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THE LITTLE FOXES THAT SPOIL THE VINYARDS # 1
INTRODUCTION:

As a very young boy growing up in a middle Tennessee town the preacher in my home congregation preached a series of lessons on subject of "The Little Foxes That Spoil the Vineyards." These lessons made a very great impression on me.

This subject is taken from the text of **Song of Solomon 2:15**. Paraphrasing this passage it might read as follows; "Rid us of the sins, the little sins that destroy our prospects of fruit bearing in the service of our God, the little things that can destroy the Lord's church."

Generally speaking we consider some sins as major sins while others sins we might classify as being very minor. Even the Bible infers that some sins were worse than others. An example of this is where Jesus speaks of Judas' betrayal saying, "Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

There is no doubt that some sins seem to have greater consequences than others. You might tell a lie to someone and that would not be as endangering as if you murdered that person. If you robbed a bank you would end up in prison whereas being jealous of someone who has more money than you would not give you a prison sentence.

However sin is sin regardless of its proportions or nature. A particular sin may not get you arrested but just because society may condone or even approve a certain conduct does not mean God sanctions or removes the consequences of sin.

THE EFFECTS OF SIN

Sin, any sin, all sin, brings death to the soul. Paul says, "For the wages of sin is death." A person might plead "I just tell little white lies now and then." A white lie is as much a sin as any so called "black lie". A number of so called "little sins" make one a greater sinner than one so called "great sin." Sometimes a little sin can be more detrimental and have a more fatal effect than a so called "big sin".

James says "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (**James 2:10**). Sin separates us from God according to **Isaiah 59:1**. Paul asserts in **Ephesians 4:18** that sin darkens the mind and alienates us from God.

Sin makes people carnal (**1 Corinthians 3:3**); causes one to wrong his own soul (**Proverbs 8:36**); poisons our speech (**Romans 3:13, 14**); defiles the mind and conscience (**Titus 1:15**); and places the sinner in the devil's grip of power (**Ephesians 2:2**).

The bottom line is that the un-forgiven sinner is lost (**Luke 15:32; John 8:21, 24**). Paul makes it very clear that "The wages of sin is death." (**Romans 6:23**). This is spiritual death or separation from God which can be eternal if not repented of. So we should be concerned about all sin not just certain sins. Ignored sins that may seem of no importance can condemn us just as much as the big sins.

SIN DEFINED

Sin tends to fall into two categories. First there are sins of omission. **James 4:17** says, "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." Second, there are sins of commission.

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I John 3:4 says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." Sin then might be defined as any omission or transgression of any law of God that pertains to mankind today.

Romans 3:19 says, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." In the very next verse Paul says that the law gives us a knowledge of sin. The result is that it convicts us of our sin.

It is also interesting to note that the more we know of God's will the greater our accountability becomes. However, ignorance is no excuse even though it may lessen the penalty to some degree.

Note what Jesus says in Luke 12:47, 48. "And that servant who knew his masters will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required, and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

BIG SINS VS BIG SINS

Based on having listened to preaching for 70 years and having preached for 50 years, if I were to attempt to rate what has been considered to be the big sins they would be as follows. Adultery, I supposed would rate as the number one sin. Especially if it is evident as in pregnancy. In many cases this has been unforgivable with some Christians even though the person might have repented.

More than often it leads to reckless gossip. Drunkenness would certainly rank right up there at the top of the list. When I was a boy divorce was almost unheard of and considered a very shameful sin. Often when a divorce occurred the person was disowned by his or her family. Of course remarriage without a scriptural reason ranks as a major sin.

I recently pulled out of my files a publication from 1950 which had as its theme, "Modern Evils." Some of the subjects discussed were movies, dancing, petting, and swearing. All were written by well known brethren. Growing up, card playing, mixed swimming and girls wearing shorts were considered major sins.

I can remember a well known evangelist speaking to a packed house in a gospel meeting telling how he had been rebuked as a boy by an old sister for playing horse shoes on a Sunday afternoon. He said from that day forward he never did that again. The point of his sermon was it was sinful to engage in any kind of recreation on the Lord's Day.

I would not minimize or ridicule any of the above things. I have many times preached on "big sins". Sin is sin and we have an obligation to preach and teach on any sin. However, I can just as easily produce another list of sins that few one would hardly give a second thought to because we don't look upon them as significant.

For example how much attention do we give to the sins of covetousness, jealousy, selfishness, gossip, anger, unconcern for the lost, prejudice, cynicism, etc., etc. [How many sermons have you heard preached on these sins?](#) These sins are not "little" in any sense. They can just as destructive to the soul as any of the so called "big sins." For example covetousness can condemn the soul just as quickly as adultery.

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I do not remember all the little foxes brother Martin preached, on but I would like in the next few weeks to discuss some very dangerous "little foxes" that I think have gone unnoticed. We are admonished in to "Make your calling and election sure."

As unnoticed as some of these may be we don't want to overlook them thinking they are of non-significance. As we get into some of them they may become unpleasant to dwell on because they are so common among us. If we feel uncomfortable talking about them then this ought to be a wakeup call to get serious and see if we need to rid ourselves of sins that can destroy us spiritually.

We need to keep in mind constantly the words of John in 1 John 1:8 "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The danger about little sins is that they lie within us and we never attempt to do anything about them because we classify them as little sins of no consequence. In the next verse John gives the solution to sin - any sin. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The Little Twin ENVY Foxes # 2 INTRODUCTION:

1. Review of last lesson.
2. I would like to do an experiment. Read the following. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like" (Galatians 5:19-21).
3. Which sins stand out the most to you? Did you notice "envy"? How easy it is to emphasize certain sins and overlook others. This brings us to the subject I want to discuss the little twin foxes. One is called envy and other is called Jealousy.

I. ENVY DEFINED

- A. These little foxes are almost identical twins. One hardly seen without the other. It is difficult to tell them apart. Some say that envy is discontent with the good fortune of others while jealousy fear to lose what it has. Jealousy can be used both a good and bad sense whereas envy is always associated with evil.
- B. Both have to do with feelings of discontent and resentment that arise in the heart over some favor, good fortune, blessing, honor or affection someone else is receiving that I think should be bestowed on me.
- C. Envy pains can destroy a man like a knife in the chest. It has been known to split churches, shrink our circle of friends, and destroy our personalities. Proverbs 14:30 says, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy the rottenness of the bones." Envy is so serious because of the destruction it can bring to the soul.

II. SOME BIBLE EXAMPLES OF ENVY

- A. Envy goes back to the beginning, where God was displeased that Cain offered the fruits of the ground but God did not respect his offering.

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It is said that "Cain was very roth and his countenance fell." Cain's envy led to wrath. Finally he murdered his brother. Cain was resentful that his brother had received more honor than he had received.

B. Joseph's brothers envied him because their father loved Joseph more than all his children. They also envied him because of his dreams and their implication that he would rule over them. Their envy led to their selling Joseph into slavery.

C. Saul envied David because the people were shouting that David had killed his tens of thousands while Saul had killed only thousands. For the rest of his life Saul hunted David down with the intent of killing him.

D. Matthew 27:17, 18 "Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him."

E. An unknown man from an obscure village began to speak and perform miracles in the many villages throughout Galilee. Later he appears in Jerusalem. His popularity increased tremendously. Later on a few days before the Jewish Passover Jesus entered the city triumphantly. The multitudes who heard of his coming went out to see him. They began to cry out, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

F. The Pharisees resented his popularity. They said, "Behold..... The world is gone after him. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children that were crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the City of David; they were moved with indignation."

This was just too much for the Pharisees. Their envy and hatred rose up and they called for the death of Jesus. Pilate knew Jesus was an innocent man and he also knew that it was because of envy they called for his death. Jesus was getting all the attention and they were getting none. Their envy turned into hate and their hate led them to carry out mock trials and have Jesus crucified.

III. APPLICATION

A. Human nature has not changed. Envy still can be seen all around us. Not only in the business and professional world but also in the church. We see it among preachers, elders, deacons, song leaders, and teachers. It is common among all Christians.

B. Have you ever felt unhappy because someone could do a better job than you?
 Have you ever felt resentful because someone else had more knowledge than you?
 Have you ever felt pain because someone else seems to have more than you do?
 Have you ever felt uncomfortable because someone else seems to get more attention, approval or recognition than you?

C. To disprove that another person is not what others think they are, envious people will resort to the tongue. A lot of damage can be done with the tongue. Remarks are made that are designed to cause others to think badly of them.

D. Envious people will resort to mean and ugly ways to make others appear bad. James says, "Where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16).

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E. An envious person feels that other people's good fortune is his misfortune, that their success is his failure and that their blessing is his curse. We should examine our motives which prompt criticism and complaints against others. This why God's word warns us about this sin.

Romans 1:32 says, "They which commit such things are worthy of death" and again in **Galatians 5:21** Paul says, "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

F. When you stop and think about it why we should be jealous of anyone. For example **why should I be jealous of any preacher?** I know that I can never preach as good as many other preachers. I know I can never have the knowledge that others have. I will not baptize more than others have. **Should I not rejoice that others can accomplish things I cannot accomplish?** This is true in any other service we perform in the church.

G. If God has given my brother a greater talent than he has given to me, **should I not rejoice in his success?** We are all what we are. You are neither superior nor inferior to anyone else. You are simply you. You have been created in the image of God.

According to John you can even partake of divine nature. No two people are exactly the same. We all have different talents and abilities. Be thankful for what God has given you. Learn to be content. With Paul let us all learn to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us learn with Paul to be content in whatsoever state I am in.
2. Fill ourselves with love. Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 12:26** that love is not grieved when others are honored, when one member of the body suffers, all the members suffer with him; when one member of the body is honored or praised, all the members rejoice with him.
3. In his great chapter on love Paul says, "Love envieth not" (**1 Corinthians 13:4**).

LITTLE GOSSIP FOXES #3

INTRODUCTION:

1. We are looking at some of the "little foxes that destroy the vineyard" or so called little sins that can destroy our souls.
2. In this lesson we will be studying the little fox of gossip. The word gossip is not a word you will often find in the Bible. Instead you will find such words as, evil speaking, tale bearing, whisperer, tale bearing and slander.
3. The dictionary defines it as "small talk or chatter about someone, often about things heard from others but not known to be facts." However, with God it is not small talk. This is probably why stronger words are used in the Bible than gossip.
4. "Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it" (**James 4:11**). "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."

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One of the longest catalogues of sin in the New Testament is found in Romans one. Among all those sins gossips and slanderers.

5. When one sees the effects of gossip, it is easy to understand why gossip is listed along with other sins. The menace of gossip destroys love, friendship and confidence in others.

All of us are guilty at times of gossip. But we can learn to abstain from this destructive sin. Paul says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6).

I. HOW GOSSIP IS CARRIED

A. There is the blunt technique. One may say, "I don't have much use for brother Brown," and then give his reason. This person does not attempt to hide his dislike and may even say, "I'd say it to his face."

B. There is the frankness technique. A person may say, "I'll be very frank with you about this." Some equate frankness with truthfulness and pride themselves in being honest with all men. However, frankness does not give one a license to berate a child of God. God's way is "Go to thy brother and show him his fault between thee and him alone."

C. Another technique is "I heard" or "they say" or "They tell me." When we presume to pass on information which might be very damaging to another's reputation, we need to consider the seriousness of the matter. *Is it firsthand information? Has it been passed on from others?*

Usually it enlarged each time it is repeated. Seeing that we have faults and failings of our own, we should not be too eager to publish the faults and failings of others. Here we need to remember the admonition of the Lord to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

D. Then there is the subtle technique. This approach is used to ease one's conscience. "Yes, she is a nice girl, but isn't it a pity about _____", then proceed for ten minutes to "run her down" in a "kindly" sort of way.

E. Finally there is the Pseudo-Spiritual technique. "Charlotte needs our prayers but as you know she has problems controlling her children." Then follows a thorough analysis of Charlotte's spiritual weakness so that others may pray more intelligently about her. This self righteous person never gives a thought of "casting out the beam in thine own eye."

II. THE DEVASTATING RESULTS OF GOSSIP

A. Gossip wounds. "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 18:8). Wounding a brother or sister in Christ is a terrible thing to do. *If a gossip will pull down others will he then pull me down when he is talking to others?*

B. Gossip separates friends. "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." Many close friends have become enemies because of superfluous talk.

C. Gossip sows strife and digs up evil. "An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips are the snare of his soul" (Proverbs 16:27). One who is eager to talk will find something to talk about. He can always find something to dig up.

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D. Gossip ensnares the gossiper's own soul. "A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul" (Proverbs 18:7). The gossiper is digging his own grave. He is killing his own soul. He is not only harming others, but bringing condemnation to himself as well.

E. Gossip is classed with the worst of evil. It is mentioned with such sins as fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, murder, deceit, malignity, haters of God and drunkenness. (Romans 1:29, 30; Titus 2:3).

F. Gossip is dangerous. "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips". The gossiper does with words what some do with guns and knives.

III. WHY DO CHRISTIAN GOSSIP?

A. Some find it enjoyable to learn about and discuss the faults of others. "The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels" (Proverbs 26:22.) The news papers and T.V. stations found out a long time ago that scandal makes news.

B. We criticize because we are critical of heart. Luke 6:45 says, "For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." If you are full of critical feelings toward people, you will not be able to stop putting these feelings into words.

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Whatever is in our minds we usually share with others. The question then is, [is this truth-sharing or tale-bearing?](#) Remember that critical words come from a critical heart.

C. Some criticize others because they flatter themselves in that they are such good judges of character. It is surprising how much human weakness, real or imaginary, will be discovered by people who begin making judgments about other's character.

D. Being a good listener to gossip will lure you inevitably into sharing your gossip with the gossiper. When you listen you get enmeshed. You have to start contributing sooner or later. Sometimes it like telling jokes, we have to tell one that is bigger. The whisperer cannot be trusted. He is one of the most unreliable of all men. [Who we would dare place confidence in a known whisperer?](#)

E. A subconscious sense of our own weaknesses and inadequacies often lead us to criticize others. By cutting others to pieces we feel better about our own shortcomings. We begin to feel that we are not so bad after all.

1 Corinthians 10:12, "For we dare not make ourselves of that number, or compare ourselves of that number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

F. Some gossip for the love of creating a sensation. Sometimes the news can cause gasps and "you don't mean it." You as the news bearer suddenly become important because you have juicy morsels that no one else knows about.

Due to the fact we cannot always discern the exact nature and degree of other people's faults – only God can do this – we may easily magnify them and judge them too severely.

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CONCLUSION: OVERCOMING GOSSIPING

A. First, refuse to listen to gossip or criticism. When you listen you increase the gossiper's sense of importance. You give him an audience. This is difficult advice to follow for you may really want to listen.

B. If your criticism concerns John Smith, go first to John Smith. If he has sinned against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.

C. Deal with your feeling of criticism of others while it is still in your heart. **Does it have to do with some grave sin in somebody or is it something that gets you upset?** Whichever it is, go to the Lord in prayer before you talk about it to anyone else. **Proverbs 26:20** says, **"For lack of wood the fire goes out; and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases."**

D. If there is no need to talk, be silent. Keep yourself in check when the person's name comes up. Ask the Lord to set a watch over your lips. **Psalm 141:3** says, **"Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips!"**

E. Ask yourself the following questions. **Is it necessary that I tell this? Will it profit me or him about whom I'm speaking? Have I considered every possible angle? Do I know all the circumstances?** An earnest endeavor to answer these queries may check the flow of harmful words.

F. Finally **"Let love be without hypocrisy" (Romans 12:9)**. Love cannot speak evil in the absence of its object, neither can it backbite nor defame.

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8).

LITTLE SELFISHNESS FOXES # 4
INTRODUCTION

We have been studying the theme **"The Little Foxes That Destroy The Vineyards."** The purpose of these lessons is not to take anyone on a guilt trip but that we may all be aware of the so called **"little sins"** which can destroy us. It is these sins that we most often ignore, overlook or disregard.

"I had a little tea party, this afternoon at three.
'Twas very small---Three guests in all---Just I, myself, and me.
Myself ate all the sandwiches, while I drank up the tea.
'Twas also I who ate the pie and passed the cake to me."

This little poem introduces our topic for this lesson.

2 Timothy 3:1, 2 Paul says, **"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...."**

Along with this we can associate such words as **"selfishness"**, **"self centered"** and **"self willed," "false pride," "pride," "greed."** and **"hoarding"** etc.

We are talking about a life that is centered in self with little care or concern about others. When one makes his own will the center of life his divine and human relationships are destroyed and obedience to God becomes impossible.

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Some have said that love of self is the basic sin from which all other sins flow.

Selfish people say things like, "What's in it for me?" "I must have my way!" "I want it and I want it now." There is the song made popular by Frank Sinatra, "I did it my way." Me, myself and I are the main concerns of the self centered person.

I. BIBLE EXAMPLES OF LOVE OF SELF - SELFISHNESS.

A. When Abraham came out of Egypt with Lot they had so many flocks, herds, tents and shepherds the land could not support them both. Their herdsmen were quarreling. Abraham said "Let there be no strife between you and me".

He told Lot to choose where he wanted to settle and Abraham would take what was left. Lot saw the plain of Jordan that it was well watered. He chose the most fertile land in his view. Being his nephew Lot should have let Abraham choose first.

B. In 1 Kings 21 we have the story of Naboth's vineyard. This man owned a vineyard close to the palace of Ahab the king of Samaria. Ahab wanted it very much. Naboth refused on the basis that it was an inheritance that had been handed down to him through many generations of the family.

Ahab went away sulking and angry because he could not get it. He got in his bed and even refused to eat. His wife Jezebel rebuked him for his sulking. By treachery she had Naboth stoned to death. When Jezebel informed him of Naboth's death he got out of bed and went down to take possession of the vineyard. He paid a great price for Elijah told him that the dogs would lick up his blood in the place where Naboth had been stoned.

C. From the New Testament there is the story of the rich ruler in Luke 18 who came to Jesus asking "Good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus referred him to the commandments. The man replied he had kept all the commandments from the time he was a boy.

Jesus told him to sell everything and give it to the poor and he would have treasures in heaven. Then come and follow Jesus. When the man heard this we are told he went away sad because he had great wealth.

This shows us that a person can be very religious and still be self centered. We are very rich and do not know it. Look at our houses. Over half the people of this world live in shambles or crude shelters of some kind. Most of them live on dirt floors.

Look the parking lot on a Sunday morning. The majority of people in the world do not own cars. They walk or maybe ride a bicycle. They are fortunate if they have some form of public transportation. Look at the abundance of food we have.

Many people in the world would welcome our scraps we put in the garbage can. Look at our clothes. The majority of people in the world rarely have more than two changes of clothes. [Look at our contributions on Sundays?](#) A congregation our size should be able to give far more than what we have budgeted.

D. Then there is the rich man and Lazarus. This man "Made merry in splendor" each day. In other words he liked to flaunt his wealth. Lazarus only desired the crumbs from his table. When we see this man we see the epitome of selfishness and self centeredness.

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E. There is the rich fool of **Luke 12**. This man was not satisfied with his present prosperity. He said he would tear down his barns and build bigger ones. He carries on a dialogue with himself. "And I'll say to myself, You have plenty of good thing laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." However that night God said to him, "you fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"

II. THE RESULTS OF BEING SELF CENTERED.

A. Selfishness will drive Christ out of one's heart. When self comes to the front door, Christ goes out the back door. He may mouth words of his loyalty to Christ but his actions will indicate otherwise.

Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." The truth is a selfish person cannot be dedicated to God; neither can he put the kingdom first in his life.

B. A selfish person gains no respect for others. He is often scoffed at by others. It is difficult to have a close relationship with a selfish person.

C. A selfish person is miserable and unhappy. You can't be happy when everything is centered on self. We were not made that way. True happiness can only come with relationship with others. I have never seen a selfish person who is really happy in life. Their lives become empty because the essentials to happy are missing. Jesus said, "If any among you would be great let him be the servant of all."

A self-centered person cannot fulfill his responsibilities to fellow members of the body of Christ because of selfish interest. Attendance at worship services is considered enough. When called upon to do something the selfish person often replies, "I don't have time, I can't do it." "I'm too busy." "Get someone else."

D. Pride is another manifestation of self-centeredness. If you don't do it my way I'll pitch a fit. The selfish person wants decision made to suit his personal desires and wishes. Bragging is often associated with false pride. By bragging we make ourselves out as being really a strong faithful Christian.

Sometimes the bragging can be about one's own selfish interest such as possessions, people we know and have associated with.

E. It hurts a person's giving of his finances. When one is self-centered he thinks only of himself and not about the Lord and how important it is to support that work.

III. HOW DO WE OVERCOME SELFISHNESS - SELF-CENTEREDNESS?

A. First maybe we need to review what conversion involves. According to **Romans 6** the Christian life is seen as a dying to self a crucifying of the old man and the raising of a new man.

B. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (**Galatians 2:20**).

C. Paul also said, "And ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore in your body" (**1 Corinthians 6:19, 20**).

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D. Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me (Matthew 16:24).

E. "Love seeketh not its own" (1 Corinthians 13:5).

F. Philippians 2:3 says, "But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

CONCLUSION:

1. I have no doubt that Selfishness is one of the more common sins among us. Few of us can say we have not been selfish at times. The question is **to what extent does it control us?**
2. It is a dangerous sin which can destroy us. We each need to take stock and see if it is in control of us.

LITTLE ANGER FOXES #5
INTRODUCTION

We continue our study of "The Little Foxes That Destroy The Vineyard." We are looking at the so called "little sins" that we often ignore, overlook or maybe even consider to be of no significance. These little foxes can be just as dangerous and destructive as any so called "big sin."

So far we have looked at the little foxes of envy, jealousy, gossip and selfishness. In this lesson we want to talk about the little fox of anger.

Begin by saying, anger is a natural emotion that we are born with. We began to express it as early as infancy. Later on children will have temper tantrums. As they grow older they get into taunting and calling people names. Hopefully as they grow older they learn to control their anger.

Anything that frustrates or irritates us will usually provoke the emotion of anger. Being a natural emotion it not unusual for us to express it. Paul says in **Ephesians 4:26, "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath."** Paul would not tell us to do something that is wrong.

Even Jesus expressed anger at the Temple when he overturned the money changers' tables and drove out the animals. A number of times we are told of God's anger at someone or sometimes at his people the Israelites because of their sinful ways. Moses became angry at Eleazer on one occasion.

In growing up our family rules have always said it was wrong to express anger. You would be punished if you did expressed anger. **How many children have been told, "You need to have your mouth washed out with soap"?**

However it is not wrong or sinful to be angry as long as we express it in the right way. The important thing is that we express it in such a way as to "sin not." We can verbalize our anger without losing control, saying or doing something inappropriate. Also anger should not be allowed to be retained for a long period of time. Paul says don't keep it past sundown.

I. ANGER HANDLED IN THE WRONG WAY CAN RESULTS IN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HARM.

A. We usually handle anger in one of three ways.

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1. First we outwardly express it - either in a controlled way or in an uncontrolled. Sometimes we may shout out loud our anger even verbally or physically abusing someone. Many times anger has led to murder.

Others may throw something; some kick the dog or take it out on their family. Some who never curse will curse when angry. Obviously expressing anger in a controlled way is the only proper way to handle anger.

2. Second, some will repress it. When you repress anger you stuff it and refuse to feel it. This often happens in child abuse.

If a child is abused in some way he or she will often stuff it trying to forget it because it is too painful to bear. The problem with this is that in later life the anger will come out in some form, shape or fashion. It may be in some physical ailment or in mental depression.

3. Third, some will suppress it. If you suppress your anger you feel it but you don't express it. The feelings often last for years and years with an unforgiving spirit. Again this can cause physical and mental problems.

4. Many studies have been made of the ill effects of anger and hate upon the human body. It has been found to be very destructive to the body. Blood pressure may rise to a dangerous point.

The heart is effected which in turn effects various physiological functions. The nervous system is also affected. One authority in this field has gone so far as to say that pent up anger causes more deaths than any other cause.

5. This is because of the harmful effects anger and hate has on the vital organ the body. Anger which is improperly handled often leads to depression. As stress builds it results in anxiety that is not dealt with.

Biochemical changes then begin to take place in the brain which can lower vital chemical that serve as neurotransmitters in the brain. As this chemical decreases depression will result. It is a known fact that depression has its roots in anger and chemical imbalances in the brain.

6. It is known that one of the major causes of mental depression is anger. Either a person is angry at self, angry at others or angry at God. This may sound like an oversimplification but it is verified by those who work in the field of mental health. Anger that is buried in the sub-consciousness will arise later on to cause serious problems.

II. HOW TO HANDLE OUR ANGER.

A. First, if it's a case we often lose control of our temper and vent it on someone else then it is a matter of learning about self control. This is not always an easy matter. People who have been out of control for a long time have formed a habit that is difficult to overcome. Anything that is a habit requires a great amount of work and concentration.

Recall a Christian telling how difficult it was for him not to use ugly language. He had always been used to doing this. He said when he would sit down to eat before he knew it he would say something like pass me the _____ potatoes. He had to really work to overcome what had become a habit with him.

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1. In **2 Peter 1:5-7** Peter gives us a list of qualities we need to add to our Christian lives. He says, **"Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance."** While the KJV uses the word **"temperance"** other translations use the word **"self control"** which seems to be a better rendering.
2. This word comes from Greek word **egrateia** meaning **"the ability to take grip of one's self"**. Another definition for this word is **"one who holds himself in."** It is the idea of self-government, discipline, the ability to control our lives.
3. The Lord wants us to be in control at all times. The person who is out of control is not only a danger to himself but to others also.
4. In **2 Corinthians 10:5** Paul says, **"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."** **Galatians 5:24** **"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."** Other translations use the words **"passions and desires."**

B. Second, if we are one of those who keeps their anger inside and our anger is a result of what someone has done to us we need to go to that person and confront him or her about their actions.

1. The Lord is specific about what to do when someone has wronged us. **"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou has gained thy brother"** (Matthew 18:15).
2. **Matthew 5:23, 24** is very explicit. **"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."**

Someone has said that if both the offended and the offender would follow this command they would meet each other half way.

3. **How many Christians do you know who have done this?** Most are not willing to do so. This may indicate that the offense was not as serious as they have imagined it to be. This simply indicates we may have a problem with our false pride or ego. Some people are easily offended and take what others may say out of context.

In such situations the one who is supposed to be the offender has committed no sin. He may not have had any intention of hurting anyone. The problem then is with self and not the other person.

4. We need to look within and see why we can become so easily offended and why we will allow such situations arouse our anger toward others.
5. When and if we do go we must be certain we are going for the right motive and that is to be reconciled. Some may go out of the motive or revenge to get back at a person. They go to give them **"a piece of their mind."**

Paul gives some good advice when we are involved in any confrontation. He says, **"dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"** (Romans 12:19). Paul says any confrontation must be **"in the spirit of gentleness"** (Galatians 6:1).

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6. Following is an example of how confrontation resolved years of bitterness and anger. Some time ago a friend of mine told me about bitterness he had held in his heart for years against someone. He resolved it by a confrontation with the one who he had held the anger toward. Confrontation can accomplish much provided it is done in the right way.

CONCLUSION:

A bitter, angry spirit toward others makes us unlovely and unlovable. Bitterness, resentment and anger don't usually stay hidden. They boil over at times and tend to ruin our disposition and outlook on life. It will rob us of our peace of mind sometimes resulting in depression even physical ailments.

The little fox of anger must be under control at all times. Remember Paul's words, "Be ye angry and sin not." Learn to assert your anger in an acceptable way. Instead of venting it in improper ways learn to express it in ways that will not be offensive to others.

In being assertive you are not letting people run over you or mistreat you but in a clear, sure, forward way you state your case to someone else. As hard as it may seem to be we are to be "Kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another" (Romans 12:10).

Following are some examples of acceptable ways to express anger.

"John, what you just did really upset me I wish you would not do that"

"What you have said really makes me angry. Do you think that was the right thing to say?"

"John I have a matter I need you to hear me out on."

"Bill I can't let this just go by and not respond for I feel what you did was out of place."

"John something you did last week has really bothered me and I need to talk to you about it. I hope you will understand my concern for bringing it up to you."

We can be assertive without being offensive, aggressive, spiteful, or revengeful.

In this way you are showing the emotion of anger but you have it under control and you are determined not to let the sun go down on it by keeping bitterness within never resolved.

LITTLE FORGIVENESS FOXES #6 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we are going to look at the unforgiving little fox. This is a natural follow up on last week's little fox of anger. We observed how destructive the little fox of anger can be. Not only will it destroy the one who has anger both physically and spiritually but it can destroy others.

The only real solution to ongoing anger is forgiveness. Many of us do not understand the importance of forgiveness, yet it is so vital and essential. **First** of all for our own personal good. **Second** is good for the welfare of the one we may hold anger against.

I. GOD ALWAYS COMMANDS WHAT HE KNOWS IS BEST FOR US.

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A. Matthew 5:44 "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

B. This is one of the most difficult scriptures in all the New Testament for a Christians to obey. The reason is because of our false pride. It is a natural tendency to want to get back at the person we feel has injured our pride. It's called revenge.

On the other hand if I am the one at fault because of false pride I do not want to admit I am the one who has offended and is wrong. Pride is at the root of most people who cannot forgive or asks for forgiveness.

C. Seemingly the only motive for retaining anger is the motive of vengeance. Obviously this is a very vain motive.

D. The Bible gives us some good advice about vengeance. Paul says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:18-21).

E. We must learn to leave all vengeance to God. It is his prerogative not ours. We need to stay out of God's business. It is unfortunate that we humans spend so much time trying to play God in various ways.

F. An unforgiving spirit makes us unlovely and unlovable. Bitterness, resentment and anger don't usually stay hidden. They boil over at times and tend to ruin our disposition. It robs us of peace of mind.

G. Even a small hurt, left un-forgiven can develop into a terrible spiritual cancer eating away until our lives are bitter and ruined. The unwillingness to forgive poisons memories, strains relationship with others, even blocks our communication with God. On the other hand forgiveness indicates the touch and reign of Jesus our hearts. It sets Christianity apart from the rest of the world's religions.

H. God loved a sinful and destitute world so much that he let His Son bear our guilt and pay for our debt, although we are the ones who should have hung on that cross. Surely if God could be so forgiving of so much we can forgive things that are small in comparison to what God has had to forgive us of.

II. MUST A PERSON REPENT BEFORE WE CAN FORGIVE HIM?

A. Some will say that you cannot forgive another person until he first repents and asks you for forgiveness. The scripture that is often quoted is Luke 17:3. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."

The point Jesus is making is that if someone who has done you wrong comes to you repenting and asking for forgiveness don't refuse him that forgiveness. There are those who are never willing to forgive. We have no right to refuse forgiveness.

B. In contrast to this when the Lord prayed, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" they had not yet repented.

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It is evident that Christ in his human state forgave even though they had not repented nor deserved forgiveness. God may not choose to forgive until there is repentance but that is God's business.

C. We are to forgive, even pray for our enemies. Consider how our Lord treated Peter. There is no indication that Peter sought out the Lord to ask for forgiveness for denying him three times. Yet, Christ was forgiving and dealt very gently with his sin.

All the disciples forsook Jesus and fled at his trial but he saw them after his resurrection and dealt kindly with them. Nothing is said about their repenting and seeking forgiveness.

You know it hurt Jesus to see these men who had been with him for over three years desert him at the time he needed them the most. They were very weak, much weaker than they realized. They needed help and Jesus was able to restore them. We see them later much stronger men willing to suffer for the Lord. Jesus' patience with them paid off.

D. Have you ever had anyone who has done you a wrong come to you asking for your forgiveness? It probably would be a rare situation with most of us.

E. How many times have our children wronged us but never repented or asked for forgiveness? Did we refuse to forgive them? How many times have we wronged others but never confessed our wrong and asked for forgiveness? Human pride is obviously overpoweringly strong. It's hard to face our faults.

F. We want others to be forgiving toward us even if we have not asked for it. We should be willing to do the same for them. We must forgive even if the one being forgiven does not in our eyes seem to deserve it.

Paul said, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

III. JESUS HAS GIVEN US AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW.

A. Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). When Jesus uttered this cry his hands and feet were fastened to the cross by large Roman nails driven by the very ones for whom he prayed.

They also had placed a crown of thorns on his head, lashed his body with a whip and laughingly mocked him. Isn't it amazing that his first words are not in complaint, nor a plea of his innocence nor even a cry for vengeance. You know he could have called ten thousand angels. Instead it was a prayer for their forgiveness.

B. The verb is imperfect, thus literally, "he kept on saying, Father forgive them, they know not what they do." We are left with the impression that with each indignity the Lord repented his prayer on behalf of his tormentors. Surely I can bring myself to forgive things of a lesser nature if my Lord could forgive his executioners.

C. Just stop and think for a moment. There is really nothing you can ever do which would enable you to pay back the debt which you owe for God's Son dying on the cross for your sins. God could in perfect justice strike every person dead and condemn us to an eternal hell for all our sins for none of us including all Christians are without sin. It is only because he is merciful loving and long-suffering that he forgives.

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D. It seems from the many examples we have of Jesus in the gospels he was more willing to forgive and forget than to condemn. He was not cruel, harsh, stern, exacting, unrelenting in his dealings with sinful man.

If you and I are to follow Jesus we too must be forgiving toward others. This does not mean you deny the pain. Sure it hurts. But you seek them out, don't hate them. Try to restore your friendship. Don't take their actions so much as an affront toward you but see that the real problem may be with them and not with you. Actually they may need your help.

E. What about the person who refuses to respond to your kindness and forgiving Attitude? Sometimes there is very little you can do. The main thing to remember is that this person probably has a real problem. People like this need to be rescued from themselves.

Paul said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Notice that he said "if it be possible." With some people it is not possible. The answer then is to have as little contact with them in any situation which would bring about conflict.

CONCLUSION:

In 1 John 4:20, 21 we have some very strong language about the matter of forgiveness. It may jar you a little but listen to the apostle John. "If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

This is what the Greeks called "agape" love. It is unconditional love. It is giving love without any strings attached. This verse does not imply we suddenly become affectionate toward someone but it means we would do what is best for that person and one of the best things you can do is to forgive.

Here are two more verses that deal with this subject. Ephesians 4:31, 32, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"

Colossians 3:13, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

LITTLE MURMURING FOXES #7

INTRODUCTION

Doing spiritual checkups. Looked at jealousy and envy, gossip, selfishness, anger and forgiveness. Heart murmurs are a concern of doctors. We want to look at a spiritual heart murmur. Do a checkup on our murmuring. A good synonym for murmuring is grumbling. To use slang it is---gripping.

I know of no better example than the Israelites. One passage tells us the story. "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness" (Exodus 16:2). One of their besetting sins was that of murmuring. It became their downfall.

"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

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It started with the burning bush that Moses saw in the wilderness. God calls upon Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses begins to make excuses. **Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"** Told that **"the anger of the Lord burned against Moses."** God promises to be with Moses. He provides a stick (rod) with which to do miraculous things. Re-united Moses with Aaron.

The plagues should have increased the Israelites' faith that God was with them and would protect them. Reaching the Red Sea and seeing the Egyptians following they begin to panic and complain. **"Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?"** This was followed with the crossing the Red Sea. Imagine what this must have been like. Put yourself in their shoes.

Next complained of the water that it was not fit to drink. Then they complained of no food.

When it came time to enter the Promised Land Moses sent 12 spies. When they returned ten of them gave a discouraging report. The result was that the people begin to murmur. As a result God turned them back into the wilderness where they would wander for thirty eight more years.

God said, **"Because of these men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it.....How long shall I bear with this evil generation which murmur against me?"** (Numbers 14:22-23, 27.)

One of the dangers of murmuring is that it often ends up being against God. Moses told the people on one occasion **"Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord."**

IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL WE COMPLAIN AND MURMUR OVER THE LORD'S WORK.

As already observed even Moses complained when the Lord asked him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Like Moses we too can often complain when called upon to serve in some capacity.

Listen to what Paul says. **"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9). "Do everything without complaining or arguing" (Philippians 2:14).**

We ought to be thankful that we can do something. Talked to people who were ill or in the hospital and have heard them to say how they wished they could be well and able enough to do something in the church. It seems when we are prevented from working we want to and then when we can and have opportunities slow to respond.

WE COMPLAIN AND MURMUR AGAINST EACH OTHER

This was true in the early church. **"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration" (Acts 6:1).**

With the Israelites the murmuring was usually against their leaders. The same is true with us. Our murmuring so many times is against those who take on leadership roles. Don't like our Bible teacher. Surely they could have gotten someone better. We don't like the song leader. We don't like an elder or a preacher.

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We can find something wrong with almost anyone because everyone is human. We all have faults. Often people do not live up to our personal expectations. Our expectations are often higher than we ourselves are willing to live up to.

We often go home after a worship service and murmur about certain ones or the worship in general. Our children hear our open complaints and then we expect them to grow up respecting the church and appreciating the opportunity to worship. Without realizing it we do a great amount of harm to our children by this open criticism and murmuring.

Note the following admonitions to Christians who murmur.

1 Peter 4:9 "Use hospitality one to another without grudging (murmuring).

James 5:9 "Grudge (murmur) not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned.

James 4:11 "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."

John 6:43 "Murmur not among yourselves."

WE COMPLAIN ABOUT OUR OWN PLIGHT

We often bewail our own situations and conditions in life. And it is a fact that we often exaggerate. Certainly life is not perfect and there are often many hardships. Like Job there may be times when we may feel we are justified in murmuring about our condition.

Many times our murmuring may be over small matters. We just like to complain whether it is the weather, our pains, our income, our cars, houses, clothes and any number of other things. God allows suffering and lets us go through difficulties.

We may not in this life fully understand all of the whys of our sufferings and difficulties. After all of Job's complaining and questions about his sufferings. God never did give him a direct answer.

Paul's attitude **Philippians 4:11** "For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Paul in **1 Timothy 6:8** writes, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

Hebrews 13:5 "Be content with such things as ye have: for hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"

CONCLUSION:

Murmuring and complaining are contrary to the spirit of Christianity. It limits fellowship. Members begin to avoid one another. It can destroy good works. All it takes to destroy a good work is for one person to start complaining. It creates an undertow of criticism.

It can crush the spirit of worship. Where there is constant murmuring a congregation cannot grow develop. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God" (Philippians 2:14, 15).

There are times when there are justifiable complaints. They should be directed to the proper persons.

LITTLE INGRATITUDE FOXES #8

By Jimmy Eaton

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INTRODUCTION

Luke 17:12-19 an interesting story. Ten miserable men, outcasts from society, covered with the dread disease of leprosy are standing afar off from the rest of the people at the entrance to a certain village. Seeing Jesus they cry out **"Master, have mercy on us."**

Jesus tells them to go and show themselves to the priests. On the way their leprosy completely disappears. But only one of them, a Samaritan, turned back to thank Jesus for his cleansing. Jesus said, **"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"** To return was the least they could have done.

Leprosy was a terrible disease. It was a slow agonizing way to die with the flesh literally dropping from the bones. Leprosy of that day seems to have been far worse than what we know about leprosy today.

The Law required lepers to be isolated from the masses of people. They had to remain outside the camp during the years of wandering in the wilderness. When approaching a city had to cry out, **"Unclean! I am unclean!"** Could come no closer than about 50 yards. Often traveled in groups begging.

The thing that stands out in this story is that only one of them returned. They cried out for mercy. They were in destitute circumstances with certain death knocking at the door. Now their voices become silent and they expressed no gratitude.

THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE.

Ingratitude is a despicable sin. In this case the nine completely ignored the source of their healing and the new life they now had. This seems almost unthinkable

We are quick to forget when illness leaves us. **How could these men not come back and show their gratitude?** There seems to be a note of sadness in the voice of Jesus as he thinks how unappreciative these men are.

Where were the nine? What happened? Someone has suggested the following possibility.

- (1) One wanted to see if the cure was real
- (2) Another wanted to wait and see if the cure would last.
- (3) Still another decided he would see Jesus later when he had more time.
- (4) One of them may have decided that he had never had a bad case anyway.
- (5) Still another said he would have gotten well anyway.
- (6) One may have given glory to the priests.
- (7) Ungratefully one said, **"O well, Jesus didn't really do it."**
- (8) Still another ungrateful soul said, **"Any Rabbi could have done this."**
- (9) Still another said, **"I was already much improved."**

Of course we really don't know what they were thinking or saying. The tragedy of this story is the great insult they returned to Jesus for such a wonderful life saving gift. What else but an insult.

HOW MANY TIMES HAS GOD BEEN THE RECIPIENT OF OUR INGRATITUDE?

Deuteronomy 6:10-12 "And it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you

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did not build. houses full of all good things, which you did fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten and are full—then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

The truth is Israel did forget. They forgot all that God had done for their fathers and for them. God gave them a land of plenty - a land flowing with milk and honey. He even promised them protection and peace from the nations around them. Yet with all their blessings they forgot all about God’s goodness.

Times have not changed. We still forget today, even though our blessings are far greater than what they had. We too can be very ungrateful. Paul reminds us in Acts 17:28 “For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring.” Our very existence depends on God. Every breath we take, every beat of our heart, everything about us is dependent upon the Lord.

James 1:17 says “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Again he reminds us in 4:15 “For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”

We noticed in our last lesson the spiritual sin of murmuring. We go through life complaining and criticizing but rarely complimenting and being thankful. This distracts us from our blessings. We have far more to be thankful for than things to complain about.

We need to be careful that we do not allow our blessings to become a liability and lead us away from God. It is easy to get into the frame of mind that I am personally responsible for my blessings. We may think that because we work hard, thus we are responsible for the blessings we have. We do not stop to think that God furnishes us with opportunities, health, strength and resources so we can have what we have.

WE NEED TO BE THANKFUL IN ALL THINGS.

Paul admonishes us with these words, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20).

First, we need to be thankful toward our parents. There were times when we would have died if we had been neglected for a single day. For years we were totally dependent upon them for everything. Think of the tragic cases we read of today where children have been abandoned by their parents.

Be thankful you were not born into a family that would have abandoned you. Think of the millions of abortions that take place in our country alone. Be thankful you had a mother who would never have aborted you.

Think of the many hours that were spent in raising you. Think of the work and sacrifices that were made in your behalf. Many forget the debt they owe their parents. They considered the needs of their parents as an unbearable nuisance. Be thankful for your family – husband, wife, brothers and sisters, even aunts and uncles.

Be thankful for people who have helped you. At some point most of us have been helped immeasurably by a friend. He may have encouraged, inspired, motivated us, or had confidence in us. At the time we did not think we would forget but now that better days are here we have forgotten.

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Be thankful for a God who loved us and gave up his Son for us to die on the cross. There have been times of desperate need when we fervently prayed and God answered our prayers. Now time has passed and we have forgotten that some of those prayers were answered.

In becoming a Christian think about the people who influenced you to become a child of God---a wife, husband, friend or someone who just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

In your development as a Christian who encouraged your growth? If you were ever unfaithful who helped to win you back to the Lord. No doubt many Christians have paid a big part in our lives. Let's be thankful for fellow Christians who cared about us. Take time to say "thank you" to those who have helped you.

LITTLE PREJUDICE FOXES #9 INTRODUCTION

There are many little foxes that can destroy the vineyard. We have given consideration to about eight of these little foxes so far.

In this lesson we want to look at still another little fox - the little fox of prejudice. This little fox is a major cause for many of the major problems we have in the world today. He needs to be dealt with because he is so dangerous.

In **1 Timothy 5:21** Paul wrote to Timothy, "I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality."

The words "partiality" and "prejudice" obviously are sins and Timothy is warned not allow himself to become involved.

Prejudice means to prejudge. It is a predisposition or bias that interferes with correct and fair judgment. It is to judge before all the evidence is before one. Prejudice is "an opinion or judgment formed without due examination"; "a leaning toward one side of the question from other considerations than those belonging to it."

To act with prejudice is to act without good judgment, to act in ignorance, to err in judgment, to sin.

Prejudice is one of the most common but ignored sins among us. It even feels natural. It always seems easy justify it. In fact it is very difficult to be without some prejudice. Prejudice blinds us to the true facts that are evident.

Prejudice is so common that often we make no bones about our being prejudice. Often someone will say something like, "Don't confuse me with facts, my mind is made up!" Or they may even say, "I know I am prejudiced about this but I can't help it." Again we will sometime say "I'm very partial about this." This is just another way of saying I have closed my mind and refuse to think any other way.

When our mind is made up then regardless of logic, facts or truth we will not change. Sometimes, before a jury trial can get underway, more than a hundred prospective jurors must be interviewed before twelve people can be selected who have not already become prejudiced in the case.

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The tragedy is that when one is prejudice he has already formulated an opinion, and has closed his mind to any further reasoning and new evidence and the consequences of this is that it can be very damaging to himself and to many innocent people.

The way Jesus was perceived and treated is one of the greatest examples of prejudice we have. A study of this perception can show us the many facets of prejudice. Jesus probably had more prejudice shown against him than any person that has ever lived.

I. THERE WAS PREJUDICE AGAINST HIS BACKGROUND.

A. They were prejudice against him because of where he came from - his home. Prejudice nearly kept Nathaniel from becoming a disciple of Christ. He said when told about Jesus, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

No doubt he was thinking Jesus was just a country hick of no significance. How many times do we make light of others because of where they come from? Some of the greatest people the world has known have come from humble backgrounds.

B. The Jews of Judea looked down on those who lived to the north in Galilee. They were considered uneducated and uncultured. They said they could not even speak the language correctly. The disciples were recognized as Galileans' because of their speech.

II. THE JEWS WERE PREJUDICE AGAINST JESUS BECAUSE HE WAS POOR.

A. Jesus had no social credentials to show he was from a high ranking family. He was not rich, he did not act or look like someone of royal rank. His clothing certainly did not portray a person of influence or importance.

Jesus himself said that the foxes had their holes and the birds had their nests but he did not have a place to lay his head. He was a poor man and religious sects like the Pharisees and Sadducees looked down on the poor.

B. How do we look upon the poor? Are they too dirty, too smelly, too awful looking for us to associate with?

C. It is interesting that those who were poor were the most receptive to Jesus and his teaching. A nicely dressed, clean, middle class person is welcome in our services today but what about the one who is poorly dressed with unattractive features? How welcome do we make this person feel?

D. They must have had a problem with this in the early church. Notice what James writes to some Jewish Christians. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor.....But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors".

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E. Again I ask, **how do we treat those who are not middle class?** We say well we don't require them to sit in some designated area. **True, but do we greet them? Do we make them feel comfortable? How many have we driven away because they did not feel comfortable sitting among us?**

F. God has warned us that man **"looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."** Yet we ignore and violate this truth time and time again. Most of the time it never occurs to us that we have sinned by such actions.

G. Somehow we can't seem to get it in our heads that that person of a different color of skin or poor quality clothing or strange customs has a soul inside him and that God is not looking on the outside as we do but is looking on the inside at the soul of that person which is in his image.

III. THERE WAS PREJUDICE AGAINST JESUS BECAUSE HE WAS A JEW.

A. The Roman soldiers were prejudice against him. This is so obvious when they took him and put a robe on him, a crown of thorns and a reed in his hand and then began mocking him as the king of the Jews. There was no love between Jews and Romans. The Romans hated the Jews and the Jews hated the Romans.

B. Prejudice plagued Paul when men tried to prejudice others against him. They said on one occasion, **"These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans."** Note the contrast - Jews and Romans.

C. People of that day had all kinds of racial problems. The Jews had all kinds of racial names and slurs such as barbarians, dogs, unclean. The Jews and the Samaritans had a tremendous racial problem. A Jew would circumvent the little country of Samaria in order to evade coming into contact with this half breed race of people. Jesus did not do this.

Sometimes he walked right through the land have contact with the people. Jesus tells the story of the man who fell among thieves and was rescued by a Samaritan to illustrate the seriousness of the sin of prejudice. Everything in this story deal with prejudice.

C. Times have not changed **have they?** In India we called them **"wogs"** and in China they were called **"sloppies"** or **"chinks."** In America, the land of free, where according to our constitution all men are created equal we have our racial slurs and names. We degrade, slander and put down other races.

D. In Red Bank 6 out of 10 who move in are not white. **What will be our reaction when the majority of our neighbors will be of another race of people?** Many churches where this has happened have fled to the suburbs in order to escape another race of people moving into their community.

IV. THERE WAS PREJUDICE AGAINST WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

A. According to **Romans 11:7**. It was because of blindness of heart that the Jews received not the salvation of their souls. Had they been open minded as were the Bereans (**Acts 17:11**) they, by their investigation, could have seen that the scriptures testified of Christ.

B. Jesus said concerning them, **"This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them"** (Matthew 13:15).

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- C.** These people had prejudged before that Jesus was not the Son of God, and all the reasoning and miracles Jesus did could not convince them as to who he was.
- D.** Prejudice is one of the worst enemies of the truth. If one could list all the enemies of truth, surely one would not leave out prejudice. Prejudice would stand out prominently amidst all of the enemies of truth.
- E.** If one has a background of religious error it is difficult to read scripture which may plainly teach against certain false religious practices and still not see the truth. Open-mindedness is a trait greatly to be coveted.

Open-mindedness welcomes investigation. It is not fair to ourselves to accept or reject a proposition before we have investigated thoroughly all of the facts, principles and truths that may be at our disposal.

- F.** Prejudice abhors an opposing view. Open-mindedness welcomes investigation. Neither of these traits are inherited, rather they are formed. At one time people believed the world was flat. They said the Bible could only be Latin. When translated into English some were put to death.

V. THEY WERE PREJUDICE AGAINST THE GOOD WORKS OF JESUS.

- A.** Their response to the many good works of Jesus was: "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."
- B.** This is almost beyond comprehension yet it is a vivid demonstration of what prejudice will do to the minds of men.
- C.** Even today brethren are prejudice against good works. Many are prevented from doing good because of prejudice. When one is biased against any good work, that one will not give the support and encouragement to that work that should be given. Often he will even oppose the work. Prejudice makes one an enemy to a good work.
- D.** Sometimes brethren are prejudiced against a good work because they did not have anything to do with starting the work. Sometimes they become offended because they were not asked to take a part in it at first or their advice was not sought and they became prejudiced against the work even opposing it to the disturbance of the peace of the congregation.

CONCLUSION:

Prejudice is so common that many have failed to appreciate the sinfulness of it. They even offer their prejudice as an excuse for their course. But the fact that one is conscious of their prejudice ought to alarm that one to the degree that desperate efforts will be put forth to remove the prejudice.

Prejudice will blind us to the truth, direct us in the ways of error, bring about injustice to others and can keep us out of heaven.

Someone has written the following. "Of all human ambitions an open mind, eagerly expectant of new discoveries and ready to remold convictions in the light of added knowledge and dispelled ignorance and misapprehensions, is the noblest, rarest, and the most difficult to achieve."

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LITTLE COVETOUSNESS FOXES # 10
INTRODUCTION:

We want to look at the little fox of covetousness. In both the Old and New Testaments covetousness is condemned. **Exodus 20:7 "Thou shalt not covet."** **1 Corinthians 6:10 "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."**

This sin has been prevalent among people from the beginning of time. Yet it seems few of us are not willing to recognize it or ignore it. No doubt many of feel we are immune to it. It is always somebody else it could not be me. By nature it is deceptive. It is somewhat like a cancer growing in someone. You can be almost dead without knowing that you have it.

Covetousness is obscured by a curtain of misconception so that it is rarely recognized for what it is. If you were to ask the average person what covetousness is they probably would answer. **"To covet is to want something that belongs to someone else."** However this is a very inadequate definition. This definition implies stealing and we say I would never steal anything.

Thus we need to understand it because it is so sly and cunning evil that slips upon us and before we know it has a grip on us. This is why the Lord warns us, **"Take heed and beware of covetousness."**

Have you ever heard of anyone who has confessed to being covetous? It is reported that the famous Catholic priest Francis DeSales known for the large number of people who confessed their sins to him said that in all his experience he did not recall a single person who had ever confessed the sin of covetousness. They had confessed the vilest of sins but never covetousness.

Have you ever known of anyone being withdrawn from and dis-fellowshipped in the Lord's church for covetousness? Yet we are commanded to do this. **1 Corinthians 5:9-11** is clear cut about this.

Verse eleven says, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no, not to eat."

The interesting thing about this sin is that it is looked upon as a respectable sin. This is the more reason why we need to look at this little fox and find out what it is all about. The fact that this sin is mentioned so many times in God's work is an indication we need to examine it and understand what it can do to us.

I. FIRST, LET US DEFINE COVETOUSNESS.

A. Our English word covetousness comes from a Greek work which means greediness, the wish to have more. It is an insatiable love or craving for any number of things. It is one who is never satisfied with what he presently has regardless of how much that may be - he still wants more. Covetousness is selfishness personified.

B. It is interesting that Paul says that covetousness is idolatry in **Colossians 3:5**. Anything or person that is exalted above God and is made the chief object of our devotion and affections becomes the god we worship. We have substituted something or someone else for God when God must take first place in our hearts and minds.

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C. Covetousness does not always involve money or material things. It can be defined as any type of false desire. It can be an unlawful desire for gain, control, power, position, recognition, etc. It is perfectly right to desire any number of things.

I might desire food, maybe some particular kind of food but this would not be covetousness. This is just a normal desire God has placed in all of us. In covetousness our desires go beyond what is normal to become excessive desires.

D. Covetousness is the excessive laying up of money and things. Those who hoard money love it for its own sake. It is the love of money that the Bible condemns and in so doing it also condemns the love of the things that money can buy.

Note 1 Timothy 6:19. "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

E. The man who covets money, things, pleasure, ambition and power is all wrapped up in himself. He makes these things little gods which he has placed before the one and only true God. Thus he has replaced God Almighty with a little false god that will end up being a great disappointment to him.

F. A fly landed on a nice strip of gooey, sweet-smelling flypaper. Not seeing a challenger in sight, he happily announced, "My flypaper!" Sinking his nose in the syrupy stuff he dines sumptuously. Then, deciding to leave, he began hopelessly beating his wings against the air - and the paper announced, "My fly!" This is often the way it is with covetousness. Man says, "My possessions!" and the possessions announce, "My man!"

II. SOME BIBLE EXAMPLES OF COVETOUSNESS.

A. This sin first appears in the Garden of Eden. God had provided the first couple with everything they needed, even more than was necessary. It was a literal paradise. The most beautiful and wonderful place on earth.

Only one fruit was not to be partaken of. Eve looked upon the forbidden fruit and said, "I want that." She thought it would make her wiser. She was not satisfied with what God had so bountifully given her. She wanted more. This was exactly what she needed. More than she had or needed.

B. King Saul looked upon the spoil of the Amalekites and said, "I want that." God's clear order was against taking any of the spoils. (1 Samuel 15). Saul was ordered to "kill and destroy" the Amalekites. But Saul saw the great plunder and he could not resist wanting it for it would give him much more than what he already had. Saul was already rich and had everything he needed. He paid a supreme penalty for his greediness.

C. Judas became disillusioned about the coming of a material kingdom. The Jews had turned against Jesus and it seemed no early kingdom would be established.

So he looked for a way to compensate for his poor life style. He would now betray his leader for thirty pieces of silver. After he got it he found out he really did not want it and it would not bring him the satisfaction he thought it would. It was stained with the blood of the Son of God. He took it back but it was too late.

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D. Demas was a faithful Christian, a very valuable companion and associate with the apostle Paul. But he looked at the world and what he felt he was missing out on. He beheld its pleasures and no doubt thought "I want that." (2 Timothy 4:10).

What he gave us was worth far more than that what he thought he was gaining. Many today follow the world to their own destruction. John warns us to "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

III. HOW DO WE BECOME COVETOUS?

A. Given the numerous times covetousness is mentioned in the Bible and how common it must have been it must still be just as common. Jeremiah 6:13 speaks of Israel, and is in great measure applicable to the people of our day, including those of us in the church.

He wrote, "For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophets even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely."

I never think of Israel having the material prosperity we have today. I cannot help but believe that if anything this sin is more prevalent today than it was then. Given the generalized understanding that covetousness is "to want" something that belongs to someone else is certainly misleading.

This in no way fully explains what it is. Maybe this why we don't recognize it in ourselves. Certainly one of the things involved is wanting what belongs to others.

Ahab is a good example of this. He saw the vineyard of Naboth. He wanted it and wanted it very much. So much so that he would do anything to get it. He wanted it so much that he sulked and pouted like a little child when Naboth refused to give it to him.

It finally led to the murder of Naboth. We see no remorse on the part of Ahab. He gladly took it regardless of what it took to get it. This is an extreme case however. We can be guilty of covetousness in the same way.

I have a good car. It is dependable; and it looks ok, but it is a few models old and my friends have new cars. Will pride prevail? Will covetousness win? Or will good common sense prevail? Must I always have the newest and best?

I have good clothing. Are they still adequate? Is it the latest fashion? But it is all right? I think I might look better in something new or something I just saw in a store. I saw something on sale and you just can't turn a good sale down.

We see a piece of furniture. It would really look good in my house. I have plenty of furniture but this would add to the overabundance I already have. What shall I do? It is rather expensive but it sure looks good. Do I really need it or do I covet it?

My point is that we often spend needlessly where we could have diverted the money to the church and the spreading of the gospel or given it for someone who is really in need. We may end up heavily in debt because of our covetousness which demands more money out of our pay checks which results in less giving out of our prosperity for the work of the church.

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B. One can covet another man's wife. David did this. He saw Bathsheeba. Evidently she must have been a very beautiful woman. He must have thought "I want this woman." He wanted her so much that he committed adultery and then when she was found with child he then planned for her husband to be killed. This was covetousness in its worse form.

C. Parents can covet their children to the point of not wanting them to be too much involved in the Lord's work. Remember George Benson tell of speaking to parents about sending their children to Harding. Sometimes their response was, "I'm afraid to send her there she might marry a preacher."

Some parents try to discourage their children from doing mission work. They don't want them to go a long distance from home. They want them near and close. A man should love his family, but any man who puts loyalty to his family ahead of fidelity to God has made an idol of his family.

D. Members can covet the authority God has given to elders. Paul says in **Hebrews 13:7** "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit to them." While one might be too pious to usurp authority outwardly, but as a covetous person he might undermine the work of an eldership in an effort to gain his ends.

This could be done in subtle ways, malicious gossip and slander. They may bring certain threats to one or more elders trying to get their way. Sometimes they are constantly giving advice to some elder hoping he will move the other elders in line with his personal wishes.

E. Hoarding up money is covetousness. This is excessive laying up of money or material things. The person loves it for its own sake. Jesus warns "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of he things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

After making this statement Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool who was caught up in hoarding. He then concludes, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (v. 21).

F. A man ought to be devoted to his vocation or profession. But any man who sacrifices his convictions in order to advance himself in his profession or vocation or in order to keep his job, has made an idol of his work.

G. Covetousness causes world wars, gambling, defrauding, stealing, lying, murder, selfishness, and on and on the list could go.

CONCLUSION: HOW DO WE OVERCOME COVETOUSNESS?

1. Learn to be content. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have" (Hebrews 13:5).
2. Adopt the attitude of Paul. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).
3. Trust in God that he will provide all those things we need. Far more important is the fact he supplies us with rich abundant spiritual blessings.

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4. Remember that covetousness never satisfies. Ecclesiastes 5:10, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver." Rather seek for "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 1:4)

LITTLE IRREVERENCE FOXES # 11
INTRODUCTION:

In this lesson we want to look at irreverence. We can define irreverence as a failure to show respect. It indicates a lack of love, awe and esteem for things which are sacred. Reverence is showing respect and love for things which are sacred. The degree of reverence or irreverence one has will affect his entire outlook on life and even his destiny.

When we think of irreverence one of the first things that come to mind is using God's name in vain or maybe failing to worship the Lord with the right spirit and attitude. Some feel that a noisy audience just before worship is showing irreverence.

Some would say talking, whispering or writing notes during worship would be showing irreverence. While some of these things might involve irreverence this is not what irreverence is all about. Hopefully in this study we can get to the heart and meaning of irreverence.

In Exodus 3:1-6 we get a sense of what reverence is. Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father in law when he saw a burning bush yet the bush was not consumed by the fire. Astonished Moses stopped to observe this marvelous wonder. Suddenly the Lord spoke from the burning bush.

"Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Moses was standing in God's presence. Moses was not standing before just any ordinary person but in the very presence of God Almighty himself. God demanded his attention and respect. There is probably more than meets the eye in what Moses is required to do.

Putting off his sandals was probably symbolic of laying aside the pollution's contacted by walking in the way of sin. The ground where he was standing was rendered holy by the very presence of God. The taking off of his sandals would be an act of reverence. It also recognizes that we are never on the same equal with God but are subordinate to Him. You can only look up to God, never down.

From this example and other places in the Bible reverence and respect always seems to be associated with coming before the presence of the Almighty God. There is also the idea of godly FEAR, AWE and AMAZEMENT. We also associated the name of God with such words as RESPECT, GLORY, HONOR, ESTEEM, ADORATION, VENERATION, HOLINESS, and REVERANCE.

We live in a marvelous and wonderful world. On every hand we can see God's majesty and glory. Many go through life seemingly giving very little thought to all the wonders of God, accepting them in a matter of fact way. God does is not to be ignored. We are told that "The heavens declare the glory of God." Heavens are now revealing amazing new information.

His glory and marvelous works do not deserve to be treated just as something that is common place. "Remember his marvelous works that he has done his wonders" (Psalm 105:5). "Stay yourselves, and wonder" (Isaiah 29:9).

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The works of God are not ordinary; they are indeed mighty. "Who can utter all the mighty acts of God? Who can show forth all his praise?" (Psalm 106:2). We live in a world that rarely stops to give any attention to God and all his wonders. This is a tragedy at least.

MANY EXAMPLES IN THE BIBLE OF PEOPLE STANDING IN AWE OF GOD

On the day of Pentecost we have such a situation. Men from every nation under heaven gathered in startled amazement as they heard uneducated Galileans speaking the message of salvation in the different languages represented there on that day.

We are told that they cried out, "We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11). In verse 7 we read, "And they were all amazed and marveled" In Acts 3:10 the Bible says, "And they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto them."

WHY DO WE ALLOW SACRED THINGS TO BECOME COMMONPLACE?

All the technological advancements of our day have led us into a time of luxuries, comforts and convenience. At the same time it has led us to believe man can do just about anything he wants to do. It becomes easy to discount the marvelous spiritual blessings we receive from God.

We have witnessed so many unbelievable things that it is now fashionable to be surprised at nothing. No doubt with some there is an air of pride and arrogance plus a spirit of independence that destroys their child-like spontaneity and wonder at God's power and majesty.

"STAY YOURSELVES AND WONDER" (ISAIAH 29:9).

Let us remember every day of our lives the existence and the excellence of the Almighty who was "In the beginning." You can think back as far as the human mind can fathom and still you cannot fully comprehend eternity.

God existed before our universe. He created it, He made you and me. There was never a beginning for God for he has always existed. With Isaiah we say "There is no searching of his understanding" (Isaiah 40:28).

Not only was the world brought into existence by the Word of God, and is kept in place by that Word, but it can also be destroyed by the same Word according to 2 Peter 3:5-7. "For this they are ignorant of, that by the word of God, the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

CONCLUSION:

We live in a world that knows very little about the one true God. The result is that very few give reverence to their creator. What a tragedy, that the creation does not even know its creator. Much of this is because of ignorance.

However, some of this is not because people do not know about God but because they do not care. They have never been taught to care or show reverence. Some simply have no concern for God even though they may acknowledge His existence in some faint way. Again what a tragedy.

By Jimmy Eaton

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Because of our love of the world and the things of the world, even we as Christian can lose our sense of awe and wonder. This is an even greater tragedy because we should know better.

Psalm 77:11-14 "I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings, Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? Thou Art the God that does wonders." The greatest wonder of all is the grace of God.

That deity would condescend to come down to this world and take on human flesh and offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins it so great it is beyond our comprehension.

Paul reminds us that "being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 1:6-8).

This wonder alone should cause us seek to glorify and praise Him forever.

LITTLE PRIDE FOXES # 12
INTRODUCTION:

1. We have been using Proverbs 2:15 "Take us the foxes the little foxes that spoil the vines" as the basis of a series of studies we have been looking at. We need to rid ourselves of the so called little sins that can destroy our prospects of fruit bearing in the service of the Lord. We continue our study of the little foxes by looking at the little fox of Pride.

2. First of all there is a natural, even a wholesome pride. We take pride in the Lord and in His church. We take personal pride in ourselves, our accomplishments, our children, our work, etc. We have all seen people who had no pride whatsoever. This is wrong in itself.

3. The kind of pride we want to talk about is an attitude that causes us to have an opinion of self that is too high. It is the attitude that causes us to be wrapped up in our imagined importance. It is an exaggerated self-esteem. It consists of such things as conceit, haughtiness, vainglory, being high minded, being puffed up.

4. It is all a matter of an inflated ego, turning inward and considering ourselves of great importance. It is appearing before others in a superior light, making one's self out as far greater than we are. Proverbs 73:6 "Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain." Pride can be a trap that is difficult to escape from.

5. An even uglier side of pride is that it can cause us to have contempt for others even slandering them at times. Pride is gratified by such things as titles, offices, possessions, honors, relationships with people of importance. It is the desire to gain attention, praise or applause from others. It is raged and distressed when people fail to notice what it does. Pride does not like to be slighted or ignored.

6. Augustine, the famous theologian and writer of the 5th century considered pride being at the root of all sin. He concluded that all sin stem from man's false pride. Pride then becomes more than just a little fox. It is not just a little sin but a sin that can destroy us.

I. PRIDE IS THE GREATEST ENEMY OF REPENTANCE.

By Jimmy Eaton

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A. One reason pride is so dangerous is because it is the greatest obstacle to repentance. One who is full of pride finds it very difficult to admit he or she is wrong, or is in need of being rescued from sin. Repentance is so vital to the life of anyone. Not only to non-Christians but to the Christian also.

We must never forget that "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 2:8).

Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Many a Christian has fallen from Grace because they let their false interfere with their repentance, thus falling from grace. (See Galatians 5:4.)

B. Go to a person who is living in sin and talk to him about changing his ways and he will often resent you. It is as if he is saying "Who do you think you are telling me how to live my life"? "I stand above Reproach." "Don't tell me tell me how to live my life." "I know what I am doing and I am in control. I make my own decisions."

This person's pride blinds him to his sin. A good example of this is talking with an alcoholic. Most of the time he will not even admit he is an alcoholic. Talk to a person about some "Little Fox of sin" and he may even feel insulted that you dare to hint that he has sinned.

C. The Pharisees were a very proud religious sect. They often confronted Jesus with an arrogance of such proportions they were unable to receive his teachings.

D. On one occasion Jesus went into the temple and found those who were selling animals and exchanging money. He drove those people out and overturned their tables. It is said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den of thieves."

This enraged the scribes and chief priests and they sought how they might kill him. They were too proud to admit that they were wrong in using the temple in such a fashion. They would never admit sin had been committed, that the temple was being desecrated. Instead of feeling shame they felt rage.

E. Jesus says, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Thousands have heard this invitation of the Lord. Some have heard it many times but because of pride they refuse to change. It's hard for some to admit they are wrong.

Someone has said the three most difficult words in the English language are, "I have sinned." Tragically a prideful ego prevents us from admitting what we really are - sinners.

F. There are Christians who find themselves in a fault but will never repent of it. Our inflated ego prevents any acknowledgment of sin in our lives. John says, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

James says, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James. 5:16). Pride steps in the way of the "one another" part of this admonition. We have too much pride to admit to a brother I have sinned.

II. PRIDE DELIGHTS IN BOASTING.

A. We see this in the Pharisee who stood at the temple and prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector, I fast twice a week; I give

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tithes of all that I possess." He could see everything wrong with the tax collector but nothing wrong in himself.

B. Speaking of the Pharisees Jesus said, "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi'" (Matthew 23:5-7). Pride destroys any semblance of humility.

C. A person who is filled with false pride not only thinks highly of himself but feels he must tell others of his achievements. He or she wants to be noticed.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount said, "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men" (Matthew 6:1, 2).

D. To be seen of men is the key phrase. Pride enjoys being in the spotlight.

III. PRIDE MAKES US INDIGNANT AND ARROGANT.

A. Do you remember the story of Naaman the leper found in 2 Kings 5:1-14? He was the commander of the Syrian army. He is described as a great and honorable man in the eyes of the king. There was one problem. He had leprosy. This no doubt would be fatal as well as preventing him from doing his job as commander of the army.

B. He was informed by a young captive girl from Israel that there was a prophet in her land who could heal him. He makes arrangements to go and arrives at the house of the prophet.

It is said that, "He stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean. But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy."

C. Just the disease itself must have hurt his pride. It would take a lot away from his pride to have to go and seek out a Jew to cure him. Now to go all the way to the prophet's house and for him not to come out to see him was a great insult. He even describes what he thought the prophet should have done.

Then to be told to go and dip seven times in the Jordan River was insult upon insult. **What an insult to such a person of high position the Commander in Chief of the Syrian army. How could a man in such a high position be treated like this?** It is quite evident that Naaman's pride had been injured.

D. Only when he was willing to surrender his false pride was he made clean. His servant gave him some good advised him wise advice and the commander surrendered his pride and went and dipped seven times in the Jordan. The Lord cannot do much with us until we are willing to surrender our prideful ways.

IV. PRIDE CAN CAUSE US TO LOOK DOWN ON OTHERS.

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A. The Old Testament story of Moses before Pharaoh asking the great ruler of Egypt to release the Children of Israel.

B. On his first appearance before Pharaoh Moses told him that the "The Lord God of Israel" said, "Let My people, go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness." Pharaoh's response was "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go."

Here we see what a heart filled with false pride will do. Pharaoh looked down on Moses and even the Lord himself. He gave no recognition to either. As if to say, "Who do you think you are coming before the Pharaoh of Egypt asking such things?"

C. It seems that each time Moses appeared before him there was nothing but contempt, insolence and arrogance. All the plagues that God brought on the Egyptians seemingly would not change Pharaoh. He was a proud man and preferred to suffer all of those plagues rather than to give up his pride and submit to the command of God.

CONCLUSION:

1. Be careful of pride. It is a dangerous little fox. It can destroy us. One reason why it is so dangerous is because most of the time we never suspect we have it. It is always the other person - not me.
2. We all need to search our hearts carefully that we are not carrying around this little fox that can rob us of heaven. Remember that "Pride goes before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18). It always precedes our falling away from God.
3. Questions we might ask ourselves.

Am I too proud to admit my faults - my sins?

Am I too proud to go to a person and tell him I have sinned against him?

Am I too proud to say "I'm sorry" when I am wrong?

Am I too proud to speak to certain Christians?

Am I too proud to associate with certain Christians?

Am I too proud to associate with people of other races?

Am I too proud to associate with those I feel are below my social standing?

Am I too proud to forgive those who sin against me?

Am I too proud to teach a person who is an alcoholic or a homosexual?

Am so proud of my position in life that I would be ashamed to let others know I am a Christian.

LITTLE REVENGE FOXES # 13

INTRODUCTION:

In 2 Samuel 16 we have a very dramatic scene. David the king is fleeing from Jerusalem as a result of an uprising against him led by his own son Absalom. As David and his friends flee through the countryside they passed by the walls of Bahurim when suddenly a relative of the king Saul, the former king of Israel appears. His name is Shimei.

It is said that he cursed as he came out to meet David and his officials. He began to cast stones. He said, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! The Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the house-hold of Saul.....The Lord has handed the kingdom over to your son, Absalom."

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There were two false accusations in his cry of revenge. David had not shed the blood of Saul or those in his household. Second Absalom had stolen the kingdom from David not God.

Abishai, David's close bodyguard since the days when David had to flee from Saul in the desert region responded by saying to David, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the King? Let me go over and cut off his head" (9).

For every Shimei there is always a Abishai ready to take sudden and bitter revenge. But David would not permit it. He said, "Leave him alone; let him curse, for the Lord has told him to."

We are told that David and his men continue along the road while Shimei walked along throwing stones at David and kicking up the dust. What a disgusting scene.

Did any of the stones hit David? How could David endure the insults? How could he continue to ignore what Shimei was doing? How long could he take such verbal abuse? We say what a forgiving man he was. His forgiveness seems to defy all normal feelings for taking revenge against Shimei. However, this is not the end of the story.

Absalom's army is defeated and Absalom is slaughtered. David returns to occupy the throne. Now re-enters Shimei the man who cursed David and threw all those stones. Falling down before the king he begs for forgiveness. "I have sinned" he says.

Abishai, David's body guard is still incensed and is still ready to kill Shimei. But again David would not allow it. David said to Shimei, 'you shall not die' and gave an oath that he would not kill him. From every appearance David is still a man of forgiveness. How magnificent, how noble this man David.

Now comes the final scene in this story. King David lies on his deathbed. In these final hours he calls his son to his bedside. "I am about to go the way of all earth. So be strong, shew yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires." These were great words of wisdom from a father to his son.

But wait, there is one more request. In his last words to his son David says, "Make sure you repay Shimei for all he did to me - cursing me and throwing stones. You know what to do. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood". (See 1 Kings 2:8, 9.) David kept his oath to Shimei. He would not kill him - but - he would let someone else kill him.

For three years after David's death Solomon did nothing. Then one day he said to Shimei. "You know in your heart all the wrong you did to my father David. Now the Lord will repay you.....Then the king gave the order to Benaiah and he killed Shemai."

No doubt David tried to forgive Shimei and it appears he did. But it is an obvious fact that David carried a grudge against this man with him to the grave. He simply could not forget all the evil Shimei had done to him. So his last words to his son Solomon were "kill him." David got his revenge.

I. DAVID DID NOT KNOW JESUS NOR ANYTHING ABOUT THE CROSS OR ELSE THIS STORY MIGHT HAVE ENDED DIFFERENTLY.

A. David's final request reminds us how complicated the human heart is. Few if any of us ever understand all that goes on inside our own hearts. Just about the time we think we have forgiven a person he or she pops up in our lives and suddenly all the old painful feelings come back.

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B. The old law forbade showing revenge. **Leviticus 19:18** "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."

David would have been familiar with the law and perhaps this is why he did not personally kill Shemei. **Deuteronomy 32:35** is another verse David no doubt was familiar with. It said, "Vengeance is Mine, and recompense."

C. We enjoy an enormous advantage over David. While David knew the Old Testament we have Jesus who has taught us how to forgive. "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:33).

Romans 12:19 "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord."

D. Not only did Jesus teach us to pray and forgive but more important he showed us how on the cross. **How can we ever forget His words**, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do"?

There were no dying grudges, no revenge as he hung on the cross. It is not easy but it can be done. Jesus proved it in his death. Jesus has not asked us to do anything he himself was not willing to do.

E. Surely if Jesus could put away revenge and forgive so much to so many I can forgive things that are not as great or as serious.

II. WHY DO WE SEEK REVENGE?

A. When we are rejected, we seek revenge. Rejection hits at the very heart. It attacks our ego. Rejection says, "I refuse to accept you. You are not good enough for me. I refuse to associate with you. You are below my level." Rejection attacks our self esteem.

We see evidence of this kind of revenge every day in the headlines of the newspapers when we read of some rejected lover, boy friend, husband, wife, who has been rejected. The one rejected returns soon with a gun to kill the one who has rejected them.

Once when Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem they passed through a Samaritan village. We are told by Luke that the people "Did not receive him." Knowing the great animosity that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans probably explains why Jesus was not accepted by them.

James and John took offense at this rejection which made them make a strange request of the Lord. They asked, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"

Sadly we Christians are often guilty of vengeance. We do it in different ways toward one another. Our way of getting vengeance may be to talk about and against one another, our brethren whom they have been commanded to love.

Too many Christians believe that **1 Corinthians 13** means nothing when it comes to their relationships with other Christians.

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They have never been able to reach this level of conduct in their lives. What a tragedy. **Isn't it wonderful that God does not retaliate against sinful men immediately when they sin, repaying evil for evil?**

When rejection takes place pride always enters the picture. Samson of the Old Testament was a very vain person. Because of his hatred of the Philistines and their rejection of him when he found his wife had been given to another man he went out and caught three hundred foxes.

He tied their tails together and put a torch between each pair of tails. He then turned them loose in the grain fields of the Philistines and thus burned up their crops which had not yet been harvested. Samson felt he had to get even. It seems that **"get even"** was the code Samson lived by.

B. When we are outraged over the evil of others we want to take revenge. Often when righteous people see evil being committed by others they want revenge take place. It's the **"eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"** concept.

Some feel that it is their place to punish evil doers. They have done wrong and they should not be allowed to get by without paying a penalty. An extreme example of this are those who would shoot, bomb or harm in some way those who are associated with abortion clinics.

We may and should oppose abortion but it is not our right to take vengeance on them. We are again reminded of the words of the apostle Paul, **"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves.....Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord."** Let God do the avenging. In the meantime pray for these people. Teach them the truth about the sacredness of life and that there is a better way to handle unwanted pregnancies.

While we would never do anything as evil and drastic as this yet we may be guilty of seeking revenge in other ways by talking about someone, by spreading vicious gossip. **Do you ever delight when someone you dislike is harmed in some way? Do we delight to hear that something bad has happened to someone we do not like? Do we think, "He got exactly what was coming to him?"**

C. Revenge takes over when we are prejudice against someone. To be prejudice is to pre-judge someone. We can be prejudice against such things as color of skin (**race**), social and economic standing, a different culture, family reputation, personalities, or just plain **"he or she is not one of us."**

Revenge in this situation is practiced by ostracizing, looking down on and making it plain we do not accept this person. He or she is not welcome as far as we are concerned.

III. GRUDGES DON'T GO AWAY EASILY. SOMETIMES WE CARRY THEM WITH US TO THE GRAVE.

A. Like David some carry grudges to their death bed. What a waste of time and energy that could be spent in a profitable way. **What good can come from it?** Instead of good only harm and hurt can be the result.

B. James 5:9 **"Grudge not one against another, brethren lest ye be condemned: behold the judge standeth before the door."** We are not sure as to what these grudges were about that James speaks of. Whatever they were they were not good for the church. James sternly warns them that they could be condemned. The same applies to us today.

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C. Vengeance is a serious matter and needs to be put out of our lives. Then and only then can we have peace of mind. Don't let vengeance ruin your life. Peace of mind is worth whatever false pride we may have to give up.

D. Suppose you get your vengeance. [What good does it accomplish for you?](#) It is a useless waste of time and energy. It can only accomplish heartache. [What good would it do David since David would be dead when was slain?](#)

E. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed not sin, Nor was guile found in His mouth', who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."

CONCLUSION:

1. Those who show a revengeful nature end up being the ones destroyed rather than those they take vengeance on.
2. The worst thing is that it can rob us of our eternal salvation. We need to perform spiritual surgery as suggested by Jesus figuratively when he said, if you have an eye, hand or foot that offends then get rid of it so you can have eternal life. [See Matthew 18:8, 9.](#)

LITTLE IMPATIENCE FOXES # 14 INTROCUCTION

James 1:2-4 "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

[Do you ever have trials?](#) Sure you do. We all do. There are natural disasters that occur over which we have no control. Our world is filled with people with all kinds of characteristics, dispositions and passions. People can cause us to have varied trials. Hardly a day passes without something occurring which tries our patience.

When trials do come James admonishes Christians to "[let patience have its perfect work.](#)" This might be translated as follows, "[Let the testing of your faith produce courageous endurance.](#)" Endurance helps us to face all the hardships and trials that come into our lives.

Without perseverance the Christian is inadequate and lacking in Christian character. As long as this inadequacy exists we lack an essential ingredient to being successful in the Christian life. Thus in [Luke 21:19](#) "[In your patience ye shall win your souls.](#)" (KJV) "[In your patience possess your souls.](#)" (NKJV) "[By standing firm you will save yourselves.](#)" (NIV)

Patience then is so important to us that even our salvation is connected to it. [Why then is patience so dangerous to our spiritual welfare?](#) Because it will be very difficult for a Christian to survive. Most people who gave up and quit the church were low of patience.

IMPATIENCE CAUSES US TO GIVE UP

I am convinced that most Christians who give up and cease to be faithful to the Lord do so because their day to day struggles with family, friends, and the work place seem so great that they cave in and give up.

By Jimmy Eaton

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They never try to work out their problems with patience and the Lord's help. When one becomes a Christian troubles and hardships do not disappear. Life is filled with hardships and problems. Many of these things are directly related to the Christian life.

Paul has warned us in **2 Timothy 3:12** "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

In the parable of the sower which is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus speaks of different soils that the seed (**the word of God**) falls into. The stony ground that some Christians encounter is described by Jesus as being the temptations, tribulations, persecutions and afflictions of everyday life. They are unable to endure these things. They give up and thus do not survive.

Remember what Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 10:13** "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Notice three things about this verse. **(1)** We only suffer what is common to all men. It is not something new or greater than what has always been around. **(2)** It is not beyond our power to resist. **(3)** God will provide a way of escape.

We have Christian friends to rely upon. We have the Word of God to strengthen us. We can always resort to prayer. Probably the biggest thing is determination. Be determined that you will not give up but you will persevere and overcome.

IMPATIENCE CAN CAUSES US TO BE RESENTFUL.

Often people, even Christians will do things that discourage us even provoking us to anger. When this happens it can cause us to be resentful for the treatment we are receiving. Resentment can turn to anger and anger into revenge. We must recognize that Christians are going to say and do things that wrong others.

For example, some Christians have trouble controlling their tongues. **When their tongue gets out of control how are we to react to this?** When we are wronged it will help if we will realize that the problem is not with us, but with the one who provokes us. We can actually feel concern for such a person and try to help them.

Peter says, "**But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently this is commendable before God**" (**1 Pet. 2:20**). Just think of all that Paul suffered at the hands of men and fellow Christians. He could have allowed it to embitter him. Instead to chose to suffer wrong and press on for the sake of the gospel and the church.

CONCLUSION

Patience is a noble and very necessary characteristic for every Christian. Peter admonishes us to "**Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience.....**"

"**From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold**

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and nakedness---besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”

Had it not been for patience there is no way Paul could have made it through all these hardships. He goes ahead to say “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I a strong” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Paul could have been very resentful but instead he says he boasts in his infirmities. [How could he do this?](#) It was because of his patience. Satan wants us to give up and quit. He will do everything in his power to discourage us.

LITTLE BURIED TALENTS FOXES # 15 INTROCUCTION

In [Matthew 25:14-30](#) we have the parable of the talents. This is a familiar parable. A man has three servants. He is about to travel into another country so he calls in all three of his servants and divides out to them talents. One received five, the second received two and the third man received one.

This diversity of gifts is significant. No two were alike. Each was uniquely different. This is true of every person born into this world. If everyone were exactly the same there would be a vast neglect of important things. [How would you like to live in a world where everyone is exactly the same?](#) What a boring and dangerous world it would be.

Notice that each servant was given talents according to his ability. To have made these men all equal recipients would have been a gross injustice. Five talents would have been an intolerable burden to the man with one-talent ability. On the other hand the five talent man would not have been challenged by the one talent man.

We should never discount the importance of the one talent person. Jesus said that giving a cup of cold water would be rewarded. Each jester of kindness is important to God. It is important to his church. It is not something to be considered lightly or of no importance. Many like to claim they are a one talent person and then conclude they can’t do anything. This is just a cop out from getting involved in the vineyard of the Lord.

GOD EXPECTS US TO ENVOLVE OURSELVES IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF HIS KINGDOM.

The nature of the church is expressed in a number of ways. It is called the Kingdom of God, flock of God, the temple of God, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the family of God. All of these suggest some unique characteristic of the church that requires various talents.

In another parable the church is presented as the Vineyard of God. Men are called in at different times of the day to work. Yet at the end of the day all receive the same amount of pay. This parable sets forth both the idea of work and reward for our work. Those in the parable who came first to work in the vineyard complained about equal wages. People enter the Kingdom at different stages of their lives yet all will gain heaven.

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In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16). Good works are essential to please God.

James 2:24 "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

1 Timothy 6:18 "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share."

Titus 3:1 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work."

CONSIDER THE GREAT TASK THAT IS BEFORE US.

Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." We have been given a tremendous task. Today the world's population stands at about six billion people. The vast majority of these are lost and without hope. Unless they receive the gospel and obey it they cannot be saved.

Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send out laborers into His harvest." We find out why he said this in the next verse.

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" Again He spoke to the disciples, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest."

Often hear ask, "How is the church doing where you live? Often the answer comes back, "Oh we are holding our own." What has really happened is that they have lost their focus. Like those in Ephesus they had forsaken their first love. To the Philippians Paul wrote, "I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Philippians 4:17).

WHERE DO WE FIT INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The apostle Paul has much to say about this in 1 Corinthians 12. He begins by pointing out the nature of the body of Christ which is the church. He says, "For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ".

Here he is comparing the body of Christ – the church to a human body. The church is very much like a human body. He goes ahead to say, "For in fact the body is not one member but many". The church is made up of many different parts just like a human body.

Paul next points out the importance of each member or part of the body. He says, "If the foot should say, 'because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' It is therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body?"

These statements make it very clear that we cannot disassociate ourselves from functioning in some capacity in the body of Christ. Yet we often see this disassociation attitude manifested in the "they" expressions. "They are doing this or that." We should be saying "We" are doing this or that.

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Paul continues as he points out that the body cannot function without the cooperation of every member in the body. When there is envy, jealousy, pouting, and being hypocritical, it is impossible to have harmony and cooperation within the body.

He goes ahead to say, "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?" This points out that God has made us all different and at the same time dependent on one another. It takes everyone using their unique and special abilities to make the body function properly.

Continuing his illustration Paul says, "And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" The human body will fail even die when the various parts refuse to work together. The same is true in the church. The church will fail and even die when the various members refuse to use their talent and work together.

Notice further what Paul says. "But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body as it has pleased Him." The meaning is simple. In order for the church to function it takes a wide variety of talents and abilities.

God has made us so that each of us differs and has some unique talent he or she can contribute. What-ever that talent is we should use it. Some may have more than one talent. If so then we need to use all of them not just one of them.

Paul sees this diversity as a blessing which contributes to the welfare of the entire body of Christ. He says, "But now they are many members, yet one body." Just as it takes many body parts to make up the physical body so it takes many members of different abilities and gifts to make up the spiritual body of Christ. Regardless whether you consider yourself a 1, 2 or 5 talent person, use your abilities for Lord. No talent is insignificant.

LITTLE, LITTLE WHITE LIES FOXES # 16 INTROCUCTION

Lying whether its white, black or blue is one of the most common sins of humanity; so much so, that David said in one of his psalms "I said in my haste that all men are liars" (Psalm 116:11).

The very first sin recorded in the Bible is that of lying. Satan comes to Adam and Eve after they were placed in the Garden of Eden and says, "Ye shall not surely die." The first sin recorded in the church is lying. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit. The consequences were serious. They fell down dead. Still today in many places lying is a way of life with people.

Jesus said concerning Satan, "For he is a liar, and the father thereof" (John 8:44). A lie is the very opposite of truth. Satan is the originator of all falsehood. Unfortunately he has led many to follow his example leaving behind devastating effects.

WHAT IS A LIE?

It is any deception or misrepresentation on our part. We look with disdain upon the sin of fornication, drunkenness, robbery and such like, but look lightly on the sin of lying. In many countries lying is a way of life. Rarely is it censured. It is often excused as just a "little white lie" or just a "fib." Rarely will one say "I have lied." In fact a person who tells a lie would in most cases be insulted if he were called a liar.

By Jimmy Eaton

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Will a person be lost because he does not always tell the truth? The answer to this question can be found in **Revelation 21:8**. John writes that in the end some will be left out of heaven. They will be "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and all liars." In **chapter 22** John adds, "And whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (v. 15).

Lying is something that one puts away when he or she becomes a Christian. Paul writes to the Ephesians, "Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor (4:25). It is obvious that lying was common in Greek society. To the Colossians he wrote, "Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man" (3:9).

WHY IS LYING SO SINFUL?

It is because of the tremendous damage it does. There can be fearful and destructive consequences of broken hearts, divided homes and lost honor. All attest to just how destructive lying is. Think for just a moment what lying did to some of the people we read about in the Bible.

- (1) Adam and Eve lost their place in the Garden of Eden. Satan denied the consequences of disobedience. He promised knowledge equal to God's by partaking of the forbidden fruit.
- (2) Joseph was flung into a prison because of the lie of Potiphar's wife.
- (3) Isaac was lied to and the result was a lifelong rupture between two brothers.
- (4) Because of the lies told by false witnesses Naboth was put to death and Ahab gained control over his vineyard.
- (5) Witnesses lied and Christ was convicted to crimes he never committed.
- (6) Paul was hounded throughout his life by evil accusations by religious bigots.

Sometimes you can lie without speaking a false word. Look what the brothers of Joseph did to their father when they showed him Jacob's coat which had been dipped in blood. Have always wondered what transpired when Jacob discovered Joseph was well and alive in Egypt. You can lie by cheating on a test without saying anything.

Lies strike at the very foundation and fiber of an individuals' character. A man's honor and integrity is one of the most precious possessions he has. To lie about a person is to attack his moral integrity. One of the worst insults a person can receive is to be called "a liar." The Jews used another word when they put Jesus on trial. They said he blasphemed.

It destroys trust which is one of the foundation stones of society. Trust is what our entire society is built upon. Falsehood would destroy our society. Suppose no one could be trusted in any of their relationships to their home, business, society, government, and church.

It would mean that homes would disintegrate, business partnerships would be dissolved. Businesses would fail. Our whole industrial structure would collapse. Anarchy would supplant government. The church would be left in shambles.

THERE ARE MANY DEADLY FORMS OF LYING.

Probably the worst form of lying is malicious lying. This is telling a lie for the express purpose of injuring another's reputation, even causing unjust punishment to be inflicted. The motive of malice is behind this kind of lying. It was this kind of lies that were told against Jesus, by the false witnesses.

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Moses' law said, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." Jewish leaders know this law well, yet they ignored it.

There are lies that we might style as selfish lies, lies told for the benefit of the one who tells them. This is the kind of lie Ananias and Sapphira told. They wanted to keep part of the money and at the same time receive credit for giving all of it.

The ear as well as the tongue can be involved in lying. When you receive or accept an unconfirmed report you may be receiving a lie. It is your privilege –and may become your duty to investigate. If you do not investigate then you should refuse to receive the report.

The word of God provides a passage that serves as a safeguard in this situation. "At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established." Notice that it is a witness, not a talebearer. Witnesses, not gossipers.

To speak half truths is lying. "For the lie which is half-truth is ever the greatest of lies." Many people only give half-truths. Instead of telling the full truth about something they tell only enough truth to get them out of trouble. A big black lie cannot be whittled down to a little white lie. This is a half-truth to cover up the full truth.

I once asked a Christian marriage counselor what advice he gave to men who came to him with a guilty conscience after having an extramarital affair. He said, I tell them to lie through their teeth but if they are consumed by guilt and feel have to confess their unfaithfulness then exaggerate what happen to the point it does not sound reasonable.

You have confessed and your wife does not believe you. I have had preachers tell me they would not advise a person to tell the truth. Don't say anything. What they don't know won't hurt them.

Some people are perpetual liars. (Brushy Mtn. prisoner) Feel compelled to make others think highly of them. One told me he a Jewelry shop on Ninth Street. Never had prisoner say outright "I'm guilty."

One said he was in another state at time of crime. Some feel compelled because of skeletons in the closet. The family secret must be suppressed at all cost. David slobbered and pretended to be mentally unbalanced to preserve his life.

HOW TO OVERCOME LYING.

Cultivate a passion for the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Truth is linked to freedom. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:33). When you love the truth you become identified with Christ, who is the Jesus that said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Love is the greatest deterrent to lying. Just a few verses from 1 Corinthians 13 would eliminate all lying. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (v. 8-12). Finally, be afraid to lie. Remember Revelation 21:8 "All liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

LITTLE SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOXES # 17

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INTROCUCTION

To be self righteous is to think of oneself as being more righteous or moral than others. No group of people in Jesus times exemplified self-righteousness as much as did the Pharisees. They were in constant conflict with Jesus.

There are so many instances of Jesus being confronted by the Pharisees that would seem to indicate the Lord wants us to learn some important lessons about the Pharisees. It has always been with us unto this day.

Jesus gives us a parable of two men who were both sinners. However, one does not seem to know it. The contrast between the two is very interesting. This parable is found in [Luke 18:9-14](#). One man is a Pharisee and the other is a publican. The Pharisees were the predominant religious sect of Jesus day.

The publicans were for the most part tax collectors who hired themselves out to the Romans to collect taxes or else performed some civil service work. They were notorious for cheating people. They were despised by their fellow Jews because they took the Jew's money and turned it over to the Romans ([Gentiles](#)) who practiced idolatry. They were under Roman authority, occupied and controlled by Roman soldiers which was even worse.

Notice the reading of this parable. **“And He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

THERE WERE CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE SELF-RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE

First, there was the feeling of superiority. Jesus begins the parable by saying that it is about people who trust in themselves that they are righteous. The Pharisee obviously had many good points. Obviously he was not an immoral man. He was not an adulterer, an extortioners, nor unjust. He avoided many of the outward sins.

He even went beyond what God required. The law required fasting once each year at the time of the Day of Atonement. Thus he fasted a hundred times more than what God required. Thus his tithing exceeded what was required of God. God had commanded tithing only on what they gained from their fields and cattle. Pharisees even tithed what they bought. It is as if they had in their view they had improved on God's law.

He sounds as if he had placed God in debt, that God owed him salvation on the basis of the good deeds that he did and his outward observance of the commandments of the law. There was a certain arrogance about him that he could feel no sympathy toward others. He despised the tax collector.

He acknowledged he had no need, sought no blessing, confessed no sin and sought no mercy. His prayer was as cold and formal as an icicle. If we look close we may see ourselves in this Pharisee. I am convinced that many in the church today are very much like the Pharisees.

It is not uncommon to hear brethren brag about how sound they are, or how sound the church is where they are members.

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Then they look upon others as unsound because they do not do things exactly like the way they think they should bone. Like the Pharisee we can go beyond what God has commanded by setting up additional laws, rules and regulations which God has not commanded.

A few years ago I visited a church building that had a sign over the door leading into the auditorium. It read, "Only the KJV or ASV may be read in this building." I do not doubt the sincerity of these brethren. However they would look down on anyone who dares to reads from another translation.

Just one examples of imposing a law that God has never imposed. Without realizing it they are adding to God's word. Binding laws that God has not bound is wrong. Without realizing it some churches actually write creeds.

To the Jews there were two sources of authority in religious matters. **First**, there were the written scriptures written down by Moses. **Second** there was supposedly an oral law God gave to Moses on Sinai and was passed by down from generation to generation called the Mishnah both were considered to be equal. The oral law was actually an interpretation of an excess of 600 laws.

We tend to do the same thing. There are the written laws of the New Testament. But often we go beyond what is written and create certain oral laws which become just as authoritative as the written law. Examples of oral laws today.

Must have an opening and closing prayer. Fixed order of worship.

Use only the KJV or American Standard only. There is no perfect translation.

Child should be 12 years old before baptism. Must get this from Jesus going up to the temple at age 12.

Men who serve at table must wear coat and tie and no hair that reached down to the shoulders.

Woman cannot teach a young boy who has been baptized. Baptism does not make a man out of a child.

Cannot have a kitchen in the church building.

An interesting conversation Jesus had with the Pharisees is found in **Mark 7:5-13**.

Understand that Christians often have such deep feelings about certain things that it would violate their con-science to do them. We should all respect a person who has deep conscientious feelings. But at the same time they should not try to bind their feelings on others.

This is where we so often get into trouble. A person who is very dogmatic can cause a divisive spirit within a congregation. Paul brings this up in **Romans 14:1-6**. A wonderful motto came out of Restoration in, "**MATTERS OF FAITH, UNITY, IN MATTERS OF OPINION, LIBERTY, IN ALL THINGS LOVE.**"

A second characteristic was his boasting spirit. The Pharisee said, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector."

Can be very proud of himself, talking openly about how sound, how strong, how faithful he is. Talk about how they handled themselves when confronted with some false teaching or even some broken tradition which they hold as sacred. Once painted for a man who had somewhat a record in attendance but would not pay me.

A third characteristic was his condemning spirit. It is so easy for good moral people to get into the condemning business. We take upon ourselves prerogatives that belong only to God. Some Christians look with contempt on sinners. This Pharisee did not really go to pray to God. He really prayed to himself. He went to the temple to tell God how good he was.

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But the question is not, "Am I as good as or better than my fellow man?" The question is, "Am I Christ like?" He had a big eye on himself, a bad eye on the publican, and no eye on God. The Pharisee received nothing since he asked for nothing.

The bottom line to his parable is found in the closing words. "For everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." This was the difference between the two men. One considered himself above the publican sinner and the publican admits his sinfulness by openly confessing it.

1 Peter 5:6 "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." The church is not club of proud, superior, perfect people. It is a hospital for sin sick sinners like me. Christian are not perfect, they are just people who have been forgiven although they do not deserve it.