

# Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

## Lesson 32

### *What About The Tares?*

by Sharon K. Griffiee

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Every parable Jesus told revealed important facts about the Kingdom of God. In His parable of the Wheat and Tares, Jesus was so concerned about the handling of *supposed evildoers* that he gave this parable as a word of warning. In this parable, Jesus explains that when good and evil grow in the same soil, it is almost impossible to uproot one without hurting the other.

**Matthew 13:24-30 (NKJV)** - *Another parable He [Jesus] put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said unto him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'*

After telling this parable, Jesus sent the multitude away. As he went into the house to be alone with his disciples, they asked him to explain the meaning of the parable of the tares.

**Matthew 13:37-43 (KJV)** - *He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, 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: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the right-*

*eous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*

Despite Christ's warning to let the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest, people have taken it upon themselves to uproot the tares. Why? God's children become grieved when they see true and false mingled together in the church. They become distraught because the tares that the evil one has sown in secret, actually resembles good wheat at first. This deception is no surprise to Jesus. It is in fact, expected. He is fully aware that Satan will try to defeat the spread of the Kingdom of God on earth. Where Jesus sends His children, the wicked one also sends his children.

**Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)** - *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*

The fact that individuals are in the church, appearing to be somewhat like Jesus' followers, does not prove them to be Christians. Many people have joined churches, but have not joined Christ. Wanting to do *something* to cleanse the church of its impurities, God's children unwisely respond like the servants of the householder in the parable. They are ready to wipe out the opposition.

However, Jesus says, "*No*", *lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.*

Consistent with Christ's warning, during the course of trying to destroy the tares, true believers become hurt, disillusioned, uprooted. History bears record that those who have not heeded Christ's warning have misrepresented God's character. To punish *supposed evildoers*, those who differed from established doctrines have been imprisoned, tortured and even put to death. It is the spirit of the evil one, not the Spirit of Christ, which inspires such acts. In the process of trying to weed out evildoers, God's children bring

suffering upon themselves; wasting precious time fighting one another over doctrine, all in the name of Christianity. Enormous tension is created in churches at large, but can be felt most strongly in prisons across the United States and around the world. When inmates are the most vulnerable, trying to deal with the ongoing tensions of incarceration, their spiritual life can also suffer.

Right off the bat, prisoners find themselves at a disadvantage. They can't attend any church of *their* choice, as non-inmates can, because only a few chaplains and chapel services are available to serve the entire prison population. The result? Inmates from diverse backgrounds and religious beliefs are thrown together in one facility. Individuals seeking Christian ministry in prison are often given the cold shoulder by other Christians; not because of who they are, but because they happen to belong to a Christian church that has been labeled as *deviant [out of the norm]*. Because of such "labeling", some inmates are afraid to even say the name of their church, because of the reproach it brings on them. At the other end of the spectrum, are those who do the labeling. Caught in a sea of doctrine and religious controversy, some have lost the desire to participate in worship with those whom they believe are associated with a deviant, so called apostate church.

Just as Jesus warned, all of us are hurt by such actions, if we take the responsibility upon ourselves to separate the tares from the wheat. The parable makes it clear; Jesus has not committed us with the work of judging the character of others. He knows our nature too well to entrust this important work to us. Often those whom we refer to as hopeless are the very ones Jesus is drawing to Himself. The Redeemer of the world does not want to lose one soul. It is a matter of life and death to Jesus. However, while it is true that Jesus is the Redeemer of the world, we must not forget that He is also the righteous Judge of the world. In His forbearance and tender love for humankind, Jesus will wait until the last possible minute to send his angels, "*to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity*" **Matthew 13:41**. (See also: **Revelation 14:14-16**)

What about the Tares? Jesus tells us to let them grow among the wheat, having all the advantages of sun and rain, until the time of harvest. What better hope for the lost than to be closely linked with God's

children? For it is there, that they have a glorious opportunity to be saved into God's Kingdom.

#### **Summarizing what this parable teaches:**

***The Parable of the Wheat and Tares is a lesson of patience.***

***James 5:7-9 (NIV) - Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!***

***The Parable of the Wheat and Tares is a lesson of reassurance.***

Even though there are differences among the thousands of Christian churches over doctrinal issues, there is a harvest time coming! Praise God! Jesus does not want us wasting one precious minute worrying about who is a real Christian and who is not. Rather, it is our responsibility as children of God, to keep the sin (weeds) out of our own lives, proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, and leave the cleansing of the Kingdom to Jesus.

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#### **Questions for personal or group study:**

1. In the parable of The Wheat and Tares, Jesus said we should not dig out the tares. As Christians, how should we behave, knowing that good and evil will exist in the church until the time of harvest?
2. In our desire to purify the church, are we too quick to classify people and their beliefs as *good* or *bad*?
3. How many different interpretations of doctrine make a person or their church suspect of being a tare?
4. Why is it important to our spiritual growth to trust Jesus to do the final judging between *good* and *evil*?

#### **I Corinthians 4:5, James 4:12**

5. What about the tares? What hope can God's children bring to those who are in bondage to the devil? **II Timothy 2:24-26, Colossians 1:21-23**