

Growing “Weeds” instead of “Fruit”

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to grow weeds and other worthless or undesirable plants? Basically, just do nothing more than refuse to pull them up, chop them off, or poison them, and you'll have a fantastic crop in no time at all without any cultivating, watering, fertilizing, or real effort. Just leave them alone and they'll take care of the rest! But by contrast, seemingly the most desirable plants- whether flower, fruit, vegetable, or even grass, are often the most difficult to grow. They require proper soil tilling and preparation, careful planting, optimum amounts of water, nutrients, and sunshine, and freedom from the competition of or destruction by the undesirables (weeds as well as insect and animal pests). And, these things must be done over a sometimes-lengthy period of time just to grow the desirable plants to maturity and productivity. Here, yet again, the *spiritual* mirrors the *physical*...

You see, it's pretty much the same for bad habits and sin versus the “*fruit of the Spirit*”- all we have to do to get a full harvest of the *weeds* of sin is just be **unwilling** to:

- **Work at preventing them.** They will otherwise take root, grow, and reproduce just fine. This doesn't mean that we are born “spiritually depraved” (Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 19:14), or that we “inherit sins” from our predecessors (Ezekiel 18:1-20). It just means that the *seeds of sin* will quite naturally wind up sprouting in our hearts because we live in a sinful world **unless** we earnestly endeavor to prevent them doing so. Living in a world also occupied by the “*prince of the power of the air*” (Satan) and “*the sons of disobedience*” (those who follow Satan) will influence us to “*live in the lusts of our flesh*” and indulge in “*the desires of the flesh and of the mind*” (Ephesians 2:1-3) so that sin eventually becomes *second nature* to us, **unless** we prevent it by turning to God and allowing the *seed of His word* to be planted and grow within us (Luke 8:11).
- **Continually ‘weed’ our hearts and lives.** While “an ounce of prevention *is* worth a pound of cure,” the need for the cure is never completely eliminated. When it comes to the *weeds of sin*, we can't prevent them all (1John 1:10). Some will just have to be *pulled up* after they sprout! Though he used differing words and metaphors, the apostle Paul often addressed the need for the *continual weeding* of sin from our lives, cf. Romans 6:11-23; Ephesians 4:17-32; and Colossians 3:1-17.

And of course, actually *sowing to our own flesh* just compounds the problem of *spiritual weeds* and assures an abundant harvest of *corruption*, Galatians 6:7-8! But here's the good news: **It doesn't have to be this way!** We can instead:

- **Break up/till the *hard ground* of our hearts, Luke 8:5-6,12-13.** This not only *prepares the soil* for the *good seed* of God's word, it also *uproots* and *chops* up already existing *spiritual weeds*! If we diligently and consistently *put the plow* to our hard hearts, they will be transformed into *fertile soil* for the *good seed*! Such is not easy. We have to also *dig up* and *cast aside* the (stumbling) *stones* of preconceived ideas, the wisdom of the world, and cherished beliefs.
- **Pull up, chop down, or otherwise poison the *weeds of sin* that do sprout- preferably while they're young and tender, Luke 8:7,14.** To be as *spiritual weedless* as possible, and thus be more productive for the Lord (cf. Matthew 13:23) we must be *ruthless* in our attitude toward our own sins, and in our treatment of them. We cannot look for or seek to enjoy any of their *passing pleasures* (Hebrews 11:25; James 4:1-4), nor can we *make provisions* for them (Romans 13:11-14) that allow them to take root and grow to maturity. The longer these *spiritual weeds* of sin are allowed to remain, the more comfortable we become with them, and the more difficult they are to eradicate.

It is far easier to just decide that the *weeds* are “good” and starting calling them “flowers”- but God hasn't and won't (Isaiah 5:20-21; 2Corinthians 5:9-11), so we better get busy *tilling, planting, and watering* that we may *bear much fruit* to the Lord! (Philip C. Strong; Southside Church of Christ; 602 Henderson St. {mail to P.O.B. 1448}, Jacksonville, TX; online at southsidechurchofchrist.net; on youtube and facebook @ [southsidecoctx](https://www.facebook.com/southsidecoctx); email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)