

Song of Solomon 2: 15; “Catch us the Little Foxes”, Sermon # 30 in the series – “I am my Beloved’s, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall On January 9th, 2010 in the Afternoon Worship Service.

Who the speaker is, here in this verse, is hard to determine at first glance. But the more that you meditate upon it; it does become clear. The text says, “Catch us the foxes”. The word “catch”, I believe, refers to Christ giving a charge to his Church to catch them. I believe that He knows, that in giving her this charge that there will be much prayer ascending to Him from the lips of His Bride; that He would help her to catch them. He will help her because it will further the interests of His Kingdom. Christ’s command to her is that she would catch these foxes because of the vines that have tender grapes on them. He calls them “our vines”. Christ and His Church are one in purpose, and one in intent, to catch these little foxes and keep them from spoiling the vines that they are cultivating. So let us ask 1st – What do the vines that have tender grapes on them represent? 2nd – Who or what do the little foxes represent, who are spoiling the vines? And 3rd – How can they be caught?

1st – What do the vines that have tender grapes on them represent?

I hope that you understand, as a Christian, that it is the great purpose of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, that you bear fruit, spiritual fruit, unto Him. When you do this; you are glorifying God and fulfilling the purpose for which you have been called. You are fulfilling the purpose He intends, in relation to your being spiritually married to Him. Your Husband-Shepherd-King, the Lord Jesus Christ, is away on a journey and preparing great things for you to enjoy throughout all of eternity. While He is away; He expects that you, as a part of His Bride, His Church; will help tend the vineyard. He will pay spiritual visits to your soul, making His presence known to you at certain times, to encourage you and to check and see the progress that you are making in doing what He would have you to do is being done; planting, tending, and gathering fruit from the vineyard. He is always with you, by means of the presence of His Spirit, whether you know it or not, and His love and grace are working in your heart. But He is reserving the consummation of the marriage and the full revelation of Himself and His love until the time of His Second Coming. In the meantime, you are to gather with Him the fruits of the garden which He has planted.

Turn with me to Isaiah Chapter 5, and we will see the planting of this vineyard by the Lord in Old Testament times. “Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.” “He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine.” “He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.” “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge please, between Me and My vineyard.” “What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?” “Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?” “And now please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take

away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and shall be trampled down.” “I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns.” “I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it.” “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.” You can see from this that “the vineyard of the Lord of hosts” is Old Testament Israel. And you can further see that the Lord planted her as a faithful vine to Himself, on a very fruitful hill. He gave them faithful patriarchs in the beginning; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He gave them Moses and Joshua and Caleb to show them the way of living by faith in the promises. Under Moses’s leadership He brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and into the Promised Land; a land flowing with milk and honey. He gave them His holy law and He “fenced” Israel with many wise and holy commandments. He made them a holy nation and a kingdom to Himself. He gave them their priesthood, their altar, and all the ordinances of their sacrifices so that the atonement which Christ would eventually bring could be typified, and thus the believers among them would have their sins covered by that sacrifice, and forgiven by faith in His promises. He made a tower in the midst of it so that watchmen (their prophets) could stand in it and guard the vineyard. And He made a winepress in it; so that He expected it to bring forth good grapes. Now with all of these tremendous privileges and blessings, you would think that they could bring forth good fruit unto Him. But, instead of bringing forth good grapes, Israel brought forth wild grapes, it says here. At the end of verse 7 it says that the Lord looked for justice, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.” This was the good fruit that God was looking for then. And it is still what He is looking for now. He is looking for justice, righteousness, and showing kindness to others; to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

But something else had to be done; something else had to take place for God’s Israel to bear fruit unto Him. She could not do it on her own, and this God proved to her in those Old Covenant times. Israel was not a faithful vine, and not a faithful Bride, during much of the Old Testament time period. There was only one way that she could ever become so. Turn with me to John Chapter 15, verse 1 - The Lord Jesus says here – “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” “Abide in Me, and I in you.” “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” “I am the vine, you are the branches.” “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” “If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” “If you abide in me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” This is how God’s Israel becomes a faithful vine. It is by being grafted into Christ who is the true

Vine. They were a corrupt vine that produced bad grapes; Christ became the true vine. They were sinners; Christ was perfectly righteous. Every branch; every believer in Christ who then attempts to do and keep God's commandments, who loves to show mercy, and who walks humbly with God, by the power of Christ, will bear fruit. The Father prunes all such vine branches; He disciplines them by providentially ordering the circumstances in their life, which they may see as very difficult, so that they will then bear even more fruit. If anyone does not abide in Christ (continually trust in Christ for righteousness and grace), they are cast out as a branch and they will perish in the eternal fire. But the Father is glorified in our depending upon His life; the grace, and the power of Christ to bring forth the fruit of righteousness and love in our lives. We trust in His righteousness and not our own, as we seek to bear fruit for Him. The tender grapes are the tender buddings of the work of grace in the soul of the believer. They are the good fruit which comes from a good tree.(Vine) Or looking at it on the larger level, the tender grapes are the younger believers in the churches who will be greatly affected by the little foxes who are out to spoil the vines. And this leads us on –

2ndly – To ask; Who or what do the little foxes represent, who are spoiling the vines?

The fox is a very cunning clever creature who often tries to trick other creatures into thinking that he is a very straight-forward and friendly creature. Thereby, being deceived by his tricks; he then kills them and eats them. John Brown in his Dictionary says – “The fox is remarkable for its craftiness, it's winding motions, and its hurtfulness to vines and flocks, its eating of dead corpses, its desperate biting, &etc.” “It cannot be tamed so as to become harmless.” “It feeds on the more tame animals, rather than the wild: it has often, if not always, a variety of outlets to its den, that, if one be stopped up, it may escape by another.” “Foxes were very numerous in Canaan, lodging in hedges, old ruins, and the like; and hence some cities or countries were called Shual, which signifies a fox; as the land of Shual, Hazar-Shual, Shualabbin, and etc.; so –that it was easy enough for Samson to procure 300 of them; set their tails on fire and make them run through the fields of grain. (Judges 15:4) The fox is a creature which can spoil the vines, and ruin the whole grape harvest. They can spoil churches and can hinder the fruit-bearing of individual Christians. Let's look at this from the Scriptures. Turn with me to Ezekiel Chapter 13, verse 1. “And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, ‘Hear the word of the Lord!’” “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!’” “O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts.” Look down at verse 9. “My hand will be against the prophets who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel.” “Then you shall know that I am the Lord God.” “Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying ‘Peace!’ when there is no peace...” You can see here, clearly, that false prophets are compared to foxes in the deserts. The particular

kind of falsehood that these false prophets were propagating was the lie that sinners can find peace and have peace when God has not made peace with them; nor they with God. The people that they are preaching to have not repented of their sins, and yet these “foxes” proclaim peace to those who remain in their sin. They are fox-like in their seduction of God’s people to these false and destructive views. There are many false prophets like this in our land today; people who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! They will attempt to seduce God’s people to error and heresy with regard to doctrine. They will attempt to seduce them to compromise their moral purity on many levels.

You can see this if you will turn to Revelation 2, verse 18 – “To the angel of the church in Thyatira write, “These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass; I know your works, love, service, faith, and patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.” “Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.” “And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.” “Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.” “I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts.” “And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” Now, this is the Lord Jesus Christ catching the bigger foxes. But our text states that He expects His churches and individual people in those churches, to “catch the little foxes”. He expects His Bride to catch the little foxes. They must catch them and take them away. What are these little foxes? I believe that the little foxes are the little compromises in doctrine or in living a holy life, which God’s people allow, or are tempted to, in order to see greater results in their ministry. These “foxes” are the thoughts and reasonings of their own heart, tempting them to compromise. I also believe that these foxes could be people in our churches who attempt to criticize and bring division in relation to the work of building going on, and because they act in a fox-like way, they end up destroying much good that is being attempted by those churches. In regard to the first; the thoughts of compromise in relation to sound doctrine and holy practice must be taken captive to Christ; and those who perpetrate false doctrine must be caught and disciplined by the church if necessary, if they will not repent, so that they will not do harm to the life and work of the church. Titus 3: 8 shows us how to catch this kind of fox. “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.” “these things are good and profitable to men.” “But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.” “Reject a divisive man after the first and second warning.” Why? Because he is a spiritual fox. Let us now ask this final question.

3rd – How can these foxes be caught?

They are caught through the words and brave actions of ministers and other believers working with them; those who are serving the cause of Christ and His truth. I believe that if the foxes are those compromises in doctrine or holiness which we find in ourselves, we ourselves must take those thoughts of compromise captive and bring them to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10: 4 and 5) Christ was faithful and obedient to God His Father in all things great and small in relation to both truth and practicing righteousness. And He teaches us, as His followers, to be the same. If you would; turn with me to the book of Luke, Chapter 16, verse 10. Here Jesus gives us a principle of truth which we can and should apply to our own hearts. “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.” “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will you commit to your trust the true riches?” The context is the use of money which is another’s. If you are faithful in the least things in regard to that, you are faithful in much, the principle goes. If you are unrighteous with the least things in regard to its use, you are unrighteous in much. The principle also extends to the stewardship of holding to truth and righteousness across the board; doctrine and practice in laboring for Christ’s kingdom. Ask yourself this afternoon; am I attempting by the grace of God to be faithful in little things related to what I believe and hold to be true? Am I faithful in little things in relation to obedience to God’s commands, or do I compromise? But let’s now look at what happens when the little foxes are caught. Look over at Luke 19:11 – “Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.” “Therefore He said: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.’” “So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to the, ‘Do business till I come.’” “But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’” “And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants,, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.” “Then came the first, saying ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’” “And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’” You see; this man caught the little foxes in his life. He did want Christ to reign over him. All the temptations to compromise in the small matters of faithfulness and obedience were overcome by Christ’s grace. It can be the same with you.

But do not let the strong opinions of the little foxes inside or outside the church move you. Just remember Nehemiah when he was re-building the walls of Jerusalem. Some men who were foxes tried to stop him in his building. “But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were re-building the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews.” “And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, ‘What are these feeble Jews doing?’” “Will they fortify themselves?” “Will they offer sacrifices?” “Will they complete it in a day?” “Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are

burned?” Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, ‘Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.’ You see; they were the little foxes trying to spoil the vines. Over in Chapter 6, verse 1 it says, “Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it, that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, ‘Come let us meet together in the plain of Ono.’ “But they thought to do me harm.” So I sent messengers to them, saying, ‘I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.’ ‘Should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?’” And in verse 14 he prays saying, “My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid.” You see; Nehemiah caught the foxes of his fears by his prayers and the faith that God had called him to a great work. He was able to speak boldly and decisively. He believed that God had called him to a great work. He believed that God would allow him and those with him, to build and to complete that work that the Lord had given to them. Even so, I pray that he will allow us to do the same here in our church, no matter what foxes either from within or from outside our church may come.