

## The Wheat and the Tares



In Mathew 13:24-29, our Lord tells the parable of the wheat and tares (weeds). Both the good seed and the tares sown by the enemy grow together in the same field, and may look similar.

We are all too familiar, unfortunately, with scandals in the church.

A minister who appears to be a shining star in the pulpit turns out to have sordid secret life of sexual misconduct or financial misappropriation. A charismatic “prophet” who seems to have a “direct line to heaven’s throne” gives false and misleading words.

As you can see in the picture above, tares (right side) look very similar to wheat (left side). However, tares are a poisonous weed (also known as *lolium temelentum* or bearded darnel), and eating it would make you feel intoxicated and giddy – and lead to vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach ache.

It is only when the seeds appear near harvest time, that one can tell the difference between them.

In a similar way, there are many pastors, teachers, “apostles”, and “prophets” today who present themselves as genuine – and speak words that may make us feel spiritually intoxicated and giddy.

Scripture warns us that *“the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions”* (2 Timothy 4:3)

Listening to (and believing) these intoxicating words can make us “feel spiritual” and perhaps even trigger powerful sensations of “supernatural experience”, but the end result is sickness and death.

Our Lord rebukes the church at Laodecia for such self-deception, telling them *“You say ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”* (Revelation 3: 17)

The remedy the Lord gives the church is *“I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”* (Revelation 3:18,19)

John the Baptist announced a similar message when he described what Messiah would do, saying *“His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”* (Mathew 3: 12)

A farming article on “Separating the wheat from the chaff” (Sep 24, 2014) on [WholeGrainsCouncil.org](http://WholeGrainsCouncil.org) describes this process as follows:

*In cereal crops like wheat, rice, barley, oats and others the seed – the grain kernel we eat – grows on the plant with an inedible hull (also sometimes called a husk) surrounding it. Before we can eat the grain kernel, we need to remove that inedible hull. This can require two processes: threshing (to loosen the hull) and winnowing (to get rid of the hull).*



*In some harvest-ready grains, the hull is thin and papery, and easy to remove. Little or no threshing is required, as the hull is already loose. Traditionally, farmers would toss this kind of grain into the air, from big flat baskets, letting the thin hulls – called chaff in Middle English – blow away in the wind, or fall through the chinks in the basket. This wind-assisted process for separating the wheat from the chaff is called winnowing and the grains with almost no hull are called “naked” grains.*

*Other grains, even when they’re ripe, have a thick hull that adheres tightly to the grain kernel; these are called “covered” grains and threshing (hulling) them is a real challenge. In the old days, covered grains were often pounded to loosen the hull, or soaked in water; sometimes they even needed to be lightly milled to remove the hull. It’s no coincidence that “thresh” – meaning to whip or flog – originated as a variant of the word thresh.*

It may difficult for us to see how such a painful experience is beneficial, especially when we are “in the middle of it”. However, the apostle Paul describes this process, and advised us that we can

*rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3,4)*

It has taken me many years to understand this process and see how “character” and “hope” emerges.

I have experienced times of extended suffering, when I felt I could only endure one breath at a time, one step at a time (literally). Endurance (Greek = ὑπομονήν) involves persevering through difficulty, “properly, *remaining under*, endurance; steadfastness, especially as *God enables* the believer to “*remain (endure) under*” the challenges He allots in life.” (HELPS word study on Strong’s 5281)



However, when we “cross the finish line” of what feels like a marathon of suffering and endurance, we have “proof of genuineness”. The endurance has built up resilience and character strength, which remains with us.

When we face another struggle, we can look back at how the Lord helped us overcome previous trials – and have hope that we will also be victorious in this new challenge.

Psychology describes this process of endurance and character as “resilience”. When it includes the fruit of hope, we typically describe it as “thriving, not just surviving”. Whether one is a believer, an atheist, or an agnostic, we all recognize this character / hope outcome as a desirable trait.

Our Lord takes great delight in seeing us persevere and overcome (through the strength and ability which He will give us), and promises that **“The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne”** (Revelation 3:21)