



# The Parable of the Tares of the Field

## Matthew 13:34-43

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Let's turn once again to the parables of Jesus that are recorded in Matthew 13. In this chapter, we find seven parables all spoken by Jesus Christ. In some ways these parables are simple stories. In many ways they go much deeper than that. They teach us of spiritual realities. A more specific definition is that these parables teach us about the nature of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus began six of these seven parables by saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like...." In other words, Jesus uses these parables to illustrate characteristics of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus addressed these parables to the multitudes. Look at verse 34.

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable. (Matt. 13:34)

Jesus had a specific purpose in using parables when speaking to the multitudes. A few weeks ago, we looked at why Jesus spoke in parables. He spoke so that God's truth could be told in such a way that some would understand and others would not understand. Parables were stories that were simple and straightforward. Jesus used ordinary, everyday events in these parables. These are events and things that his audience easily understood. Yet, on the other hand, the parables were difficult. They were allegorical stories. The ordinary events of life on the surface had a similarity to what the kingdom was like, but the similarity wasn't necessarily obvious. Even Jesus' disciples needed help in understanding these parables. In verse 36, the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." Parables were simple stories. But parables needed explaining. Jesus explained them to those whom "it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13:11). But Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, because "to them it has not been granted [to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven]" (Matt. 13:11).

Another purpose Jesus had for speaking in parables is found in Matthew 13:35. Jesus spoke with parables to fulfill Scripture.

"...so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD." (Matt. 13:35)

This quote is from the Old Testament. It comes from Psalm 78:2. Some have difficulty with Jesus' claim of fulfilling this Scripture since Psalm 78 doesn't contain any parables like the ones that Jesus told. In fact, if you read through Psalm 78, you will read about the history of Israel. You might be inclined to think that Psalm 78 is a simple history lesson. However, it goes further than simple history. It explains and interprets God's role in the history of Israel. It describes how God continually came to the people of Israel and helped them. It describes how they rejected God, despite His goodness to them. It describes how this stirred the heart of God against them. But God remained compassionate toward them and didn't destroy them even though they deserved it. In this sense, Psalm 78 is a parable, as it explains the history of Israel with a focus upon the redemptive/historical working of God. In Matthew 13, the parables of Jesus continue to unfold God's kingdom. They are directed toward the future. They describe what the kingdom of heaven will be like.

We saw last week that the kingdom of heaven would grow. It would grow like a tiny mustard seed that grew up to be a large plant. The seed would increase to find many birds resting in it. It would grow like a tiny portion of leaven in a large lump of dough. Eventually, the leaven would influence the entire lump. Jesus promised that the kingdom of heaven would grow from small things.

Two weeks ago, we saw how the message of the kingdom would be spread like seed upon different types of soil. Some hear the truth and reject it outright. Others hear the truth and receive it and begin to grow. Yet, the difficulties of life (persecutions from the world) or the concerns of life (the worry of the world) or the love of life (the deceitfulness of riches) would cause the plant to wither and die. These who sprouted up will eventually fall away. Others hear the truth and receive it and begin to grow and produce fruit. Some produce hundred-fold, others produce sixty-fold, and some produce thirty-fold.

This morning, we will look at the parable of the tares to discover further insight into the character of the kingdom of heaven. Let's first look at the parable itself. In verses 24-30, Jesus teaches the parable. Later, in verses 37-43, Jesus explains the parable.

Telling the Parable (verses 24-30)

Let's begin reading at verse 24,

He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field." (Matt. 13:24)

Again, we encounter a farmer sowing seed. This time he sows good seed into a good field. He expects to have a good crop. But then, a strange thing happens.

"But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away." (Matt. 13:25)

The farmer worked all day in the field. When the sun had fallen, and the day's work was complete, he and his men took a much needed rest. Unbeknownst to them, the enemy came in and sowed tares among the wheat. The NIV translates the word for tares as the word "weeds." Could you imagine this happening today? A farmer plows up his field, then goes through it with his planter and plants his soybeans in the field. At night, another man comes and has a planter filled with velvet weed seeds. He plants velvet weeds right along side of the soybeans. I don't know of any farmer who has ever experienced this today. In preparing for my message this week, I read in many places that this was prohibited by Roman law. I tried to find the source for this in the ancient literature, but I couldn't find any. Perhaps it was a common practice in Jesus' day, perhaps it wasn't. At any rate, this does take place in Jesus' story.

There have been times when the dandelions in our lawn have looked particularly bad. And I have toyed with the thought that an enemy of mine came through my lawn at night, planting dandelion seeds. But, then, I think for a moment or two and I become convinced that it was just the wind. If you would speak with my wife, you would probably find sympathetic ears to the "enemy theory," because she detests dandelions in our yard! My daughter (on the other hand) simply adores dandelions. She thinks that they are pretty. She loves the thought of being able to go outside and pick as many flowers out of our yard as she wants. Tears have been known to flow in our household when dad, the mortal enemy, pulls out the weed and feed to try to kill those dandelions.

Just as it takes several weeks for my weed and feed to take effect and start wilting my dandelions, so also does it take a few weeks for the enemy activity to be made known to the farmer.

"But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also." (Matt. 13:26)

Notice that the damage isn't evident until the wheat begins to bear grain. There is a seed called darnel (or "bearded darnel") which is a common weed that farmers in the Middle East still battle today. It looks very much like a stalk of wheat when it begins to grow. However, as the it comes time to produce a crop, the darnel doesn't produce any crop, but the wheat does. You begin to see the difference between the plants when the wheat seeds are produced. This is what verse 26 tells us. It wasn't until the wheat began to bear grain that the weeds became evident. When the difference was discerned, it shocked the workers in the field.

"And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' " (Matt. 13:27)

The slaves were shocked and confused at the presence of tares in the field. Certainly, the slaves would have expected some tares in the field. But, there are so many tares that it appears that the landowner planted weeds in his field. So, these slaves came and reported the status of the field this to the landowner. As confused as the workers in the field were, the owner of the field knew precisely what took place.

"And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' And the slaves \*said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' " (Matt. 13:28)

The slaves were willing and ready to work in the field. They thought that the best way to deal with the weed problem was to pull them out. This is often a good way to deal with weeds. You want to get them out of the field. However, with the darnel, this isn't a good thing, as the landowner explains in verse 29,

"But he \*said, 'No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them.'" (Matt. 13:29)

These tares had a way of wrapping themselves around the wheat so that in pulling up the weeds, you would end up pulling up the wheat (root and all) with them. This isn't because you are pulling on the wheat, but because the root system of the two plants are intertwined. The landowner's advice comes in verse 30,

"Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'" (Matt. 13:30)

Once you reach the harvest time, it is permissible to pull up both plants together, root and all. Then, you can pull them apart and separate them. This is exactly what the reapers do. The weeds are gathered and bundled and burned. The wheat is gathered and stored away in the barn, for future use.

There is the parable. It is simple and straightforward. Like the parable of the sower and the four soils, if left alone, it might simply appear to be a story of life in the day of a landowner. But, as we have seen, it has a meaning. Thankfully, the disciples of Jesus asked him about the

meaning of the parable.

## Explaining the Parable (verses 36-43)

Then He left the multitudes, and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." (Matt. 13:36)

Even more thankfully, we have Jesus' own interpretation of the parable. So, we aren't left in the dark as to what exactly this parable means.

And [Jesus] answered and said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and [as for] the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil [one;] and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. (Matt. 13:37-39)

In these three verses, Jesus gives direct parallels to seven different symbols in the story.

1. The sower is the Son of Man, who is Jesus.
2. The field is the world.
3. The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom.
4. The tares are the sons of the evil one.
5. The enemy is the devil.
6. The harvest is the end of the age.
7. The reapers are angels.

With these keys in mind, we can begin to understand the parable. Jesus is out sowing seed in His field, which is the world. Unlike the parable of the soils, however, in this parable, Jesus is only planting good seeds on good soil, which represent sons of the kingdom. Jesus is producing a crop of wheat in the world. While Jesus is planting the good seed, his enemy who is identified as the devil, or Satan in verse 39, is out in the same field. Satan is producing his own crop which is weeds. These are the sons of the evil one. These two plants are growing together in the same place. In this world, there are sons of the kingdom, and there are sons of the evil one. They are living together. They are living side-by-side. In many ways, their roots are intertwined. The difference between these two people isn't quite so noticeable at first. But when the wheat begins to put forth its fruit, the difference becomes obvious for the world to see. It becomes obvious that this person over there is a weed. It becomes obvious that this person over here is a stalk of wheat. But, rather than being rooted and cut off, the sons of the evil ones are allowed to grow and flourish right along side the wheat. Sometimes they flourish greater than the wheat. The sons of the evil ones are allowed to grow and flourish until a certain point. That point is identified as the end of the age. When the end of the age comes, the farmer sends forth his reapers to uproot and divide the plants. The reapers are angels (verse 29). Jesus will send forth His angels and all of the people in the world will be uprooted and divided. Some will be placed in the barn, which represents blessing in the kingdom of God forever. Others will be burned, which represents the punishment that the evil will experience in hell forever.

This imagery of angels is completely consistent with Jesus' teaching elsewhere. Matt 13:29 says, "the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous." In Matt. 24:31, Jesus said that the "[Son of Man] will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other." Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 that when Jesus is revealed from heaven, he will come with his mighty angels. That is the interpretation of the parable.

## Applying the Parable

This morning, I want to give three applications to the parable. My first application is a general one and comes from the nature of the entire parable. The last two are more specific, as they come straight from the text of Jesus' interpretation.

### 1. Know Where You Live

The entire thrust of this story is that sons of the kingdom are in and among sons of the evil one. For the Jewish hearers, this would have been pretty radical. Just think about the nation of Israel. It was a separate nation. They were called to live apart from other nations in the world. They were called to live different than other nations lived. There were certain things that they were supposed to eat, such as lamb during the Passover (Exodus 12:1-13). There were things that they couldn't eat such as pork and pelicans (Lev. 11:7, 18). They had things that they were supposed to wear, like blue tassels on their garments (Num. 15:38). They had things that they couldn't wear, like garments with two kinds of material mixed together (Lev. 19:19). They had things that they were supposed to do, like performing sacrifices for sin (Lev. 1-5) and holding yearly feasts (Lev. 23). They had things that they were prohibited from doing such as touching the Ark or entering the Holy of Holies. God had called them to be a separate, distinct nation from all of the other nations on the earth.

But, this is not how it is with this present age. No longer is there one nation, set apart, living in a distinct place with a distinct people under a distinct law. Now, you have sons of the kingdom all over the world. And intermixed with them are sons of the evil one. They live in the same neighborhoods. They shop at the same grocery stores. They work at the same places of employment. They drive on the same roads. They eat in the same restaurants. They eat the same foods. They buy the same cars. They live in similar houses. For us, this isn't too radical. This is how we have always lived. But for the disciples, this would have been radical. They had developed an "us" versus "them" mindset. Their thinking goes something like this: "We are the chosen nation. They are not. The best that the Gentile nations can do is admit that we are special. We will let them come as far as outer court, but no further. Let's do everything within our power to keep them out. Let's not associate with them in any way. Let's certainly not eat with them (Acts 10:28).

With this parable, Jesus is hinting at the nature of the kingdom to come. Jesus is prophesying of how the sons of the kingdom will infiltrate and live among the sons of the evil one. It's not going to be "us" versus "them" in the sense of "our nation and people are right" and "their

nation is wrong." Rather, the wheat and the tares will live among each other. The working out of this concept dominated much of the activity of the early church. They struggled to understand what this meant. They had councils to determine whether or not Gentiles, who were granted repentance, needed to be circumcised or not (Acts 15). They grappled with the role of the Mosaic law in the Christian church. There were those who wanted Christians to be like the Jews of old, submitting to the Mosaic Law, which would separate Christians from the world into their own, isolated groups, much like the Jews were.

Paul battled with this in his epistles. Galatians was written to warn the church of those who would place an undue emphasis upon the law, thus forsaking the gospel of how we are justified by faith alone. The book of Ephesians was written to describe how the Gentiles, though they were once apart from Israel and strangers to the covenant, have now joined with the Jews into the one, united church. So, walk in a manner worthy of that calling (Eph. 2:11-22; 4:1-3). In Colossians, Paul dealt with Jewish legalists, who put an emphasis upon the shadows of the law, like the feast days and Sabbath days, rather than upon the substance to which those shadows pointed, which was Christ (Col. 2:16-17). And in all of these battles, those in the church were seeking to understand how to relate to the Mosaic law, which had implications upon how involved Christians would be in the world.

It was understood that the gospel was reaching throughout the world, but the question was how to keep the Christians pure. There was (and still is today) a great tendency in the church was to want to isolate themselves, like the Jewish nation was. There's a tendency to take on their attitude of "We are the circumcised, and you aren't. We only eat Kosher food, but you don't. We celebrate the feasts, but you don't." But in this parable, Jesus explains that during this present age, the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one will intermingle. Our job as "wheat" is not to root them out. Our job is not to destroy them. Our job is not to conquer them. Our job is not to oppress them. Our job is not to condemn them. Our job is not to call down fire upon them, like James and John wanted to do when the Samaritans didn't receive them (Luke 9:54). Our job is not rip out our swords, like Peter did when the Romans came to arrest Jesus (Matt. 26:51). Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm" (John 18:36).

Though our kingdom is not of this world, we are still in this world. And we need to live in this world in such a way that it is clear that we live for a world to come. Paul wrote, "[Prove] yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among who you appear as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). We are "children of God ... *in the midst of a ...* perverse generation." We are "lights *in* the world." And while we live in this realm, we need to be patient and endure those who are sons of the evil one. Jesus prayed, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the Evil One" (John 17:15).

How easy is it for us to condemn those who don't live as we live. We stiff-arm them and keep them far away. This past week, we had a foreign exchange student from Chicago come and live with us. The plan was that he was going to stay with us for the entire weekend, but he ended up feeling a bit ill, so I took him home Thursday night. We were playing Ping-Pong after some of our Thanksgiving dinner festivities. We were having a great time. We were close to finishing. He just missed a shot and then he swore. He took the name of the Lord in vain. The blood boiled in my face. I began to rage, because of the outrage of my heart. In my house, we serve the Lord. We aren't going to use His name in vain. I almost made an issue over it right then and there. And then, I thought, "He's a tare. I'm not supposed to uproot him and condemn him, here and now in a fit of rage. With patience, I want to reach out to him. I want to share the gospel with him." As I took him home to Chicago that evening, I had a chance to clearly share the gospel with him. He had no interest in it whatsoever. He likes his comfortable Buddhism which essentially demands nothing from him.

It is OK to have a non-Christian in your home. I hope that you do invite non-Christians into your home so that they can experience a home where Christ is Lord. It is OK to be involved in activities with non-Christians. Activities such as boy scouts, politics, athletics, and music all provide opportunities to reach out to unbelievers. But when the world begins to influence you, you need to realize the danger. We are to influence the world, not the other way around. As wheat, our job is to evangelize the tares. We are to live among them and influence them, like we saw last week in the parable of the leaven. We are to influence them for the better. We are to tell them of Christ. We are to tell them of the work of Christ on the cross. We are to tell them that they need to believe in Jesus and trust him with their entire lives. There is no other hope for their lives but to trust Him. Those in this world don't understand this. They think that they are sufficient in themselves.

I know of a family who was born and raised in Israel. This man's father was a brilliant man, who came to Christ late in his life. This man wanted to know what had so changed his father's life. So, he came to the United States and spent a year in a missionary training facility, where his father had been converted. For the first 6 months, he was very resistant to the gospel of Christ, as they were blind to the truth. Yet, in the patience and love of those leading the mission, this man caved in and believed the truth about the Messiah, which was prophesied in the Old Testaments Scriptures, which he knew well from his youth up. A few weeks later, his wife also came to faith in Jesus. Today, they are missionaries in Israel. How strange it was for this non-believing family to come to a missions training facility. They easily could have been rejected and condemned and shunned. Yet, it was through the patient intermingling of this family with genuine Christians that they came to believe in Christ. This is our role as wheat in this world.

We don't need to fight with worldly weapons. We fight with the gospel of Christ. We are to live the truth of the gospel. We are to spread the message of the gospel. We are to trust that God will transform tares into wheat, and He can do that. We are to wait for the end of the age, in which the angels will come and divide between the tares and the wheat.

Let me make one final observation here. During this time, we ought never to expect that the world will become "Christian." At the end of this age, there will be tares for the angels to throw into the fire. At the end of the age, there will be wheat for the angels to store up in the barn. Sure, the Christian church has increased, like a tree from a mustard seed. Sure, the Christian church has influenced the world, like leaven in a lump of dough. But, while we live upon the earth, we will always live among the sons of the evil one. You need to know this. You need to realize this. You need to live in light of this reality.

## **2. Live With the End of the Tares In View (verses 40-42)**

We are to live with the end of the tares in view. This comes from verses 40-42, which says,

"Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 13:40-42)

What Jesus describes here is an dreadful place. The picture here describes people being gathered up as weeds and thrown into a fire to be burned alive. But the picture continues in its dreadfulness. Rather than dying, these people weep and gnash their teeth -- forever. Jesus said that those in hell will "go away into eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46).

I was speaking with a man recently about the truths of the gospel. I told him how those who believe in Christ and trust in Him alone will find themselves worshipping their master, whom they love greatly. I told him how those who don't believe will find themselves in hell. He then asked me, "What do you think that hell is like?" I told him that it didn't much matter what I thought hell was like. What matters is what Jesus thinks that hell is like. From my Bible, I showed him that Jesus described hell as a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth." It is a place of crying. It is a place of teeth-gritting pain. In the gospel of Matthew, this phrase is used 6 times. I want you to listen to them to help you get the effect of how terrible is the judgment of hell. Listen to a few verses from Matthew: In Matt. 13:50, the angels are separating between the bad fish and the good fish. "[The angels] will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Back in Matt. 8:12, Jesus warned that there are those who are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who fail to believe in Jesus. These will "be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." In Matt. 22:13, Jesus told a story about a wedding feast. There was a man who came without his wedding clothes. "The king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" In Matt. 24:51, Jesus told of an evil slave who had been put in charge of his master's resources, but was living selfishly, believing that his master wouldn't return very soon. But the master did return and "[the master] will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and gnashing of teeth." In Matt. 25:30, Jesus told the story of the talents which were distributed to people to use. The worthless slave who buried his talent will be cast out "into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Hell is an awful place. But hell is a real place. Hell is the place where the tares of this world will find themselves for eternity. Jesus puts forth **two types of characteristics of the tares**. We find these characteristics at the end of verse 41.

#### **Characteristic #1 - They are stumbling blocks**

The stumbling blocks are those who cause offense for others. These are those who go around and seek to persuade people of their wicked ways. These are the Romans 1:32 people, "they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." They practice wickedness and encourage others to participate with them.

#### **Characteristic #2 - They commit lawlessness**

Those who commit lawlessness are those who have no love for God and His word, but are loose in their living. They engage freely in the flesh. They know that God hates the things that they do, but it doesn't matter much to them. They don't believe that the judgment is coming, so they live in their own pleasure.

Just as the unbelieving suppress the reality of the coming judgment in their mind, I fear that the judgment that awaits this world isn't on the minds of Christians very much. I find myself forgetting of the realities of hell. I find myself forgetting how terrible a place it will be.

About a year and a half ago, I experienced a kidney stone. It was one of the worst experiences in my life. I remember where it first started to hurt. I remember when it first started to hurt. It was about 10pm one Sunday evening, and I was doing some computer work on the couch. Yvonne was in the other room, doing something as we were winding down our evening. And then, all of a sudden, boy did my back begin to ache. I didn't know what it was, so I began to lie down and stretch my back out, thinking that it was some kind of muscle cramp or something of that nature. After about 20 minutes, I limped over to where Yvonne was and I said, "Yvonne, something has happened to my back. Boy it really hurts. I have to go to bed right now." I went upstairs and spent some time in the bathroom kneeling over the toilet, throwing up because of the pain. After about 30 minutes, Yvonne came upstairs to check on me and I was on the ground, moaning in pain, because it hurt so bad. So, Yvonne went downstairs to log on to the internet to do a bit of research, trying to figure out whether or not it was appendicitis or a kidney stone or what. She found out that someone experiencing a kidney stone will have the following symptoms: (1) pain all around the back, as opposed to one side; (2) pain that never ceases (even momentarily); (3) difficulties in sitting still. I affirmed that I was experiencing the first two symptoms. She didn't need to be told that I was also experiencing the third symptom, as she saw me on all fours rocking back and forth, hardly sitting still. At that point, we were pretty sure it was a kidney stone. After another 30 minutes (and consultation with my father, who is a physician), we decided that we would go to the hospital. Praise the Lord for hospitals. Praise the Lord for gracious neighbors. Sometime around midnight, we called up a neighbor, who lives just down the street and asked her if she would come and stay in the house with the children while we went to the hospital. She came right over.

We made our way to the hospital. They performed a preliminary examination on me, taking my blood pressure, pulse, body temperature, and a few other things. They asked me, "On a scale of one to ten, what would you say is the level of pain that you are experiencing. One is no pain at all and ten is as bad as you can imagine." I said, "a ten, definitely." They said, "OK," and left me there in the waiting room to be checked in. I was on the floor as they were checking me in. Eventually, I made my way down the hall to the bathroom where I could agonize in private. Unfortunately for me, there had been some type of car crash and there was no available bed for me in the Emergency Room. In their minds, I was placed low on the priority scale. I was in that bathroom for about an hour except for one point when another person had to use the bathroom. Yvonne told me (I don't remember this), that I was lying in the hallway of the hospital groaning in pain. At one point, Yvonne came to check up on me and I said, "This is ridiculous, Yvonne, I'm dying in here." Yvonne (bless her heart) spoke with the receptionist and said, "Is there anything that you can do? My husband is in great pain." Finally, I was let into the emergency room and was given some drugs and was pain free for the first time in about four hours. Eventually, I needed surgery to take out the kidney stone.

I'm telling you this story because I want to demonstrate a point. When I was in pain, I remember distinctly thinking, "If only I could just sit here

without any pain. Even for only a few seconds, I would feel much better." I came to understand a bit about the rich man, who was suffering in hell and longed to have his tongue cooled with water on the tip of the finger of Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). I longed for the time when I would be pain free. I had taken it for granted for so long. I would never take it for granted again. But, I have forgotten. Here, I have been a year and a half with no pain from my kidneys and I have forgotten of the realities of how awful it was. The doctor has told me to drink lots of water--something like ten cups per day. "Right before you go to bed, drink two large glasses of water." Have I? No. Though a few weeks ago I felt a slight twinge in my back. I don't know what it was. Perhaps it was a cramping muscle, perhaps it was something with my kidney. But, I tell you, I was drinking water like it was going out of style. It took a reminder. Then again last week? I didn't drink much water.

We are prone **to forget** the realities of how bad it can be. If I have problems remembering the awful pain of my kidney stone, which I experienced, certainly, it is easy for us to forget the awful realities of hell since we have not experienced it. But, the suffering in hell is far worse than any kidney stone that you can imagine and ought to be on our mind.

We are prone **to not believe** the realities of God's punishment. When Eve was tempted, the issue at stake was the truth of God's word as to whether or not she would be punished for taking the fruit. She doubted God's word of warning, "In the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). And whenever you sin, it is no different. It is because you forget the eternal realities or it is because you refuse to believe them. We need to live in light of the realities of eternity. This is why my point of applications is stated this way: Live with the End of the Tares in View. It will change the way that you live. It will change your desires for obedience. It will give you greater reasons to constantly run to Christ. It will change the way that you evangelize.

Perhaps today, I might have stirred your hearts afresh to see the realities of hell. I'm simply reminding you of this, because it is central to the parable. There are only two types of people in this parable: the wheat and the tares. Jesus spent more time discussing the tares and what will happen to them than he did to the wheat. The tares are on their way to hell. This may include some of you. The realities of this life is that the tares and the wheat are living closely together. Tares can easily live within the church, undetected and unnoticed. Their secret sins can remain secret. Their prayerlessness can be hidden. Their worldliness can go undetected for years. If this is you, please know what awaits you. Turn and repent before it is too late.

I have one last point of application this morning. It is a short point.

### 3. Live With the End of the Wheat In View (verse 43)

"Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." (Matt. 13:43)

In contrast to the realities of hell, Jesus puts forth what the righteous believers might anticipate. They might anticipate incredible glory, "shining brightly as the sun." These are those who see God for all that He is and reflect His glory, as Moses did when he came down from the mountain. "We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). You have no idea of the glories that await a believer in Jesus Christ. Paul put it well, "I consider that the suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). This is good news and ought to stir your heart to joy and righteousness. As we have already spent much time on contemplating the end of the tares, it isn't in vain to contemplate the wheat. It ought to give you great reason to rejoice by way of contrast. John Piper writes, "When the heart no longer feels the truth of hell, the gospel passes from good news to just news." (*Brothers, We are NOT Professionals*, p. 116)

Hear the good news. A believer in Christ has been blessed abundantly beyond what is imaginable. When we believe in Christ, we are given God. Romans 8:15 says that "we have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" These words are still used by Hebrew children today to express their love to their earthly father. This describes the intimate relationship that a child of God has with the God of the universe. When we believe in Christ, we are given the Spirit. Romans 8:16 says that "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." The Holy Spirit is on our side and will argue before God the Father that we are His children. When we believe in Christ, we are given an inheritance! Romans 8:17 says that we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ." We get what Jesus deserves. Jesus, as the Son of God, will receive an inheritance worthy of His person. As fellow heirs, we are treated like Jesus' brother and will receive what He receives. Someday, Christians will "be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:17). This speaks of the new bodies that we will receive, which will be freed from all sin.

The fate of the tares is what we all deserve, apart from the gracious kindness of God in Christ Jesus. But, God has given Himself, His Spirit, and His Son's inheritance to us. In ages to come, He will give us new bodies to be glorified with Christ. In that day, we will shine forth His glories. It's not because of us. It's not because of our superior goodness. It's because of what Christ has accomplished in us. He has shown us of our need. He has made us righteous by faith. He has granted to us repentance. He has given to us righteous desires. He has opened our eyes to see the realities of His glory. He has opened our ears to hear the wonders of His word.

There is one condition for receiving all of these things: suffering with Christ. All of these things that we receive from God are conditioned upon the last have of Romans 8:17, "if indeed we suffer with Him." Wheat living among tares will suffer. The children of this world have always hated the children of God. The Christian life is a difficult life, but it is a blessed life.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 30, 2003 by Steve Brandon.  
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