

# In the Way

Neil Girrard

The parable of the wheat and the tares holds a unique place in the New Testament. It is one of the very few parables where Jesus explicitly detailed out the key elements to understanding the meaning. As such, we need to pay attention to the meanings *He* assigned to them and recognize them, not as mysterious, debatable ideas, but as truths which Christ Himself gave for the edification (strengthening, building up) of His body, His people, whom He has called out of this world's darkness and caused to enter into and attend to His kingdom of light – that is, His ekklesia. ([1577] Greek word poorly translated “church” – see Col. 1:13, etc.) We must pay attention to the details Christ gave or we will misinterpret this parable and misapply these truths, even preventing some of His ekklesia from being what He intends and desires them to be.

Let us first notice the end of the story. When the tares are removed, “*Then* the righteous [sons of the kingdom] will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (Mt. 13:43, also v. 38) It is only *after* the tares are removed that we see the greater manifestation of the real nature of God's kingdom. Thus we can see that a primary characteristic of the tares is that they stand *in the way* of God's kingdom being manifested among men. As Jesus rebuked the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, the tares “shut up the kingdom of God against men; for [they] neither go in [themselves] nor do [they] allow those who are entering to go in.” (Mt. 23:13) Luke records this saying in a different way, giving it a different emphasis, perhaps as it was given on a similar but different occasion. As Jesus said of the lawyers (scribes), the tares “have taken away the key of knowledge. [They] do not enter in [themselves], and those who are entering in [they] hinder.” (Lk. 11:52)

It is a terrible thing to stand in front of the door to the kingdom of God and fail to enter. This is a tragedy of immense proportions. Yet it is exponentially worse to do this while barring another person's entrance into the kingdom! The kingdom of God is that realm where Christ and God are actively and carefully *obeyed* (Mt. 6:10) – this *is* the essence of a king over his kingdom! – and a tare is one who, even as he routinely uses the name of Christ and God, diverts people away from actually obeying the commands of Jesus. Whereas Jesus said, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe [know and obey] all things that I have commanded you...” (Mt. 28:19-20), the tare corrupts and perverts the truth (perhaps most or even only with his notions that he has the right, a “special anointing,” “gifting” or “calling” and God has given him the right and duty to tell other people how to live and be, especially around and *under* him! – Mt. 24:5) and draws followers away from Christ and after himself. (see Acts 20:30)

This is precisely what occurred in the first and second centuries as bishops arose from the ranks of elders and drew followers after themselves and their own teachings. The Catholic bishops were the most successful as they perverted the ideas of unity and leadership to mean attachment to the very visible hierarchical authority structure centered in Rome – and these were able to subordinate or ostracize any and all who did not bow down to that notion. This *is* the parent and pattern that the “church” “pastor” comes from! And all this is exactly as Paul prophesied would occur!

As the power to suppress, excommunicate and even execute has slipped from the Catholic “church's” hands, men have had to resort to the double standard of “believe and practice as we do or go find (or start) a place where they do!” This is the means by which their

own divisiveness can be tolerated. Since Christ is not their true King but rather their “denomination” (sect, heresy) is formed around their own preferred “doctrines,” “creeds,” and “theology” (most often a corrupted compilation of truth and error), these tares must have a way to build up their own fiefdom that doesn’t require *too much* from the affluent customers who come to have their ears routinely itched and scratched by the religious, swelling words that roll so eloquently from the tare’s mouth. (2 Tim. 4:3-4, 2 Pet. 2:18) This too was warned against by both Jesus and Paul though the concepts have been somewhat obscured through poor translations and even greater ignorance of what the words mean.

Jesus warned, “Because lawlessness (Greek, *anomia* [458]) will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” (Mt. 24:12) Lawlessness, put simply, has the capability of rendering even the chiefest of Christian attributes virtually lifeless. *Anomia* is literally “no law” and it refers to the absence of any outside source or standard by which one is expected or required to order his life and conduct. This idea is perhaps best captured in the description of the Israelites during the time of the judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Jdgs. 21:25) The time of the judges – strikingly similar to this time of rampant denominationalism and sectarianism – has been described as a time of apostasy, warfare, decline, violence, moral decay and anarchy – traits curbed or accentuated according to the spiritual disposition of the reigning king. (1 Ki. 13:33, 14:22, 2 Ki. 18:3-4, etc.) The devolvement of Christianity into churchianity only shows that Christ is *not* the King over most, if not all, that is done in His name!

Paul warned that those who routinely practiced the works of the flesh would not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:21) Included in his list of the works of the flesh are four of the “church’s” cornerstones:

- *Contentions.* (Greek *eris* [2054]) Every “church” must contend, at least in its own pulpit, for its own peculiar or denominational doctrines and “theology.”
- *Selfish ambitions.* (Greek *eritheia* [2052]) The man or group at the top, either in attaining to or maintaining their grasp on the top spot, must be motivated by selfish ambition – otherwise Christ would be the true Head.
- *Dissensions or divisions.* (Greek *dichostasia* [1370]) The double standard, believe and practice as we do or leave, is the most basic building block in all of churchianity. Paul said to avoid those who cause them. (Rom. 16:17)
- *Heresies.* (Greek *hairesis* [139]) The idea of grossly aberrant religious error worth burning someone at the stake for is a later *Catholic* addition to the meaning. The original meaning is simply that of a forming one’s own party or following. We now call these “denominations” and believe them to be a good thing.

Put bluntly, we will not see the kingdom of God come forth in our midst while we follow or submit to a man, a “ministry” or an organization that is built upon or driven by these *sins*. Quite simply, the “church” stands in the way of the kingdom of God. We can choose one or the other but we cannot have these sins in our lives and see the will of God done on earth as it is in

heaven. The counterfeit “church” and the kingdom of God are mutually exclusive of one another.

When we recall that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God but it was the ekklesia (and then the “church”) that came into existence, we can see that the primary reason the kingdom of God did not come into the preeminence but was overshadowed by the Romish hierarchy was that the bishops had arisen and stood in the way. Because the bishops first taught and then practiced Nicolaitanism ([3531] “conquer over the people” – Rev. 2:6, 15), the people accepted the ways of contention, selfish ambition, dissension (division) and heresy (sectarian) – and therefore progressively the kingdom of God was left far behind, remembered only in the pages of the New Testament and nostalgically longed for from time to time by some saint or mystic. This problem still haunts and plagues the people of Christ to this day.

When we further explore the roots of the office of the “pastor” (traditionally, bishop), we find that he was also called a “pontiff” – literally, a bridge between the people and God. In effect, this title *boasts* that the man stands in the way of the people attaining to the fullness of God’s plan for them. He was – and still is – aided in this deception by standing on a platform (a picture made complete, for those who can see it, by having a cross or some other symbol of Christ or God behind him in some place entirely unreachable by the people unless they go through the “man of God” in the pulpit) with all his volunteer victims seated at his feet as he speaks whatever he – or in many cases, the demonic within him – wishes. In this way, the passive listeners have their ears scratched as they are told fables – stories that use words and names from the Bible but don’t require the listener to actually know *or obey* Jesus Christ! (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

Though the shepherd (Greek *poimen* [4166], poor English translation “pastor”) is listed in a group of specially graced (or gifted) individuals who are to train and equip the saints - *every* believer – to do the works of service (to one another, to the poor, orphans and widows, etc. – Eph. 4:11-12, Jn. 15:12, Jas. 1:27), today’s “pastor” and the “church’s” professional staff are now expected to do those works. Where this laziness and neglect of one’s individual responsibilities to God are practiced as “truth,” great “theological” excuses are manufactured. “Grace” is nearly always invoked and any effort toward obeying the commands of Jesus is condemned as “legalism” or “self-effort” toward salvation. Jesus’ command to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to *obey all things that I have commanded...*” (Mt. 28:19-20) is simply “theologically” explained out of existence or just never brought up as a topic in the “pastor’s” “sermons.” Jesus still says, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Lk. 6:46) This is the *form* of godliness of which Paul wrote that has no power to make a person actually godly (resembling the character or attributes of Christ and God) – from these kind of “brothers” we are to turn away! (2 Tim. 3:5)

Some who are reading this will dismiss it as judgmental foolishness, never realizing that such a response only indicates that the demonic holds great power over them and is keeping them from coming into the light of truth. Others will reject it on the basis of “Well, even if it’s true, don’t uproot the tares!” (see Mt. 13:29) Such a response has the appearance of wisdom and of being obedient to the truth but is a deception nonetheless. Consider:

- The tares were planted “while men slept.” (Mt. 13:25) Those who are awake (see Mt. 25:5-7, Rom. 13:11, 1 Cor. 15:34, Eph. 5:14) are not to follow after blind leaders – we may simply leave them to their own destruction because

every plant not planted by the Father will be uprooted soon enough. (Mt. 15:13-14, 13:41-42)

- The tares, by virtue of their place in the pulpit and over the people and of their allegiance to a sinful division (denomination, even the so-called “non-denominational” ones!), are those who are to be avoided. (Rom. 16:17) Because the lives of the tares are not characterized by true divine love and righteousness (what is right in God’s eyes), we can know they are children of the devil (1 Jn. 3:10) and we can turn away from their impotent, lifeless churchianity (2 Tim. 3:5) and draw near to God anyway. (Jas. 4:8)

- The servants who are first told not to uproot the tares but who are later sent to uproot them and deliver them to a fiery furnace are *angels*. (Mt. 13:29, 41-42) No mere man *can* uproot a tare and deliver that person to a fiery furnace except perhaps by literally murdering that person – a tactic completely foreign to the New Testament and entirely contradictory to the commandments and ways of Christ Jesus!

It is neither necessary nor commanded that we even attempt to “uproot a tare.” Leaving them alone (Mt. 15:14), avoiding them (Rom. 16:17) and turning away from them (2 Tim. 3:5) *are* what are commanded to do. And it is precisely here that we can take our first step toward true spiritual maturity – going forth to meet Christ outside the camp of men’s ideas and “theologies,” bearing His reproach and following Him wherever He leads us. (Heb. 13:13, Lk. 9:23, Rev. 14:4) This *is* the road that leads to life – anything else is merely some man’s “church,” just another lane in the broad highway that leads to destruction. (Mt. 7:13-14)

Let he who has ears hear.

Neil Girrard  
Paidion Books  
P.O. Box 327  
Capitan, NM 88316

Website – [www.paidionbooks.org](http://www.paidionbooks.org)

Email – [paidion@paidionbooks.org](mailto:paidion@paidionbooks.org)

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