

Expository Tracts, No. 6.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

BEING

THOUGHTS ON MATT. XIII, 24–30 and 36–43.

BY THE

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THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

MATTHEW XIII. 24–30 and 36–43.

- 24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:
25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.
26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.
27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?
28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?
29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.
30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.
36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.
37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;
38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*;
39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.
40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.
41 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;
42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

READER,

The parable of the wheat and tares, which stands before you, is one of the most useful parables which Christ ever spoke. It shows you what you must expect to see in the Church around you: it shows you what the Church will always be, until Christ comes again. Give me your attention for a few minutes, while I try to unfold the lessons which the parable contains.

1. In the first place, this parable is meant to teach you *that good and bad men will always be found together in the professing Church, until the end of the world.*

The visible Church is a mixed body. It is a vast “field,” in which “wheat and tares” grow side by side. You will 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. There has never been a visible Church, or a religious assembly, of which the members have been all “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. Whatever men may do to purify a Church they never succeed in obtaining a perfectly pure communion. “Tares” will grow among the “wheat;” hypocrites and deceivers will creep in; and, worst of all, if men are extreme in their efforts to purify a Church, they do more harm than good: in their zeal to “gather up the tares,” they are in danger of “rooting up the wheat with them.” Such zeal is not according to knowledge, and has often done much harm. The wicked and ungodly must be treated with compassion. Who can tell what the worst of sinners may yet become? Those who are tares today, may be wheat tomorrow.

Reader, are you expecting the conversion of the whole world to be accomplished by the labours of missionaries and ministers? Look at the parable before you, and beware of such an idea. You will never see all the inhabitants of earth “the wheat” of God, in the present order of things. The tares and wheat will “grow together till the harvest.” The kingdoms of this world will never become the kingdom of Christ, until the King Himself returns. The present time is the time of election: it is not the time of universal conversion.

Reader, are you ever tried by the scoff of the infidel, when he says that Christianity cannot be true, because there are so many false Christians? Call to mind the parable before you, and remain unmoved. Tell the infidel, that the state of things he scoffs at does not surprise you at all; tell him your Master prepared you for it eighteen hundred years ago. He foretold that His Church would be a “field,” containing not only “wheat,” but “tares.”

Reader, are you ever tempted to leave one Protestant Church for another, because you see many of its members unconverted? Remember the parable before you, and take heed what you do. You will never find a perfect Church. You may spend your life in changing from communion to communion, and pass your days in perpetual disappointment. Go where you will, and worship where you may, you will always find “tares.”

2. In the second place, the parable is meant to teach you *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 for ever. The wheat and the tares are to be divided at last. The Lord Jesus shall “send forth His an-

gels” in the day of His second advent, and gather all professing Christians into two great companies. These 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, honour, and eternal happiness: the worldly, the ungodly, the careless, and the unconverted shall be “cast into a furnace of fire,” and receive shame and everlasting contempt.

Reader, are you an unconverted man? Are you yet dead in sins, and without a real hope in Christ? Surely you ought to tremble when you read this part of the parable. See in its fearful language your own certain doom, unless you repent and are converted; know that you are sowing misery for yourself, if you go on still in your neglect of God; reflect that your end will be to be gathered among the “bundles” of tares, and to be burned. Surely such a prospect ought to make a man think!

Reader, are you a believer in Christ? Have you passed from death to life, and found peace in Jesus? Surely you should take comfort when you read this parable. There is happiness and safety prepared for you in the great and dreadful day of the Lord. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God will proclaim no terror for you: they will only summon you to join what you have long desired to see,—a perfect Church, and a perfect communion of saints.

Reader, if you are a believer, you should often look forward to the “good things to come,” which the parable before you reveals. Your present trials, I doubt not, are very many; but the coming glory shall make amends for all. Think for a moment how beautiful the whole body of believers will appear, when finally separated from the wicked! Think how fine the “wheat” will look in the garner of God, when the “tares” are at length taken away! Think how brightly grace will 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 it knew Him not.” (1 John iii. 1.) But the righteous shall one day “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” (Col. iii. 4.)

But after all, into whose hands has this tract fallen? Who art thou that art now reading it? Art thou among the “wheat” of God, or art thou among the “tares”? Awake to the solemn inquiry this very day. Find out thy state before God. Flee to Christ without delay, if thou art not yet converted. They only are safe who are GOD’S WHEAT.