, authenticates discipleship.

Christ as the Pattern of Noble Service

Beyond [John 10](#), [Mark 9:50](#) declares, “Salt is good,” but only as it retains character—mirroring disciples who must not lose their distinctiveness. Jesus praises a woman’s anointing as “a beautiful thing to Me” ([Mark 14:6](#)), affirming acts of devotion that align with His redemptive purpose.

Noble Warfare and Ministry

Paul employs 2570 to dignify gospel service:

“FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF THE FAITH”
([1 Timothy 6:12](#))

and later, “

I have fought the good fight”
([2 Timothy 4:7](#)).

The adjective links the Christian struggle to the noble cause of truth and salvation. Timothy is urged to “wage the good warfare” ([1 Timothy 1:18](#)), and elders must “have a good testimony from outsiders” ([1 Timothy 3:7](#)).

Goodness in Church Leadership

Overseers who serve well acquire “a good standing” ([1 Timothy 3:13](#)). Deeds of mercy likewise accrue a “good reputation” for widows ([1 Timothy 5:10](#)). **Such usage ties organizational qualifications to observable excellence.**

Eschatological Good

[Romans 14:21](#) and [1 Corinthians 8](#) situate καλός within the weaker-brother debate: the strong must forego lawful liberties when they cease to be “good” for a neighbor’s conscience.

Future reward is implied: “Storing up for themselves treasure as a good foundation for the future” ([1 Timothy 6:19](#)).

Historical and Jewish Background

In Septuagint usage καλός often translates טוב (tov), describing creation (“God saw that it was good,” [Genesis 1](#)) and covenant life ([Micah 6:8](#)). The New Testament continues this theological lineage, anchoring goodness in God’s creational intent and covenant faithfulness while intensifying its Christological focus.

Patristic Reflection

Early church writers employed καλός to express the integrity and attractiveness of martyrdom and charity. Ignatius of Antioch speaks of “good athletes” who finish the race, echoing Pauline imagery. Such writings perpetuated the New Testament vision that moral beauty draws outsiders to the gospel.

Contemporary Ministry Implications

2570 summons believers to visible, attractive holiness: service done well, speech seasoned rightly, craftsmanship reflecting care, and hospitality marked by excellence.

Pastors foster “patterns of good works” ([Titus 2:7](#)); congregations prioritize ministries “devoted to good works” ([Titus 3:14](#)) so that surrounding communities glimpse God’s character.

BAD #1

4550. sapos ▶

Lexical Summary

sapos: Rotten, corrupt, bad, worthless

Original Word: σαπρός

Part of Speech: Adjective

Transliteration: sapos

Pronunciation: sah-PROS

Phonetic Spelling: (sap-ros')

KJV: bad, corrupt

NASB: bad, unwholesome

Word Origin: [from [G4595 \(σήπω - rotted\)](#)]

1. rotten, i.e. worthless
{literally or morally}

HELPS Word-studies

4550 *sapros* – properly, *rotten* (putrid), over-ripe; (figuratively) *over-done* (ripened); hence, *corrupt*. "[4550](#) (*sapros*) is (akin to *sēpō*, 'to rot'), primarily, of vegetable and animal substances, expresses what is of poor quality, unfit for use, putrid" (Vine, Unger, White, NT, 49); *sapos* – "of poor or bad quality" (L & N, 1, 65.28).

Topical Lexicon

Root Meaning and Nuance

σαπρός conveys the idea of something that has **SUFFERED DECAY**—fish gone **PUTRID**, fruit turned mushy, words rendered toxic. In the Greco-Roman marketplace the term marked **produce unfit for consumption**;

in Scripture it marks lives, deeds and speech
unfit for the kingdom.

Occurrences in the Synoptic Gospels

1. [Matthew 7:17-18](#); [Luke 6:43](#). Jesus contrasts “good” and “bad” trees to expose the inner nature of prophets and disciples: “Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit” ([Matthew 7:17](#)). The metaphor insists that outward works inevitably disclose inward reality.
2. [Matthew 12:33](#). Addressing the Pharisees, Jesus presses the same point: “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad; for a tree is recognized by its fruit.” The call is not to cosmetic reform but to regenerating the tree’s very nature.
3. [Matthew 13:48](#). In the Parable of the Dragnet, fishermen “collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.” σαπρός signals final separation: the worthless is discarded when the kingdom’s net is drawn up.

Spiritual Metaphor: Moral Discernment

Jesus’ repeated pairing of καλός and σαπρός equips disciples to test teachers, movements and personal habits.

**THE OPPOSITION IS QUALITATIVE,
NOT MERELY QUANTITATIVE:**

a saπρός tree cannot produce intermittent good fruit; its essence corrupts every yield.

Holiness, therefore, is not an optional extra but
the very sap of the kingdom life.

Ethics of Speech: Paul's Development

[Ephesians 4:29](#) shifts the term from horticulture to conversation: *“Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building up the one in need and bringing grace to those who listen.”* Words may nourish or rot fellow believers. Paul frames speech as a stewardship: anything *saprós* is forbidden because it contradicts the new creation reality ([Ephesians 4:24](#)).

Old Testament Echoes

Though *σαπρός* is Greek, its moral resonance aligns with Proverbs' warnings about crooked speech ([Proverbs 4:24](#)) and Israel's regulations against offering blemished sacrifices ([Leviticus 22:20-22](#)). The covenant consistently rejects what is decayed or defiled in favor of what is whole and pleasing to the Lord.

Christological Focus

The Gospels portray Jesus as the perfectly “good tree” whose fruit—healing, teaching, atoning death—proves His identity. Conversely, the religious leaders' *saprós* fruit unmasks hearts far from God despite external piety.

The cross becomes the ultimate sorting, where the Sinless One absorbs humanity's rot to impart His righteousness.

Pastoral and Homiletical Implications

- [Discernment](#): Churches must evaluate ministries by fruit, not flair.
- [Sanctification](#): Genuine conversion replaces, rather than masks, *saprós* habits.
- Speech discipline: Edifying language is a primary mark of the Spirit-filled life.
- [Eschatology](#):

*The dragnet scene urges readiness;
worthless lives will be cast aside.*

- **Counseling:** Identifying root issues, not merely trimming rotten branches, leads to lasting change.

Summary

σαπρός functions as a vivid moral diagnostic across the New Testament.

**WHETHER DESCRIBING FISH, FRUIT OR SPEECH, IT
EXPOSES CORRUPTION THAT CANNOT COEXIST WITH
KINGDOM LIFE.**

The remedy is not superficial adjustment but the new birth that produces truly καλός fruit to the glory of God.

BAD #2

4190. ponéros ►

Lexical Summary

ponéros: Evil, wicked, bad, malicious

Original Word: πονηρός

Part of Speech: Adjective

Transliteration: ponéros

Pronunciation: po-nay-ROS

Phonetic Spelling: (pon-ay-ros')

KJV: bad, evil, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious, wicked(-ness)

NASB: evil, wicked, bad, evil one, crimes, envious, evil things

Word Origin: [from a derivative of G4192 (πόνος - pain)]

1. hurtful, i.e. evil
2. (figuratively) calamitous
3. (passively) ill, i.e. diseased
4. (especially, morally) culpable, derelict, vicious, atrociously wicked
5. (neuter, singular) mischief, malice
6. (neuter plural) guilt
7. (masculine, singular) the devil
8. (plural) sinners

{(properly) in effect or influence, and thus differing from G2556, which refers rather to essential character, as well as from G4550, which indicates degeneracy from original virtue}

HELPS Word-studies

4190 *ponēros* (an adjective which is also used substantively, derived from [4192](#) /*pónos*, "pain, laborious trouble") – properly, ***PAIN-RIDDEN, EMPHASIZING THE INEVITABLE AGONIES (MISERY) THAT ALWAYS GO WITH EVIL.***

Topical Lexicon Overview of Meaning

The adjective *πονηρός* portrays what is morally corrupt, injurious, and actively hostile toward God's design.

It can describe a person, a generation, a thought, a deed, a spiritual power, or even a climactic "day" of intensified opposition.

The term is never ethically neutral;

it is the settled antithesis of divine goodness.

Continuity with the Old Testament

In the Septuagint πονηρός frequently renders Hebrew rā', rooting the concept in the creation-fall narrative.

As Adam and Eve's sin unleashed a realm of evil, the New Testament carries that storyline forward, presenting Christ as the One who rescues "us from this present evil age" ([Galatians 1:4](#)).

Major New Testament Categories

1. Moral Character

- "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts..." ([Matthew 7:11](#)).
- The unregenerate are "alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds" ([Colossians 1:21](#)).

2. Collective Unbelief

- "An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign" ([Matthew 12:39](#); 16:4; [Luke 11:29](#)), indicting national hardness of heart.
- The kosmos system "lies in the power of the evil one" ([1 John 5:19](#)).

3. Inner Thoughts and Outward Acts

- "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?" ([Matthew 9:4](#)).
- Lists of vice include "wickedness" ([Mark 7:22-23](#)), "evil boasting" ([James 4:16](#)), and actions deserving church discipline ([1 Corinthians 5:13](#)).

4. The Evil One

- With the article, πονηρός becomes a title for Satan: "The evil one does not touch him" ([1 John 5:18](#)); "deliver us from the evil one" ([Matthew 6:13](#)).
- **Spiritual warfare language ("shield of faith... to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one," [Ephesians 6:16](#)) presumes a personal malevolent being.**

5. Evil Spirits and Afflictions

- Jesus and the apostles expel "evil spirits" ([Luke 7:21](#); 8:2; [Acts](#)

[19:12-16](#)), revealing demonic oppression as a present reality overcome by divine authority.

6. The Evil Day

- *“Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand”* ([Ephesians 6:13](#)). A future, climactic assault intensifies the need for vigilance.

Contrasts and Parallels

πονηρός stands in deliberate tension with ἀγαθός (“good”) and χρηστός (“kind”).

Jesus contrasts the “good treasure” of a righteous heart with the “evil treasure” of a corrupt one ([Luke 6:45](#)).

Paul commands believers, “Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good” ([Romans 12:9](#)), affirming a non-negotiable moral polarity.

Theological Significance

- **Total Depravity**: Humanity apart from grace falls under “evil” ([Matthew 7:11](#)).
- **Personal and Cosmic Conflict**: Evil is both a heart condition and a spiritual empire ruled by Satan.
- **Sovereign Restraint and Final Judgment**: God presently limits evil ([2 Thessalonians 3:3](#)) and will decisively purge it at the consummation ([Matthew 13:49-50](#)).
- **Redemptive Deliverance**:

The cross and resurrection secure removal from the dominion of evil and promise the believer ultimate protection ([John 17:15](#)).

Practical Ministry Applications

1. Preaching and Teaching

**CALL SIN WHAT SCRIPTURE CALLS IT—EVIL—TO
EXPOSE ITS GRAVITY AND MAGNIFY GRACE.**

2. Discipleship and Sanctification

Encourage believers to “overcome evil with good”
([Romans 12:21](#)) through Spirit-empowered obedience.

3. Spiritual Warfare

**EQUIP CONGREGATIONS WITH THE “FULL ARMOR OF GOD,”
EMPHASIZING PRAYER, FAITH, AND SCRIPTURE.**

4. Pastoral Care and Deliverance

*Maintain biblical vigilance regarding demonic influence,
following apostolic patterns of prayer and authority in Christ.*

5. Corporate Prayer

Persist in the Lord’s model: ***“Deliver us from the evil one”***
([Matthew 6:13](#)), recognizing ongoing need for divine protection.

Historical and Cultural Context

IN GRECO-ROMAN ETHICS “EVIL” OFTEN DENOTED SOCIAL HARM; SCRIPTURE DEEPENS THE DIAGNOSIS TO INNER REBELLION.

Second Temple Judaism spoke of the yetzer hara (evil inclination); the New Testament identifies both internal corruption and external satanic agency.

Early Christians, facing persecution, applied [Matthew 5:39](#) (“do not resist an evil person”) to model sacrificial witness while still opposing moral evil through righteous living.

Summary

[πονηρός](#) encapsulates every thought, act, person, spirit, or era set against God. Its 79 New Testament occurrences form a mosaic that clarifies the human predicament, magnifies the gospel’s rescue, and fortifies the church’s mission until the day when the Lamb annihilates all evil and ushers in unending righteousness.

Matthew 7:18 

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
3756 [e]	οὐ ou	Not	Adv
1410 [e]	δύναται dynatai	is able	V-PIM/P-3S
1186 [e]	δένδρον dendron	a tree	N-NNS
18 [e]	ἀγαθὸν agathon	good,	Adj-NNS
2590 [e]	καρπούς karpous	fruits	N-AMP
4190 [e]	πονηροὺς ponērous	bad	Adj-AMP
4160 [e]	ποιεῖν*, poiein	to produce;	V-PNA
3761 [e]	οὐδὲ oude	nor	Conj
1186 [e]	δένδρον dendron	a tree	N-NNS
4550 [e]	σαπρὸν sapron	bad,	Adj-NNS
2590 [e]	καρπούς karpous	fruits	N-AMP

2570 [e]	καλοὺς kalous	good	Adj-AMP
4160 [e]	ποιεῖν*. poiein	to produce.	V-PNA

Matthew 7:19

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
3956 [e]	πάν pan	Every	Adj-NNS
1186 [e]	δένδρον dendron	tree	N-NNS
3361 [e]	μή mē	not	Adv
4160 [e]	ποιοῦν poioun	producing	V-PPA-NNS
2590 [e]	καρπὸν karpon	fruit	N-AMS
2570 [e]	καλὸν kalon	good	Adj-AMS
1581 [e]	ἐκκόπτεται ekkoptetai	is cut down	V-PIM/P-3S
2532 [e]	καὶ kai	and	Conj

1519 [e]	εἰς eis	into	Prep
4442 [e]	πῦρ pyr	fire	N-ANS
906 [e]	βάλλεται. balletai	is thrown.	V-PIM/P-3S

IS CUT DOWN 1581. ekkoptó

HELPS Word-studies

1581 *ekkóptō* (from [1537](#) /ek, "out from and to" and [2875](#) /kóptō, "cut") - **PROPERLY, CUT OFF (OUT) AND LEFT TO THE INEVITABLE OUTCOME. (FIGURATIVELY) ENTIRELY REMOVE (CUT OFF), EMPHASIZING COMPLETE DETACHMENT (REMOVAL, SEVERANCE).**

Topical Lexicon

Core Concept

ἐκκόπτω pictures **decisive removal**—an axe falling, a hand **severed**, an obstacle cleared.

Scripture employs the term to underline God's uncompromising holiness and the believer's wholehearted allegiance.

Occurrences in the Synoptic Gospels

1. Judgment on Unfruitful Trees: John the Baptist warns, *“Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire”* ([Matthew 3:10](#); [Luke 3:9](#)).

THE METAPHOR PREFIGURES ESCHATOLOGICAL SEPARATION BETWEEN GENUINE REPENTANCE AND EMPTY PROFESSION.

2. Radical Discipleship: Jesus instructs, *“If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away”* ([Matthew 5:30](#); 18:8).

The verb presses home the urgency of mortifying sin—better painful loss now than eternal ruin later.

3. Israel’s Final Opportunity: In the parable of the fig tree, the owner commands, “Cut it down; why should it use up the soil?” ([Luke 13:7](#)) and, after a year of grace, the vinedresser concedes, “If it bears fruit next year, fine. But if not, you can cut it down” ([Luke 13:9](#)). **The word signals looming judgment if repentance remains absent.**

Pauline Usage

[2 Corinthians 11:12](#)—Paul resolves to “cut off the opportunity” for false apostles, illustrating decisive action to protect the flock.

[Romans 11:22–24](#)—Paul interprets Israel’s unbelief and Gentile inclusion through an olive-tree allegory: **unbelieving branches “were cut off,” while Gentile branches were grafted in.** Yet the same God “is able to graft them in again,” affirming both severity and kindness.

Theological Emphases

1. DIVINE SEVERITY AND KINDNESS: [Romans 11:22](#) unites the themes—cutting off is not arbitrary but rooted in covenant faithfulness.

2. HOLINESS REQUIRES SEPARATION: Whether excising personal sin ([Matthew 5:30](#)) or removing corrupt influence ([2 Corinthians 11:12](#)), the action protects purity.

3. OPPORTUNITY BEFORE FINALITY: [Luke 13:8–9](#) shows mercy granting time for fruit; nevertheless, judgment remains certain if fruitlessness persists.

Historical Reception

Early church writers (e.g., Chrysostom on [Matthew 5:30](#)) viewed the term as figurative, urging spiritual surgery rather than literal amputation. Reformers connected it to church discipline, emphasizing removal of persistent error to preserve gospel integrity.

Ministry Applications

- Preaching:

Employ ἐκκόπτω passages to balance assurance with sober warning, encouraging genuine fruit.

- Discipleship:

Teach believers to “cut off” stumbling behaviors, relationships, or media that entice sin.

- Church Discipline:

Follow Paul’s example to safeguard the flock by decisively addressing false teaching.

- Evangelism: [Romans 11](#) grounds outreach to Israel and the nations in the promise that God can re-graft any who believe.

Related Imagery

- **Pruning** ([John 15:2](#)) complements cutting off: the former refines fruitful branches; the latter removes fruitless ones.
- **The unquenchable fire motif** ([Matthew 3:10](#)) underscores the finality accompanying ἐκκόπτω.

Summation

ἐκκόπτω embodies the Biblical principle that God's kingdom tolerates no enduring fruitlessness or corruption.

IN GRACE HE WARNS; IN JUSTICE HE REMOVES.

Believers, therefore, respond with vigilant holiness, decisive self-denial, and confident hope in God's power to graft in all who repent and believe.

THROWN
906. balló

Topical Lexicon

Scope of Usage

Strong's Greek 906 appears one hundred twenty-four times, stretching from the opening scenes of Gospel ministry ([Mark 1:16](#)) to the final vision of the Lake of Fire ([Revelation 20:15](#)).

The verb describes **an intentional motion** —“to cast, hurl, place, pour, let fall”—and is employed for actions both mundane and momentous, **literal and figurative**.

Because the word can denote either violent expulsion or deliberate placement, **context determines** whether the act is destructive, salvific, ritual, or ordinary.

Everyday Actions and Ministry Scenes

1. Fishing and Provision

- [Mark 1:16](#); [Matthew 4:18](#); [John 21:6-8](#) portray fishermen “casting” (βάλλοντας / βάλετε) their nets. The Lord’s command to “Cast the net on the right side of the boat” ([John 21:6](#)) turns a common task into a sign of His resurrected authority and care.

2. Hospitality and Service

- Martha “pours” water over the disciples’ feet through the action of the servant Jesus ([John 13:5](#)). The same term covers pouring wine into wineskins ([Matthew 9:17](#)) and coins into the treasury ([Mark 12:41-44](#)), highlighting that routine ministry tasks require thoughtful placement, not careless disposal.

Symbolism of Stumbling and Self-Denial

JESUS REPEATEDLY USES THE VERB TO DEMAND RADICAL AMPUTATION OF SIN: *“If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away”* ([Matthew 5:29](#)).

The willful hurling of the offending member teaches that discipleship entails decisive, once-for-all action against personal wickedness.

The alternative—being **“thrown into hell”** sharpens the warning ([Matthew 18:9](#); [Mark 9:47](#)).

Parabolic Teaching

1. Wine and Skins

New wine must not be “put into” old wineskins ([Matthew 9:17](#)). The incompatibility between the new covenant and old structures is dramatized by βάλλω.

2. Salt and Soil

Worthless salt is “thrown out” ([Matthew 5:13](#); [Luke 14:35](#)), portraying loss of witness.

3. The Dragnet

In [Matthew 13:47-48](#) a net is “thrown into the sea,” collecting every kind; the later sorting prefigures final judgment.

Miracles and Acts of Deliverance

1. Demonic Affliction

The boy whom a spirit often “throws into the fire or into the water” ([Mark 9:22](#)) illustrates Satanic cruelty; Christ’s rebuke restores order.

2. Healing Touch

Jesus “laid” (ἐβαλεν) His hands on the deaf-mute ([Mark 7:33](#)) and Peter’s mother-in-law lay “cast” by fever ([Matthew 8:14](#)). The term conveys both the burden of illness and the Lord’s sovereign relief.

Judgment Motif

1. Temporal Judgment

Trees without fruit are “thrown into the fire” ([Matthew 3:10](#); 7:19; [Luke 3:9](#)), previewing national and personal reckoning.

2. Final Judgment

- *“They will throw them into the blazing furnace”* ([Matthew 13:42, 50](#)) describes reprobation.
- Revelation widens the scope: stars, censers, hail, and ultimately Satan himself are “thrown” to earth or into the abyss ([Revelation 8:7-8](#); 12:9-10; 20:3).
- *The climactic casting of the beast, false prophet, death, Hades, and unrepentant humanity into the Lake of Fire* ([Revelation 19:20](#); 20:10, 14-15) underscores irreversible divine verdict.

Spiritual Warfare and Cosmic Conflict

[Revelation 12](#) uses βάλλω repeatedly to narrate the expulsion of the dragon and his angels: “The great dragon was hurled down” ([Revelation 12:9](#)). The verb’s violent force communicates the absolute defeat of evil powers and the security of the saints who “overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” ([Revelation 12:11](#)).

Sacrificial Imagery and Worship

In [Revelation 4:10](#) the twenty-four elders “cast their crowns before the throne,” enacting total surrender. The same deliberate placing that once deposited coins in the treasury now returns every reward to God, making worship an act of voluntary relinquishment.

Faith and Prayer

Jesus employs βάλλω in the promise of mountain-moving faith: “Be taken up and thrown into the sea” ([Matthew 21:21](#); [Mark 11:23](#)).

Believing prayer can hurl obstacles aside, echoing divine capacity to reorder creation.

Prison and Persecution

Acts records apostles “thrown into prison” ([Acts 16:23-24](#)), paralleling the violent casting of Paul and Silas with the Gentile authorities’ intention to suppress the gospel. Yet the Lord frees His servants, showing that men may cast down, but God lifts up.

Pastoral Application

- 1. Decisive Repentance:** The repeated call to “throw away” whatever causes sin requires shepherds to urge uncompromising holiness.
- 2. Evangelistic Enterprise:** The fishermen-turned-apostles remind ministers to **CAST THE GOSPEL NET WIDE, TRUSTING CHRIST FOR THE HAUL.**
- 3. Worshipful Surrender:** Believers, like the elders, cast crowns before the Lord, demonstrating that every gift is ultimately His.

Christological Center

Whether instructing disciples to cast nets, casting out demons, or being Himself “cast-off” at the cross, Jesus embodies both the Actor and the One acted upon. Through His resurrection authority, He will finally cast all evil into perdition, ensuring that every use of βάλλω converges on His sovereign mission.

Eschatological Assurance

The last occurrences seal the promise of consummate justice: *“If anyone was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire”* ([Revelation 20:15](#)).

βάλλω thereby marks the terminus of evil, the vindication of righteousness, and the beginning of unbroken fellowship with God.

FIRE

4442. pur ►

Lexical Summary

pur: Fire

Original Word: πυρ

Part of Speech: Noun, Neuter

Transliteration: pur

Pronunciation: poor

Phonetic Spelling: (poor)

KJV: fiery, fire

NASB: fire, burning, fiery

Word Origin: [a primary word]

1. fire

{literally or figuratively}

Topical Lexicon

Literal and Providential Flames

The word regularly designates ordinary fire, the created element that gives light, heat, and consumes material objects. Such mundane use appears in [Luke 22:55](#), where servants huddle “around a fire in the middle of the courtyard,” and in [Acts 28:5](#), when Paul, bitten by a viper, “shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no ill effects.” Yet even these everyday settings remind readers that the same element is under God’s sovereign control; Jesus can rescue a demon-tormented boy often cast “into the fire”

([Mark 9:22](#)), and the apostle can survive flames unharmed, echoing earlier deliverance narratives ([Daniel 3](#)).

Divine Judgment—Present Warnings and Final Reality

Fire most frequently functions as the emblem and instrument of God's holy wrath.

John the Baptist warns, "Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" ([Matthew 3:10](#)). Jesus intensifies the note of permanence:

"Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" ([Matthew 25:41](#)).

The picture culminates in Revelation, where the ungodly are finally consigned to "the lake of fire" ([Revelation 20:14–15](#)).

The same motif supplies stern interim cautions. *"Unquenchable fire"* ([Mark 9:43](#)) makes sin's seriousness vivid, while [Hebrews 10:27](#) depicts *"a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire"* for deliberate apostasy. These texts collectively affirm that God's justice will not be thwarted; His judgments are sure, righteous, and everlasting.

Purification, Refinement, and Reward

Fire does not only destroy; it also purifies.

Peter compares the testing of faith to gold *"refined by fire"* ([1 Peter 1:7](#)), yielding praise at Christ's revelation.

Paul explains that *believers' works will be "revealed with fire"* ([1 Corinthians 3:13](#)).

The image is never punitive for the faithful; rather, it removes what is worthless and discloses what is eternal.

Accordingly, the risen Lord counsels the Laodiceans to “buy from Me gold refined by fire” ([Revelation 3:18](#)), calling them to a tested, authentic discipleship.

The Manifest Presence of God

God’s self-disclosure is often accompanied by fire. On Pentecost “tongues that looked like fire” rested on each disciple ([Acts 2:3](#)), signifying the Spirit’s empowering presence. In vision, Jesus’ eyes are “like blazing fire” ([Revelation 1:14](#); 2:18), and the heavenly throne emits “flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder” joined with “seven torches of fire” ([Revelation 4:5](#)). Such scenes underline His majesty and penetrative knowledge: nothing is hidden from the One whose gaze is fiery and pure.

Christ’s Mission and Apostolic Authority

Jesus declares, *“I have come to ignite a fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!”* ([Luke 12:49](#)).

THE SAYING POINTS BOTH TO HIS PURIFYING WORK AND THE DIVISION THE GOSPEL INEVITABLY BRINGS.

Echoing Elijah, James and John once sought literal fire upon a Samaritan village ([Luke 9:54](#)); Christ rebuked them, reserving judgment for His timing. Later, eschatological witnesses “will devour their enemies with fire from their mouths” ([Revelation 11:5](#)), a prophetic sign that apostolic testimony carries God’s unassailable authority.

Zeal, Speech, and Moral Responsibility

James employs fire to expose the destructive potential of unbridled speech: *“The tongue is a fire... it sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell”* ([James 3:6](#)).

Conversely, righteous zeal is commended; believers are urged to be “fervent,” literally “boiling” in spirit (cf. [Romans 12:20](#) where benevolence “heaps burning coals” that may lead an enemy to repentance).

Fire thus illustrates both holy passion and the peril of sinful excess.

Eschatological Renewal of Creation

The Apostle Peter explains that “the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire” ([2 Peter 3:7](#)). Far from teaching annihilation of creation, the passage anticipates its cleansing and transformation, paralleling the flood in Noah’s day. The new creation emerges only after the purgative flames remove every trace of corruption.

Worship and Heavenly Liturgy

Fire also belongs in priestly and apocalyptic scenes of worship. In [Revelation 8:3–5](#) an angel fills a golden censer with incense and fire from the altar, mingling with the prayers of the saints before casting it to the earth—symbolizing God’s answer to intercession and the merging of worship with judgment.

[Hebrews 12:29](#), quoting Deuteronomy, reminds worshipers that ***“our God is a consuming fire,” calling for reverence and awe.***

Pastoral and Missional Implications

1. Preaching and teaching must faithfully present both the mercy and the fiery justice of God.
2. Trials faced by believers are not arbitrary; they serve a refining purpose, producing enduring faith and eternal reward.
3. The church’s mission proceeds in the power of the Spirit, who first appeared as fire, compelling believers to proclaim the gospel with holy zeal.
4. Warnings about eternal fire demand evangelistic urgency, urging repentance while there is time.
5. Corporate worship should reflect sober joy, acknowledging the God whose holiness both purifies and judges.

Thus, throughout the New Testament, πῦρ portrays a multifaceted reality: literal flame under divine governance, a metaphor of judgment and purification, a symbol of God's presence, and a catalyst for mission and holiness.

Matthew 7:20 ►

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
686 [e]	ἄρα ἰγε arage	Then surely	Prtcl
575 [e]	ἀπὸ apo	by	Prep
3588 [e]	τῶν tōn	the	Art-GMP
2590 [e]	καρπῶν karpōn	fruits	N-GMP
846 [e]	αὐτῶν autōn	of them	PPro-GM3P
1921 [e]	ἐπιγνώσεσθε epignōsesthe	you will know	V-FIM-2P
846 [e]	αὐτούς. autous	them.	PPro-AM3P

THUS / SO THEN / THEN SURELY
686. ara

Topical Lexicon

Summary of Meaning and Function

ʾApa and its fuller form ἄπαγε function as markers of logical consequence or unavoidable implication.

When the biblical writers arrive at a conclusion that necessarily flows from preceding revelation or argument, this small particle flags the “therefore” moment, inviting hearers to agree that God’s word demands the stated result.

It is never a casual connective; it seals the logic of faith, ethics, or redemptive history.

Occurrences in the Ministry of Jesus

Matthew 7:20 records **the Lord’s warning**,
“So then, by their fruit you will recognize them.”

The particle underscores that discernment is not optional but the unavoidable inference from the principle He has just given about trees and fruit.

In Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20 Jesus drives home the kingdom’s present arrival: “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

THE ADVERB PRESSES THE CROWD TO FACE THE INESCAPABLE IMPLICATION of His miracles.

In Matthew 17:26 (“Then the sons are exempt”) He employs ἄπαγε to reason with Peter about the temple tax, moving from analogy to conclusion.

Luke–Acts: Salvation History Unfolding

[Luke 11:48](#) (“So then, you testify that you approve of the deeds of your fathers”) shows prophetic indictment. [Acts 11:18](#) is pivotal for the Gentile mission: “So then, even to the Gentiles God has granted repentance unto life.” Here ἄρα turns Peter’s report into an irreversible theological verdict that reshapes church history.

Pauline Theology: From Justification to Ethical Obligation

Romans is saturated with the particle, framing Paul’s step-by-step gospel logic. [Romans 5:18](#) gathers the argument of Adam and Christ into one conclusive sentence. [Romans 8:1](#) heralds liberty: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” In [Romans 8:12](#) the apostle moves from status to duty: “Therefore, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh.” [Romans 9:16](#) and [9:18](#) highlight divine sovereignty; [10:17](#) declares the faith-sourcing power of proclamation: “So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” [Romans 14](#) twice uses ἄρα to impress personal accountability ([14:12](#)) and communal edification ([14:19](#)).

1 Corinthians employs the word in evangelistic holiness ([5:10](#)), marital sanctification ([7:14](#)), and resurrection logic ([15:14-18](#)). “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless, and so is your faith... Then they also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” The particle ties the entire Christian hope to the historical resurrection.

In [2 Corinthians 5:14](#) Paul argues, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all; therefore all died.” Here ἄρα seals missionary motivation. Galatians uses it to defend grace ([2:21](#)), identify true sons of Abraham ([3:7, 29](#)), expose the offense of the cross ([5:11](#)), and call for practical benevolence ([6:10](#)). [Ephesians 2:19](#) celebrates corporate identity: “Therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household.”

Pastoral and Eschatological Emphasis

[1 Thessalonians 5:6](#) applies watchfulness; [2 Thessalonians 2:15](#) commands steadfastness. [Hebrews 4:9](#) draws its famous Sabbath-rest conclusion: “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,” while [Hebrews 12:8](#) confronts readers with the proof of divine sonship through discipline.

Rhetorical Nuance of ἄρα

The longer form often carries a shade of tentativeness or reflective musing, as in [Matthew 17:26](#). Yet even here the end result is firm once the reasoning is accepted. Its presence can soften the tone while maintaining the force of logic.

Historical Reception

Patristic writers noticed that wherever ἄρα appears, the inspired author has reached “the knot of the matter” (Chrysostom on [Romans 8:1](#)). Reformation expositors likewise rested doctrinal formulations on these pivotal verses, seeing ἄρα as a Spirit-guided signal that the preceding theology necessitates the ensuing affirmation.

Contemporary Ministry Application

Preachers and teachers should watch for ἄρα in their exegesis, for it highlights sermonic hinge points: gospel indicatives birthing imperatives, doctrines flowering into doxology, narratives culminating in mission.

WHENEVER SCRIPTURE SAYS “SO THEN,” THE MODERN CHURCH MUST ECHO, “AMEN, AND THEREFORE WE WILL BELIEVE AND OBEY.”

DESIRING GOD

How Do We Discern False Teachers/Prophets?

How do we discern false teachers? It's a hot topic in the inbox. It always has been. Here's one representative email, sent by a listener to the podcast named Krikor. “Hello, Pastor John! I am a huge fan and love listening to these podcasts. APJ has really helped me grow in my faith and convictions as well as in making me better at helping others in their own struggles.” Amen! Let me just stop there. That's one reason why this podcast exists: to see that you are being equipped to help the people in your life in their moments of need. It's so encouraging to read that. Okay, back to Krikor's question. “My question is this: The Bible gives us a lot of warnings about false teachers, but how can I identify if someone I listen to

on the Internet is a false teacher? A number of people have been accused of being false teachers. How would I discern this? What should we be looking for?"

Well, I would start by saying, don't set the bar so low that you only stop listening to people if they can be properly called false teachers. Lots of people are teachers who are simply misguided and unhelpful in many ways, but might not come under the ban of being called a false teacher. Set your standards high. Listen to people who are truly God-centered, Christ-exalting, Bible-saturated, Spirit-dependent, who bear the marks in their lives of authenticity.

But since you asked about identifying false teaching and false teachers, let me give you four biblical ways to assess whether someone is a false teacher. I do this just because the Bible agrees with you that we should be alert to the reality of false teachers, and it gives us tests.

1. Fruit Test

First, there's the test of the fruit of their lives. Jesus says in [Matthew 7:15-20](#),

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits.

Now, Paul put a huge premium on this principle of holiness and righteousness in his own life-giving credibility to his gospel. I saw this recently, just because I'm working my way through 1 Thessalonians in *Look at the Book*. I mean, he made such a huge deal out of it for two chapters.

Here's what he says in [1 Thessalonians 1:5](#): "Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of

men we proved to be among you for your sake.” That’s amazing. And then he unpacks that for two chapters: “You know what men we proved to be, so judge us by our lives.” Now, of course, it’s not always easy to see the behavioral fruit of a teacher, especially Internet teachers, right? Which is why you need to look carefully and take time and belong to a church — a real live, human-being, flesh-and-blood, in-person church with a real live preacher whose life you know. So whether it’s hard or not, Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruits.”

2. Doctrine Test

Second, there’s the test of sound, central doctrines — for example, the doctrine of the incarnation in [1 John 4:1-3](#), where John says,

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you will know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.

“We need to measure the doctrines that are being taught by the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In other words, if someone denies that Jesus Christ is the God-man, God come in the flesh, he’s a false teacher or a false prophet. John doesn’t mean to say that if you get the incarnation right, there are no other mistakes you can make that are serious. That’s not the point. He was simply dealing with that particular issue in that church, and on that issue, confessing that Christ had come in the flesh meant that you were speaking the truth of God. You got that one right, and that was the issue in that church.

Paul emphasized the same doctrinal importance, the doctrinal test, in [1 Timothy 6:3-4](#).

He says,

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

In other words, we need to measure the doctrines that are being taught by the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and by their implications for godliness. That's test number two: doctrine, sound doctrine.

3. Scripture Test

Third, there is the test of submission to Scripture. Paul said in [1 Corinthians 14:37-38](#), "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized." That's amazing. The authority of the apostles must be submitted to, or you're a false teacher; you're not recognized.

John said it this way in [1 John 4:6](#): "We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

“Everybody says true things from time to time —
even the devil. But that doesn’t make them reliable
teachers.”

In other words, the apostles elevated their teaching to the level of a test of truth. If a person does not submit his thinking and his teaching to the authority of the apostles — to the authorized teachers of Christ who wrote the New Testament — then they're not going to be reliable teachers. It doesn't mean they won't say true things. Everybody says true things from time to time — even the devil. But that doesn't make them reliable teachers.

4. Gospel Test

Finally, there is the test of the gospel itself. Paul is just red-hot about this one. [Galatians 1:8-9](#):

Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

And the gospel he had in mind when he said that was the gospel laid out in the book of Galatians, and it's the gospel of justification by faith alone apart from works of the law. And he sums it up like this in [Galatians 5:2-3](#):

Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision [that is, as a step toward getting right with God in justification], Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.

In other words, if you insist on law-keeping as a way of justification before God, you've got to keep it all, and you've got to keep it perfectly. And then he ends with this terrible warning: "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace" ([Galatians 5:4](#)).

Our Best Protection

So, there are at least four biblical tests for false teaching:

1. the test of the fruit of behavior
2. the test of sound doctrine
3. the test of submission to Scripture
4. the test of teaching the pure gospel of justification by faith

And I would end by simply reminding us that the best way to protect ourselves from false teachers is to be part of a healthy, Bible-preaching church, and to be prayerfully saturated with the Bible every day.

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[GotQuestions.org](#)

How can I recognize a false teacher / false prophet?

Jesus warned us that “false Christs and false prophets” will come and will attempt to deceive even God’s elect ([Matthew 24:23–27](#); see also [2 Peter 3:3](#) and [Jude 1:17–18](#)). To guard against falsehood and false teachers, it’s important to know the truth and know the characteristics of the counterfeit. Any believer who “correctly handles the word of truth” ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)) and who makes a careful study of the Bible can identify false doctrine.

Jesus said, “A tree is recognized by its fruit” ([Matthew 12:33](#)). So, believers are to be fruit inspectors. Knowing the look, texture, and taste of a healthy apple is important. So is knowing the look, texture, and taste—and smell—of a rotten one. Here are three specific tests to apply to any teacher to determine the accuracy of his or her teaching:

1) What does this teacher say about Jesus? In [Matthew 16:15-16](#), Jesus asks, “Who do you say I am?” Peter answers, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and for this answer Peter is called “blessed.” In [2 John 9](#), we read, “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.” In other words, Jesus Christ and His work of redemption is of utmost importance; beware of anyone who denies that Jesus is equal with God, who downplays Jesus’ sacrificial death, or who rejects Jesus’ humanity. [First John 2:22](#) says, “Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son.”

2) Does this teacher preach the gospel? The gospel is defined as the good news concerning Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, according to the Scriptures ([1 Corinthians 15:1-4](#)).

As nice as they sound, the statements “God loves you,” “God wants us to feed the hungry,” and “God wants you to be wealthy” are not the complete message of the gospel. As Paul warns in [Galatians 1:7](#), “Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.” No one, not even a great preacher, has the right to change the message that God gave us. “If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!” ([Galatians 1:9](#)).

3) Does this teacher exhibit character qualities that glorify the Lord? Speaking of false teachers, [Jude 11](#) says, “They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion.” In other words, a false teacher can be known by his pride (Cain’s rejection of God’s plan), greed (Balaam’s prophesying for money), and rebellion (Korah’s promotion of himself over Moses). Jesus said to beware of such people and that we would know them by their fruits ([Matthew 7:15-20](#)).

For further study, review those books of the Bible that were written specifically to combat false teaching within the church: Galatians, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, and Jude. It is often difficult to spot a false teacher/false prophet. Satan masquerades as an angel of light ([2 Corinthians 11:14](#)), and his ministers masquerade as servants of righteousness ([2 Corinthians 11:15](#)). Only by being thoroughly familiar with the truth will we be able to recognize a counterfeit.

What is the key to bearing fruit as a Christian?

In the natural world, fruit is the result of a healthy plant producing what it was designed to produce ([Genesis 1:11–12](#)). In the Bible, the word *fruit* is often used to describe a person’s outward actions that result from the condition of the heart.

Good fruit is that which is produced by the Holy Spirit. [Galatians 5:22-23](#) gives us a starting place: the [fruit of His Spirit](#) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The more we allow the Holy Spirit free rein in our lives, the more this fruit is evident ([Galatians 5:16, 25](#)). Jesus told His followers, “I chose you and

appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” ([John 15:16](#)). Righteous fruit has eternal benefit.

Jesus told us clearly what we must do to bear good fruit. He said, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” ([John 15:4–5](#)). A branch must stay firmly attached to the trunk to stay alive. As disciples of Christ, we must stay firmly connected to Him to remain spiritually productive. A branch draws strength, nourishment, protection, and energy from the vine. If it is broken off, it quickly dies and becomes unfruitful. When we neglect our spiritual life, ignore the Word of God, skimp on prayer, and withhold areas of our lives from the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit, we are like a branch broken off the vine. Our lives become fruitless. We need daily surrender, daily communication, and daily—sometimes hourly—repentance and connection with the Holy Spirit in order to “walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” ([Galatians 5:16](#)). Staying intimately connected to the [True Vine](#) is the only way to “bear fruit in old age” ([Psalm 92:14](#)), to “run and not grow weary” ([Isaiah 40:31](#)), and to not “grow weary in well-doing” ([Galatians 6:9](#)).

One counterfeit to bearing good fruit is pretense. We can become experts at the routines, the lingo, and “acting Christian,” while experiencing no real power and bearing no eternal fruit. Our hearts remain self-centered, angry, and joyless even while we go through the motions of serving God. We can easily slip into the sin of the Pharisees of Jesus’ day in judging ourselves by how we think we appear to others and neglecting that secret place of the heart where all good fruit germinates. When we love, desire, pursue, and fear the same things that the rest of the world does, we are not abiding in Christ, even though our lives may be filled with church-related activity. And, often, we don’t realize that we are living fruitless lives ([1 John 2:15–17](#)).

Our works will be tested by fire. Using a different metaphor than fruit, [1 Corinthians 3:12–15](#) says, “If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”

God is the judge of even our thoughts and motivations. All will be brought to the light when we stand before Him ([Hebrews 4:12–13](#)). A poor widow in a one-room hut can bear as much fruit as a televangelist leading giant crusades if she is surrendered to God in everything and using all He has given her for His glory. As fruit is unique to each tree, our fruit is unique to us. God knows what He has entrusted to each of us and what He expects us to do with it ([Luke 12:48](#)). Our responsibility before God is to be “faithful with little” so that He can trust us with much ([Matthew 25:21](#)).

10 Tips Scripture Gives Us to Help Recognize a False Prophet

1. They Say What People Want to Hear

“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear” ([2 Timothy 4:3](#)).

2. They Teach a Doctrine Other than Christ

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories” ([2 Peter 2:1-3](#)).

3. They Use Tricks to Pull People In

“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time” ([Matthew 24:23-25](#)).

4. They Are Dishonest about Their Real Intentions

“For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness” ([2 Corinthians 11:13-15](#)).

5. They Seek to Divide Congregations

“I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people” ([Romans 16:17-18](#)).

6. They Ignore the Need for Repentance

“The visions of your prophets were false and worthless; they did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity. The prophecies they gave you were false and misleading” ([Lamentations 2:14](#)).

7. They Gloss Over Any Sins They/Church Leaders Commit

“Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says’ — when the Lord has not spoken” ([Ezekiel 22:28](#)).

8. They Substitute Their Own Words for God’s Word

“Then the Lord said to me, ‘The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds’” ([Jeremiah 14:14](#)).

9. They Do Damage to Church Families

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them” ([Matthew 7:15-16](#)).

10. They Will Face God’s Punishment

“My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will not belong to the council of my people or be listed in the records of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign Lord” ([Ezekiel 13:9](#)).

How Are We to Respond to False Prophets?

The Bible is very clear about what we are to do when dealing with a false prophet. And it comes down to keeping our eyes fixed on the Lord, not letting anyone pull us away from what we know is His truth.

“If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, ‘Let us follow other gods (gods you have not known) and let us worship them,’ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you...” ([Deuteronomy 13:1-3](#)).

“‘You may say to yourselves, ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously...” ([Deuteronomy 18:21-22](#)).

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God” ([1 John 4:1-3](#)).

A New Testament Account

During one of Paul and Barnabas’ missionary trips, they came across a false prophet who was actively working against God’s plan. Paul was prepared for this situation, and realized that he must confront that person right away to honor the name of the Lord.

“They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the [word of God](#). But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. Then Saul, who was also called Paul,

filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun" ([Acts 13:6-11](#)).

The idea of false prophets may sound like ancient history. But we are always called to be thoughtful about what we are taught. And when we need to, God gives us the wisdom and boldness to stand up and claim His truth.

THE BEREAN (devotional)

Genesis 3:4-7

(4) "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. (5) "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (6) When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (7) Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

New International Version [Change email Bible version](#)

In verse 4, [Satan](#) slyly convinces Eve that [God](#) has lied to them by withholding from them the ability to become "like God, knowing good and evil." God was being unfair, he argues, keeping them

from their potential. The passage suggests that, after hearing this, Eve did not hesitate one bit in making her decision. She took the bait without even flinching and ignorantly promoted the interests of Satan by giving the forbidden fruit to her husband. In effect, she signed on to advance Satan's objective—to derail God's plan to create mankind in His spiritual image.

Satan's tack has been the same ever since, even though he must realize that, due to Christ's death and resurrection, he will ultimately lose ([Revelation 20:10](#)). While he still has time, he will try to make as many people as he can fail to reach their incredible human potential. He will do whatever is in his power—whatever God allows him to do—to convince them that his way is superior to God's.

For those that have been called by God in this lifetime, we have far more at stake here. If Satan can succeed in deceiving us to advocate for him more and more, he greatly increases our chances of being subject to the [second death](#), the eternal death in the Lake of Fire ([Revelation 20:14-15](#)).

Peter warns us of the dangers that Satan poses to God's people: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your [adversary](#) the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" ([1 Peter 5:8](#)). According to the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, "sober" (Greek *nepho*) is a verb found in the New Testament only in the figurative sense, implying "sober watchfulness." In addition,

"vigilant" (Greek *gregoreuo*) means "to keep awake, i.e., watch (literally or figuratively)."

Combining "sober" and "vigilant" paints an interesting word-picture for us. When a person is heavily intoxicated, he wants nothing more than to sleep it off, so it is impossible for the sleeping drunkard to be vigilant about anything. The message for us is that we must be attentive to our physical and spiritual condition so that we do not become spiritually intoxicated. This type of person is exactly the kind whom Satan seeks. If we enter this state, then we make ourselves a prime target to be devoured by the "roaring lion."

— Staff