

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11).

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LITTLE FOXES THAT SPOIL THE VINES

by John Isaac Edwards

In the song of songs it is written, *“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes”* (Song 2:15). The New American Standard expresses it this way: *“Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards...”* One commentator observed, “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” (*The Pulpit Commentary (Song of Solomon, Vol. 9, pp. 57-58)*). We are making spiritual application of this in our study.

1) **LITTLE THINGS NOT SO LITTLE.** There are a lot of things that may be little, but really are not so little after all. Proverbs 30 records, *“There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings’ palaces”* (vv. 24-28). Over time, little can

increase *“...unto a multitude...”* (Gen. 30:30). From a positive standpoint, think about *“a little water.”* A *“little water”* was used by Abraham in showing hospitality in Genesis 18, and *“a little water,”* in Genesis 24, demonstrated Rebekah was chosen by the Lord to be the wife of Isaac. Jesus spoke of *“...a cup of cold water...”* (Mt. 10:42). The rich man begged, *“...send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame”* (Lk. 16:24). Remember *“a little coat”* a mother made her son (1 Sam. 2:19), *“a little oil in a cruse”* that was used to sustain a widow woman, her son and Elijah the man of God (1 Ki. 17:12), *“a little chamber”* made to accommodate a holy man of God (2 Ki. 4:10), the contribution of *“a little maid”* to the recovery of Naaman (2 Ki. 5:2) and the use the Lord made of *“a few little fishes”* in Matthew 15:34? Little things can also be quite destructive and devastating. Ever have termites? A Palestinian might look at a little fox and think that little adorable thing is cute and cuddly, it’s harmless, what damage could he possibly do? Yet, if the husbandman values values his vineyard, he had

better take preventive measures to protect it from anything that could harm it, including little foxes. Likewise, little things can spoil or ruin relationships, one’s home, the church, ourselves and the list goes on. We must address all things that pose a danger or threat spiritually.

2) **LITTLE FOXES.** In this study, *“little foxes”* represent small things that can ruin us, if we do not capture and subdue them. We are capitalizing on that word *“little.”*

A Little Idleness. The Bible says, *“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man”* (Prov. 6:6-11). Recall the field trip of Proverbs 24? The wise man said, *“I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns,*

and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet **a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:** So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man” (vv. 30-34). Does that push your snooze button?

A Little Folly. Do you recollect the use the Book makes of dead flies? The words of the Preacher include: “*Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour*” (Eccl. 10:1). A good reputation is to be valued as ointment of the apothecary. A little folly is to one’s reputation as dead flies to the ointment. In his quest to find the meaning and purpose of life, Solomon gave his heart to know folly (Eccl. 1:17; 2:3, 12; 7:25). He spoke of the wickedness of folly (Eccl. 7:25). He said, “...*I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness*” (Eccl. 2:13). Ecclesiastes 7:1 says, “A

good name is better than precious ointment.” Do not allow your good name to be spoiled by a little folly.

A Little Leaven. Bread-makers know what leaven is. It is a substance, typically yeast, that is added to dough to make it ferment and rise. When Paul addressed the report of fornication among the church of God at Corinth he said, “*Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened....*” (1 Cor. 5:6-7). The pervasive influence of sin had to be removed. The Lord warned, “*Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*” in Matthew 16:6. He was not talking about their bread, “... *but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*” (v. 12). Sin and error are to the soul what cancer is to the body. One might think it is just a little thing, but as leaven it spreads and permeates! “*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (Gal. 5:9).

A Little Fire. A little fire can become deadly. James’ tongue-teaching includes this statement: “*Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!*” (Jas. 3:5). If you think the tongue is not powerful, consider a bit and a very small helm! “*Behold, we but bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth....so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell*” (Jas. 3:3-6). Though it is little in comparison to the size of the body, it has great power! Proverbs 18:21 says, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue...*” Thus, we must be careful as to how we use it!

Is it possible that something little is spoiling us? Let’s identify and catch the little foxes in our lives lest the whole vineyard be ruined!

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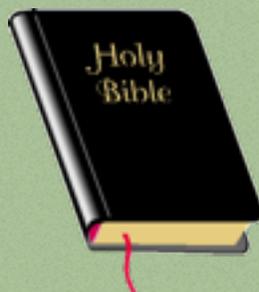
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