

Pulling Weeds

With all the rain lately, “weeds” have been on my mind... and in my hands as I pull the seemingly never-ending supply! But while stooped over doing battle, I got to thinking. So, I did a quick search. The Bible doesn’t say much about “weeds” specifically- only a couple of metaphorical references in Hosea and one in Jonah (e.g. sea-weeds), but the concept is plainly evident in Jesus’ *Parable of the Tares*, Matthew 13:24ff. As most of us have experience with “weeds,” consider that:

- **Weeds are sometimes hard to distinguish from the good plants.** They may look a lot like what you’re attempting to cultivate- especially early on. It takes an experienced eye to tell that first two-leafed shoot of crabgrass from a corn plant, but the differences become readily apparent later.
- **Weeds are undesirables.** They may put on foliage that some consider pretty, but they usually stink, and mostly importantly, produce no good fruit(s). That’s what makes them weeds!
- **Weeds are invasive.** You have to till, plant, fertilize, water, and tend (keep the bugs and predators off) fruit-bearing plants; but weeds will sprout, grow, and takeover all on their own if you let them. All you have to do to get a bumper crop of weeds is just do nothing.
- **Weeds are hearty.** You can mow, spray, or cut them back, but unless you pull them up by the roots, they generally just keep coming. Even after you pull them up, it’s best to burn them to be sure their seeds don’t wind up reproducing yet more weeds!
- **Weeds are relentless.** Even after the prescribed “pull and burn” treatment of #4, more/others weeds will usually take their place after the next good rain. You never really get “finished”- you just have to keep going and never give up!

Now, go back (you saw this one coming, didn’t you?) and replace “weeds” with the word “**sin**”...

- **Sin is sometimes hard to distinguish from “good works.”** That’s probably why there are lists to help us identify the “bad” from the “good,” cp. Galatians 5:19-21,22-23. Obviously, experience makes the job of distinguishing the “bad” from the “good” easier (cf. Hebrews 5:14), but unfortunately, the way we often get that experience is by cultivating the “bad” too long!
- **Sin is undesirable.** Oh, I know- if sin wasn’t “fun,” it wouldn’t be tempting. Moses understood, however, that even sin’s greatest *pleasures* are only “*passing*” (Hebrews 11:25), and always produce “fruits” that taste bad and are near impossible to live on.
- **Sin is invasive.** Like one dandelion seemingly becomes 100 overnight, sin is deceptively pervasive. The “just one thing” (sin) that we refuse to pull up by the roots quickly pollinates others producing a whole crop of related weeds of sin, cf. 2Timothy 2:16-18; 3:13.
- **Sin is hearty.** It’s hard to kill. Even when it appears to be shriveled up and dead, it’ll spring back to life and bloom before you know it. That’s why 1Corinthians 10:12 says, “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*” You can’t just “prune it back” or “mow the top off” and expect it to die. You have to pull it up by the roots, and throw it on the fire. Anything less is just making a “*provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts,*” Romans 13:14.
- **Sin is relentless.** Even if you “pull up and burn” one, another one of a different variety may sprout up out of nowhere. Vigilance is key. We never really get finished dealing with our sins to the point where we can *spiritually* sit back and take our “*ease, eat, drink, and be merry,*” cf. Luke 12:19ff. We have to keep *pulling* and keep *burning*!

Take it from someone who has a lot of experience with weeds- botanical and spiritual, if we’re going to “*bear much fruit*” for the Lord, and thereby “*prove to be His disciples*” (cf. John 15:1-8), there’s going to have to be a lot of weed/sin pulling along the way. And waiting until they’re big, tough, and have deep roots doesn’t make the job any easier. Let’s get pulling! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)