

Little Foxes

Song of Solomon 2:15

I. INTRODUCTION: I

- I. **2** God often uses the creatures of this world to teach us lessons about life.
 - A. Isaiah used the ox and the donkey (Isa. 1:3); David used the horse and mule (Psa. 32:9).
 - B. Job referred to the beasts and the birds (Job 12:7); many more are used: stork, turtle, dove, crane, ants, locusts, cony, spider, etc.
2. In the Song of Solomon 2:15 “*little foxes*” are used to illustrate a lesson for us: “*The Pulpit Commentary* (“Song of Solomon,” vol. 9, p. 57-58): “Foxes, jackals, little foxes, are very common in Palestine, and are particularly fond of grapes. They burrow in holes in hedges round the gardens and, unless strictly watched, would destroy whole vineyards. ...Aristophanes compares soldiers to foxes, because they consume the grapes of the countries through which they pass.”
3. We all should recognize the absolute necessity to bear spiritual fruit in our lives (Jn. 15:1-8).
 - A. Paul lists the “*fruit of the Spirit*” that we must cultivate and bear (**Gal. 5:22-23**: “...*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...*”).
 - B. We must be very careful as we seek to cultivate and bear this fruit and be watchful for the “*little foxes*” that can spoil the bearing of our spiritual fruit.
 - (1) Notice the question Paul asked those who had allowed the “*little foxes*” to run unhindered (**Gal. 5:7**: “*You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*”).
 - (2) Their fruit was not lost because of uprooted vines, but the vines still did not bear fruit.
 - (3) Their fruit was lost because negligence and small indulgences which were not watched and curbed and they spoiled the fruit on the vine.
 - (4) The “*little foxes*” that can spoil the fruit of the Spirit are small vices, poor attitudes, and petty distractions we often allow to creep into our lives.
 - (5) They become foxlike when we allow them to sneak up and overtake us (Gal. 6:1).
4. **3** Let’s consider a few of these “*little foxes*” we often allow to spoil the fruit we should bear.

II. DISCUSSION:

- I. **4** Selfishness Spoils Love:
 - A. Selfishness is the most common “*little fox*” of our time; our generation has been nicknamed the “Me” generation; we see that graphically demonstrated by our abundance of social ills.
 - B. Saul’s selfishness (**1 Sam. 20:31-32**: “*For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die.’ 32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, ‘Why should he be killed? What has he done?’*”).
 - (1) Selfishness destroyed his love for God.
 - (2) Selfishness destroyed his love for David.
 - (3) Selfishness destroyed his love for his own son, Jonathan.
 - (4) And, selfishness even destroyed his love for himself.
 - C. Selfishness is at the root of all sin, if we allow selfishness to creep into our lives it will destroy love, and if we “*have not love, I am nothing*” (1 Cor. 13:2).

2. **5** Discontent Spoils Joy:

- A. Christians are to be a people characterized by “joy” (**Phil. 4:4**: “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”); even in the face of severe trials (**Jas. 1:2-3**: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”); we should always have joyful hearts knowing we are the recipients of God’s grace (**Hab. 3:18**: “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”).
- B. Haman was one who allowed discontent to rob him of joy (**Est. 5:11-13**: “Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king. 12 Moreover Haman said, ‘Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. 13 Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.’”).
 - (1) Haman had a good job and a family.
 - (2) But, despite all the good things he had, he allowed the “little fox” of discontent to spoil everything.
- C. We too can allow the “little fox” of discontent to spoil our joy.
 - (1) God has given us so much that blesses us and gives us joy (compare our lifestyles to those in the Philippines, Zimbabwe, India, etc.).
 - (2) If we allow the “little fox” of discontent to enter our heart it will spoil our joy; imagine how foolish we must look to the dirt poor saint in the Philippines when we show discontent in our lives (i.e., spoiled brat).
 - (3) We have so much to be joyful about! (e.g., salvation, freedom, family, faithful brethren, economic prosperity, etc.); therefore, let us count our many blessings, name them one by one!

3. **6** Worry Spoils Peace:

- A. God’s people are not to be a worrisome people! **Matt. 6:31-32**: “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”
- B. Remember king Darius? He allowed worry to spoil his sleep: **Dan. 6:18-19**: “Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. 19 Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.”
 - (1) Have you ever spent a night “tossing and turning” on your bed because you were worrying about tomorrow?
 - (2) Its hard, but we should not worry to the extent we lose a peaceful night’s rest; the vast majority of the things we worry about we either have no control over or don’t come to pass.
- C. Martha was another who allowed the “little fox” of worry to distract her and spoil her peace: **Lk. 10:41-42**: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”
 - (1) There’s a lot of truth to the saying, “Don’t sweat the small stuff.”
 - (2) Martha was “sweating the small stuff” when she should have been taking advantage of the opportunity to sit at Jesus’ feet and learn from the Master Teacher.
 - (3) What worries take your mind off the “good part”? Whatever it is, it’s not worth it!

4. **7** Impatience Spoils Longsuffering:

- A. How’s your patience? Are you “longsuffering” or does your patience wear thin quickly?

B. The Hebrew Christians were undergoing trials and temptations and it was wearing down their patience; notice what the Hebrew writer says to them: **Heb. 10:35-36**: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”

(1) The Christian race is a marathon, not a sprint: **Heb. 12:1-2**: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

(2) Impatience can cause us to do and say ugly things (James & John; **Lk. 9:52-56**).

C. Impatience is a sly “little fox”:

(1) Impatience steals our longsuffering towards others (e.g., poor drivers, irritating clerk).

(2) Impatience attempts to excuse our behavior (“Well, that’s just the way God made me.”).

5. **8** Bitterness Spoils Kindness:

A. When we become bitter we harden our hearts; that’s what happened to the Pharisees (**Mk. 3:1-5**).

B. The Hebrew writer also warned about the dangers of bitterness (**Heb. 12:14-15**: “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;”; defiled means “unclean,” unfit for the Master’s use!).

C. Some allow bitterness to spoil any kindness towards others: **Eph. 4:31-32**: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”).

D. If we allow the “little fox” of bitterness to enter our life; it can have tragic consequences! **Matt. 6:14-15**: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

6. **9** Laziness Spoils Goodness:

A. The Scriptures condemn laziness:

Prov. 10:26: “As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.”; **Prov. 13:4**: “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” (cf. Prov. 20:4; Prov. 26:16)

B. What do you think about people when you drive by their place and it’s all “run down”? **Prov. 24:30-34** (John Syzmanski)

C. I fear much of the goodness has gone out of our nation.

(1) Laziness has taken it away (>47 million on food stamps, 15% of U.S. total population, nearly double the amount in 2006!)

(2) The sweet fruit of moral uprightness rots when the desire for honest work is undermined by the “little fox” of laziness!

D. As Christians we have good reasons **NOT** to be lazy:

(1) Laziness among brethren condemned: **2 Thess. 3:10**: “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

(2) Paul certainly practiced what he preached: **Acts 20:34-35**: “Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 I have shown you in every

way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

(3) Therefore, Paul could speak with authority on the subject: **2 Thess. 3:6-9**: "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us."

(4) Paul also gave another important reason for work when he wrote: **Eph. 4:28**: "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." These were by no means empty words, Paul practiced what he preached.

E. BTW: One of the greatest gifts a parent can give to their child is to instill in them a strong "work ethic" very early in their life.

7. **I O** Doubt Spoils Faith:

A. Do you doubt that?!

(1) Recall "doubting Thomas": **Jn. 20:25**: "The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.'"

(2) Recall the 10 unfaithful spies: **Num. 13:31-33**: "But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.' 32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, 'The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.'"

B. No pun intended, but undoubtedly doubt demonstrates a weak faith: **Matt. 14:31**: (Peter on the water) "And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'"

C. Doubt is a sign that we have an unstable character: **Jas. 1:6-7**: "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

D. Having questions concerning our faith is not bad, we all have them from time to time.

(1) The problem comes when we do not actively seek answers to our questions, or we seek our answers in the wrong place (i.e., wisdom of men vs. Scripture).

(2) When we look to the world for the answers to our doubts is when we allow the "little fox" of doubt to eat away at our faith.

E. God can and will answer our questions if we exhibit true faith: **Matt. 7:7-8**: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."; **Jn. 7:17**: "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority."

8. **I I** Pride Spoils Meekness:

A. You remember king Uzziah? Pride spoiled his meekness (**2 Chron. 26:15-16**: "And he made devices in Jerusalem, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and large stones. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong. 16 But

when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.”).

- B. The women of Jerusalem also allowed pride to destroy their meekness (**Isa. 3:16-17**: “Moreover the LORD says: ‘Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a jingling with their feet, 17 Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will uncover their secret parts.”).

(1) Man never seems to learn that “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” (Prov. 16:18).

(2) That’s why Paul wrote, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor. 10:12).

(3) The daughters of Jerusalem should have listened to that advice! **Isa. 3:24**: “And so it shall be: Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-set hair, baldness; instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty.”

- C. We should always seek to have a humble heart: **Isa. 57:15**: “For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’”; **1 Pet. 5:5**: “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’”

9. **12** Love of Pleasure Spoils Self-Control:

- A. The prodigal son allowed the “little fox” of pleasure to spoil his self-control: **Lk. 15:13**: “And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.”
- B. One who throws self-control to the curb is God’s enemy: **Jas. 4:1-4**: “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?”
- C. We should carefully consider some sound scriptural advice when it comes to self-control: **Heb. 11:24-26**: “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.” (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27)

10. **13** Procrastination Spoils Diligence:

- A. Over and over again the scriptures exhort God’s people to be a diligent people: **Prov. 12:27b-28**: “But diligence is man’s precious possession. 28 In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.”; **Heb. 6:11-12**: “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”
- B. Our exercising of diligence guarantees us eternal life! **2 Peter 1:5-11**
- C. I’ve never achieved any good thing in life without pursuing it with “all diligence,” have you? And, I would just as quickly add that procrastination never helped me achieve one thing! How about you?
- D. Remember, the day of salvation is always today! **2 Cor. 6:2**: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

III. CONCLUSION: 14

1. The only way to deal with the “*little foxes*” is to hunt them down and destroy them.
2. This can only be achieved by self-examination (**2 Cor. 13:5**: “*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*”).
3. When we identify a “*little fox*” in our life; we must have the strength and courage of heart to admit we have a problem and do something about it (Phil. 4:13).

Adapted from a sermon (“Little Foxes”) by Wayne Greeson in *Sowing the Seed* 3, pp. 22-24.