

# Tares in the Church

#0172

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—May 24, 1974

Our first text this evening is Isaiah 55:8–9:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” Isaiah 55:8–9.

God says, “I don’t do things just the way you would do them.” Did you ever wonder why God did things in certain ways, and why He doesn’t do certain other things that you wish He’d do? Well, He’s telling us here. He doesn’t think quite the way we do. It’s a good thing, isn’t it? Yes. I’m sure we all, if we’ve lived very long, had experiences in which we were sure of what ought to happen, and then later we changed our mind. Did any of you ever change your mind? Yes. God doesn’t have to change His mind because it’s all right to start with.

If we’re going to work with God, it’s important that we understand the way He *thinks* and the way He *works*. When Jesus was here, He devoted much of His time to clearing up misconceptions of the character of God and the work of God on earth.

Turn, please, to Matthew 13. We’ll notice one of the parables that Jesus used to teach a lesson concerning how God thinks and how He works:

“Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven” Matthew 13:24.

That is, God’s work here on earth.

“Is likened unto a man which 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 blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 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? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 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” Matthew 13:24–30.

Later in the chapter, we hear the disciples asking Jesus to explain this story. And He does in the 37th verse:

“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man” Matthew 13:37.

Who’s the sower? Jesus.

“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 righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” Matthew 13:38–43.

In other words, there’s a lesson here for those who will listen and pay attention. I trust that every soul will get a real blessing, as we study this parable tonight.

Let us notice, first of all, the lesson that this parable brings us concerning the world about us—the physical world. Anyone who looks at nature, even casually, discerns evidences of beauty. We’ve just been looking at these beautiful orchids. And who can look at that without (if he’s thinking) observing that the One who made the universe must love beautiful things? And sensing that He’s made us to enjoy beauty, we realize that He made these things to make us happy. So it is with the song of the thrush and the cardinal. So it is with the beauty of the food we eat: the apples, the oranges, the grapes, the strawberries, and all the rest—beauty, delicious flavors, and so much in life to make us happy.

Yet all around us in nature, we see evidences of something else. All the birds don’t sing like the thrush and the cardinal, do they? Some of them make some noises that you’d hardly call music. Some of the plants, instead of having beautiful flowers have ugly thorns. As we go through the woods enjoying what is meant for us to enjoy, more than once we’re scratched, and sometimes have deeper cuts than scratches, as the result of the saw briars and so forth.

May I tell you, friends, that without the Bible, nature would be indeed a riddle, with no answer. But thank God, in the Scriptures the veil is pulled aside. Here we are told that He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man, but the one who sows the weeds, the bad seeds, the tares, who is that? That's the Devil.

Notice this interesting statement:

“The God of nature is perpetually at work. His infinite power works unseen, but manifestations appear in the effects which the work produces. The same God who guides the planets works in the fruit orchard and in the vegetable garden. He never made a thorn, a thistle, or a tare. These are Satan's work, the result of degeneration, introduced by him among the precious things; but it is through God's immediate agency that every bud bursts into blossom”  
*Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6, page 186.*

A number of years ago, out on the Pacific coast, was a man who was called the plant wizard, Luther Burbank. How many of you've ever heard of Luther Burbank? Sure. How many wonderful varieties of fruits and vegetables he developed! I visited his home several years ago. One thing that interested me about Luther Burbank, especially, was that he developed a spineless cactus for cattle to eat.

As I thought about it, I've been impressed with this: If a mere man working with his scientific ability and research and experimentation, could take the thorns *off* the cactus, is it anything strange if Satan, with his mastermind, could put thorns on them? We are told that he has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature.

He's the one who's responsible for these disease germs. You're well aware that every now and then some new strain of bacteria or virus appears, and multitudes suffer. Yes, he's working all the time, with that mastermind, to sow tares among the wheat, to develop thorns and briars where God has created beauty.

Satan is not a creator. Don't miss this point! Satan cannot give life. He cannot create. He cannot make something out of nothing. But he can take that which God has created, and twist it, pervert it, modify it, mar it. And this is what he's been doing for 6,000 years. This is what he's done with the animals, with the birds, with the plants, and with human beings. This is why we see all over this planet so much evidence of sin and degeneration, disease and death. Looking at the whole picture of desolation, we can say in the words of Jesus, “An enemy hath done this.”

God allowed the Devil to do this for a purpose—to exhibit his character. You see, Lucifer had claimed that he had a better plan than God did. So far, I don't think he's made a very good showing. What do you say? Are you pleased with the way he operates? No. And yet he's still leading millions astray. What a strange distortion of

creation we see! But thank God, as I say, it's permitted in order that you and I may see how futile it is for a *creature* to try to improve on the work of the *Creator*.

If we really believe that it will be manifest in the way we take care of these bodies of ours, and our minds as well, won't it? We will seek to find and follow the Creator's pattern in our lives, instead of seeking to join with the enemy in twisting and changing and "improving" what God has made. As for God, His work is perfect. If we were, all of us, like He made us, oh, how beautiful the human race would be in body and mind and spirit. It is as we seek to work with God to *restore* that original beauty—the reflection of His image—that we are most successful.

But now these lessons in the physical world are designed to teach us very important spiritual lessons. Will you look again, now, at this thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and notice that 24<sup>th</sup> verse, with which we began? What, does He say, is like this story of what happened in the field? The kingdom of Heaven, the work of the church. God's kingdom here on earth, the kingdom of grace, is like this.

So let me ask you a few questions. Is Jesus at work in His church? Do you believe He is? Is He sowing the good seed? Is it springing up? Is it coming into harvest?

I wish I could stop there, but I can't, the parable goes on. Is there somebody else that is sowing seed in the church? Who is it? The enemy. And the enemy is who? The Devil. Does that seed spring up? Where does it spring up? Where does it say here? It was among the wheat, wasn't it? Were there 40 acres of wheat over here and 40 acres of tares over there? Is that the way it was? The whole field had wheat, and the whole field had tares.

Did you ever hear of anybody that moved from someplace because the influences weren't good, and moved over to another place they thought would be, if not Heaven itself, next door to Heaven? Have you ever heard of anybody doing that? If they stay very long, they find that what is growing there in that field? Tares, tares, tares.

The question naturally arises, "Why in the world should there be *tares* in God's field?" In the story that Jesus told, was the enemy that sowed the tares operating in his own field? Was he? No, he wasn't. He was an enemy of the man that owned the land. The Devil slips in, he comes in and he's planting seed *all* the time in the church. So far, in my travels, I haven't found any place where he isn't operating. What about you?

Now the next question: We found out that the Devil has sowed these tares here and there, all around in the church. The next question is the question that the servants asked the Master of the field: "Is it your wish, then, since you've told us how these tares got here, that an enemy sowed them, is it your wish that we" do what? Go and what? "Gather them out."

Now, we might think it a laborious task to go by hand and just pick a tare here and a tare here and a tare there. But in the orient, where Jesus was talking, they do a great deal of handwork; still do today. So what they were suggesting could be done. But the Master was looking farther than the servants were. Did He say yes or no? No. Did He tell why? Why was it? "Because," He said, "Those tares and wheat are growing so closely together, and their roots are so intermeshed and intermingled that as you root out the tares, you may do what? "You may uproot some of the wheat, and we cannot afford to have that done." Oh, my dear friends, I pray that God may help us to understand His thoughts and His ways. He looks ahead.

As I read these words, my mind goes back to the beginning of the great controversy in Heaven, before the creation of this world. Lucifer rebelled against God and His law. He carried with him in his rebellion, how many? One-third of those bright angels that had always been good and loyal and loving. One-third of them joined with Lucifer in his rebellion.

During the early stages of that controversy, the wheat and tares were so mingled that only God knew who was who. But there finally came a harvest day. The issue was finally joined, and every head of wheat showed itself wheat. Every weed showed up its nature as a weed. And the separation was made as character was fully developed and distinguished. Then came the separation. What happened to those rebellious angels, the one-third? They were separated. They were cast out of Heaven.

How long that period of development was we do not know. We do not know whether it was measured in weeks or months or years or decades. We do not know. Inspiration is silent. I'll tell you this, friends, it was more than a few hours. The development of character is a tremendous process. But when those characters were fully developed, do you know that for 6,000 years not a single one of those millions of angels has ever changed his mind. Not one loyal angel has joined the army of the Devil since the separation took place. And not one of the Devil's host has come back and joined with Jesus in loyalty. The righteous are righteous *still*. The wicked are wicked *still*. Probation closed for those angels, and then there was a separation.

Is it coming again, this time with men? Are we approaching that hour? Oh, yes. The wheat are growing. The tares are growing. Which are you, my brother?

You know there is one thing about this that makes me so thankful. And if this one thing weren't true, I wouldn't even be preaching about this tonight. You and I can decide which one of these characters we'll develop. We can decide whether we will go with Jesus, and develop the wheat character, the valuable character like Him, or we can decide to join with the enemy in rebellion and develop that tare character, that weed character which is only fit to be burned in the lake of fire.

But everybody here tonight is going to be one or the other. Everybody is going to turn out golden grain for the garner of God or tares for the bonfire. *Every one.*

Now, I want to come to a very important point in this parable in its application to our lives. I'm so glad that every one of you is here tonight. But I want to touch a point that either has already troubled you somewhere in the past, or it *will* trouble you sometime in the future. Everybody here tonight either has been troubled or will be troubled with this. What is this that troubles people? It's this: If this is God's church, why are there so many hypocrites in it? Or were you ever troubled with that? But remember, I said, if you haven't been, you will be. Now this story that Jesus told is the answer to that question.

Here was a field that belonged to the Master, and He Himself sowed it with good seed. But the enemy came in and sowed what? Tares among the wheat. When the servants asked Him, "How come? How did all these weeds get in here?" He simply said, "An enemy of mine has done this."

So when people say, "How is it, if this is the truth and if the Gospel is correct and has power, how is it that there are so many people in the church that don't live up to it?"

I want to read you something:

"Some people seem to think" *Testimonies to Ministers*,  
page 47.

Here's what some people think:

"Some people seem to think that upon entering the church they will have their expectations fulfilled, and meet only with those who are pure and perfect. They are zealous in their faith, and when they see faults in church members, they say, 'We left the world in order to have no association with evil characters, but the evil is here also;' and they ask as did the servants in the parable, 'from whence then hath it tares?'"  
*Ibid.*

That's it. I leave the world in order to get away from the influence of sin. And I come in the church, and, lo and behold, here it is also within the church. And I think, "I wonder if I got in the right place."

Did you ever hear of a man named Judas? What church did He belong to? Did He belong to the true church? Was he an officer in it? How do you know that he was in the true church? It was Christ's church. Jesus was right there and organized it, didn't He?

Did you say Judas was an officer in that church? What office did he hold? He was treasurer. Did he do anything else? Was he an evangelist? Did he preach? Did he heal the sick? Was he a minister, an ordained minister? Who ordained him? Oh, Jesus surely wouldn't do that, would He? I don't think I want to be in a church like that.

Dear friends, you and I don't want to be like Judas. God save us from his fate. But I want to tell you something: If we'd been in the church with Jesus, Judas wouldn't have been very far away, correct?

Did you ever hear of people refraining, refusing to attend communion service because somebody who was unworthy was going to be there? Was Judas present at the first communion service? Whose feet did Jesus wash first? Judas. He sat right next to Jesus there at the communion table. And there are people that would say, "Well, just leave me out of it. If Judas is going to be there, I think I'll stay home."

Well, somebody will say, "That was before the Day of Pentecost, and Judas was sifted out before Pentecost, and he wasn't around anymore."

This is all correct. But now let us come down in the book of Acts. Did you ever hear of Ananias and Sapphira? What happened to them? What did they do? They lied. They lied about what they had promised to give to God. Were they church members? Yes. God took care of them at the right time.

But it wasn't only the hypocrites like Ananias and Sapphira that we read about there in the book of Acts. You remember reading there in Acts 6 that there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected. "Oh, I don't think I'd want to be in a church where there was any murmuring." But that was the only church Jesus had on earth at that time, right?

You go over a few more chapters and you find Paul and Barnabas out having a wonderful evangelistic trip, going from place to place raising up a church in nearly every city that they stayed in. Then they come back to Antioch and tell their story. They finally decide to go out again, and Barnabas wants to take who? John Mark, his nephew.

Paul says, what? "No, we don't take him."

"Why not?"

"Well, John Mark left us before when things got hard and ran home to mother. No, we won't take John Mark."

Barnabas says, what? "Yes, we will."

Paul says, "No."

Barnabas says, "Yes."

Do you remember what the Bible says? The contention was so sharp between them that they parted asunder. Now notice folks, they weren't thieves like Judas. They

weren't hypocrites like Ananias and Sapphira. But they exhibited some human nature. Am I correct?

Then there's the apostle Peter. He comes to Antioch. And as he'd been instructed by God, he disregarded the wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles. He ate with the Gentiles. But finally, some people came from headquarters, from James, the Bible says. And he thought, "Well, I don't know. James might not like this. I don't think I'll eat with the Gentiles while these men are here."

Who got up and said something about it? Paul said something about it. Peter took it, too.

Why are those things written in the Bible, folks? To help you and me to learn this lesson that Jesus is teaching us in the parable of the tares: that good and bad, victory and defeat, success and failure are mixed and mingled together in the church of Christ on earth.

Now let me read you this sentence here:

"All our zeal will not be successful in making the church militant as pure as the church triumphant" *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, page 47.

So if you're looking to find a place on this planet where everybody will have the right influence on you, and everybody will have the right influence on your children, where you can trust your children to run with all the children around them and know they're just all beautiful little angels, pure and lily-white, I do not know where to direct you, my friends.

Don't misunderstand me. I don't think we should deliberately choose the worst atmosphere we can find. Do you? No. Surely we want to get all the help we can. But my point is: After we've gotten all the help we can, God still allows us to be surrounded with both wheat and tares, good characters and bad characters, helpful influences and hurtful influences. And when the question comes, "How come?" Jesus says, "An enemy did the bad things." But when we ask the question, "Well then, shall we get busy and get rid of all the weeds? Take everybody that won't come into line, and send them somewhere? Get them out of our hair?" Jesus says, what? "Not so, lest while you pull up the tares, you," do what? "Pull up the wheat also."

Oh friends, if God hadn't waited as long as He waited in Heaven for the separation, some of those good angels who finally stood with Him would have lost their way. God waited with infinite patience. He's doing that today in His church. And I want to tell you something, and don't miss it: In the Day of Judgment, you will never stand up and say to God what some of you say here on this earth. In the Day of Judgment, you will never stand up and say, "Lord, I could have made it, if it hadn't been for so and so



and this one and that one and what they did.” No. Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.

Young people, what a shame to allow what some young person does or what some other older person does, some minister, some church elder, to allow that to cause you to stumble. Think of what I have given you tonight from the Bible concerning Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, Paul, Barnabas, and these others. Think of Peter and the terrible failure he made. Think of Abraham and the lies he told, and Isaac followed after, and did it. Jacob, he did some, too. And yet, thank God, they kept on and finally won the victory. *Every* sinner can find in Jesus repentance and salvation. But if you and I are going to stumble over what other people do, there will always be something to stumble over.

Remember, Lucifer started this thing, and he had *nothing* to stumble over. Sin is a mystery. Sin will try to find an excuse, an explanation. Lucifer covered with mystery *all* his doings, and he made it *appear* that he was trying to improve the government of God. God knew it was rebellion. And so, I repeat, at the judgment you will not open your lips in self-justification and in defense blaming on others your failure to develop a character like God. You won't do that.

Why do it now? Why stumble over anyone else? God has plainly told us exactly what is happening. Therefore, if we're going to be in the church, we're going to be in the church *not* because all the members are perfect, but because *Jesus* is there. We want to develop the character of wheat even if there are tares all around us.

Now, will you go back to Isaiah 55? We were reading verses eight to nine. Now we'll read verses six and seven:

“Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” Isaiah 55:6–7.

Whatever anybody else does, I can come to Jesus and be saved. Is that right? Nobody else can save me, but Jesus and nobody can cause the loss of my soul if I follow Christ. The church is a school in which God is teaching these lessons. And just because most of the students in the class miss some words when the spelling words are put out is no reason for me to leave school, is it? Even if all the students one day got the wrong answers in arithmetic, that wouldn't be a reason for me to get up and flunk out, would it? What do you think?

Does Jesus have a church? Is He running a school? Is He getting people ready for graduation from this life to the next? Has He given us a perfect pattern? Yes.

Sometimes in school, a teacher will write something on the blackboard and say to the children, "Now, I want you to copy this. Try and do a good job to copy it just like I have written it on the board."

If I am a boy sitting at a desk, would it help me if I would look over and see how my fellow student in the next seat is writing, and copy after him? No. I had better look at the copy.

Shall we do it? Thank God. And where we have failed by looking to others, where we have stumbled by watching others, let's turn our eyes to Jesus and thank Him for the one perfect copy, and for the assurance that He will fully develop all who will let Him work with them.

Now we're going to have a little testimony meeting. Any of you who'd like to speak, come right up and sit here on this front seat, and you may stand here at the microphone and give your testimony. I want to see what you got tonight.

[Testimony service follows]

We're going to sing number 266, and you'll notice the last line of the chorus, each time, as we sing. It says:

And though all men should forsake Thee,  
By Thy grace, I'll follow Thee.

Is that a good determination? That's right. While it's a wonderful thing to have the fellowship in the church, that's not the basis of our salvation. Who saves us? Jesus. Can He save us, even if everybody else fails us? Yes. Even if everybody else stands with us, can they save us? No. My salvation is in whom? Christ. So, though everybody else should forsake Him, you and I are going to say, "By Thy grace, I'll follow Thee."

Now, as we sing this, if there's someone here that would like to come and seek the Lord, if you've gotten your eyes on human beings, and they've disappointed you and caused you to stumble, why not come up here and seek the Lord? Or if you have some other problem that you need to seek the Lord for? The help is in Jesus, folks. The help is in Jesus. Let us stand.

I will follow Thee, my Savior,  
Wheresoe'er my lot may be.  
Where Thou goest I will follow;  
Yes, my Lord, I'll follow Thee.

I will follow Thee, my Savior,  
Thou didst shed Thy blood for me;  
And though all men should forsake Thee,

By Thy grace I'll follow Thee.

Though the road be rough and thorny,  
Trackless as the foaming sea,  
Thou hast trod this way before me,  
And I'll gladly follow Thee.

I will follow Thee, my Savior,  
Thou didst shed Thy blood for me;  
And though all men should forsake Thee,  
By Thy grace I'll follow Thee.

Though I meet with tribulations,  
Sorely tempted though I be;  
I remember Thou wast tempted,  
And rejoice to follow Thee.

I will follow Thee, my Savior,  
Thou didst shed Thy blood for me;  
And though all men should forsake Thee,  
By Thy grace I'll follow Thee.

Though Thou leadest me through affliction,  
Poor, forsaken, though I be;  
Thou wast destitute afflicted,  
And I only follow Thee.

I will follow Thee, my Savior,  
Thou didst shed Thy blood for me;  
And though all men should forsake Thee,  
By Thy grace I'll follow Thee.

Though to Jordan's rolling billows,  
Cold and deep, Thou leadest me,  
Thou hast crossed the waves before me,  
And I still will follow Thee.

I will follow Thee, my Savior,  
Thou didst shed Thy blood for me;  
And though all men should forsake Thee,  
By Thy grace I'll follow Thee.

Our Father, we're so glad that You've shared with us some of Your thoughts from the Word and we're glad that we don't have to look at imperfect human beings in the church who are learning, just like we're trying to learn, precious lessons. Forgive us where we've stumbled over others, and may we settle it tonight that we have just one

pattern. That's Jesus. And though all men should forsake Thee, by Thy grace, we'll follow Thee.

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