

I listened with attention as the Teacher told the story of the weeds sown by an enemy¹ and explained it to us in the perspective of the Kingdom of God². His words clearly addressed the idea that God allowed evil to remain in the world among us and would ultimately make the separation that would free us from it.

As I pursued my work of ministering to others and teaching them about that Kingdom, I encountered opposition on a fairly regular basis. There were those who tried to undermine my efforts – some because of their unbelief, and some because they wanted the attention I was receiving for themselves³.

I began to think of my own enemies in the light of the parable of the weeds. I consider here a slightly different version (a modified summary of the original story, with a different explanation at the end):

The landscape of our lives is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while he was going about his regular business, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's friends came to him and said, 'Didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

"'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"His friends asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

"'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, we will first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

The man sowed good seed in his field, meaning that he had been faithful to the Kingdom and treated other people with Goodness and Love as children of God. His enemies planted weeds, by telling slanderous and false stories about him in an attempt to destroy his reputation. As both the wheat and weeds grew, people of the area were presented with both good and bad reports. The man's friends wondered if they could go out and resist the enemies by proclaiming the man's innocence, but he commented that by responding to the lies and stirring the pot the people might be turned against him. He decided to leave the weeds alone and let the truth about his work rise above them and become known. As his life moved forward, the lies would be consumed by the revelation of the truth as shown by God's light.

Our adversary and his cohorts⁴ are continually planting bits of slander to weaken our influence on others. If we try to answer each individual lie after people have accepted them, we may endanger the good we have done. But it is best to work only when there is specific confrontation, when those promoting the lies come into direct contact with us. It is better to not start conflict, but we should not be afraid to respond to combat or defend assaults on the truth. And we must have forgiveness as our goal, to prevent bitterness (or poisoned soil) to develop.

It is true that the weeds spread or propagate if you do nothing. The Good growth will overcome it, however, with God's power⁵. The final harvest will demonstrate the value or worth

of the true fruit⁶. But we must be able to show the presence of God as the people we are teaching strain to see His Good as they look through the weeds.

The Teacher, of course, was slandered during His entire ministry, though it was clearly against God's law⁷. He was called Beelzebub, a blasphemer, a liar, demon-possessed, and raving mad⁸. Most of the time, He did not directly answer the accusations⁹, but simply let His Goodness shine through¹⁰.

My God, whom I praise, do not remain silent, for people who are wicked and deceitful have opened their mouths against me; they have spoken against me with lying tongues. With words of hatred they surround me; they attack me without cause.

While they curse, may you bless; may those who attack me be put to shame, but may your servant rejoice.

Psalms 109:1-3, 28

1. Matthew 13:24-30
2. Matthew 13:3-43
3. Philippians 1:12-18
4. See Revelation 12:9 (The original Hebrew term "satan" means "accuser" or "adversary")
5. 1 Corinthians 3:6
6. Matthew 7:16-20
7. Leviticus 19:16 "Do not go about spreading slander among your people."
8. see John 10:19-21; Matthew 12:2, 10, 24; Matthew 9:3, 26:65 (He was also accused of associating with sinners, Matthew 9:11 and others)
9. Acts 8:32 and 1 Peter 2:21-24
10. John 14:5-14