

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren,

To all the members of the Church of God, The Eternal, greetings! I wish and pray that you are in good health and prospering by the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Here in Mindanao, Philippines, we are experiencing the constant blessings and protection of the Lord, physically and spiritually as well.

I said physically protected, for in spite of the petty war between the government and the MILF (Muslim Islamic Liberation Front) and Abbu Sayaff, He has kept us safe under His invulnerable protection and care.

The MILF and Abbu Sayaff, both Muslim separatist groups, have been making trouble with the government and so the government, now irked by their hit and run tactics, is waging a full-scale campaign against them.

We are spiritually protected I said, for in spite of the effort of other ministers who separate from us and join other split organizations to draw away disciples after them, and to try to destroy the Church of God, The Eternal here, they have not succeeded. We owe everything to the Almighty God.

The burden of my letter to you, brethren, is found in the book of Matthew 13:24–30.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 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? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest:

and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

What did Jesus mean when He said tares? According to Webster's dictionary, tares are injurious weeds to grain fields. In my own experience as a farmer, our rice plant has weeds that grow together with the rice having the same characteristics. You cannot distinguish one from the other except when they bear fruit. This is the time when their true nature is revealed.

These are not just ordinary weeds that are easily recognizable. Wheat farmers call them wild oats. But how are we going to tell the difference between the wheat and the tares? According to the University of Idaho College of Agriculture, there are a number of ways if we know what to look for. The first leaf of the wild oat seedling twists counter-clockwise. The sheath of the wild oat seedlings has no auricles or clawlike projections at the base. Any broad-bladed grass growing outside the seeded rows should be suspected. These plants, if allowed to spread, put out toxins in the soil killing off the good seed that was planted and also using the water and fertilizer meant for the good plant. There are several good herbicides on the market—some pre-emergence and some post-emergence. Periodically changing cultural practices and control programs minimizes the adaptability of the wild oat plant.

Brethren, there have been people throughout the ages of the church who look just like the good seed. With God's help and careful screening on our part we should be able to distinguish them from the real planted seed, once their fruits are manifested. We should do as the Bereans did, examining the Scriptures daily, proving their preaching by the Scriptures (Acts 17:11) and holding fast to that which is good (1Thessalonians 5:21).

It could be that they look good from a distance but upon closer scrutiny we find they have a twisted or false view of God's laws. They may have changed the revealed truth, invalidating the Word of God—teaching as doctrine the precepts of men, neglecting the commandments of God and holding to their own lusts (Jude 16–18). "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts." And Jesus warns in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

Let us not be deceived, the bad seed can choke the good.

We must understand that tares always grow side by side with the wheat. "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30).

How can we solve the problem of tares?

There are two ways of getting rid of these harmful weeds that will grow and are growing along with our spiritual lives.

Firstly, pre-emergence—by prevention—we can use God's Word, the Bible, before problems arise. As the Apostle Paul advises, we must be always on guard so that the enemy will not have a chance to sow tares among us. We will avoid the things that can lead to problems. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Romans 16:17–19).

Secondly, by applying post-emergence (treating an existing problem) we can use God's Word by manifesting faith with what our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ promised before He suffered. He said in John 16:22–23, "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Any problem we are having regarding our faith, if we ask the help of the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, He will surely give it to us.

As the time of harvest draws near let us consider these things before the reapers of the harvest arrive. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Finally, brethren, farewell, the brethren that are with me salute you and wish you the best. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mario Y. Roque', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mario Y. Roque