

The Wheat and the Tares

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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Text: Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43

Purpose: Jesus illustrated a principal through the parable of the “Wheat and Tares.” Growing up around us are people called the “sons of the Kingdom” and “sons of the wicked one.” Those that are “in Christ” are fruitful and maturing in their faith. Those that are “wicked” are deceitfully evil and divisive in their actions. We need to examine ourselves and make sure of our calling and our position before God.

A science teacher decided to conduct an experiment to show his students the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. He took four jam jars. In jar one he put cigarette smoke. In jar two, alcohol. In jar three junk food and in jar four good clean dirt. He then put an earthworm into each jar, sealed them and put them in a cupboard.



At the end of a week he took the jars out and showed them to the students, saying, "Look, the worm in the cigarette smoke is dead, the worm in the alcohol is dead, and the worm in the junk food is dead. However, the worm in the dirt is alive and well. What do we learn from this?"

One young student put up his hand and said, "If we smoke, drink alcohol and eat junk food, we won't get worms."¹

Last week we examined the parable of the sower and the various soils in which the seed could be sown. The **seed was the word of God** which was sown across a field with various types of soil.



Some of the seed was sown on hard packed dirt. Those seeds were quickly snatched away by the birds. Some seed was sown on rocky soil. Those seeds did begin to grow, but when the heat of the day came, the new sprout quickly withered. Some seed landed among the thorns and grew, but was unproductive because the life was being choked out by the weeds. But some of the seed landed on good soil. That brought about a harvest of 30-fold, 60-fold and even 100-fold.

Jesus also gave us the interpretation of the parable and pointed out the seed is the word of God. The harvest is the result of the word growing in the soil of our soul. Is the soil of our soul hard packed, rocky, thorn infested, or good fertile soil? The question I left you with last Sunday was, **“How does your garden grow?”**

S seeds that fall to way side ground ...	S seeds that fall to rocky ground ...	S seeds that fall to thorny ground ...	S seeds that fall to good ground ...
Walking in Darkness	Walking in Darkness	Walking in Darkness	Walking in the light
...are led away by Satan's deceptions.	...leave when persecution arises.	...are worldly and seek after riches.	...bear fruit and teach the Word correctly.

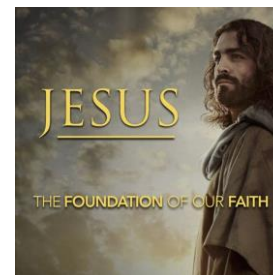
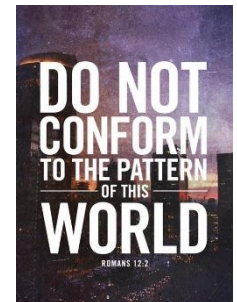
Jesus was on a roll in Matthew 13, where at least 8 parables were told. In each one Jesus continued to expound on what the Kingdom of God looks like and how it grows and spreads. Just as the first parable used the illustration of seeds and growth, in this second parable, Jesus continues with an agricultural example. Jesus expounded on this topic by using the parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

Jesus is letting the disciple know that they are entering into a new dispensation, a new period of time, with God. Today we recognize that this age we are in is called the “Age of Grace.” John Newton, the author of *Amazing Grace*, gives us a perfect picture of the grace of God. Today, we are in a time of waiting between the work that Christ has done at Calvary and when Christ will return again and judge this world.

We look all around us and see evil growing and spreading. We see lawlessness and complete disregard for the things of God. We decry the blatant sins which the culture is flaunting but we shrink back in fear that we may offend someone.



The world is hell bent on destroying all that is good. Christians need to undergird themselves with God’s word so we will not succumb to the overwhelming pressure to conform ourselves into the mold of the world. The scripture found in 2 Peter 1:5-11 tells us of the progression that a person experiences as they grow in their



relationship with Christ. The foundation stone in that list begins with Faith. The list progresses through virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. These are the characteristics we need to mature unto.

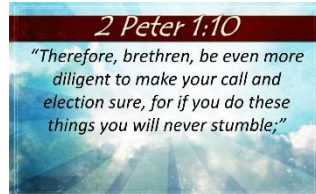
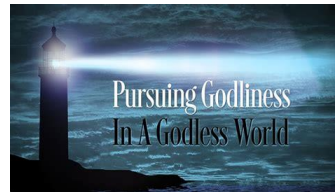
These items are a progression which moves us from the foundation of belief, (faith) to its ultimate expression in

Christian character (love). If we truly want our community to change and transition from the tide of evil that seems to be sweeping across our nation, we need to get busy telling others of the love of God and the forgiveness that can only be found in a relationship with Christ. We all want people to live a moral, honest, honorable lifestyle, but the only way in which that can come about is if they are instilled with faith in God, taught moral truths, led by those inner convictions, and have established a perseverance that will not falter.

Once these foundation blocks are in place, then and only then will godliness, brotherly kindness and sincere love begin to blossom. How can we expect our godless neighbors to act unless they have the love of God living within them? We can bemoan the sins of our society, but unless we transform ourselves first and then our neighbor by the love of Christ, they will never be transformed. They will continue to grow up as tares among the wheat.

After this list was given to believers, Peter admonished believers to *“be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble.”*

Today, I want us to “diligently” examine ourselves in light of this parable about the “wheat and tares.” It is an eye-opening parable that clearly tells us of eternity. When you die, you go to one of two places – to Heaven or Hell. Which one are you going to?



In this chapter in Matthew, the disciples came to Jesus and asked him to explain the parable of the wheat and tares. Maybe the disciples understood the other ones that Jesus had taught, but this one had a few elements that may have bothered them.



The Context

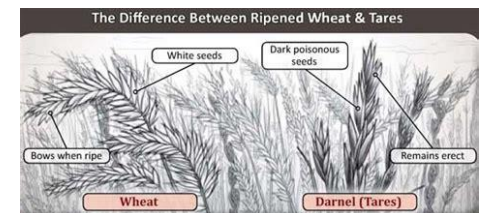
Jesus used a common illustration of a farmer going out and planting a field of wheat. He uses good seed and plants the crop and expects a good harvest. However, while he and his servants were asleep, an enemy slipped into the field and planted some tares among the wheat. What exactly are tares?



The Interpreters Bible said they are weeds that go by the name, “Bearded Darnel.”² In the early stages of its development, it looks exactly like wheat. It is only when the plant has matured and the kernels have formed in the head of the genuine wheat plant that the two plants can be distinguished from one another.



The wheat heads begin to fill out with grain in the head, while the head of the tares are filled with little black seeds. The farmer may begin to get excited at the prospect of a good yield, but as the time gets closer to harvest, you begin to see the difference between the two plants. The plants that have

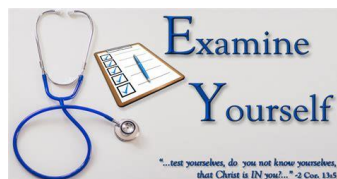


wheat begin to make the stalk bend slightly making the head appear to be bowing toward the earth. The plants that have the tares are lighter in the head and they continue to stand tall and straight.

The servants see the difference between the two and realize that there is a problem. They bring this to their master's attention. One solution to the problem would be to go out into the field and pull up the plants now and eliminate the bad plants. But the master realizes how intertwined the two plants are in their root system. If they were to be removed this close to harvest, then the roots of the wheat would be ruined. The master instead, suggests they wait until harvest day and then they will gather the tares into bundles and burn them while preserving the wheat to be gathered into barns.

In Matthew 13:37-42, Jesus gives the disciples an explanation of the various elements in this parable. The sower is Christ. He is the one that is sowing the good seed of the gospel of grace. The one who sowed tares is the devil. The wheat are those individuals who are saved. The tares are the unsaved individuals, but have the initial outward appearance of salvation. The tares are those in the church who look saved, act saved, sound saved, but who are in truth deceived about their salvation. The future of the tares was the fire, and the future of lost sinners, even those who act saved, is hell.

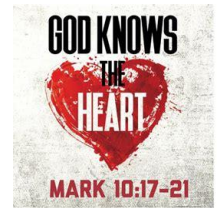
My objective this morning is to encourage each of you to do what Paul commanded the Corinthians to do. *“Examine yourselves whether*



ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye are not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5) As I mentioned earlier, Peter also told his readers to, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, you shall never fall.”

I don't want you to sit here this morning and continue going through life deceived. You must examine yourself and diligently determine if you have repented from your sin, and made a commitment to Christ as your Lord and Savior. There are only two destinations for eternity, heaven or hell. There are only two kinds of fruit growing in the field of harvest, wheat or tares.

The only people that actually know your heart is you and God. You may think your children are saved, but you don't really know their hearts. You may think your husband or wife is saved, but only that individual knows their heart. You cannot trust what your parents told you happened when you were young; you cannot trust the word of another concerning your salvation. You must make your own diligent search and find assurance.



The wheat and tares have at least three things in common.

I. Both Were Planted Together (v.24-25)³

Both the wheat and tares have the shared common experience of being planted. But the two plants are different in two distinct ways.



A. The Character of the Seeds is Different

The first difference between the two is the character of the seed. The wheat seed produced wheat while the tare seeds produced tares. On a spiritual level, the “seed” is the thing we have placed our faith in. For a genuine believer, the “seed” is the gospel of grace. A born-again person trusts Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. The tares on the other hand may be trusting in any number of emotional, spiritual, or physical experiences for their salvation. Simply having an experience is not equivalent to having saving faith.

Some people may say, “it’s all kind of fuzzy, and I don’t remember much about it, but everyone tells me that I have been saved.” We need to realize that a “warm fuzzy feeling” is not the same as trusting faith. I don’t want to gamble my eternal future on some “fuzzy” feeling. Salvation comes to us when we recognize we are sinners and are convicted of our sin, we repent of that sin, and then trust Christ as our personal Savior.

John 6:44 tells us that it is impossible to be saved until the sinner is drawn to God. If you have ever been under the conviction of sin, you will never forget it. The Holy Spirit speaks to your heart and your heart is drawn to God.

The question we need to answer is, “**Where is your faith?**” What are you basing your hope of heaven on? It must be in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is only through the death and resurrection of Christ’s atoning work at Calvary or your faith is in vain.



Every year, our doctors will encourage us to get the Flu Shot. If you got a flu shot this year, when they injected you with the vaccination, they actually injected you with a “dead virus” which mimics the real thing. It protects you from being able to get sick from the real virus. Every year there may be hundreds of different viruses, and the CDC makes their best guess as to which one will be most wide spread and then makes a vaccine for those strains.

In a spiritual sense, many church members that are tares in the pews have been inoculated with a dead religious virus which prevents them from hearing a message like this today. It is imperative that each of us examine ourselves. We must be sure our faith is genuine.

B. The Character of the Sowers are Different

There are distinct differences in these two seeds. The first is the seed itself and the second is the one sowing the seed. The good seed was sown by the owner of the field, Jesus Christ. The tares were sown by the enemy or Satan. Why would the enemy do this? This was an attempt to ruin the crop, and ultimately it was an attack on the farmer and his family. There must have been a lot of hatred for the other if they wanted to poison them.

Satan is in the business of sowing tares among the Lord’s wheat. Why? Satan knows that if he can place enough of the artificial among the genuine, then he can devastate the entire crop. Satan is in the business of undoing all that the Lord is doing! If he can fill the church with enough lost members,



then he can deceive multitudes. If he can mix enough goats with the sheep, he can disrupt the harmony in a church.

Whenever there is church trouble, you can almost bank on this truth: there is a lost person involved somewhere. Satan knows that enough lost people in the church will give the church a bad name. Why? Because the lost can only imitate the saved for so long, then their true nature, like the tares, comes out.

II. Both Seeds Grow and Progress Together (v. 26-30a)

Secondly, both the wheat and tares progressed together. As the wheat grew, so did the tares. The tares did everything that the wheat was doing and they looked good while they grew.



A. The Tares Acted Like Wheat

Their activity was similar to, and mimicked, that of wheat. Tares can be active in the local church. A person can come to church, read their bible, sit in Sunday school, teach a class, and even stand behind the pulpit, and be deceived. This kind of person may have portions of the bible memorized, stand and pray in church, and may even serve as a deacon. But all this activity similar to wheat does not mean they are wheat.

B. The Tares Looked Like Wheat

The tares may even look like wheat in the beginning. Until they have matured completely, they are impossible to tell

one from another. If you had wheat in one hand and tares in the other, you probably would not be able to tell them apart.

That is the way it is in the church. You cannot tell the difference between the genuine and the artificial. The tares in the church may dress right, talk right, walk right, and give every appearance of being saved. We need to be careful in advising others of the assurance of their salvation. Only the Holy Spirit can give that assurance to an individual.

C. No Evidence of Fruit in the Tare

The tares may act like wheat, and look like wheat, but that is where the similarities end. One thing the tare cannot produce is fruit. If you were to open the head of a stalk of wheat, you would find it filled with wheat kernels. If you opened the head of a tare, you would only find tiny black seeds. Fruit making is the defining mark of genuine salvation!

The fruit of the Spirit is found in Galatians 5:22-23. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”* A person that is faking it may be able to exhibit some of these characteristics over time, but their true nature eventually will be seen.



It is interesting to note the response of the master to his servants. They wanted to remove the tares, but the master said wait until harvest time so the tender roots of the wheat would not be disturbed. The point is - you and I cannot

actually tell the difference between the real and genuine. That is God's realm of responsibility. We need to be careful judging others when God says wait. Our tendency is to judge on the external, while God judges on the heart.

In 1 Samuel 16:7, when Samuel was to go and select the next King of Israel, God told him, "*But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.*" Let God do the judging. We need to be busy spreading good seed.



III. Both the Wheat and Tares Were Processed Together (v. 30b)

The third similarity is that they both were processed together. Eventually the day of harvest arrived. The reapers were sent into the field to gather the tares first, and then the wheat. How could they tell the difference now? It is easy at this stage, because as the wheat matures, the head becomes filled with grain and the heads bow down under the weight. The seeds in the heads of the tares are light and they stand straight up. This allows the tare to stand tall and be easily harvested.



This picture of the wheat and tares is clear to me. As a genuine believer grows in the Lord, he or she tends to become more humble in the presence of God. The tare, on the other hand, will stand in their pride and go to hell clinging tightly to their false beliefs and foolishness. When

the harvest time comes, they are both gathered, but with vastly different destinations.

A. The Tares are Burned

These plants were bound together, and then cast into the fire. There was no other use for them than to be burned in the fire. If the tares were to be eaten, it would have caused nausea and dizziness. This imitation wheat plant, the bearded darnel was actually poisonous.



B. The Wheat is Bared

After the tares were burned, the wheat was gathered and taken to the barn. Here the wheat would be process and prepared for market or saved for use by the family later.

The implication of this parable is clear. When life comes to an end, there are only two possible destinations for every human soul. Every person that lives and dies as a tare will find themselves cast into the fires of hell, where they will be eternally separated from the presence of God.



This is not my opinion, it is God's. Psalm 9:17 says, "*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*" 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 says, "*In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.*"

The question is, “Where will you be for eternity?” Examine yourself. Diligently seek out the Lord while there is time.



As we try to bring our thoughts to a close this morning, I want to warn you of a few things. How are these tares made? Where do they come from? How do they get into the church? It is through the work of Satan. We need to be aware of the traps that lay before us.

1. Beware of Good Works



We need to beware of substituting our good works for our salvation. Often the tares are not the worse ones we can think of. Often, they are busy doing good. They may be busy and active, but they are lost. Our salvation is never found in singing in the choir, doing a job in the church, visiting the sick, or in helping the poor.

2. Beware of Good Beliefs

We also need to beware of substituting Jesus with “good” beliefs. You can believe the bible and every word in it and still not have a saving faith in the person of Jesus Christ. Even Satan knows the bible and knows it is true, but his destiny is already determined. He believes and it causes him to tremble because he never will be saved. You can believe the Bible and still go to hell.

Only when you bow before the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance for your sins and receive the atoning death of Jesus as your only hope of salvation will your belief be changed into saving faith. Maybe you have heard all of the

teachings of the church but have failed to be born again. Repeatedly, we are admonished to “Be Born Again.” Simply knowing good beliefs does not translate into saving faith.

3. Beware of Good People

There are good people around you that wouldn't hurt you for all the money in the world. But they would simply ignore confronting you with the most important decision of your life. Don't let another person's goodness give you a false sense of security with God simply because of the company you keep. Well meaning people can send you to Hell by trying to assure you that you are right with God.

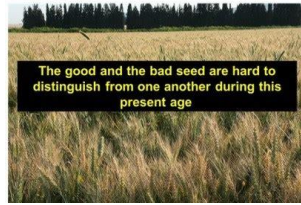
4. Beware of Good Feelings

We also need to be aware of good feelings that give us a false sense of security in our relationship with God. Sometimes we experience a mountain top emotional experience during worship. It is easy to think that feeling the emotional aspect of worship is equivalent to a relationship with God. Our good feelings can betray us and lull us into a false sense of salvation security. I am saved by God's grace and my confession in Christ, not on the basis of whether I feel saved or not.

The parable of the wheat and tares is one for us today. We need to test, try, and prove our relationship with God. Have we confessed our sin? Have we repented from our sin? Do we acknowledge Christ as our Lord and Savior? Have you accepted the atonement for your sin through the death and resurrection of Christ?

If you have done that, then 1 John 1:9 says you will be forgiven. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Only you know your heart. Today can be the day of assurance of salvation if you will only call upon Him. Don’t wait.

Both Grow up together in the same field
(field = the world) until the end of the age....
Matthew 13:30



LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Mikey’s Funnies, A Worm Funny, Oct. 21, 2022

² The Interpreters Bible, Vol. 7, page 414.

³ Outline from Sermon Notebook, Matt 13 24_30 Wheat or Tares.