

THE FOXES, THE LITTLE FOXES

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The foxes, the little foxes, are the ones that spoil the vines (Song of Solomon 2:15). Naaman came dangerously close to losing his cleansing by being willing to face “some great thing” while almost discounting what was to him a small thing (II Kings 5:13). The Lord drew attention to the importance of small things when he said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). Wisdom invites consideration of Solomon’s observation, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.”

The Little Foxes of Foul Friends

A pivotal factor in the eternal destiny of men is the friends they choose. King David’s son “Amnon had a friend” who provided him with just enough motivation to push him over the edge into sin (II Sam. 13:3). The careful study of II Samuel 13-18 by parents with their children will indelibly affix the impression foul friends may have on their lives and the lives of those they love. Just as “evil companionships corrupt good morals,” “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (I Cor. 15:33, ASV; Prov. 18:24b). Wisdom is required to distinguish the difference between these choices and to prefer the latter over the former. The little foxes spoil the vines.

The Little Foxes of Flawed Faith

Faith is based on the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The apostles’ doctrine is designed to “perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (I Thess. 3:10b). A flawed faith may manifest itself in seemingly little ways like calling the auditorium the sanctuary, the Lord’s supper the sacrament, the preacher the pastor, the Lord’s day the Sabbath, the collection the tithe, the pulpit the altar, the building the church, and so on. Both the Old and New Testaments display the dependence on his word which God demands of the faithful. Jeremiah wrote, “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? Saith the LORD” (Jer. 23:28). Peter wrote, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through

Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (I Pet. 4:11). The little foxes spoil the vines.

The Little Foxes of Fanciful Fascinations

Fanciful fascinations with the world spoil the spiritual nature of the church. The apostle John urged Christians not to love the world (I John 2:15-17). Yet, a growing number of Christians seek that which pleases the world and then bring it into the church in the hope of increased numbers of both people and dollars. The majority have never found the ways of the Master very attractive. Jesus said, “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” (Matt. 10:25b).

Fanciful fascinations with wrong worship spoil the spiritual nature of the church. The continued and widespread acceptance of hand clapping and raising the hands in worship illustrates the point. The practice of hand clapping is defended on the basis of it being like saying, “Amen.” Wrong worship has always used the approach of altering right worship. A study of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, shows how he altered the place, order, object, and time of worship (I Kings 12:25-33). Hebrew history from that point on uses Jeroboam’s wrong worship as a reference point of apostasy. The seemingly little things of altering the worship had far ranging consequences. The New Testament does have “say amen” in I Corinthians 14:16, but how you get from there to hand clapping is the story of Jeroboam retold.

Fanciful fascinations with wicked ways spoil the spiritual nature of the church. The man-made “purpose driven” models of church growth and organization are wicked ways. God has made himself clear on the point, “Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:128). It takes a wicked handling of the word of God to suggest that the teaching set out in, for example, *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren can be blended with the Bible and things like church growth will be accomplished in fulfillment of the great commission. The Bible still says, “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6). The little foxes spoil the vines.

The Little Foxes of Faltering Fellowship

Inconsistent attendance at the worship of the church causes sleepless nights of concern only for those dedicated to watching for the souls of the congregation. It is viewed a little thing to skip a service a few times a month. God asked Adam and

Eve, “Where art thou?” when they had disobeyed him (Gen. 3:9). Christ is present at all the services of the church (Matt. 18:20). “Where art thou?”

Irreverent attitudes are met with indifference today. In dress, some young people wear baggy clothing about to fall to the ground in order to call attention to themselves when the Bible calls for modest apparel (I Tim. 2:9-10). If invited to the governor’s mansion for dinner, would the children be allowed to dress like that? (Mal. 1:8). If it would not please the governor, what lends the view that God should be pleased? In demands, many have turned inward to their own interests and wants. Eldershops receive high demands for programs and activities which come at great expense draining funds from the church treasury which could be used for evangelism, benevolence, and edification. And, if the demands are not met, the families threaten to go elsewhere where they will be met. The little foxes spoil the vines.