

## MY PERSONAL VISION AND YOUR CHALLENGE

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Feed My Sheep, A Shepherd's Responsibility, False Shepherds Of Ancient Israel, False Prosperity Gospel And Abundant Life Preachers, Jesus Warns Of The Thieves Robbers And Hirelings, The Good Responsible Shepherds, Example Of The Profitless Shepherd, Keep Your Money, Be A Humble Servant, God's Good Gold, Parable Of The Talents, Apple Saplings, The Barren Dead Church, The Cursed Fig Tree, Fruit That Remains, Joy Over One Sinner That Repenteth, Different Kinds Of Fruit, Bring In The Sheaves, God Gives The Increase, His Vessels Of Clay, Rewards In Heaven, A Crown Of Life, Suggested Reading

As many of my readers will know, the primary reason why I started this online ministry over two decades ago is simply because I have an earnest desire to feed the Lord's sheep. As you may recall, not long before His Ascension to Heaven, three times Jesus said to the Apostle Peter "Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep", as we see by the following verses:

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

John 21:15-17, KJV

I suspect that it may have been because of this incident that is found at the end of the Gospel of John, that Peter was later inspired to write the following in his first

Epistle:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;"

1 Peter 5:2, KJV

As I explain in some of my other articles, such as "The Book of Enoch: Truth or Heresy?", the Lord became extremely upset with the spiritual shepherds of ancient Israel because they failed to do this very thing. In other words, instead of faithfully feeding their flocks with the Word of God, as well as helping to meet their physical needs, they abused the sheep, and they used them for their own profit, while the poor sheep starved. In articles such as "What About the Poor?", I point out that God's Word makes it very clear that He does not tolerate abusing the poor. Tragically, this was still happening at the time of Christ. Consider what the Prophet Ezekiel wrote in the thirty-fourth chapter of his Book:

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock . . . As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them."

Ezekiel 34:2-3, 8-10, KJV

Sadly, as many of you will already know, and as I explain in articles such as "Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon" and "Abundant Life Doctrine: Scripturally Exposed!", there are a lot of so-called "Prosperity Gospel/Abundant Life" preachers in the Christian church today who do the very same

thing. Their spiritual disease and deception has even spread into the poor nations of Africa. I was shocked to make this discovery. But in thinking about this, I realized that the poor people of Africa are perfect targets for this kind of vile deception. Exactly as Jesus warned in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John, these fast-talking, greedy, false shepherds are thieves, robbers and hirelings who care not for the Lord's sheep, as we see here:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers . . . All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

John 10:1-5, 8-13, KJV

Of course, I am not suggesting that all Christian leaders, pastors and shepherds behave in such a deplorable manner. There are obviously many good, responsible shepherds who truly do love the Lord, and who do love their sheep. Such people are extremely sacrificial individuals who do their best to feed their flocks with the knowledge which the Lord has entrusted to them. In short, I realize that I am by no means alone in this kind of feeding ministry.

However, to be honest, my personal vision and burden goes beyond simply feeding God's sheep. To know that some of you are truly being inspired by, blessed by, motivated by, and

spiritually fed by my articles and series gives me a great deal of personal satisfaction. I also want all of you to know that I am extremely thankful for the many inspiring words of support and encouragement which you send my way via Facebook comments, private messages, etc. They truly thrill my heart. While I truly appreciate every positive word that you send in, I am looking for something else in addition to your wonderful messages. Allow me to explain through the following very fitting example.

Consider a shepherd, native to the verdant mountains of Switzerland, who lovingly toils day after day, week after week, and month after month tending to his flocks. Because of his excellent care as a faithful shepherd, his sheep are protected from wolves and other natural enemies; and they grow big and fat and full of fluffy wool as the months go by. Imagine, however, if despite his tender care, his sheep never mate in order to produce new lambs. Or imagine if shearing time arrives and those sheep refuse to be clipped for their wool.

After this has happened a few times, that shepherd is going to begin wondering to himself "What am I even doing this for? I spend all of this time and energy year after year caring for my flocks, yet these selfish sheep have never given me any new lambs to expand the flock, and they refuse to allow me to shear them." Now obviously, if this situation were allowed to continue for a prolonged period of time, the shepherd would eventually have no choice but to retire from the sheep herding business, because all of his sheep would eventually die of old age without having ever produced any new generations of lambs.

Perhaps some of you have already seen the clear message in this imaginary example. If the sheep are only coming to be fed for themselves, but are not giving anything in return, not only are they extremely selfish, but they are slowly but surely bringing about the demise of their own herd. If those foolish sheep just come bleating to the shepherd begging for those special morsels they know he keeps hidden in his coat pocket, but they don't give him any wool or any new lambs, what good is it going to do them or the shepherd? If that poor shepherd is not earning any kind of a profit from his business, then he is better off getting rid of it and doing something else.

At this point, some of you may possibly be thinking to yourselves, "Here it comes! I knew it all along! All of this talk about doing the Lord's Work for free was just a clever scheme and a ruse to get us hooked on his articles. Now that he has got our interest, it is time for payday! Now he is going to tell us that we need a paid subscription in order to continue receiving his wonderful articles! He is just like all the rest of those money-minded Bible hucksters who suck on us for all we are worth!"

Ha! No. Not exactly. I will be absolutely honest with you. Yes, I most certainly do want something from you. However, it is most definitely not what you think. No, I don't want your money -- please keep it -- unless of course you are willing to send it to me in an envelope without a return address so I can't possibly find a way to return the money to you! Of course, that assumes that you even know my mailing address. :)

Let's return to the wonderful comments which some of you send my way at times. Exactly what is it that you think I am looking for when I read them? Do you really think that it is just your praise so that I can become lifted up in my pride? Do you think that it is just so that I can boast to others and show them how spiritual I am? God forbid that I should ever adopt this kind of an attitude! As the Apostles Peter, Paul and James wrote:

"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

1 Corinthians 8:2, KJV

"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

Galatians 6:3, KJV

"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

James 4:6, 10, KJV

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed

with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"

1 Peter 5:5-6, KJV

The answer is really quite simple. Aside from the fact that I am looking to see if you are truly being fed by my work, I am also looking to see what you personally are doing with the knowledge and precious jewels which you are discovering within my writings. The Bible tells us that God's Word is indeed like a hidden treasure. In fact it is even more precious than gold and silver. That is why I like to refer to it as "God's Good Gold". Consider the following verses:

"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

Psalms 119:72, KJV

"Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

Matthew 13:52, KJV

So tell me then. Exactly what are you doing with all of that "Celestial Gold" which I have been mining for you for so many years now? Similar to the aforementioned selfish sheep which refused to mate, and which refused to be sheared, are you just selfishly hoarding the gold for yourself? Or are you sharing it with others like the wise servants who gained more talents for their Master in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew? Consider the following verses:

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying,

Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 25:14-30, KJV

If there is one thing which I can determine from some of your wonderful messages, and from observing some of your online activities, it is that to some degree -- I will never know exactly how much in this present life -- this ministry is bearing positive fruit for the glory of the Kingdom of God. Obviously, I find that encouraging.

However, allow me to remind you that an apple tree does not grow juicy apples just for the sake of growing fruit. There is supposed to be an end result. That end result is that some of those apples will ripen, fall to the ground and rot, and then hopefully, some of their seeds will sprout and produce new young saplings. Eventually those young trees will produce fruit of their own, and thus the process will continue. This is precisely what Jesus meant by such verses as the following:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall

into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

John 12:24, KJV

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." John 15:16, KJV

The key phrase there, as I have pointed out before, is "your fruit should remain". If all you are doing is taking my articles, reading them, and temporarily being inspired and fed by them, then you have missed the mark. That is exactly what a lot of religionists do when they go to church. They do their duty by attending services every Saturday or Sunday week after week. They get all inspired for a few minutes while listening to the pastor's sermon; but then they go home and live their lives exactly the same as they always have. They don't bear any fruit for the Kingdom of God whatsoever. Do you know what Jesus says regarding such churches which bear absolutely no spiritual fruit? Take a look at these verses:

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

Revelation 3:1, KJV

"Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:60, KJV

I am also reminded of the following incident which is found in both the Gospels of Matthew and Mark:

"Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!"

Matthew 21:18-20, KJV



"And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it . . . And when even was come, he went out of the city. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away."

Mark 11:12-14, 19-21, KJV

A spiritually dead ministry, and a dried up fig tree is not what my vision is about in the least. My goal for the BBB ministry is that it will produce fruit that remains which will then mature, ripen, fall to the ground, rot, and release seeds which will then produce more fruit; and so the process continues. Of course, the most obvious fruit of a Christian is simply the spiritual birth of another Christian. We all know how delightful it is when another person repents of their unbelief and accepts Jesus into their life. Even the Angels in Heaven rejoice, as we see by these verses:

"And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Luke 15:3-10, KJV

However, that is not the only form of fruit which a Christian can produce. There are times when someone may already know

the Lord and be saved, but perhaps they are not being very active for the Lord. Perhaps they are in a spiritual slump. So it takes someone else to relight their spark, and to motivate and convict them so that they get back up on the wall of service for the Lord. Exactly what that service is depends a lot on the faith of the person involved. In some cases, bearing fruit for God's Kingdom means passing the torch, or lighting other torches which can help to carry on the work. This is precisely what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote the following to his beloved son Timothy:

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

2 Timothy 2:2, KJV

So you see then, the purpose of my articles -- that is, my seeds -- is to produce new fruit in your life as well. When you accept the Word I have shared with you, the seed of faith sprouts in your heart. Maybe it even leads to your Salvation. Or perhaps someone else has already planted the seed of faith in your heart, but you have not tended to it properly, so its growth has been stunted. In that case, my articles may serve to water that precious seed, and to provide it with all of the right nutrients so that it will grow properly, and will eventually bear some form of fruit. Maybe my articles help you to be a better online witness. Or perhaps they make you a stronger street witnesser. Or maybe they inspire you to start your own home fellowship. Or perhaps they motivate you to be a better spouse. Or maybe they give you ideas regarding how to better raise your children.

The truth is, only God knows what specific plans He has by introducing you to the BBB ministry. My job is to simply be faithful to share the Word with you, and then to hope that I will be able to collect the sheaves, and to multiply my bread, as we see by the following two verses:

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Psalms 126:6, KJV

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."

Ecclesiastes 11:1, KJV

To be honest, it does not really matter who does the actual planting and the watering; for as the Apostle Paul wrote in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, in the end, it is only God who can give the increase, as we can determine by the following verses:

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."  
1 Corinthians 3:5-11, KJV

We see the very same thing happening in the Book of Acts where we are told that God is the one who can give the increase:

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."  
Acts 2:47, KJV

Of course, in order to win new souls to His Kingdom, the Lord cannot send His Angelic Messengers to do the job for Him. Most people would not fare too well if they had an encounter with such a majestic being. Thus, the Lord has had to rely upon us, His vessels of clay, to get the job done for Him. If we truly love the Lord, then we will obey His command to "Go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature" -- Mark 16:15. Whether this is done in the flesh as a foreign missionary, or as an online evangelist and Ambassador for Christ, or in your local neighborhood such as through a Home Church or a door-to-door ministry, is according to your personal faith. But whatever your chosen ministry is, we have the assurance of God's Word that if we are faithful to do this, then we will be eternally blessed

with rewards in Heaven. Consider the following verses:

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."

Proverbs 11:30, KJV

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Daniel 12:3, KJV

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:19-21, KJV

Thus is my personal vision regarding the Bill's Bible Basics ministry. Through investing my time and my energy in you, my readers, I am planting seeds of faith which will hopefully produce a future crop of some kind. In fact, it is quite possible that some of you will be jewels in my crown if you go on to produce even more fruit for His Kingdom. In turn, those people who you win to the Lord, or encourage to serve the Lord in some way, will then become jewels in your crown as well. Isn't that wonderful? Consider the following exciting verses:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

2 Timothy 4:8, KJV

"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

1 Peter 5:4, KJV

With these inspiring thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. I trust that you have enjoyed it, learned something from it, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or any other social network, I would really appreciate if you would

take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thank you so very much! May God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

Abundant Life Doctrine: Scripturally Exposed!  
Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?  
Endtime Witnessing: Winning the Sheep and Waging the Warfare!  
Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon  
Parable of the Sower: Salvation and Service  
Sluggards and Sloths: Are You Diligent and Faithful?  
Study, Work and Don't Be Ashamed  
The Book of Enoch: Truth or Heresy?  
This Little Light, Glory of the Lord and Our Bright Future  
What About the Poor?

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