

## A Seeming Contradiction

"Let both grow together until the harvest" Matthew 13: 30.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate" 2 Corinthian 6: 17.

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(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 29, 1937, page 268.)

That there are no real contradictions in the Word of God we are well assured, though there are passages that present a contradictory appearance to the superficial reader. On closer inspection however the contradiction disappears and some rich spiritual instruction comes to light. A case in point is furnished by the two scriptures noted above.

In Matthew 13, all attempt on the part of the servants of the parable to separate between the wheat and the tares, by rooting up the latter, is *forbidden* — the wheat representing "the children of the kingdom," and the tares, "the children of the wicked one." In 2 Corinthians 6, a separation between the believer and the unbeliever is strictly *enjoined*. There certainly seems to be a contradiction here.

It cannot be urged that different epochs are contemplated in the two passages, and that the solution of the problem lies in that. The parable of the tares in the field is one that shows how the kingdom of the heavens in its present form has taken on its very mixed character, which is to be ended by the coming of the Lord; and consequently shows that the mixture must persist throughout the present period. Paul's instructions as to separation are valid for just the same period. Both passages apply to the present epoch in which we live.

We do notice however that it is *the kingdom of heaven* which is likened to this inextricable mixture of wheat and tares in the field; whilst the instruction to come out and be separate from the unbelievers is addressed to "*the church of God* which is at Corinth." There is a difference here. Let us consider it.

The kingdom of heaven is of course not heaven but rather that sphere on earth where the rule of heaven is acknowledged. All those who profess and call themselves Christians profess to be under the authority of the Lord who has taken His seat in the heavens. In this parable "the field" is explained by the Lord as being "the world," and it is by the sowing of the good seed in the world that the children of the kingdom have been brought forth. By the enemy's sowing of tares in this same field have the children of the wicked one been produced. All are in *the same world* and thoroughly mixed together, especially in those parts which we may speak of as Christendom.

Now this parable makes it very clear that it is not the business of the Lord's servants today to attempt to disentangle the children of the wicked one and clear them out *of the world*. They will be disentangled from the children of the kingdom and cleared right out when the Son of Man comes and inaugurates the era of the kingdom displayed in power, and the work will be done by angels and not by men. To clear the evil out of Christendom is no business of ours.

Many Christians cling to the idea that to the church has been committed the mission of converting the world; that the Christian gospel, supplemented by Christian education and influence, is going to reduce the tares and ultimately eliminate them, and that so the millennium will be introduced. There is no support for this idea in the parable, but the very reverse. The suggestion made by the servants of the householder was that they should root the tares out of the field, and this was forbidden by the householder. He saw that they lacked the necessary discrimination and skill, and that their efforts

would result as much in rooting up wheat as in rooting up tares.

There was a prophetic warning in this. We have only to read a little history to learn what efforts have been put forth by the great Papal system to root the tares out of the field — in other words, to eliminate "heretics" from Christendom, by destroying them out of the earth. In no country was the Papacy more successful in this work than in Spain. They piled the faggots round the "heretics" and burned them by the score, calling the solemn occasion, "auto-de-fe" which means "an act of faith." The irony of it! Much of Spain's present day misery can be traced back to their fatal success.

They did their work all too well. No one was spared who confessed faith in Christ as the only Mediator apart from His virgin mother, and saints and angels. There were not many "heretics" in Spain, so the Inquisition ended with the triumphant feeling that they had rooted all the "tares" out of the land. In reality they had rooted up every visible blade of "wheat." If any system other than the Papal system attempted the same thing to-day, they would only end by producing the same terrible result.

So a brief summary of the parable of the tares of the field would be this: while the kingdom of heaven persists in its present form, the human servants are forbidden to attempt to rectify matters by rooting out of the world the children of the wicked one.

But in 2 Corinthians 6 the church is in view and not the kingdom. Those who are members of Christ, and of His body, are not told to root the ungodly out of the earth, if they were, there would indeed be a great contradiction between the two passages. They are told to be separate as regards all "fellowship" with the ungodly. Just because we are not called upon to put things right in the great "field" of the "world," we are called upon to let a strong line of demarcation exist, and be very visible, between ourselves and the world. The truth here is not *contradictory* of Matthew 13, but *complementary* to it.

Examine the passage for a moment and see how this is so. We are not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The word "unequally" might more accurately be translated "diversely." It is an allusion to Deuteronomy 22: 10 where it is forbidden to plough with such animals together as an ox and an ass. They are diverse in nature and hence thoroughly different in habits and gait. It would be an utter misfit and entail misery for both animals. Now there is a fundamental *diversity of nature* between the believer and the unbeliever, which forbids anything like a yoke between them. Of course we move amongst unbelievers and have much contact with them in our daily callings, and oftentimes even in the home. We are called upon to behave with the utmost grace and to let our light shine before them. But we are not to be *yoked* with them.

The question may be asked — What exactly constitutes a yoke? The following verses, containing a series of questions, help to answer this. "What *fellowship* . . . what *communion* . . . what *concord* . . . what *part* . . . what *agreement*?" These five words show what kind of thing is forbidden. Moreover they are followed by the positive instruction to "come out . . . be *separate* . . . *touch not* the unclean." — three other words which reinforce the five questions. We are not to involve ourselves in any fellowships or partnerships which would yoke us to unbelievers and commit us to the unclean things with which their world is filled. Without any question marriage is a yoke of that kind, and business partnership is another; and other things too come under the scope of this word. Again and again we have to ask ourselves when commitments are proposed to us — Will this thing involve me in an unequal yoke?

Many a godly Christian has had to suffer as to his worldly prospects because he obeyed this scripture. He could have made a lot more money if he had consented to partner some ungodly man and share in his enterprises. This is just what the closing words of the chapter contemplate. We may be

losers as to the things of the world, but we shall not ultimately lose, for the Lord God Almighty will take us up and father us in a very real way. We may always rely on Him.

In connection with this such scriptures as 1 Corinthians 5: 13, and 2 Timothy 2: 19-21, have their place. Both show that flagrant evil — whether moral or doctrinal — is not to be given lodgment in the bosom of the church of God. Not only is there to be a clear-cut line of separation between the saints and the world, but evil of the types mentioned in these two passages is to have no place in their midst. And this is the more urgent and important because we are found in the midst of such a mixed state of affairs in the world. *Just because we cannot root the tares out of the world field, it is so important to maintain the line of separation, which is warranted and enjoined by the Scripture.*

Rightly understood then, the two passages, cited at the outset, support and reinforce each other.