

# Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

## 13:24-43

by J.C. Ryle

### Transcript

The parable of the wheat and tares, which occupies the chief part of these verses, is one of peculiar importance in the present day. It is eminently calculated to correct the extravagant expectations in which many Christians indulge as to the effect of missions abroad, and of preaching the Gospel at home. May we give it the attention which it deserves! In the first place, this parable teaches us that good and evil will always be found together in the professing church, until the end of the world. The visible church is set before us as a mixed body: it is a vast field in which wheat and tares grow side by side. We must expect to find believers and unbelievers, converted and unconverted, the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one all mingled together in every congregation of baptized people. The purest preaching of the Gospel will not prevent this. In every age of the church the same state of things has existed: it was the experience of the early Fathers; it was the experience of the Reformers; it is the experience of the best ministers at the present hour. There has never been a visible church or a religious assembly of which the members have all been wheat. The devil, that great enemy of souls, has always taken care to sow tares. The most strict and prudent discipline will not prevent this: Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Independents all alike find it to be so. Do what we will to purify a church, we shall never succeed in obtaining a perfectly pure communion: tares will be found among the wheat; hypocrites and deceivers will creep in; and worst of all, if we are extreme in our efforts to obtain purity we do more harm than good: we run the risk of encouraging many a Judas Iscariot, and breaking many a bruised reed. In our zeal to gather up the tares, we are in danger of rooting up the wheat with them. Such zeal is not according to knowledge and has often done much harm. Those who care not what happens to the wheat provided they can root up the tares show little of the mind of Christ: and after all, there is deep truth in the charitable saying of Augustine, Those who are tares today may be wheat tomorrow. Are we inclined to look for the conversion of the whole world by the labors of missionaries and ministers? Let us place this parable before us, and beware of such an idea. We shall never see all the inhabitants of earth, the wheat of God, in the present order of things: the tares and wheat will grow together until the harvest. The kingdoms of this world will never become the kingdom of Christ, and the millennium will never begin until the King himself returns. Are we ever tried by the scoffing argument of the infidel, that Christianity cannot be a true religion because there are so many false Christians? Let us call to mind this parable, and remain unmoved. Let us tell the infidel that the state of things he scoffs at does not surprise us at all. Our Master prepared us for it 1800 years ago. He foresaw and foretold that his church would be a field containing not only wheat but

â€œi» ½tares.i» ½â€œ■ Are we ever tempted to leave the Protestant church for another, because we see many of its members unconverted? Let us remember this parable, and take heed what we do. We shall never find a perfect church. We may spend our lives in migrating from communion to communion, and pass our days in perpetual disappointment: go where we will, and worship where we may, we shall always find â€œi» ½tares.i» ½â€œ■ In the second place, the parable teaches us that there is to be a day of separation between the godly and the ungodly members of the visible church, at the end of the world. The present mixed state of things is not to be forever: the wheat and the tares are to be divided at last. The Lord Jesus shall â€œi» ½send forth his angelsi» ½â€œ■ in the day of his second advent, and gather all professing Christians into two great companies. Those mighty reapers shall make no mistake: they shall discern with unerring judgment between the righteous and the wicked, and place every one in his own lot. The saints and faithful servants of Christ shall receive glory, honor and eternal life; the worldly, the ungodly, the careless and the unconverted shall be castâ€œi» ½into a furnace of fire.i» ½â€œ■ There is something peculiarly solemn in this part of the parable. The meaning of it admits of no mistake: our Lord himself explains it in words of singular clearness, as if he would impress it deeply on our minds. Well may he say at the conclusion, â€œi» ½who hath ears to hear, let him hear.i» ½â€œ■ Let the ungodly man tremble when he reads this parable; let him see in its fearful language his own certain doom, unless he repents and is converted. Let him know that he is sowing misery for himself if he goes on still in his neglect of God. Let him reflect that his end will be to be gathered among the bundles of â€œi» ½tares,i» ½â€œ■ and be burned. Surely such a prospect ought to make a man think! As Baxter truly says, â€œi» ½We must not misinterpret Godâ€™s patience with the ungodly.i» ½â€œ■ Let the believer in Christ take comfort when he reads this parable; let him see that there is happiness and safety prepared for him in the great and dreadful day of the Lord. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God will proclaim no terror for him they will summon him to join what he has long desired to seeâ€œa perfect church and a perfect communion of saints. How beautiful will the whole body of believers appear when finally separated from the wicked! How pure will the wheat look in the garner of God when the tares are at length taken away! How brightly will grace shine when no longer dimmed by incessant contact with the worldly and unconverted! The righteous are little known in the present day: the world sees no beauty in them, even as it saw none in their Master. The world knoweth us not because â€œi» ½it knew him not.i» ½â€œ■ (i» ½ 1 John 3:1 ). But the righteous shall one day â€œi» ½shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.i» ½â€œ■ To use the words of Matthew Henry, â€œi» ½their sanctification will be perfected, and their justification will be published.i» ½â€œ■ â€œi» ½When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.i» ½â€œ■(Col.3:4)

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