



## *Are You Awake or Sleeping?*

*Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. **But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.** But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'*

*"And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!'*

*"The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'*

*"But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"*

*Matthew 13:24-30*

*It's incredible that the enemy was provided the opportunity to sow the tares by the sleeping slaves, who in turn ask incredulously, "How did this happen? Could there be something wrong with the seed?" Although Jesus explains exactly what this parable means, many fail to learn one of the main lessons in the fact that the tares are allowed into the church not as the result of the will of God, but the negligence of the church itself. Having fallen asleep on their spiritual watch, Satan was provided the opportunity to insert unbelievers in our midst.*

I actually heard an extended sermon based on this parable which managed to omit this key fact by skipping past the opening verses and jumping right to Jesus' words, *"Allow both to grow together until the harvest"*. Extracting and lifting this line out of the parable the speaker

*"Are You Awake or Sleeping?", Page 1 of 6*

asserted that this meant that it was by God's design that good and evil are allowed to grow, side-by-side, equal to each other until His appointed time of judgment. Therefore, he further asserted, the application of this information was for us to note that no matter how bad things are, no matter how bad a ministry or person might be, there is always something "good" to be extracted. His repeated admonishment was that we weren't to be distracted by the presence of evil, but to instead look for the good that was in its vicinity. (Egad!)

Having provided this "platform", he then proceeded to list a host of "good" things he'd extracted from a myriad of resources. This exhaustive list of religious organizations included many which I would agree are impeccable in their quality and pedigree, but it also included a great many which were either dubious or outright alarming because of their history and stated (and misguided) doctrinal assertions. The amazing thing was how this speaker *knew* which ones would be controversial to the audience and often paused on these to reassure us, "Now I know these folks have some problems, and they wouldn't be my number one recommendation, but if you can look past it, here's some good that's come through them."

At the very least, this man was an example of the sleeping servants in the parable to whom it can be directly attributed that Satan is allowed to enter the church and plant false teaching. Even more so, he is probably an example of a false shepherd who actually *allows* God's flock to be spiritually attacked and harmed. What we have to take seriously are the many warnings from Christ and the Apostles that we're supposed to remain vigilant against these false teachers/believers so that neither we nor the church at large will be deceived or go astray because of them.

***“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore **be on the alert**, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.***

*Acts 20:28-31*

It might be inevitable that evil and wickedness will come and attempt to establish itself within our fellowships and organizations, but it's not necessarily a given that they should be accepted or allowed as something inevitable. It is clear that we have the biblical responsibility to make every good faith effort to detect, warn, and guard against them at every turn.

*And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Son of man, speak to the sons of your people and say to them, ‘If I bring a sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and **make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows on the trumpet and warns the people**, then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken warning, he would have delivered his life. **But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned**, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman’s hand.’*

*“Now as for you, son of man, **I have appointed you a watchman** for the house of Israel; so **you will hear a message from My mouth and give them warning from Me**. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand. But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your life.*

*Ezekiel 33:1-9*

It doesn't matter whether everyone will respond in the right way to the warning; the responsibility we bear is to *sound* the warning regardless.

[“Are You Awake or Sleeping?”, Page 3 of 6](#)

Throughout Scripture we have repeated and plentiful examples of how to deal with such people. They are to be plainly, directly, and even publicly confronted so that there is no doubt as to their true nature. We see this in David's calling out of Saul, Jeremiah's dealings with Hannaniah, Christ's interaction with the corrupt religious leaders of the day, and throughout the New Testament epistles wherein the writers actually name the names of false teachers and warn against associating with them.

It's true that if sin occurs in the course of a personal relationship with a brother or sister in Christ that the biblical process is to go first to them privately and initiate a process of reconciliation. However, this is **NOT** the process to follow in dealing with false teachers, false prophets, false leaders, or false shepherds. Nowhere in Scripture – not even by Christ Himself – were they dealt with in any manner other than openly, directly, and publicly. A good watchman sounds an alarm; he doesn't first go out to the enemy to see if he can "work it out" with them. A good shepherd defends the flock; he doesn't attempt to make friends with the wolves.

Now the man in the real-life example I opened this discussion with was, in actuality, a very nice guy. It's not like he showed up in a Halloween devil's costume with a pitchfork and started screaming and attacking people. He was sincere, educated, articulate, even humble in the outward presentation of himself. But we can't allow such superficial appearances to cloud our judgment and subsequent course of action, which we always measure against God's Word.

*But what I am doing I will continue to do, so **that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are** in the matter about which they are boasting. For such men are **false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ**. No wonder, **for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light**. Therefore it is not surprising if **his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness**, whose end will be according to their deeds.*

*1 Corinthians 11:12-15*

"Are You Awake or Sleeping?", Page 4 of 6

This is why they're so difficult to spot initially, their appearance and demeanor as tares so closely mimicking the wheat. In the parable, the servants didn't even notice the problem until "the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also." Biologists tell us this is the exact nature of this real-life look-alike, that while it grows it looks exactly like wheat until it blossoms and bears fruit, at which time it is plainly obvious which is the wheat and which is the tare. By this we have another clue as to how to recognize those that are actually false: By their fruit.

*"For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. **For each tree is known by its own fruit.** For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for **his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.**"*

*Luke 6:43-45*

There's a word in this politically correct world which has made inroads into our thinking which actually has no biblical standing according to the world's definition: "Tolerate". Paul uses it in 2 Corinthians 11:19-20 to admonish Christians for tolerating false teachers and their teaching, and Jesus uses it in Revelation 2:20 to admonish Thyatira for tolerating the false teacher Jezebel. It's only "positive" use, if you will, is by Christ to the church in Ephesus:

*'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and **that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;**'*

*Revelation 2:2*

What the world would have us implement is a definition of tolerance that is completely opposite that explained by God's Word. In each instance it refers directly to false teachers and the need to be resolutely **INT**olerant.

Let's put into practice the armor of God as taught by Paul in Ephesians 6:

- It begins first and foremost with the truth. *"Having girded your loins with truth". (6:14)*
- It protects our heart. *"Having put on the breastplate of righteousness". (6:14)*
- It provides our foundation and direction. *"Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace". (6:15)*
- It provides overall protection from spiritual assaults. *"Taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one". (6:16)*
- It protects our most vulnerable areas. *"And take the helmet of salvation". (6:17)*
- It provides the one offensive weapon necessary for dealing with the enemy. *"And take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God". (6:17)*

Within the context of this discussion, it might be worth noting that there's no way to use a sword except directly and forcefully.

It all begins and is held together by God's Truth and built into a whole by our pursuit of righteousness, the Gospel, faith, and salvation so that we are able to effectively wield His Word as His watchmen and shepherds on behalf of the entire flock.

In His Love,

[Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org](mailto:Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org)