



Every spring, we look forward to our fruit trees budding and blossoming. In our small orchard we have apple, plum and cherry trees. The first to bloom are the cherry trees with delicate, pinkish blossoms that are not only beautiful, but also slightly fragrant. This year was no exception, as we anticipated the delicious, sweet cherries we would enjoy in a few months.

Our trees were loaded with blossoms and we felt this might be our biggest crop ever. As time went by, we saw the blossoms turn to small fruit and then eventually into big, dark red cherries. The day came when they were ripe for the harvest, and with joy we began to pick the delicious looking fruit.

After picking the first basket, I decided I would go in to start the pitting process in order to can some. I put them in the colander, rinsed them off, and started to remove the stems when I suddenly noticed a small pinpoint hole in some of the cherries.

I had seen that very same type of hole years before when the children and I had picked cherries at another orchard. Upon arriving home, we had discovered that many of them were infested with worms.

You can imagine my disappointment when I opened up a cherry with a hole and sure enough, there was a tiny white worm next to the pit! We have been picking cherries from our own trees for years now and have never had worms before. Now this year many of our cherries were plagued with worms.

To be really honest with you, I have to admit that my first thought was just to get rid of them. After all, just think of how much time it would take to sort them one by one. But I knew we needed to can the cherries for this winter and whatever we could salvage would be better than none.

So I began, one by one, to pick them up and look carefully for a tiny hole. It seemed that one quarter to one third of them were ruined by one tiny, almost imperceptible hole. The process of sorting was labor inten-

sive. Emily came to help, and even with the two of us, hours were spent sorting through the bowls of cherries, throwing out the bad, wormy ones, and pitting the good ones in preparation for the preserving process.

As I reflected over the tedious work, I thought about the powerful parallels to the judgment process which is taking place presently in the heavenly courts. We are like the cherries. We all claim to know Christ, to be His children, and bear sweet, tasty fruit. *But how many of us, in reality, are hiding a worm inside?* We hope that no one sees, yet it is growing and destroying us from within. It may be just one seemingly small and insignificant sin, one hidden sin that no one else knows about—maybe not even our spouse or parents—and yet it is there. We try to look right on the outside. We try to look like wholesome, delicious, juicy cherries; but hidden inside is a worm of sin that will destroy us and make us unfit for the preserving process. Some are hiding the addiction to pornography; others, lying, gossiping lips, or deceptive ways; some are holding on to bitterness or jealousy, while still others hold on to greed of gain, pride, or vanity. As we are called forth to be evaluated and judged, **the all-knowing and all-seeing eye of God can easily detect that almost imperceptible spot** and set us aside as unfit to be sealed. He never makes a mistake and will only preserve those who are without spot or blemish.

Ephesians 5:27 says, “That he might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

As I thought about the parallel, it changed my attitude about all the extra work involved in sorting the cherries. Now my focus was different. Was there something hidden in my heart like the worm in the cherry? “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

I am thankful that if we are willing, our tender Father will reveal the worms that eat us away on the inside and give us the opportunity to be cleansed of them through His power before our names appear in the judgment. I pray that each of us will be **diligently using the time we have** to be fitted for the sealing process, ready to be preserved for all eternity.

We see all around us the signs are rapidly being fulfilled in preparation for Christ's soon coming. Let's not wait until the harvest to begin the cleansing because then it will be too late. Let's begin today to allow Christ to reveal our sins and cleanse us from all defilement so that when the harvest comes we will be ripe, fully matured, and pure, ready to be harvested for our eternal home. *There is never a more convenient day than today!*

Our cherries are now processed, sealed, and ready to be a blessing to us in the long winter months ahead. And when we sit down to eat we will be thankful for the painstaking effort made so many months before. So also, when we sit with our Saviour at the banqueting table, we will **rejoice that we were willing to face the heart searching**, purifying process so many weeks, months and maybe even years before, to enjoy eternity with our precious Friend and Redeemer.

~Alane