

# The Weeding Out

(Full Title) **The Weeding Out of the Church of God**

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 9/9/2017

The Scriptures do not provide many details of what goes into the making of a **beautiful garden**. Suffice it to say that it would be difficult to adequately describe the variety and the beauty of a Godly garden. I think of the magnificent flowers and shrubs that draw the butterflies and hummingbirds.

Genesis 2:8 The LORD God **planted a garden** toward the east, in **Eden**; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

It was a perfect garden with absolutely **everything** needed, for not only sustenance, but the perfect garden also provided an environment where man could **thrive** – physically, creatively, emotionally and spiritually.

Genesis 2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the **garden of Eden** to cultivate it and keep it. [Prune it and **keep the weeds out** of the garden.]

Most of us learned as little children - You have to keep the weeds out of the garden. All through the Scriptures we find that God is particularly keen about keeping the weeds out of His garden - the Kingdom of God. Solomon said in:

Ecclesiastes 2:5-6 I made **gardens and orchards** for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools of water, water that brings forth boughs and trees:

Solomon's **hanging gardens** were world renown – supposedly one of the legendary Seven Wonders of the World. In 1Kings 10 you can read about how the Queen of Sheba traveled to Jerusalem to meet Solomon in person. The Queen of Sheba had heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with difficult questions.

1Kings 10:2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great entourage, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

As gracious host, Solomon showed the Queen of Sheba his gardens of rare flowers ornamented with hanging vines, shrubs, flowers, pools and fountains. Can you imagine the army of gardeners and horticulturists it took **to weed**, plant and maintain Solomon's gardens? There is a millennial picture of the earth here in Isaiah 51.

Isaiah 51:3 Indeed, the Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places, And her wilderness He will make like **Eden**, And her desert like the **garden of the Lord**.

This **garden of the Lord** is not on earth, but in heaven in the presence of God. That beautiful **garden of the Lord** is within the Kingdom of God. It goes without saying that there are **no weeds** in the **garden of the Lord**.

There is nothing that defiles in the presence of God. Everything there in the presence of God is absolutely beautiful and perfect. Can you imagine walking in the cool of the morning in the heavenly **garden of the Lord**. I think of the beautiful Bougainvilleas and hanging Wisteria - like great clumps of grapes...

Genesis 3:8 And Adam and Eve heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the **garden in the cool of the day**: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Why did they hide? It was because the weeds had taken over their lives.

Genesis 3:11 And Jesus said, ... Have you eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded you that thou shouldn't eat?

There are not many brethren in the Church of God these days who want to think about the **weeding out** process that the Church of God must go through – and all that it entails.

Brethren, it is important that we fully realize that we are going through a **qualifying procedure** where God will determine **who** will be in the **better** resurrection (Hebrews 11:35).

There is something about our human nature what make us want to know **when** Jesus is coming back. I suppose it is natural to want to save our skin – and avoid the tribulation to come. But down deep we should know that **no man** is going to figure out the day, hour, even the time or season when Jesus will return. Because Jesus said:

Mark 13:32-33 Of that day and that hour knows no man, **no**, not even the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, **but the Father**. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

It may be that God the Father has a certain **number** in mind of those who will reign and rule with His Son, Jesus Christ in the millennium. Maybe it is 144,000 converted and repentant men and women from the beginning of mankind??? God knows **exactly** how many resurrected saints He will utilize to kick off the millennium. How close are we to that number being filled up?

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Those one-thousand years are **only the beginning** of an eternity in the Kingdom of God. All those people who have ever been called to the knowledge of the Sabbath and the Holy Days are among those who make up the list of qualified applicants who aspire to reign with Christ. In the **selection process**, God will determine **who** is ready and able to teach those in the world tomorrow the way of God that leads to eternal life. It will not be everyone in the Church of God.

Matthew 7:21 Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

There is a **weeding out** process going on – and there will be a final weeding out – because God is not mocked.

Matthew 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Matthew 7:23 I Never Knew You.

Jesus clearly says that it is **only** those who do the will of my Father which is in heaven.

It is **only** those who are living their Christianity that will be the teachers in the world tomorrow. The people in the millennium – the New nation of Israel – will need qualified teachers. God the Father is not going to send in teachers with no experience who are un-credentialed.

Isaiah 30:21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, **This is the way, walk ye in it**, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

Who better to teach others God's way than those who have **lived it** in this lifetime. And that is where the **weeding out process** will make all the difference.

God calls those seat-warmers, and pretend Christians useless and obnoxious weeds in His Church – 'tares.' God describes our congregations as being made up of wheat and tares. Do we examine ourselves and ask, "Am I a tare among the wheat, or am I wheat among the tares?" We are told that the angels will separate the tares, "them which do iniquity," from the wheat, "the children of the Kingdom."

Matthew 13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

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

Matthew 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

Matthew 13:39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

Matthew 13:40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

Matthew 13:41 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.

In the end, God will utilize His angels to do the **weeding out** of the Church. No one will slip through the cracks because of their connections to some corporate organization. I want to tell you about a duck hunting trip I once took with Karl Beyersdofrer. This was back in the '70s and in Texas.

We were deep in the woods – and we saw some ducks going down to a small pond – they call them 'tanks' out in Texas. We decided to sneak up on them. There was a dam on the lower end of the pond – and Karl and I decided to sneak up on the ducks by climbing up the back side of the dam. When we were half-way up the dam, a single duck came moseying over the dam to our side. You don't **stroll** in Texas – you Mosey.

Anyway, this lone duck spots us – our plot to sneak up on the flock of ducks was discovered! That duck stopped in its tracks and said, "Quack." Or was it, "Quack?" I'm not sure. But to our surprise, that single duck **meandered** over the top of the dam and swam back to the bunch. It is also okay to meander, amble, wander and roam across Texas.

That duck was **not** able to convey to the flock the danger they were all in, but felt safe enough in the bunch – not to fly away to safety. We, brethren, should be smarter than ducks, but it reminds me of the "herd mentality" I see in God's Church – like there's safety in numbers – but there is not safety in numbers – we should know that.

Has Satan convinced way too many members that since they are in the Church—they have got it made? There were lots of Pharisees in Christ's day – but that did not provide salvation for a single person – did it? Brethren, it is the same way today... No one will slip through the cracks – through the weeding out process – because of their connections to some corporate organization.

Let's back up here in Matthew 13 because there is something here that strikes me as counterintuitive. Here is the strange thing. Jesus is speaking of congregations that are made up of wheat and tares. There's good wheat and bad weeds...

Jesus says **to let** that mixed congregation coexist with one another, and do not do anything to clean it up.

### **The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds/Tares**

Matthew 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed **good seed** in his field:

Matthew 13:25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

Matthew 13:26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

That is the situation we find in the congregations of the Church of God today.

Matthew 13:27 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?

When asked, "Who sowed these tares among the wheat," Jesus said unto them:

Matthew 13:28 An enemy has done this. The servants said unto Him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

Matthew 13:29 But He said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

The wheat and tares are **to grow together**, and God says don't even try to uproot the weeds in the congregation! Again, why does God allow this hostile environment of false ministers and unconverted brethren to persist in our congregations? The answer to that question is that's where true Christians are to build Godly Character and put on the Righteousness of Jesus Christ. And besides, some of the innocent wheat – the good members – would get hurt in the process.

Make no mistake about it – there are some **blatant** sins, and heretical problems that must be dealt with immediately – read 1Corinthians 5 for example. No one is going into the Kingdom without **Godly Character** and the **Righteousness** of Jesus Christ.

Being in God's Church is like going on a **job interview**. Let's understand: We are **applying** for the Kingdom of God. None of us are shoo-ins. It is a difficult process. Christianity is not easy. Every successful applicant for the Kingdom will have run the gamut Paul described:

2Corinthians 4:8-9 We are beset with trouble on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.

Brethren, we have been invited to the marriage supper that God the Father will host for Jesus. It is our hope and faith that we will be with Jesus Christ at His return. But let's understand that **just being invited** to the marriage supper is not enough. We've been invited – but notice:

Matthew 22:1 And Jesus answered and spoke unto them again by parables, and said,

Matthew 22:2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

Matthew 22:3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were invited to the wedding: and **they would not come.**

You want to see a big example of that? Look at the Worldwide Church of God in the '70s and '80s. A full 70% of the members returned to this world – it is like Jesus said there in verse :3, **they would not come.** “They would not come,” they did not follow through on the Father’s **invitation** to the Kingdom.

Matthew 22:4 Again, The King sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: **come unto the marriage.**

That is a personal invitation to us – to the Marriage supper of the Lamb of God.

Matthew 22:5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

Matthew 22:8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were invited were not worthy.

Matthew 22:9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

Brethren, let’s understand: God will continue inviting guests until every seat is filled – but then the door will be closed! No more invitations will go out.

Matthew 22:10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both **bad and good:** [both **wheat and tares**] and the wedding was furnished with guests.

Brethren, the bottom line is this: Many people who have been invited to the Kingdom of God **are not going to make the final cut.**

It is **not** enough to meet with friends on the Sabbath or go to the Feast every year. There is so much more to being a true Christian. The question is: Will we have put on the **proper wedding garment** – which is the **righteousness of the saints?**

Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

Revelation 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be **arrayed** in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Note that what is given to the Church is not the “fine linen” (as the New International Version suggests) but the **privilege** of arraying herself in righteousness that has been given to us. A better translation would be, “to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen.”

If we have been invited – and we have – **we can make it**, through God’s Spirit. God’s people are called to good works.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Matthew 22:11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which **had not** on a wedding garment:

This verse is speaking **directly about the weeds** in the Church of God.

Matthew 22:12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how came thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

He was speechless because there's no answer, no exception, and **no excuse** that will **allow weeds** into the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 22:13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Those who made light of the invitation from God the Father will **not** make the **final cut** because they refused to put on the proper wedding garment – which is the righteousness of the saints.

Over the years we've seen many of those we attended Sabbath services with fall away – never to be renewed. The sorting out is not yet complete. It is apparent that the Church of God is not as prepared as it should be to meet Jesus Christ at His return. The **weeding out** of the tares will not be complete until **just before** Jesus Christ returns. What **percentage** of those people that we count as brothers and sisters in Christ will actually be teachers in the Kingdom of God? Notice the answer in the next verse:

Matthew 22:14 Many are called, but **few are chosen**.

This terrible circumstance should be addressed by the overall Church of God which does not recognize its lapsed state. Jesus describes the Church just before His return. It is extremely dangerous that as a people, the Church is self-satisfied with its Laodicean spiritual condition. We must make every effort to grow stronger in Godly character and Christ's righteousness as the end approaches.

Revelation 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Revelation 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Revelation 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Revelation 3:21 To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Revelation 3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Over and over, Jesus demonstrated that there is a selective qualifying process that the brethren must meet the requirements of in order to be in God's Kingdom. Especially the brethren in God's Church must **make the cut** between the good and the bad. Continuing in Matthew 13, Jesus reiterates the same lesson:

Matthew 13:47-48 The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the **good** into vessels, but cast the **bad** away."

Brethren, we do not **have it made**—that is not the case at all!

Matthew 13:49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

Matthew 13:50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus tells us that the bad/unusable fish are discarded. John the Baptist says this in a slightly different way in:

Matthew 3:12: [Jesus] will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

This principle appears somewhat differently in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats:

Matthew 25:31-46: Christ is Judge, and He sets the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left.

He judges that the sheep can enter eternal life, while the goats receive the judgment of fire. Although a final judgment is coming for the world, the Church is now under God's judgment.

1Peter 4:17 We, the house of God, are being judged right now on how we are living our Christianity.

Not only is the sentence coming, but our conduct and growth are also currently being judged - Christ is evaluating whether we meet **His** high standards. Ultimately, everyone is judged the same way, according to the same standard, by the same criteria. But in explaining:

Matthew 13:29, We are not the judge of our brother because we do not know what they know or do not know. We do not know their hurts and fears. We do not know their level of conversion. We do not know what experiences they have suffered through.

Jesus knows, and He is perfectly merciful. The "weeds" among us are not ours to judge, but Jesus, the righteous Judge, has promised to judge with equity.

Psalms 98:9 Before the LORD; for He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

Are we striving with all our might to attain to the Kingdom? Jesus likened the Kingdom of heaven, to a treasure, or a pearl of great price. He advises us to let **nothing** stand between us and that cherished prize.

Matthew 13:44 The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.

Repeatedly, Jesus gives us examples to warn us of the dire consequences that await us if we fail to measure up to His high standards. Study the warnings that Jesus presents to us in His renditions of the Wheat and Tares; the Sheep and Goats; the parable of the Talents; the Children of the Kingdom; and the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

Where is the **genuine Christianity** in God's Church today? Where's the true Faith?

Colossians 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Colossians 3:14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Yes, it is getting **tougher** and tougher by the day – and it is going to get **harder** yet to be a Christian in this world. It is not enough to stand in the Truth for a while, and then let down. Paul reiterates the warning that Jesus gave us:

1Corinthians 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Our forefathers – the Israelites – were **weeded out** in the desert – do we honestly believe that it can't happen to us?

Hebrews 4:11 Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Hebrews 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done **despite** unto the Spirit of grace?

Brethren, we do not wish to wait until the tribulation to wake up – that would be terrible!

Let us be thankful for the tremendous and unique gift that has been set before us. Let's conclude with a promise and an encouraging note: Let us remain faithful and endure until the coming of our Lord.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

End: The Weeding Out