

The Parable of the Tares

by A.W. Pink

The Parable of the Tares reveals the work of Satan in introducing a spurious Christianity, and the ultimate doom of the wicked at the end of the age.

Scripture: Matthew 13:24

Topics: "Spiritual Vigilance", "The Nature of True and False Believers"

Description

A.W. Pink expounds on 'The Parable of the Tares,' illustrating the coexistence of true believers and false ones within the religious world, symbolized by wheat and tares growing together. He emphasizes that this mixed state is a result of the enemy's work, with Satan sowing tares among the wheat while believers are unwatchful. Pink warns against the dangers of complacency and the deceptive nature of spurious Christianity, urging vigilance and the preaching of the Gospel instead of futile reform efforts. He concludes with a sobering reminder of the ultimate fate of the wicked, highlighting Christ's love for His own and the reality of eternal judgment.

Transcript

The Prophetic Parables of Matthew 13

Chapter 2:

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES.

This parable forms the second of the series, and its substance corresponds with the meaning of this numeral. One is the number of unity, for it stands alone, excluding all difference. But with two there is a difference, another. This other may be either for good or evil. In its evil sense two stands for difference, contrast, and so, enmity. Two is the first number which may be divided, and hence it stands for division, conflict. If we refer back to the opening chapter of Scripture we find that it was on the second day's work that God "divided the light from the darkness, and the waters under the firmament from the waters above it."

The second in any number of things generally has evil and enmity stamped upon it. Take the second statement in the Bible: the first one is "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," but the second statement tells us "and the earth became without form and void." Thus it is with the seven parables of Matthew 13: the first one describes the work of Christ; the second the work of Satan! The

Parable of the Tares supplies an explanation of Christendom as it has existed all through these nineteen centuries, and as it is today; a mixed state of affairs; the true and the false side by side; Rome and her daughters masquerading under the guise of Christianity.

The "field" represents the religious world, in which the wheat and the tares "grow together". This mixed state of affairs has resulted from the work of the enemy at the beginning of this dispensation, the effects of which are with us till this day. This parable, like the former, also supplies a most conclusive refutation of the unscriptural dreams of post-millennarians. They believe that, through the preaching of the Gospel (under the blessing of God), the cause of Christ will extend, until the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

But Christ here explicitly declared that the wheat and the tares should "grow together until the harvest," which He defined as "the end of the age." He gave no hint that the "tares" would gradually die out, or that they would decrease in numbers; but announced that, at the end, they would be found in such quantity as to need binding "in bundles." The connection between this parable and the former one is most marked. The Sower of the good seed is the same, "the Son of Man;" the "field" is the same, "the world" (v. 38), i.e. the religious world.

But there is one thing said about the "seed" here which is very striking. In verse 19 it is called "the word of the kingdom," while in verse 38 we read "the good seed are the children of the kingdom." Like produces like: the word of the kingdom produces sons of the kingdom: the fruit is according to the Seed! The prominent thing in this second parable of the series is the Enemy and his work. Let us consider: 1. The Time when he worked. This was "while men slept" (v. 25); that is, at nighttime.

In other words, it was under cover of the darkness that the Devil sowed his tares! This is characteristic of Satan, for he hates the light: secrecy, stealth, dishonesty, are his favorite tactics. But mark you, the Sower Himself did not sleep: He slumbers not, neither is weary. Nor does Satan. He is ever on the alert, going about, "seeking whom he may devour." He is the personification of perpetual motion. "While men slept." The reference is to the unwatchful condition which soon developed among the Lord's people.

The presence of the "tares" among the wheat was evidenced at a very early date. To the Thessalonians the apostle declared, "The mystery of iniquity does already work" (2 Thess. 2:18). John had to say, "You have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). Jude wrote, "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (v. 4). To the Church at Pergamos Christ said, "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam . . . so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:14, 15). 2.

The Method he employed. First, we are told that the Son of Man sowed good seed in His field (vv. 24, 37)- Then we are informed that the Devil turned farmer (v. 25). Satan is no originating genius, but is ever an imitator. He produces counterfeits of the works of God. It is important for Christians to know this, so that they may be on their guard. If we study Scripture we shall not be ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11). It is to be carefully noticed that as the Enemy mimicked Christ he sowed neither thorns nor thistles--had he done so his work had been easily detected, and there had been no difficulty in distinguishing the false from the true.

No, he sowed "tares," or better, "darnel." This is a degenerate wheat, and so closely resembles the genuine article that the one cannot be distinguished from the other until harvest-time. That the "servants of

the householder" recognized the tares as soon as they sprang up does not conflict with our last statement, for it is the apostles who are here in view, and they were specially endowed with the Holy Spirit, and so had a greater measure of discernment than any since. These "tares" are spurious Christians.

When the "servants" first discovered what the enemy had done, they wanted to root out the tares (v. 28). But the Master forbade them, saying, "Nay; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them" (v. 29). It is only when they are both fully ripe that the farmer can with safety separate them, for it is not until then that it is seen there is no grain in the ears of the tares. Until the harvest time the tares present a fair picture to the eye. As these imitation blades, green and flourishing, grow side by side with the real wheat, there is every prospect of a bountiful yield.

But appearances are deceptive, and much of the product will prove only a disappointment and mockery to those who have spent so much time and labor on their cultivation. "All is not gold that glitters." At the Harvest-time there is going to be a great disillusionment. Then it will appear that Christ's flock is a "little" one. This parable, then, gives a remarkable expose of the methods employed by Satan. He seeks to destroy God's testimony on earth by introducing a spurious Christianity, a clever imitation of the real thing.

And this parable reveals that he works from within: he sowed the "tares" among the wheat! Satan has an imitation Gospel. This is clearly implied in the solemn warning given in Galatians 1:7-9. It is more plainly intimated in 2 Corinthians 11, where we are told "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (vv. 13-15).

The principal agents of Satan are to be found, not in the drinking-houses or race-courses, etc., but in our seminaries and in the pulpits! These are not advocating lawlessness, but are preaching "righteousness;" but "being ignorant of God's righteousness" they are "going about to establish their own righteousness" (Rom. 10:3). It is a mingling of Law and Gospel, and multitudes are deceived thereby. Satan has an imitation Church. Christ is now building His Church, a Church which will include all the saved of this present dispensation, and none who are not members thereof will be saved.

The Devil has caricatured this also. Romanism professes itself to be the "spouse of Christ," and her ministers insist there is no salvation to be found outside of their pale. They profess the name of Christ, and hold some of the great fundamentals of His teaching. But artfully mingled with these are the deadly errors of Paganism. But so clever is the imitation, so subtly are the Scriptures appealed to in support of their pretensions, that millions are deluded by their soul-destroying system.

"There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). Satan will yet be permitted to bring forth an imitation Christ. This will be his masterpiece. Much is said in Scripture concerning him. He is the great antichrist. He will have power to work miracles; he will at first claim to be the true Christ come back to earth. Multitudes will be deceived by him so that all the world will wander after him (Rev. 13:4). Yes, the Devil sows "tares," imitation wheat--not thorns and thistles. 3.

The Enemy's Success. It is to be observed that in this parable we do not read of any opposition or hindrances to the growth of the tares, like we did in the first parable concerning the wheat. No mention is here made of any soil uncongenial to the Devil's seed. There is no "wayside" ground, too hard for them to penetrate. There are no "thorns" to choke them, for they will thrive anywhere. There is no mention made of "fowls of the air" coming to catch them away. All external conditions and circumstances are favorable to

the growth of this seed.

No cultivation is needed; they will grow of themselves. The enemy's success is plainly intimated by the prominence given to the "tares" in this parable. This comes out very clearly and most solemnly in verse 36. When Jesus had sent the multitude away, and had gone into the house with His disciples, they said, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field," not "the parable of the good seed and the tares" (see vv. 24, 25). It is the tares and not the wheat which predominate and occupy the larger portion of the field.

The mention of "bundles" in verse 30 bears out the same thought. The Owner of the field forbade any interference with the tares. This is a point which has perplexed many. Why did the Lord permit the Enemy to sow his "tares"? And why has He permitted them for so long, to occupy the principal part of the field? In other words, Why has God allowed the Devil such long-continued freedom? This is not so difficult to answer as many may suppose. They overlook the fact that the leaders of this world rejected its rightful Sovereign; that the Jews preferred Barabbas.

Having chosen a murderer in preference to the Lord of Life, both Jews and Gentiles have reaped what they sowed. The Devil was "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:14), and having refused the Savior, this great soul-destroyer has ruled over them ever since! The time for this to be "the end of the world" (v. 39)--There is no difficulty in this expression if we bear in mind that there is a world of time, as well as a world of matter. But if we understand it to signify the "end of the earth," or "world-system," then it is manifestly erroneous.

Personally, we much prefer the marginal rendering of the R. V.--"consummation of the age." The Greek word is not "kosmos," as in John 1:10, but "aion." To show that we are not altering the translation in order to suit our own views, turn to Hebrews 9:26: "But now once in the end of the world" has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." What can be made of that? If by "world" be understood the earth, or the world-system, then it is a manifest absurdity, for that certainly did not "end" at the crucifixion of Christ.

But if "aion" be rendered "age," there is no difficulty. Thus Matthew 13:39 should read, "The harvest is the end of the age;" there is another Age to follow this, namely, the Millennium. Further proof that the "harvest" referred to in Matthew 13:39 takes place at the end of this age, rather than at the end of time, is found in Revelation 14:14, 15, which synchronizes. After Revelation 14 is fulfilled comes Revelation 20:1-6, which treats of the Millennium. Let us note now the order of its procedure.

"In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn" (v. 30). The tares are gathered into "bundles" before the wheat is actually garnered. In spite of their promising and attractive appearance, everything which has not sprung from the Seed sown by the Son of man is ultimately to be consigned to the everlasting burnings: as He Himself declared, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

But what we would particularly direct attention to is the "gathering together" of the tares into bundles. There is no actual casting of them into the fire at this preliminary stage, no removal of them from the field. It is the separation of the tares in the field, so as to leave the "wheat" distinct, and ready for garnering. The wheat is gathered into the Barn before the tares are "burned"--sure proof of the removal of the saints from this scene prior to the descent of God's judgment of the world.

The gathering of the wheat corresponds with 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. As we survey current events in the light of Matthew 13:30 it is abundantly clear that the process of binding the tares into bundles is proceeding in various directions, and proceeding with amazing rapidity. In fact it is one of the most prominent of the "signs of the times." Take the commercial world. The individual is fast becoming a non-entity, as most business men know to their sorrow. Co-operation, organization, amalgamation, are the order of the day.

Trusts, combines, syndicates, unions, are the "bundles" into which the interests of industry are now being bound. "Gather the tares into bundles;" the Divine command has already gone forth ! Take the social world. Clubs, guilds, fraternities, are multiplied on every side. "Class distinctions" are more and more resented by the masses. Social barriers which have existed for centuries are rapidly being broken down; whilst in many countries, socialism and bolshevism--which aim at the destruction of individual enterprise--are seeking to gather all into one great State "bundle."

Yes, the word "gather" the tares into bundles has already gone forth! In the ecclesiastical sphere the same thing is equally noticeable and prominent. Interdenominational efforts and movements are multiplying. Only last week in this city, on what is known as "good Friday," members and preachers from churches of four or five denominations met together, and held what they term the celebration of "the Lord's Supper"--and this in a church whose pastor is a pronounced modernist. What a farce!

If some noted Evangelist comes to the city a "combined" meeting must be held. The unification of Christendom is the ideal of many, and the goal for which her leaders are aiming. Protestantism is virtually a spent force, and the hindrances and obstacles against the Papacy yet gathering all Christendom under her wings are rapidly disappearing. Those who understand prophecy know well that it will not be long ere she attains that ambition for which she has so long worked, and that one huge ecclesiastical "bundle" will be formed.

Yes, the command to "gather" the tares has gone forth! The same principle is more and more regulating the diplomatic affairs of the earth. The leading "Powers" are working increasingly in conjunction and co-operation. Witness the demands for concerted action in connection with the ultimatum to China. The League of Nations is another movement in the direction of forming one more great "bundle." Yes, my readers, unless we are blind--and blind we certainly are, if we cannot see it--the binding of the tares into "bundles" is already going on before our very eyes: it has not only commenced, but is far advanced.

Prophecy is daily becoming history. The next thing will be the removal of the wheat! Let us now draw a few practical conclusions from this parable. First, see here the worthlessness of "reform" movements and efforts. It is an idle dream that we can improve the world by gathering out noxious weeds--banish drunkenness and immorality, purify politics, etc. Men might as well attempt to purify the waters of the Dead Sea! The Lord has said, "Let both grow together till the harvest."

Then do not waste your time on the cultivation of the tares. "Preach the Gospel" is our marching orders. Second, what a solemn warning is here against unwatchfulness! It was "while men slept" that the Enemy came and sowed his tares. Beware of sloth and the relaxation of vigilance. Remember the words of Christ to His disciples, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37). Heed the warning of Romans 13:11, 12,--it is high time to awake out of sleep! Third, mark Christ's love for His own.

When forbidding the servants to root up the tares, He said, "Nay, lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them" (v. 29). How much He must think of the "wheat": he had rather the

"tares" grow, than that a single blade of the wheat be injured! Fourth, how terrible is our Lord's description of the ultimate doom of the wicked! "And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (v. 42). The "Furnace of Fire" is no mere superstition of the "dark ages," but a dread reality, as multitudes now living will yet discover to their eternal misery, it is the certain portion of all who continue to reject the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is unspeakably solemn to note that the most awe-inspiring descriptions of Hell, to be found anywhere in the Bible, came from the lips of Love incarnate! It is to be carefully noted that whilst Christ interpreted every figure in this parable, see verses 38-40, the "fire" He did not explain. It is literal! O my reader, if you have not already done so, "Flee from the wrath to come" ere it be too late. Flee to Christ for refuge.

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