

Oaks-West Church of Christ

204 Second Street • Burnet, TX 78611 • 512-756-4493

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Keeping Faith In A Changing World

by George Slover

In the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:24-30), Jesus speaks of a man sowing good seed in his field, but while he slept an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. Both the wheat and the tares were allowed to grow together. At the harvest time the reapers first gathered the tares and burned them, and then gathered the wheat into his barn. Jesus was teaching his disciples that the sons of light must coexist with the sons of the devil until the end of world, at which time those who practice lawlessness will be punished, but the righteous will receive an eternal reward.

The truth of this parable has certainly been evident over the last several few months. Standards of right and wrong have been distorted. We live in a world that now calls evil good and good evil, who puts darkness for light, and light for darkness. (Isaiah 5:20) How are godly people to handle these things?

As Americans we have been somewhat sheltered. I grew up as a child of the 60s

and 70s. While we certainly did not live in a perfect world, at least many Biblical values were honored much more than our in current times. Therefore, I find myself struggling even as David must have struggled with how to relate in an ungodly world. There are answers to these struggles found in Psalm 37.

In verse one, David says: “ Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.” The word “fret” basically means to blaze in anger. The word carries the idea of jealousy or envy. He is describing a state of mind where we are worried or envious because others prosper and are successful and we are not. Thus, God’s first lesson: control your anger.

I grew up in a home where I was taught the value of patriotism, and to salute the American flag from a father who defended that flag in the Second World War. I was taught to respect the law and those who enforced it. And I was taught you treat people justly

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and fairly based on character and not ethnicity. Therefore, when I see some of these values being defiled it angers me. However, I must not allow circumstances or people to determine my disposition in the world. I must remain steadfast in my resolve to serve the Lord.

There is a sense in which anger is appropriate. We have every right to be vexed by the behavior of those who no longer respect law and order, or proudly boast of their vile behavior. In another place David says: "Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies." (Psalms 139:21-22). God's people must vocalize their disapproval of immorality and lawlessness, even at the risk of being severely ostracized.

David also observes: "I have seen the wicked in great power, And spreading himself like a native green tree." (Psalms 37:35) Does this sound familiar? The tree here is an emblem of those who are wicked prospering and becoming more vigorous and brash. Do you see it getting any better in America? No. But, we can learn to direct our anger toward the ungodly behavior. We can choose to pray, and do good to those who are enemies of God. (Matthew 5:43-49)

In verse 3, David says: "Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness." God's second lesson: trust in his providence. God never promises to make us wealthy; however, he does promise to provide basic needs to those who seek him. "I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread." (Psalm 37:25) "A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked." (Psalms 37:16). We must pursue

God's kingdom, and then trust him to take care of us.

God never guarantees that his people will not suffer nor be oppressed, but he does promise one day to execute justice. This prevailing theme is expressed in verses 12 and 13: "The wicked plots against the just, And gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, For He sees that his day is coming."

To wait is a challenge in a world that expects instant gratification, but our daily goal is to focus on glorifying God and living a Christ like life. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6,7)

Our third lesson is also stated in verse 3: Trust in the LORD, and do good; and again in verse 27: Depart from evil, and do good; And dwell forevermore. The lesson: avoid evil and do good. It is impossible for us to just check out of society; however, we are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. (Matthew 5:13-16) Through godly character and action we can have a leavening influence on our neighborhood.

Let us attempt to shape the world through deeds of kindness, by sharing the gospel, and by living pure and holy lives. "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?" (1 Peter 3:13). While it is true that it is our job to oppose sin, we can also influence the world with courtesy and kindness.

We must resolve to control our anger, trust in God, and treat others with divine love. This world offers no guarantees for the future. However, because we are children of God, we are guaranteed his eternal protection.

Welcome!

When you visit our assemblies, you will be received friendly, kindly and courteously. We believe this to be the natural attitude of those who truly love God and mankind. Though you may at first be among strangers, we hope that you will come to know us well and count us as your friends.

We offer Bible studies as well as correspondence courses for those interested in learning more about what God expects of us.



Upcoming Ladies' Bible Classes - cancelled until further notice.

Services for August - We will meet for **one** service at 10:45 a.m. There will **not** be a Bible class or evening service, and there still will **not** be a Wednesday evening service. We will re-evaluate toward the end of August. Thank you for your support and encouragement as we make these difficult decisions! --DT for the elders

If you know of upcoming events, please inform Darrell so they can be included here.



Please remember the following individuals in your daily prayers:

June Owens
Jack Wilson
Jerry Richardson
Karen Hallmark
Shirley Perkins' brother, Leon
Morgan O'Hair
Dinah Williams
Joy Ulrich
Kevin Barth
Lisa Trammel
Joel and Tori Moore
Tyler Hairston

And continue to pray for each other

If you know of someone that needs to be on this list, please tell Darrell (email preferred) and provide updates so names stay on the list as long as needed.

We have many that face challenges on a daily basis and need your prayers as well.

“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,”
(Ephesians 6:18 ESV)

