

The Wheat and the Tares

by John Nelson Darby

The parable of the wheat and the tares illustrates the coexistence of good and evil in the world, with the Lord's people being instructed to remain separate from the wicked and to look forward to the final judgment when the wicked will be destroyed and the righteous will shine forth in glory.

Scripture: Matthew 13:24

Topics: "God's Grace", "Vigilance Against Evil"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the grace and patience of God in teaching His people through their weaknesses and trials, illustrating that the world serves as a divine classroom for believers. He explains the parable of the wheat and the tares, highlighting the coexistence of good and evil in the world and the importance of vigilance against the enemy's work. Darby reassures believers that despite the presence of tares, God's ultimate plan will culminate in the separation of the righteous from the wicked at the end of the age. He encourages the faithful to look forward to the day when they will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father, fully realizing their identity in Christ. The sermon calls for a deeper awareness of God's love and a readiness to meet the Lord at His coming.

Transcript

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

MATTHEW 13

There is something wonderfully gracious in the way the Lord waits upon His people to instruct them : it is calculated to draw out the affections and the minds of believers in love and gratitude. But how often have they cause for shame, that the occupations of their minds and hearts render them insensible to the various ways, means, and methods in which a God of love teaches them!

God is blessing them all the way, and His mercy is exercised even in their wants. Do they feel and bewail their ingratitude and ignorance ? Who teaches like God ? His wisdom is the saint's portion. Are they bowed down under a consciousness of weakness and of bondage ? " My strength is made perfect in weakness," and thus, in every way, He exactly suits Himself to their several necessities. He never withdraws His care ; He never turns aside from them; still doing them good; and, though they may be fearful and fainting, His love is still manifested. Jesus is the fountain of all blessedness, sent to poor, weak, wretched sinners, that they may have abundance of comfort, of peace, and of enjoyment.

The knowledge of this knits and attaches the heart of the poor sinner to such a rich Saviour-makes him find that the way the Lord has led him has displayed to him the character of the God who thus instructs him, that his very sorrows and trials are a manifested proof of God's free love and favour, as succeeding circumstances display the riches of divine grace. The way in which He leads us, the particular circumstances in which we are placed, the situations we are in, are all so many methods and means of divine instruction planned by a God of love.

The believer longs for rest from all that now offends, but God leaves him here to teach him many lessons. This world, constituted as it is at present, is a means by which God teaches us what we could not learn in a world of glory: the believer is instructed in the long-suffering, patience, and love of God, in a way he never could have known elsewhere; his wants, his weakness, his barrenness, his deadness, display most touchingly the wonderful patience of God. And here too he learns the astonishing proofs of God's love in Christ ; giving Him for such sinners that they may be pardoned and freed ; learning what God is, in the Person of Jesus Christ, through all the particular circumstances in which they are placed, notwithstanding all our weakness, short-comings, and misdeeds. There is no feeling of hostility in God's mind toward us - not even an impatient word or look; all is love.

It is in the weakness and wants of His children that God's manner of love is even more drawn out, as the Father of a family: the affections of a parent are the same for all his children, but under different circumstances is differently manifested: the long and weak childhood of a child calls forth all the tender sympathy and watchful care of a parent, and knits the affections of a child to him. So the Lord, amidst our weakness and infantine helplessness, guards us, watches over us ; and thus we come to learn the manner of God's love. Then, as we advance under the watchful care and training, and arrive towards maturity, we learn the blessedness of His love, and we come to discern how the Lord opens out the knowledge of Himself, putting us into a position of wondrous blessedness. " Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

This is the manner and blessedness of God's love to us and if the believer is insensible to this, he is in a sadly low state ; for nothing so much evidences the soul's not being in a healthful state, as to be insensible to the manner of God's love toward us, to be engrossed with what is about us here, and not to be sensible that we are nearer to God than we are even to the circumstances in which we are placed. How wondrous to behold God taking pleasure in opening out His mind and His plans to man! which we see evidenced in this thirteenth chapter of Matthew, as in the explanation to His disciples of the parables spoken to the multitude.

We find here seven parables, which have been before noticed, but the order of which it would be well to remark again. The first parable is not a comparison or likeness of the kingdom of heaven, as the others, but a declaration of the agency of the kingdom, and of its particular results-the act described as being incidental to the Son of man before His ascension, and its results also, such as might be exhibited in individuals before as well as after it. The kingdom of heaven was subsequent to this, and consequent on Christ's resurrection, when a new system of things was about to be established.

The other six parables were not spoken at the same time: three were addressed to the multitude, and three to the disciples alone. Of these the first three exhibit the public character and result of this kingdom in the world; and the last three symbolised its intrinsic value, and the full development and results in God's hands. The former fully developed its ostensible and visible manifestation as seen in the world,

and the latter, the real value of the thing itself as known in the mind of God. This expression, "kingdom of heaven," as well as "the kingdom of your Father," is peculiar to the Gospel of Matthew, the gospel more especially of dispensation and prophetic testimony.

In what situation then is the believer while here? Holding communion with an absent Lord in heaven-brought into His family here-into His kingdom, and taught, not to look for blessings simply upon earth during his Lord's absence, but to look for a time when His saints shall know Him even as they are known, and shall never be absent from Him. That is what they are looking for, and into that situation they have been brought as the "good seed," partakers of the grace of that "corn of wheat," which fell into the ground and died, that they might live.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that sowed good seed in his field." And from verses 24-30 and 36-45, we have the parable and its signification, as explained by the Lord Himself. These things speak their own meaning: therefore they are simply brought before us as matters of fact. He says, as putting any other construction aside, "The field is the world." In these parabolical expressions there is a perfect harmony and conformity of meaning: if we can clearly ascertain the meaning by scripture light in one, we can readily imagine the same meaning of the same word in any other place.

Now our Saviour said expressly, "The field is the world", this is its meaning and no other, which brings before us the theatre or the scene where the transaction recorded here takes place --"the world." It presents us with the view of a person sowing good seed in his field, he that sowed the good seed is the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He sowed it. It was good seed He sowed, and He sowed it in His field; and this is the world. He was entitled to this field; it belonged to Him. This then is the simple fact: the world was the field; the field belonged to Jesus, and He sowed good seed in it-something that had not previously been in it-a something planted which was not indigenous to the soil. Manifestly then it could not be the Jewish nation or system, for that was placed previous to the period, here alluded to, of the work of the Son of man. The world which is here mentioned is spoken of as a place, not where the seed had been sown and grown up, but where good seed, not yet planted, was now to be put in; and this then is in the world.

Let the child of God now look around him, and see whether (with the exception of those who have been manifestly brought into this new system) he sees anything of this good seed in the world; does it look like a field sown with good seed? In how far it resembles it, those who know the character of such as now possess the world can best tell. The world then is His - the Son of man's field. Thus this baffles the wisdom and power of those who pretend to claim any portion of it as their own, and who seek to have it all, and are described as saying, "This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." It is not theirs - it is Christ's: His by an indefeasible right - by an indisputable title His.

This indeed, when once established, is calculated to overthrow the pride of vain man, who puts in his pretensions for a share; who calls the world his own; but it is not, it is Christ's; and every one who takes it as his own individual right is meddling with things which belong not to him, and of which he must give an account to the rightful owner. The world then is this field, and the field is. "While men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tares among the wheat." Here we have the character and circumstances under which this change came about; these men - these field labourers - were put in trust, and the enemy brought in the evil seed while these men slept.

Oh, how little are men aware of the indefatigable perseverance of the enemy of souls! it is while men sleep he does the mischief. It may not for a time be manifested; but he has sown it, and it will soon spring up. Satan is not hindered even by the good seed being there: "for when the blade sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also." God does certainly overrule it for His people's good; but the fact is there, that tares have been sown and spring up.

They may not be seen immediately; but still they are in the ground, and much of it is occupied them. The men slept; the enemy entered unperceived, sowed the tares among wheat, and then went his way, having done the mischief. And the man who cannot see that these tares are now occupying the ground and springing up, must be wanting indeed in spiritual discernment.

And what need have we of continual jealous watchfulness, that the ground be not overrun with them! what need to be awake, to be sensible of the position we are in! that there is a positive separation between the wheat and the tares! that there is a wall of everlasting demarcation between them, and that we are not sensible enough of this! Does not sad bitter experience testify that there is much moral and evil countenanced? that there is a very bad and low state tolerated among believers? that there is a mixing up of the world with the things of God, an apparent shrinking and withdrawing from the Lord's work? Do we look for the cause? We find the whole of it here: the men slept, and let in the enemy, as the Psalmist says, "Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily."

The Lord makes His cause and His people's one; they are His, and therefore their enemy is His. He calls them "brethren": "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." The saints of God get much courage from this declaration, when they know that the battle is in the Lord's hand. The saints look on this little word, "His enemy," with great delight. If sensible of our deficiencies and failings, and conscious that, while we slept, the enemy came in, yet let us look to the Lord; even though filled with shame in ourselves, yet let us look to the remedy, and we shall learn here, by this one little word, that it is His enemy, and, consequently, we have the strength of Christ against him.

"When the blade sprung up!, then appeared the tares." This was the successful result of the enemy's work; they sprung up together. There was not at first any outward distinction; they were all mixed up together. There was no remedy for that, as regarded the present state of things; instantly to set the world right was not in the mind of God.

Man was found a faithless steward; he had been negligent, and let in the enemy, and the field was found overrun with tares; but God's plans were not frustrated by it.

The servants come and say, "Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?" He said, "An enemy hath done this." The Son of God looked down at His field which He had sowed with good seed, and found it filled with tares: but, though in that position, we find it is not the wisdom of God to set the world to rights by plucking up the tares. The servants said, "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" This is according to man's wisdom, who would set the world to rights again by plucking up and rooting out heretics, and purging out the wickedness according to their own desire. "Nay," said the Lord, there are circumstances existing at present which made this proposal impossible to be acceded to; they are now together, and let them both grow together. If I were to give you power now to pluck up the tares, you might unconsciously root up the wheat with them, which cannot be; "let both grow together until the harvest."

The Lord has graciously explained the meaning of the word in verse 39: The harvest is the end of the world." The term " world here is not the same word as that used previously, where it is said, "the field is the world." This unquestionably is (as the literal translation signifies) the age, or dispensation, and should be read, " the harvest is the end of the age." In the first instance where it is used, it renders the meaning simply " the world," which is the scene of this great transaction. It is quite unconnected with the idea of place, and conveys the time when it was to be thus manifested at the end of the age or dispensation, and '~ at the time of the harvest." Says the Lord, " I will say to the reapers [that is, after both are grown up, fit for the operation], Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them but gather the wheat into my barn."

Now this presents us first with the view of the gathering together of the tares in bundles for the purpose of being burnt, and then the gathering of the wheat into the barn. After this is the destruction of the tares, as explained by our Lord : " As, therefore, the tares are gathered together and burnt in the fire, so shall it be at the end of this age : the Son of man shall send forth his angels [His messengers, ministers, and ambassadors of His purposes in providence], and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." And, after that (that is, after the burning of the tares), " then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Here is the order: The tares are gathered in bundles to be burned ; the wheat is lodged in the barn ; the destruction of the tares, or their entire consumption, then takes place ; and, finally, after their destruction, " then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

In the third parable, spoken to His disciples alone, we find the Lord using terms analogous to these: The angels dividing the two parties which were hitherto mixed up together, gathering the good into vessels, and casting the bad away and destroying them ; and then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. This brings before us the unhindered blessedness of the children of God-of those who are alive to God. That time is coming; and it is a thing greatly longed for by the saints. The present position of the world makes it known to them. They see that the tares are ripening fast in iniquity, ready for the destruction ; and they see the ripening of the saints of God ; and, though now apparently and sadly undistinguished, the Lord is ripening them for the harvest and will gather them in.

The tares are making their progress, being brought together ripe for destruction. Though they may think it is well, and no fear is to overtake them, yet certain and sudden vengeance awaits them. They say, and act on it, that it will not come; but God is true, and His word shall come to pass. Read Rev. 14 : 14-20. There are the tares then ripening, thinking no harm shall happen unto them; strengthening themselves in their iniquity, and counting the very providence of God (their being bound together in bundles) the very occasion of their strength and power, which is to prove their utter destruction. " The heathen are sunk down in the pit which they made." " Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." The wheat are not left in the world in the great day ; they are gathered into the barn ; they are taken out of the way, " caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." They witness the destruction of the Lord's enemies ; and " then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Here we behold the blessedness of the child of God, and the perfect character of that blessedness which the future results of God's love will evidence. just remember that everything that offends has been cast out ; all iniquity burnt up, destroyed ; the saints safely housed in the barn ; and then shall they shine -observe, " then shall the righteous shine "-they are the righteous. But who are the righteous ? Those who are one with Christ: His character is brought forward as " the Lord our righteousness," and " the Sun of

righteousness. 3) " He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds ; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain." 2 Sam. 23 : 4. And in these last words of David we have, along with the description of the glory of the Lord at His coming, a view of the destruction of the wicked : it is a similar passage to the one in the text, and refers to the same event. " But the sons of Belial [that is, the children of the wicked one) shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands "-that is, they cannot be drawn by the teaching and beseeching of man to come to the right. " But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place " (v. 6, 7), that is, in the same place where they are, similar to the burning of the tares.

Christ is the Sun of righteousness, and therefore they are righteousness ; He is the Sun, and therefore they shine as the sun: " When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," and we shall be made like unto Him. This blessedness was contemplated and spoken of by God's saints of old. We have it in the words of David: " As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." That was what he was looking forward to-to shine as the sun, as the righteous ; to see God's honour vindicated, Satan and his powers cast out, and all God's enemies destroyed, and he himself bearing Christ's likeness ; then he would be satisfied. And Paul also expresses himself strongly: " If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead " ; when I shall see Christ as He is, and be like Him, shining as the sun, as the Sun of righteousness. That is what I now see in Spirit, and that is what I now believe in faith, and that is what I am just looking for, to be like Jesus in His kingdom.

Is there in you, dear brethren, this earnest breathing after this glory ? this sensibility of enjoying these things ? Oh, they are calculated to bring much joy-very real and deep comfort - to know that we shall shine as the sun, when the clouds of vengeance, which now threaten an ungodly world, shall have been discharged in just judgment on them: when these clouds shall then be carried away and dispersed, and all iniquity cast out, then shall the righteous flourish ; then comes his time of much delight!

Brethren, are not these things calculated to rejoice the heart of the believer ? Further remark that it is said, " In the

kingdom of their Father." Here is great blessedness to the child of God in this appropriating word of happiness. It shews the position in which the Lord Jesus has placed them associated with God as their Father, in His kingdom. We see the mighty result ; not only that they shall be righteous - shall shine as the Sun of righteousness, but be brought into their Father's house. " I, my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I Would have told you ; I go to prepare a place for you." He unites Himself to them as one calling them brethren, calling them to look up to God as their Father: I will declare thy name unto my brethren " ; and again, I go to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God."

There are two things which in anticipation minister great comfort to all believers ; they shall see the Saviour whom here they loved, and they shall be found in Him, participating in His glory, and like Him. This is what they should be rejoicing in, pressing towards, and looking, for. If then indeed ye are children of God, what is grieving you ? Think of your high privileges: " We shall see him as he is," " be like him," in the presence of the Father, in His house, in the kingdom of our Father, having fellowship with Him everlastingly.

This is the portion of the child of God, a portion we are called on to rejoice in, even here, for it is ours ; it is an inheritance reserved for us, and we are reserved to shine as the sun in the kingdom of our Father.

The Church will not always have to mourn an absent Lord. He will come to claim His bride-to take her to Himself, that where He is, she may be also: so He prays, " Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am " : and in Him she is complete ; for the Father gave Him to be " head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Here then is the position of the church with Christ; one body, one mind, one in all things, one in tastes, one in desires.

Believers thus taste the Father's love most blessedly by beholding the Lord so sacrificing Himself as to bring this love to them, purchased for their enjoyment and inheritance. They feel the Father's love: "I say not unto you, I will pray the Father for you ; for the Father himself loveth you.", If we are believers, let us raise our thoughts to the bliss that awaits us, and not be sinking to the bottom, or floating on the surface of spiritual enjoyment.

It is no matter what are your circumstances here, what are your cares or your conflicts ; it is but for a moment ; the portion of the saints is to rejoice. But what is it that you are bowed down for? Is it a feeling of your own weakness? Why, the very " joy of the Lord is your strength." Why are you in affliction ? What is it that keeps you down ? Is it the world of sin ? That is your enemy; and that it is your enemy is the cause of the greatest rejoicing , this is your confidence, and should be your delight, that it is a conquered enemy. If you feel it is your enemy, you know it is His enemy, and then you are brought into the same position with the Lord Jesus; on one side with Him, fighting one common enemy. Jesus warned His disciples of this trouble, but promised them His peace-promised to be with them by the Spirit, and testified to them the result of all the work He was doing for them: " I have overcome the world." Think, if you be of them who are thus loved and thus made happy here, what happiness yet awaits you when you shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of your Father! Blessed indeed shall we be in that day, when " we shall see him as he is " ; first, " be like him," and then " see him as he is." Oh, the blessedness! when, after all troubles and conflicts are over, we shall " awake in his likeness."

Believers, is there nothing in this to quicken your joy in meeting Jesus ? Is there nothing in this to throw contempt upon the world, and its unmeaning joys ? The soul that loves Jesus loves one who has conquered all his enemies ; " He that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." in this is the Son of God's love manifested, in that He humbled Himself to descend to the children of men, to bear their iniquity, to carry their sorrows and troubles, to minister to their joys and comforts, and to bear away sin from them forever! And their joy and confidence is, that the same Lord has ascended on high, having "led captivity captive" - having destroyed His and their enemy: "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Is it any comfort to you, that the wisdom of God will soon be seen in the world, to the destruction of all that oppose it? Would you like to have the world thus sifted, and all iniquity purged out? Would it rejoice your heart to hear that Jesus was now coming? In fact, would you like Him to come now? Oh! How sad, how very sad is it, that, when He is just about to come, and His saints about to be made entirely like Him, they should be mixed up in any way with the workers of iniquity, practicing their habits, pursuits, or satisfactions!

Pray, brethren, that you may be led to a more simple and entire conformity to the image of your Saviour; that you may be cleansed from the unsatisfying and unsanctifying desires of the world, so that you may be

ready to meet your Lord at His appearing.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/the-wheat-and-the-tares/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net