

By Their Fruits

Rediscovering a Biblical Standard

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” (Mat. 3:7-10)

John said that those lacking “good fruit” would be cast into fire. Now, according to the flawed logic of the e-bees (empty believers; formally termed EASY believers), John’s demand for good fruit would be a belief in works-based salvation, producing good fruit TO BE saved. Of course, that’s not the case, not here, and not anywhere else. The good fruit is a natural EVIDENCE OF salvation, not a requirement for it. Just as James believed that faith without works is dead (James 2:17-26), John believed the same, which is so much as saying that religion without good fruit is dead. This holds true throughout the Bible, especially in Hebrews chapter 11, the Hall of Faith chapter that deals exclusively with this very subject. Yet, in spite of how much the word of God stresses this truth, the fundamental e-bees will never cease in their private interpretations and flawed definitions because their proud religious kingdoms are built upon them. These kingdoms are largely built upon quantity rather than quality, so the quality of the truth presented in this message will be ignored as they press on with their ridiculous numbers game.

“We’ve already had twelve people saved tonight,” an e-bee once told me after pressuring twelve people to say the sinners prayer at a county fair. He MIGHT have had SOME people saved, but the naïve notion that all twelve were saved is just a bit too much for any serious and sound believer to swallow, especially since probably none of the twelve ever came to church services or were baptized. That same church went on for years boasting of fifty to one hundred “precious souls saved” per month, yet the attendance seldom passed three hundred, and today they run under two hundred.

I once read an account where one of these e-bee babies from another state boasted that their church has more people in their restroom than many churches have in their whole membership. SO! What does THAT prove? That church probably has more people in HELL than some of us have in our membership! An AC/DC concert or a Super Bowl has more people in the restroom than some of us have in our churches, but does that prove anything other than the fact that playing the numbers game amounts to stupidity on stilts? The Father’s business (Luke 2:49) is a SPIRITUAL business, and those who throw numbers around like unsaved politicians and stock analysts seem to have missed their calling.

Now, this naïve and childish way of thinking among fundamental Christians (IFB, etc.) is the result of majoring in “soul winning” rather than majoring in the word of God. But, since much of this soul winning amounts to nothing more than mechanical, dead, high-pressure religious salesmanship, “soul spinning” is often a more appropriate term. I read of one of these churches boasting of over 269,000 souls led to Christ since 1960. At the writing of this message, that would be an average of over eighty converts per week for over 3,000 weeks straight. If you believe that one, perhaps I could interest you in the purchase of a certain bridge up in the northeast.

The word of God is very clear in stating that in the last days people are going to be turning AWAY from the truth, not turning TO it (II Tim. 4:4), so it only makes sense for the sound-thinking believer to be suspicious, even HIGHLY suspicious, of large churches and large conversion counts. There are exceptions, and thank God for them, but the general Bible rule is that there will be MANY professors, yet FEW possessors (Mat. 7:13-23). Reports of multitudes being saved throughout fundamentalism just doesn't sync very well with the "falling away" of II Thessalonians 2:3, the "turn away their ears from the truth" of II Timothy 4:4, the "scoffers" of II Peter 3:3, or the departure from the faith and the "seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" of I Timothy 4:1. Nor does it sync well with the **"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"** Laodicea of Revelation 3:17, and it definitely doesn't sync with II Timothy 3:1-5: **"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."**

The "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" makes a fine match for the religious robots of fundamentalism who are so lacking in spiritual discernment that they'd rather get a profession of faith than wait and pray for real Holy Ghost conviction. Rather than NOT being born of the "will of man" (John 1:13), that's really about the only new birth that many of the e-bee converts ever have or ever will experience. The will of God is for them to be convicted and then "born of the Spirit" (John 3:8), born "of God" (John 1:13) and **"born again . . . not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God"** (I Pet. 1:23), but why bother with all of that when we can get a profession right

now and maybe even get ‘em in the water next Sunday? That’s the true modus operandi of empty-believe fundamentalism, and it comes straight from the headquarters of Hell. If that seems too harsh, then you might want to take a look at Matthew 23:15.

Speaking of Matthew 23, we would do well to remember that the evil Pharisees that received such harsh rebukes from our Lord were NOT the liberals and modernists of their day, as that would be the skeptical Sadducees. No, the Pharisees were the conservative and ultra-legalistic Jewish leaders of Christ’s day. At least in a comparative sense, you might say they were the conservative, independent, fundamental Baptists of first century Judaism, and Jesus said they were Hell-bound hypocrites producing fake converts. No, it’s not a perfect analogy, but it’s not a bad one either. Maybe it’s time to stop looking for excuses to ignore Bro. Melton and time to start paying some serious attention to the word of God. After all, “precious souls” are at stake.

Yes, that was a tongue-in-cheek remark since I believe the e-bee leaders are far more concerned with securing and advancing their kingdoms than in the souls of men (See Revelation 18:13 where the “souls of men” are the LAST inventory item on Babylon’s merchandise list.). This preacher and writer has always had a tough time believing that e-bees truly care about souls. The evidence is found in how they NEGLECT these souls once they “win” them (See Ezk. 34.). The majority of the souls “won” never become involved in the church, and most of the ones that do usually remain spiritual babies for decades. A Baptist who has sat in a pew for over five years and still hasn’t heard what a dispensation is, the difference between standing and state, or why he should believe only the King James Bible, is a NEGLECTED Baptist, regardless of the name, rank, or popularity of his pastor . . . or the size of his church. These dear souls have been contacting me for the past quarter

century seeking answers that their e-bee preachers have not provided. These crooks are starving their people, spiritually speaking, and I reject the notion that anyone can starve a soul and really care for that soul at the same time. So the “precious souls” bit is for the e-bee suckers, not for sound-minded believers with mature brains.

Alright, let’s consider Matthew 7:15-23: **“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so EVERY good tree bringeth forth GOOD FRUIT; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”** (BLOCK CAPITALIZATION used for emphasis, here and throughout this study)

Jesus said that a good tree brings forth good fruit and that we can know people “by their fruits.” Yet, we are told by the e-bees that we should NOT judge new “believers” by their fruits because we can’t know their hearts. For example, one of these religious simpletons told me a few weeks before this writing that he had led a trucker to the Lord who has never born any fruit at all, yet he KNEW that the man was saved. HOW does he know??!! He has ignored the “by their fruits” standard that Jesus instituted, which would indicate that the man was never really born again, yet the e-bee insists that he really “led him to the Lord.” These people

claim that WE can't know that their converts aren't saved, yet we're expected to believe that THEY CAN know that they are. Strange. Very strange, indeed.

Now please understand something as I press on with this theme. I am not suggesting that we spend all our time inspecting fruit and questioning the salvation of saints. I am saying two things: LET'S START RESPECTING THE LORD'S "BY THEIR FRUITS" STANDARD AND LET'S STOP PRODUCING AND TALLYING-UP FAKE CONVERTS. I have no desire to cast doubt on any true believer's salvation, but much doubt needs to be cast on the careless practices of the religious robots of fundamentalism. After all, some of these "ministries" are probably damning more souls than they're saving by peddling false security to unconverted sinners.

Jesus said, **"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."** (vs. 19) He didn't make allowance for someone being saved and bearing no fruit at all, because, quite frankly, that's impossible. Now, please pay close attention as I attempt to get something across that makes all of this more understandable. I will be misquoted and quoted out of context on this, but God knows how to deal with such tricksters. Here it comes: *No one is saved by merely calling on the Lord. No one is saved by merely asking Jesus into their heart.* The key word is "merely." There must first be a true Holy Ghost conviction of the heart, otherwise any worded prayer is in vain. That's why HEART BELIEF and RECEIVING Christ are key. A salvation prayer is fine, but it's really only an audible expression of what's happening in the heart, or at least should be. When it's not, you have a fake convert.

The "by their fruits" rule is rock solid because it comes from the very lips of Jesus Himself, God manifest in the flesh, and, as we shall see, the rest of the Bible upholds

this standard. The e-bees would have us ignore this rule, like they do, but we'll play it safe and KEEP the rule while showing that it's just as sound as John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8-9, or Romans 10:13.

According to I Peter 1:23, the new birth is a birth that comes from the incorruptible word of God: **“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”** The sinner hears the word of God regarding the gospel of Christ and he believes on Christ by receiving Christ in his heart (John 1:12; Rom. 10:9-10). That makes him a child of God by virtue of a new birth that is of the living words of God. I think we can all agree on that, even the shallow e-bees, now that we've layed it out for them. Well, one of the emblems of the word of God is *fire*. Jeremiah 20:9 says, **“. . . his word was in mine heart as a burning fire . . .”** That means, spiritually speaking, a true Christian has FIRE in his heart, just like Jeremiah. Well, bless your soul, where there's fire there's HEAT! It's impossible to have it otherwise. I could blindfold you and walk you by 100 campfires and you could identify each one by virtue of the heat being produced. You would KNOW there's fire by the evidence of the heat. You might say that the fruit of fire is heat. Then if I walked you by an unkindled stack of wood and said, “Here's another campfire,” you would KNOW that something is wrong because there would be no heat. You would not stand there like an idiot and say, *“Well, who am I to judge? Some fires have heat, and some do not. That's good enough for me.”* No, that's not good enough. Where there's fire, there's heat. Period.

Another emblem that we can learn from is wind. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit came in like a mighty rushing wind, and John 3:8 likens the Holy Spirit to wind in the context of the new birth: **“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is**

born of the Spirit.” Do you see where we’re going? You can’t see the wind, but you can sure hear it blowing, and you can sure see the leaves on the trees shaking or the flag waving. In fact, if I were to say to you, *“Wow! That wind is really getting strong out there,”* you would look to see some evidence. You would know not to look for the wind itself, but you’d sure know how to observe the leaves, the flag, and the debris blowing down the street. If you looked and saw no leaves moving, no flag waving, and no debris blowing down the street, then you would rightfully doubt my claim that the wind is blowing. Then, by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mat. 7:15-23), you should doubt conversions that bear no fruit. Where there’s fire, there’s heat, where’s there’s wind blowing, there’s something moving, where there’s a good tree, there’s good fruit, and where there’s a spiritual tree, there is spiritual fruit. It’s impossible to be otherwise. As we shall see, no fruit means NO ROOT.

Verse twenty-three in our current text turns out to be very instructive. The e-bees keep talking and writing about salvation PROFESSIONS. Well, look what Jesus said in Matthew 7:23: **“And then will I PROFESS unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”** It’s almost like the Lord is saying, *“You want to make PROFESSIONS? Well, I can do it too!”* I’m not condemning the occasional use of the term, as I realize that some professions are very genuine (I Tim. 6:12; Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 10:23), but Jesus’ choice use of the word in the context of fake conversions is interesting, especially when cross-referenced to Titus 1:16: **“They PROFESS that they know God; but IN WORKS THEY DENY HIM, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work REPROBATE.”** Now, would you say that’s a real convert or a fake?

Alright, come to Matthew 13. Look at verses three through eight: **“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And**

when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.” Then in 13:19-23 Jesus explains the spiritual meaning of the parable: **“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”** The “ground” in the parable is defined as “his heart” in verse nineteen, so “good ground” (vs. 23) is a heart being convicted and prepared by the Holy Spirit as the sinner responds positively. Jeremiah 4:3-4 says, **“For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow GROUND, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your HEART . . .”** (Also see Hosea 10:12) The ground is the heart of man, and the “good ground” is the heart of man that has been BROKEN so as to receive God’s word. Psalm 34:18 says, **“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a**

BROKEN HEART; and SAVETH such as be of a contrite spirit.”

So, in the parable, only SOME of the hearers received the seed into GOOD ground, and they were all fruitful that did. Some brought forth “**an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty,**” but all were fruitful to some degree. None brought forth ZEROFOLD because that’s impossible, just as impossible as fire not producing heat or wind not producing movement. Philippians 1:6 says, “**Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you WILL perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.**” Well, if God is doing a work in a heart, then He has a fire burning in that heart, so some spiritual heat will be manifest to some degree. It might not be a lot, maybe only a slight spiritual interest for a while or a desire to overcome some sin, but at least some spiritual fruit has started. When there is no fruit at all, then we are looking at a lost and unbroken stony heart, a lost and unbroken wayside heart, or a lost and unbroken thorny heart, all of which bear no fruit because of no living root. It really isn’t that complicated.

Now, as mentioned before, the e-bees will twist the above Bible truth to mean that we are saying a sinner must produce fruit, or works, TO BE saved, and that is absolutely false. Quite honestly, their inability to grasp such a simple spiritual truth (and their nasty habit of deliberately misquoting and misapplying my words) makes this writer wonder at times about THEIR OWN salvation and not just the salvation of their professed converts. I suppose it’s possible, but it does strike me as strange that anyone can be saved and still be so spiritually stupid. I probably wouldn’t use such harsh wording if I were revealing the names of people and churches, but I’m not. My only desire is to educate God’s people by generally exposing the empty-believe doctrine of devils, not to sling stones back and forth and fight like chiding children. Besides, the spiritually

clumsy e-bees usually find a way to expose themselves anyway, which always makes for delightful entertainment.

Next, come to Matthew 12 and consider verse 33: **“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is KNOWN by his fruit.”** There it is again, the fact that we can generally KNOW true converts from fake ones by looking for fruit. A short time before this writing, an e-bee on the Internet accused me of taking things out of context in order to teach the Lord’s “by their fruits” standard, yet he failed to mention exactly HOW I was taking anything out of context and WHAT he felt the true context was. At the time, I was offering the same view that I’ve offered in this study on Matthew 3:7-10, namely how we are told to expect “fruits meet for repentance” and not to buy the silly notion that repentance is ONLY a change of mind with no fruit at all. If the reader thinks I have disrespected the context in any way, in any portion of Scripture, please feel free to enlighten me. Merely CLAIMING that a man is disrespecting Scripture context is meaningless. Anyone can CLAIM anything. I have disrespected no context at all. I am teaching what the Lord wants taught from the Scripture being presented, and if someone disagrees, then the burden of proof is on THEM. Let them cease from their cowardly little whines and bring forth their strong arguments on what they believe to be the “true meaning” of Matthew 3:7-10, Matthew 7:15-23, and all the other Scripture that’s being presented in this study.

Something probably needs to be said at this point about what does and what does not constitute the abuse of context in the Bible. The seasoned Bible believer realizes that certain righteous principles transcend dispensations and hold true throughout the word of God. There is a big difference between a specific doctrine and a general principle, and those who can’t distinguish between the two do not need to be commenting on the Scriptures. To claim that Matthew 3:7-10 or Matthew 7:15-23 is “not for us”

because John and Jesus were not speaking to church-age Christians is silly. The use of such twisted logic could allow one to escape most of the admonitions in the Bible and justify most any sin. In spite of who was being addressed in Matthew 3, Matthew 7, and in the many other passages that we'll be seeing, the fact remains that **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”** (II Tim. 3:16-17) The no-fruit-no-root principle is a GENERAL principle that is upheld throughout the Bible, just like the Ten Commandments, Israel being God's chosen nation, or the law of sowing and reaping. This is probably already self-evident to most readers, and it should become evident to everyone else as this study progresses.

Next, let's look at Acts 26:19-20: **“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and DO WORKS MEET FOR REPENTANCE.”** My, my, there it is again! That's Paul, and he's agreeing 100% with John the Baptist, who preached, **“Bring forth therefore FRUITS MEET FOR REPENTANCE”** (Mat. 3:8). Both John and Paul preached this same principle, the principle of *NO FRUIT MEANS NO ROOT*. One might bring forth an hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold, or maybe nowhere near that much, but ZEROFOLD is not an option. It is an indication that the sinner was never truly born again. He might PROFESS salvation, but he does not POSSESS salvation, regardless of what the e-bees might have told him. No fruit means no root.

Let's grab a few from the Old Testament. First, let's get Isaiah 27:6: **“He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take ROOT: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the**

face of the world with FRUIT.” There it is, plain as the nose on your face: If there’s a ROOT, there will be FRUIT.

Look at Isaiah 37:31: **“And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take ROOT downward, and bear FRUIT upward:”** How does this happen? Is it the result of man-made tactics and planning? No, the next verse says, **“. . . the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.”** It’s like Paul saying, **“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”** (I Cor. 3:6) Far too many preachers and ministries have taken over the Lord’s increase department, and far too few are planting and watering like they were told to do.

Come to Proverbs. Some principles of God hold true throughout the Bible, and not just in the Old or New Testament, and the “by their fruits” standard is such a principle. Look at Proverbs 12:12: **“The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.”** There it is, AGAIN. If a man has been imputed the righteousness of Jesus Christ by virtue of Holy Ghost conviction and a new birth, then he now has a righteous root in his heart that will produce FRUIT. That’s what the Book says. It doesn’t say HOW MUCH fruit, but it certainly says fruit.

Mark’s account of the parable of the sower offers some additional instruction to what we’ve already covered from Matthew’s account. Mark 4:7 says, **“And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded NO FRUIT.”** Please take note of that. The NO FRUIT term is used only in reference to the seed that fell among thorns, not the seed that fell on good ground. The first thing that we read about the seed that fell on good ground is the fact that it DID produce fruit. The very next verse says, **“And other fell on GOOD GROUND, and DID YIELD FRUIT that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an**

hundred.” The natural progression is that a SEED takes ROOT, and then the root bears FRUIT. That’s God’s design from the very beginning.

Speaking of the beginning, let’s go to the very first chapter of the Bible and take a look at the first mention of SEED. I trust that we can all agree that a true Christian has been born again of the SEED of God’s word (I Pet. 1:23; Heb. 4:12; Rom. 10:17), so let’s see what the Bible’s first mention of SEED has to offer. Genesis 1:11 says, **“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding SEED, and the FRUIT tree yielding FRUIT after his kind, whose SEED is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.”** How about that one? The Bible’s first mention of SEED is also its first mention of FRUIT! In fact, the Bible’s first THREE mentions of seed is also its first THREE mentions of FRUIT! (Gen. 1:11, 12, 29) If every word is established by two or three witnesses (Mat. 18:16; Deu. 19:15), then it looks like the SEED and FRUIT principle is established in the Bible’s very first chapter!

Okay, let’s go to Luke 13 and get verse 6: **“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and SOUGHT FRUIT thereon, and found none.”** This is our Lord Jesus speaking, and He chose to say that a man came looking for FRUIT. He didn’t say that the man came looking for a tree only, but rather that he came looking for FRUIT and found none. Jesus didn’t say that the man went running around the community boasting about his fruitless tree. To the contrary, the man was very CONCERNED that the tree had no fruit, and he was prepared to have it CUT DOWN! The parable continues with the following words: **“Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come SEEKING FRUIT on this fig tree, and find none: CUT IT DOWN; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it BEAR**

FRUIT, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt CUT IT DOWN.” (Luke 13:7-9) The cutting down of a tree is followed by it being cast into FIRE (Mat. 3:10), an obvious parallel to a lost man being cast into Hell. I realize that this parable has to do with fruitless Israel, but the principle still holds as it reveals the mind of God regarding fruit, or evidence, rather than empty and fake religious professions. A fruitless Christian is a FAKE Christian, and it is our duty to preach this rather than allow these people to go to Hell by remaining silent.

Perhaps I should elaborate further on what a fruitful Christian is. I’ve already pointed out that our Lord allowed for wide variations in Christian fruitfulness (“some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty”), so please don’t get the idea that I’m suggesting that a man is lost if he isn’t a spiritual giant, a great witness, a church member, a KJV believer, or anything else. I am trying my best to present a Bible principle that no one would have questioned two hundred years ago. It is none other than fruitless and worthless Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22) that has propagated the empty-believe gospel and corrupted souls by the millions and churches by the thousands. It is not my job to say who is lost and who is saved, nor would I care for such a job. My job and desire in this study is to impress upon the reader the need to slow down with sinners and be very clear, very scriptural, and very prayerful and patient with them when preaching the Gospel. This usually means witnessing to them, leaving a tract, and then following-up a week or two later after much prayer. It never means getting ahead of the Holy Spirit and coercing them into a meaningless front porch prayer and then pretending they are saved.

If they ARE saved, then they are “born of the Spirit” (John 3:8), so there will be at least some spiritual fruit. This spiritual fruit is listed for all to read in Galatians 5:22-24: **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness,**

temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's HAVE crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” This means that the sinner who is born again and becomes a new creature in Christ (II Cor. 5:17) WILL produce at least SOME fruit. It might not be much for a while, but it will be something because fire produces heat, and a living seed and root produces fruit.

Suppose a man is a drunkard and a wife beater. Then one day he prays a salvation prayer on his front porch. According to the word of God, you can KNOW if this man's conversion is real by observing his life. If he never comes to church services, never prays or reads the Bible, and he continues to be a wife-beating drunkard, then he is NOT bearing spiritual fruit and he's not a new creature in Christ. On the other hand, if he tries to live a better life by at least *attempting* to amend his ways, even though he might often fail, we would have reason to believe that his conversion is real and that the Lord has begun a work in his heart (Phil. 1:6). His new attitude of concern about his sins would be a definite indicator of a new birth and a new heart. He might never be a thirtyfold or sixtyfold Christian, but at least some fruit can be seen.

I remember one particular e-bee preacher standing in his pulpit and defending his damnable “soul winning” tactics. His words went something like this: *“You know, some folks criticize us and say that we are plucking them too soon, plucking them while they are still green. Well, bless God, I'd rather be plucked green than not plucked at all!”* That shows you the immature and twisted mindset of these people. The punk was so eager to draw a few “amens” from his e-bee minions that it never occurred to him that plucking green souls meant plucking souls that WEREN'T RIPE FOR HARVEST, therefore the plucking was not a Spirit-led thing at all! It was 100% religious robotics. But it got him the “professions” that he was after and gave him something to brag about, and that was the primary goal anyway.

The inability of grown Christian men to see through this madness has always been of special interest to this preacher and writer. Why can something so obvious not be seen by grown men, especially grown Christian men? Even many lost men and women have enough spiritual discernment to know that this stuff is not of the Lord, yet there are thousands of IFB preachers and personal workers who can't see it. I have concluded that either they are lost and mindless reprobates themselves or God has basically taken their minds due to their continual rejection of His holy words while using those very words to further their own fundamental agendas. **“Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.”** (Pro. 13:13)

A commonly repeated argument of these high-pressure e-bees is *“Well, at least we’re winning some!”* Although the claim is debatable, we’ll accept it for sake of making a point. Suppose that as many as half of the e-bee converts are genuine. That means half are FAKE! No intelligent CEO in this country would keep a man on the payroll who consistently LOSES as much money as the company makes in profits! I can hear it now: *“Mr. Wellington, I am pleased to announce that we did very well last year in most all of our endeavors and we WOULD have \$8,000,000 in pre-tax profits, except for the fact that I lost \$8,000,000 on the Northton Construction project. But, at least we broke even and we can be optimistic about the year ahead!”* Probably not. Friend, the Father’s business is interested in a PROFIT (Luke 19:11-27), not in losses or breaking even, especially not where the souls of men are concerned. And, in light of Matthew 7:13-14, I was being very generous with the 50/50 ratio.

But it goes deeper than that, much deeper. Once an e-bee finishes his soul-spin on a sinner, the sinner can now go through life saying that he’s a Christian. He may never

say it voluntarily, but when being witnessed to by a real soldier of the Lord, he will quickly respond with, *“Oh, yeah. I’ve been saved for about twenty years, since two men from Broadway Baptist prayed with me right on my front porch.”* He says this while smoking a cigarette and buying a case of beer on his way to the lake Sunday morning. He has never shown any sign of spiritual life, yet he says he’s saved because he once said an empty prayer and an idiot preacher welcomed him to the kingdom of God on his front porch. Did the preacher go back to this man after a while and inform him that he now doubted his conversion since he has seen no fruit, no new creature in Christ? Of course not! He chalked him up as one of the three hundred “precious souls” saved that year and bragged about it to his preacher buddies. In reality, rather than win this man to Christ, the preacher actually helped to slam shut the door of this man’s heart by giving him an alibi to reject future gospel witnesses. Instead of eternal security, this man now has a FALSE security that will eventually take him to Hell.

I recently saw an ad for one of these e-bee “soul winning” clinics that had the hosting pastor’s photo along with several of his “credentials,” one of which was the fact that he had seen one third of his converts baptized. It didn’t mention the other two thirds at all, nor did it offer any convincing evidence that even the one third really received Christ. Yet, his e-bee minions flocked to his clinic to hone their “soul winning” skills. Please don’t think I’m trying to sound overly humble with what I’m about to say, because I’m really not. I’m just trying to be honest and get across some helpful truths. How exactly does any decent preacher allow his photo to be published along with lofty words of praise in his honor? I’m dead serious. This sort of vanity is published and promoted continually in fundamental circles, and it appears that most of the brethren are okay with it, but WHY? What kind of man does this, and what kind of people accept it? What kind of man WANTS to be the object of such attention and flattery? Maybe we would expect such

conduct from an unsaved politician or a Hollywood silver screen god, but from a Baptist preacher? And why are so many Baptists okay with it? Yes, I know the answer, but do YOU know the answer, and what will you do about it?

Now get Ephesians 2. We'll look at the standard verses, but we'll also look at the commonly ignored verse. First, look at verses eight and nine: **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”** Okay, that's simple enough. A sinner is saved by GRACE through FAITH and not of works. If he were saved by works, then he could boast about his works, but God wants us all boasting about Jesus Christ instead, so no man gets SAVED by his works. Does that mean that he HAS no works? No, it just means that he isn't SAVED by his works. The sinner gets his salvation in verses 8 and 9, but then look what immediately follows in verse 10: **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should WALK IN THEM.”** The verse begins with the word “For” which makes it a continuation of verses 8 and 9, so let's view all three verses together and emphasize some key words: **“For by grace are ye saved through FAITH; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. FOR we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”**

Looks like God wants some WORKS to follow our FAITH, does it not? But notice that these works are natural results of God's working in us: “his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS.” That is, if God really saved you, then his Spirit entered and sealed you, and that same Spirit will produce good works, or fruit (Gal. 5:22-23). If you have a problem with that, then you have a problem with GOD, not with Bro. Melton.

Come to Colossians chapter one, verses 3-6: **“We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your FAITH in Christ Jesus, and of the LOVE WHICH YE HAVE to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and BRINGETH FORTH FRUIT, as it doth ALSO IN YOU, SINCE THE DAY YE HEARD OF IT, and knew the grace of God in truth.”** That’s a good one, right there. These folks heard the gospel and immediately started loving the saints and bearing fruit (“since the day ye heard of it”). They didn’t receive Christ and then continue in sin. The HOLY Spirit that convicted them of sin and baptized them into Christ also began working in and through them to produce at least SOME fruit.

Next, get I Thessalonians 1:2-3: **“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your WORK OF FAITH, and LABOUR OF LOVE, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.”** These were new Christians, and Paul was very pleased with their spiritual progress because their faith had produced WORK and their love had produced LABOUR. That’s spiritual fruit coming from new believers in Christ. In fact, he says in verse 5 that **“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance . . .”** Then in verses 6 and 7 we read that that same Holy Ghost led these believers to become FOLLOWERS and ENSAMPLES even though they received the word in “much affliction.” My, what a contrast to the professing converts that we see brethren tallying up today. If those verses aren’t clear enough, take a look at verse 9: **“. . . ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”** I’d call that a bit more than a professed change of mind. If there’s no fruit, then the mind

was never really changed; you just SAID it changed so you could call yourself a soul winner.

I know that the “by their fruits” concept is a hard pill to swallow for modern-day “judge not” Christianity, but we, as Bible believers, owe it to the Lord to do our best in producing genuine converts. There’s no way that we can know for sure in every single case, but we can certainly be more serious about the Lord’s “by their fruits” standard than we have been. The e-bee assumption is always that the professed convert is really saved (that’s why he’s added to the tally), even when no fruit follows, although there is no Scripture to support such an assumption. Based on the Lord’s “by their fruits” standard, the assumption should often be that the person probably is NOT saved, yet we never hear the e-bee preachers addressing this. Could it be that precious NUMBERS are more valuable to them than precious souls? Apparently so. After all, if the average e-bee preacher were to subtract his total of fake converts from his total of true converts, he might very well end up in the hole with a big negative. That wouldn’t grace the pages of the next bulletin very well, so he just counts them all. How sweet . . . at least until the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Alright, I’ve said enough, and I’ve given far more Scripture than should be necessary to convince anyone. No one has to bear fruit TO BE saved, but it’s impossible for a truly saved person to produce no fruit at all. Our Lord gave us His “by their fruits” standard for a reason, precisely so we could discern between truth and error and so we can focus on producing genuine converts instead of damning souls to Hell by peddling false security to unregenerate sinners. I’ve witnessed this irresponsible behavior among fundamental Baptists since only a few months after I was saved in 1979, and it seems to be growing worse. This booklet is simply my attempt to do something about it. I believe strongly in evangelism, but it must be REAL evangelism. I preach on the street, I witness to people door-to-door and publicly, and

our church puts out thousands of gospel tracts, booklets, Bible courses, and CD's. When someone shows a sincere hunger for the Lord due to Holy Ghost conviction, we fill that hunger with the Gospel of Christ and watch God turn a sinner into a saint. When we see no conviction and no hunger and thirst for righteousness, we plant a seed and pray. We do NOT produce and tally-up fake converts. We never have, and we never will. That's James Melton and Bible Baptist Church. Take it or leave it.

In closing, I would like to add that some have used my arguments against the e-bees to attack preachers and ministries personally. Please stop this. Empty-believism is a very real and very serious problem that needs to be addressed, which is why I address it, but you have not seen me naming names and going against people personally as I have no idea how this or that preacher or personal worker deals with sinners in their own local evangelistic efforts. Yes, some preachers are empty-believers and are likely doing more harm than good, but there are also times when the pastor himself is very sound and responsible, yet some of his members are the problem without him even knowing it. Then there are loose cannons out there who are neither pastors nor members. Surely we can preach against this problem and trust the Holy Spirit to apply the message where it's needed rather than making unnecessary and irresponsible attacks on fellow Christians. My desire is to strengthen believers with Bible truth, not to diminish anyone's testimony or spiritual effectiveness. May God help us to be faithful with His holy words and to uphold His holy standard in a responsible and Christ-like manner. Thank you for your reading time.

“The true husbandmen is not determined by how many grapes he picks, but rather by the condition in which he leaves the vineyard when he's finished.”

Dr. Bob Jones, Sr.

By Their Fruits

Rediscovering a Biblical Standard

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