

# THE TEST OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY

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Walking through the aisles of a major supermarket not so long ago, I was astonished to discover that some of the simplest gustatory delights, like nuts, mayonnaise and butter, have substitutes made scientifically available for the enjoyment of those who either have allergies to them or are stringent calorie counters. Some of these food substitutes were so spot on that the look, feel, taste and smell couldn't be distinguished from the real stuff anymore. One would have to carefully read the packaging, which belies the actual ingredients, to know if it's "the real McCoy" or just another brainchild of ingenious chemical engineering.

But it isn't just in the food realm where imitations exist. Almost everything has been expertly counterfeited, imitated, or made a replacement of. Even the Bible tells us that there are counterfeit gifts, false teachers, and wolves in sheep's clothing. Nothing is spared. Nothing is left sacred. And the Parable of the Weeds in Matthew 13 shows us the value of this dilemma.

The owner of a certain field sowed wheat one day, and at some point and for no reason afforded us, his enemy sowed a weed that very closely resembled wheat during the night. The servants eventually noticed the weeds and wanted to pull them out, but the owner cleverly and masterfully knew that at this time, the roots of the two would have been quite entangled

and it would damage the wheat, and that it would be quite difficult to distinguish one from the other until harvest time when the wheat would have born its tell-tale grains while the weed would not. At harvest, everything would be as clear as day. And it would, without doubt, be a day of reckoning.

The story shows us that, yes, even Christians and Christianity could be counterfeited. People can speak Christianese without having experienced genuine conversion. They could attend all the Bible studies, equipping classes and worship services without experiencing transformation. They could preach or cast out demons, but, on the day of reckoning, the Lord will not give them passage into His kingdom. They could look Christian, act Christian, and sound Christian, but their hearts couldn't be farther away from God. It is not by their gifting that true disciples of Jesus are known: it is by their fruit (Matthew 7:21-23). And a true believer will bear fruit, much fruit, and fruit that lasts despite adversities in life (John 15:8, 16). The great Master knows that especially in the midst of troubles and entanglements in the world, His disciples will persevere and endure (James 1:12).

But how do we know that we are persevering amidst our challenges? Hebrews 10:19-25 tells us how.

First, we draw near to God. A true disciple will seek refuge in no other because he knows God to be good

in all His ways, and that everything will work together for his good, all for His glory. He delights himself in God.

Second, we hold unswervingly to the hope we profess. A true disciple will seek the help of the Holy Spirit who alone gives the supernatural capacity to trust God and hold on to His Word even if no light in the darkness is seen. His hope is in God.

Third, we spur one another on toward love and good deeds. A true disciple will choose to live out his faith by giving of himself to others even if he himself is in need. He loves as God loves.

Fourth, we do not give up meeting together. A true disciple knows the value and benefits of a true and loving community, through which much blessings are both given and received. He loves the family of God.

Fifth, we encourage one another. A true disciple points others to Christ especially when he is either discouraged or has not yet discovered the hope that is found in Jesus alone. He is God's mouthpiece for encouragement and salvation.

During these trying times, let us persevere by abiding in the Lord and remaining distinctly Christian, distinguishable from the world so that on the great harvest day of the Lord, we will find ourselves in the safety of His presence. Our labor in the Lord is not in vain! ✱