

LITTLE FOXES

INTRODUCTION

We have been doing the "What on earth is God doing in my life" course on Sunday nights. This focuses much on the fruit we are bearing. As Bruce Wilkerson explains, we can produce no fruit, fruit or much fruit. Our goal must be to produce much fruit and for this we will be greatly rewarded. If we don't produce fruit, then our heavenly Father, will come and take us away so that we can be disciplined, corrected and return to a place of bearing fruit.

Jesus, when speaking about this used the grape plant, saying, "I am the vine and you are the Branches, My Father is the Vinedresser(gardener)." **John 15:1-2, 5** (NKJV) "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Then, one morning this week, I read this scripture from Song of Solomon, which I realised had a direct link to our ability to bear fruit:

Song of Solomon 2:15 (NKJV) Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes.

Little foxes that spoil the vines! We don't want our tender grapes damaged, we want to bear much fruit. This morning we will speak about those little foxes, what they mean, what they can do, and how we must deal with them.

MESSAGE

Little foxes! I never linked little foxes to fruit, I always thought that they may damage the vines as they ran among the vineyards' or burrowed among them. But then I then did some research...

Foxes are not carnivores, or meat-eaters only! They are omnivores, they do eat meat but they will supplement their diet with berries which give them energy. One of those berry type fruits is the grape, so yes, foxes do eat grapes.

Bruce Wilkinson had a great set for his teaching on "what on earth is God doing in my life". There is a backdrop picture of a vineyard and then he actually has a grape vine (probably synthetic) with a fence and the grape plants with some areas carrying clusters of grapes.

One of the things he explained was how the branches that must bear the fruit can fall off the fence and onto the ground where the leaves get covered in dust and mud and then those branches can't carry fruit. The vinedresser who represents Father God, walks among the vineyard and picks up those

branches, "taking them away from the ground" and he cleans them and hangs them back on the fence so that they can once again bear fruit.

Can you imagine the damage little foxes do in a vineyard? They will jump up against the fence to get at the juiciest new grapes, and as they do so, they will not only grab the grapes but will drag the branch off the fence into the dust and mud on the ground and prevent fruit-bearing.

I want to point out that those branches have not been taken away or cut off from the vine (Jesus), but they have been taken back to a place of being able to bear fruit.

In order to bear fruit and to protect the fruit, three things must happen:

1. The branches must be "taken away" from the ground.
2. The leaves must be washed and cleaned - Jesus said in John 15:3, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you". When the little foxes pull us into the dirt, we need to get back into the word so that it can clean us again.
3. The foxes need to be caught and removed - in fact, they need to be destroyed!

ATTACKING THE FRUIT MEANS ATTACKING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND CHRIST!

In the Song of Solomon, the Shulamite woman, notes that the vineyards are in full blossom. Soon the grapes will be ripe for the marriage feast. We know that the relationship between Solomon and the Shulamite woman is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. The foxes could endanger the wedding feast of the Lamb... or to place it more blatantly, **little foxes could threaten our presence at the wedding feast of the Lamb!**

The little foxes can also rob us of blessings here on earth. How often God's people have stood at the threshold of great blessing, the refreshing odor of an abundant spiritual harvest in the air when, all has been lost — not through a direct obvious attack by the devil, but rather by those wily little foxes that have been allowed permitted to spoil the vines.

I believe we are in a position like this in Christian Heritage right now! God has been moving powerfully in our midst but all of a sudden, there seem to be little foxes in the vineyard!

IDENTIFYING THE LITTLE FOXES

Why little foxes?

- They are little! This means they are not something that we would consider important or a major threat.
- They are sometimes unconscious actions and choices that have an impact on our faith and our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- They seem innocent and sometimes even cute!
- They are things we allow that we shouldn't be allowing or tolerating.
- But they are spiritual compromise and they are deadly!

Identifying the little foxes:

- They are not gross sins of the flesh such as adultery, murder, stealing, lying, idolatry, blasphemy, drunkenness etc.
- They are sins of the spirit and they can be broken into three categories:
 - The wrong things we think, the wrong things we say and the wrong things we do.
 - These may be described as heart sins, lip sins and behaviour sins.
- Examples: lustful and impure sensual thoughts, unforgiveness, offense, gossip, judgmental attitudes, irreverence toward God and his appointed servants, lack of self-control, despising others, hatred, complaining and grumbling, lack of gratitude – the list goes on.
- Clearly, these are not obvious, they are hidden, secret attitudes of the heart and the behaviour that comes as a result of a wrong heart attitude.
- These little foxes will rob us of our ability to bear the FRUIT of the SPIRIT: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.
- When the fruit of the spirit is absent, the things that replace it are most likely little foxes.

HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH THE LITTLE FOXES?

They must be rounded up and put to death: **Galatians 5:24** (ESV) And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. – we need to crucify those little foxes. **Romans 6:11** (ESV) So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. **If the little foxes are not put to death they will grow into big foxes!**

In Revelation we read of a church that was struggling with these kinds of sins and Jesus did not have good things to say:

Revelation 2:18-25 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: 19 "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. 20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because **you allow** that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, **to teach and seduce My servants** to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I **will kill her children with death**, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the **minds and hearts**. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

- Little foxes are the things we allow!
- Left unattended, they result in seduction, sexual immorality and idolatry!
- They need to be repented of while we still have time – Jesus has given us time to deal with the little foxes.
- **Jesus searches our minds and hearts – this is where little foxes come to do their work!**
- But... if we don't repent, we see Jesus, the King of Kings with His iron scepter!
 - I will cast her into a sickbed.
 - those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation.
 - I will kill her children with death.
 - I will give to each one of you according to your works.

This is a severe warning to kill the little foxes before they cause sickness, tribulation, death and then even worse, judgement!

Hebrews 10:31 (NKJV) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Church, I challenge each one of us to search our hearts this morning and do some ruthless crucifying – let us kill the little foxes with death before they kill us!

- ***Have we got bad attitudes?***
- ***Is there compromise in our lives? What are we allowing?***
- ***Have we been thinking impure thoughts or been engaging in sexual immorality?***
- ***Have we become disrespectful and irreverent towards God, His church or His servants?***
- ***Have we engaged in gossip?***

HOW DO WE KILL THE LITTLE FOXES?

We need to know and consider ourselves dead to sin (Romans 6). We cannot do it in our own strength, we need the help of the Holy Spirit and Galatians 5:16 is the simple answer: **Galatians 5:16** (NKJV) I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Yield to the Holy Spirit, trust Him and rely upon Him to give you the victory. When we first bear His fruit there will appear in our life an abundance of fruit.

CONCLUSION

Are there little foxes of compromise in our lives. Seemingly unimportant little disobediences that we allow, tolerate or even enjoy? Today the Lord has challenged us to deal with these little foxes. The only way to do it is to crucify them – in the words of Jesus from Revelation 2, we need to “kill them with death”!

Let us humbly approach God’s throne of grace today with repentant hearts. Let us listen to Jesus warning and repent while we still have time. Then we can look forward to bearing much fruit instead of being cut off and cast into the fire.

Jesus paid the price for us. Let us take hold of the victory we have today once again. I encourage us to respond to this call today and pledge allegiance to the Lamb.