

## Another Garden Story

There are numerous passages in Scripture that use agricultural themes to teach spiritual lessons. Jesus' *Parable of The Sower* and *The Parable of the Wheat and Tares* are familiar to those with a minimum knowledge of the Bible. Teresa Hampton's book, *Come To The Garden*, applies lessons she learned from experiences in her grandmother's garden to spiritual truths required to restore the unity of the Lord's church. My gardening experience is basically limited to planting flowers and setting out shrubs. More specifically, I dig, Margaret plants, and the good earth gives the increase. With this preface, I humbly offer the following thoughts for your consideration.

In the early spring, when the vegetation takes on a tender green color, both wild flowers and weeds populate the flowerbeds. The wild flowers, to the untrained eyes, look very much like the weeds during their early growth. As they grow, the difference between the flowers and weeds is unmistakable even to the inexperienced gardener. The flowers are beautiful and pleasant to have in the garden. The weeds are neither and they are removed.

Young flowers remind me of new Christians. At first there is not a lot of difference between the new Christian and their non-Christian peers. With time and spiritual maturity, the differences become readily apparent to all observers. The Christian's values and conduct are different as night and day from those who are not Christians. Their attitude and optimistic view of life makes them delightful to be around. God's word and a little time can change a person into something beautiful, someone Christ-like.

It is important the gardener be knowledgeable of the flowers in the flowerbed less the flowers are mistakenly pulled up and removed along with the weeds. Likewise, more mature Christians must not deal harshly with the new Christian when he/she fails to let go of their worldly ways while they are attempting to change. Sometimes, older Christians expect new converts to mature almost instantly and their stern corrections drive the new Christian away from the church family.

Jesus' *Parable of the Wheat and the Tares* in Matt. 13:24-30 illustrates the difficulty of separating the Christian from the non-Christian in the environment of the world. In time, we are told, the Lord will separate the wheat from the tares. In the meantime, we should be thankful that God is a great gardener and we should thank Him each day He allows us time to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.

-- For the elders (Don Denton)