

## Matthew 3:8

**"Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance;**

Here John the Baptist is speaking not to sinners as we might imagine, but to the church leaders. He was preaching in the wilderness of Judea. People were coming out to hear him from Jerusalem, Judea, and the area around the Jordan River; but, in addition to the people, the leaders from the synagogues were coming to observe the ministry of this "wild man". John knew that it wasn't the truth that they were seeking, but it was their curiosity that brought them to listen. John the Baptist goes on to say in **Matthew 3:10, "And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** These church officials and leaders were as guilty of playing games with God, as people are today. So often we truly deceive ourselves into believing that if we follow certain rules, traditions, regulations and laws, that somehow God is obligated to ensure us of eternal salvation. The truth is it's not a formula that God is looking for in our lives, it's a changed heart! You see, once the heart changes, the body follows. You can tell people you're saved, but is there proof, or fruits that validate your claim? Here's the biggest question, has a change in your life taken place since you asked Jesus into your heart? Is the fruit in your life today new fruit, or is it the same fruit of sin that you had prior to praying the prayer of salvation?

Church, clearly John the Baptist is absolutely serious when he says that the axe is ready to cut down any tree at the roots, if it doesn't bear good fruits! We have watered down salvation to the point where people believe that it doesn't matter what they do once they've prayed the sinners' prayer. What is imperative to understand, is that it is not whether you prayed a certain sentence or two, but was your life changed? Did you meet Jesus when you asked Him into your life, or were you simply repeating what someone else was saying? The truth is, once Jesus comes into your life as your Lord and Savior, you can't help but change! Not only that, you start to fall in love with Him to where you no longer want anything to do with your old habits and sins. For some people their conversion and deliverance is nothing short of miraculous, and for others it is certainly a day by day process. The question isn't whether you struggle with sin, because every one of us still has struggles and temptations, but do you give into those temptations? Do you make excuses for your lifestyle and choices? See, this is where we can deceive ourselves. When God told me to lay down my addictions with alcohol and tobacco, I tried everything I could think of to get Him to allow me to keep them. I saw myself as basically a good guy who had struggles like everyone else; but once the Lord told me to quit, from that day on I was living in blatant sin!! Does God expect miracles from us? No, but He know our hearts, and He is absolutely aware of our games, our disguises and our manipulating schemes. These Pharisees and Sadducees that John the Baptist was talking to here looked good on the outside, but their hearts were evil. What about you friend, if you were to meet Jesus this very day, what would He say about your fruit? Would the axe cut at your roots, only for you to be thrown in to the lake of fire; or has new fruit sprung up in your life since you asked Jesus into your life? This is certainly no game, and I can't exhort you enough to make sure that your eternity is going to be spent with the King of Kings. Please don't leave this to chance, if you need to forgive, then forgive. If you need to love, then love. If you need to repent, then start today!