

Little Foxes & Dead Flies

by Bill McLeod

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and dealing with small, seemingly insignificant things that can cause harm and spoil our relationship with God.

Duration: 24:09

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:24, Philippians 2:3, Philippians 2:21, James 2:5, 1 Peter 2:2

Topics: "Sin"

Description

In this sermon, Bill McLeod shares a personal experience of a man named George Bell who was a successful witness and soul winner. Despite his initial envy towards George, God challenged Bill to examine his own heart and live out the biblical principle of esteeming others better than himself. This encounter led Bill to a profound spiritual transformation as he knelt at the altar and experienced the touch of Jesus, reducing him to absolute humility. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of approaching the Word of God with sincerity and a hunger for growth, while laying aside malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking.

Transcript

Good morning, this is Bill McLeod coming from Winnipeg, Canada, and I'm going to speak on the subject of little foxes and dead flies. Beginning Solomon 2.15, "Take us, the foxes, the little foxes, for a vines of tender grapes." And then Ecclesiastes chapter 10 verse 1, it says, "The dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary. An apothecary is a pharmacist or a druggist.

Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking smell. So does a little folly, him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor." Psalm 119.128 says, "And this should be the address at which we all live, "Therefore I esteem all your precepts concerning all things to be right." And I hate every false way, but there are many commands of God or precepts, teachings of God that we never even think about, because they're so small we figure they're not that important and we'll be careful about fornication and adultery and stealing and hurting people and all that kind of stuff. But these other things, they're not really important.

And as a consequence, we really put ourselves in a bad relationship with the spirit of God. Little foxes, dead flies. What are some of these? Well, Philippians 2 verse 3 says, "Let each esteem other better than themselves." Now, you're listening, do you do this? Do you esteem other people better than yourself? Well people sometimes say, "Now wait a minute, how can I esteem my wife better than me when I know she

isn't it? Well, if you feel that way, of course, you don't understand.

We're supposed to esteem other people better than ourselves. It's one of those little least commandments, you know, but it's a command. Let each esteem other better than themselves.

And we very seldom do that. I mean, we certainly don't put ourselves down below anybody else, especially some people that we know are not very far up. They measure themselves by themselves and they're not wise, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 10.

You're not to compare yourself with other Christians. Christ is the model. He's the plumb line that God put in Israel.

And by him, things are judged to be straight, right, or otherwise. So let each esteem other better than themselves. I had a friend, he was a minister, a big fellow, about 6 foot 3, life of every party, young people loved him, fell to my droves.

And he heard I was coming down to Winnipeg from Saskatoon at the time of the revival and he thought, 'Well, I'll check it out. The devil cloud is in this thing, it can't be very emotional.' That's the way he reasoned. And so he showed up to the meeting.

He told me after, he said, 'You know, when your men gave their testimony, boy, that really hit me pretty hard, but it didn't move me. Not completely, it pushed me, but it didn't move me.' And then he said, 'You'll quote that verse, 'Let each esteem other better than themselves.' And he said, 'That's when the action began.' He said, 'It was just as if the Lord, the whole congregation disappeared and the Lord only stood in front of me.' And he asked me this question, 'Do you live this way?' And I said, 'Well, Lord, I think I do, yes.' And the Lord said, 'What about George Bell?' Now, George Bell was a minister friend that was a very successful witness and soul winner, and he himself was not that. And so he was very envious of this fellow, George Bell.

And so he said to God, 'You know, he's such a big windbag, I don't know how you can bless him the way you do.' He said this, and God said to him, 'I want you to get up now and go to the altar. I have something to tell you and teach you.' Well, I'm only halfway through the message, I see him coming down the aisle, face as white as a snowbank. He told me after, 'I was never so sick in all my life.' Now, all I can do is tell you what he told me and well, others and testimonies again and again.

It would take him ten minutes to tell the story, he'd weep the whole time, and here's what he said. You judge it. 'I was walking down the aisle towards the altar when the Lord Jesus met me, put his hand on my head, and reduced me to absolute zero.'

When I got to the altar, I knelt there, I couldn't find myself, I didn't know what to do, and the Lord came and said, 'What about George Bell?' And he said, 'Oh, Lord, he's a thousand times better than me.' And the Lord said, 'Well, now you've got it right.' And you know, he was transformed through that, whatever happened, he certainly was transformed as a Christian and became a song leader for me for some while until his health gave out. But we had some marvelous meetings together. But that's where it began.

Let each esteem other better than himself. It's just a little command, it's not important, I don't do that, but well, wait a minute now. Dead flies, little foxes, and then there's another one, 'Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare.' And that's in, well, Philippians 2.4, 1 Corinthians 10.24, 'Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare.' Philippians 2.21 says, 'Everybody does it.' That is, they

do seek their own, all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ.

But look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. We rarely, if ever, do that. We might do it if a brother or a sister or somebody close to us, but normally we don't. I was in some meetings in Ontario one time, and I happened to be in the basement of a church walking down the aisle.

I came around the corner and bumped into a man that I knew well but hadn't seen for years. And I called out his name and said, "Hey, am I ever glad to see you. How is it with you and God?" And he burst into tears and he said, "I was just hoping, I was just hoping that somebody would ask me." And you know, we're supposed to be looking not on our own things.

You keep on looking at your own problems and trials, you'll never get anywhere. You'll find all kinds of, they just pile up in front of you. You get concerned about somebody else.

Stop looking at all your own things, but think of other people's problems. I say again, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare." All right. And then Proverbs 6.18 says that there are certain things that God hates, but he regards as being an abomination.

And one of them was this, "The heart that devises wicked imaginations." Well, have you ever done that? Of course, I guess everybody has at some point done that, but it's just a little thing. We don't worry about it. We figure everybody does it.

You can't help it because you have a sinful nature, so we just do it. That's one of those little things again. God hates that.

It's an abomination to him for one of his children to have a heart that devises, that cooks up, that thinks evil things. God hates it. So it's not little, you know, something God's really concerned about.

And then when it comes to giving, 2 Corinthians 9, 6 says, "If you sow sparingly, you reap sparingly. If you sow bountifully, you reap bountifully." And in Luke 6.38 we're told that we're just to give largely. "Give and it shall be given unto you, a good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall men give unto your booze and forth, the same measure that you meet or give with others shall be measured to you again." You'll get in return exactly what you give.

And so if you're sowing sparingly, you'll reap sparingly. You're not giving much to the work of God. As a matter of fact, Paul, when he talked in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, he talked about people who give little, and he said that it was the point by which you can judge certain people.

They don't give to God because they don't really love God. They know they should, they just don't do it. The figure's not very important, just a little thing.

And so the Bible speaks about proving the sincerity of your love and the proof of your love, those two verses in 2 Corinthians chapter 1. And both of them are referring to giving. What's the proof of your love? Do you give sparingly? Do you give bountifully? Well, it's not important. It is important.

It's one of those little things. Jeremiah 4, verse 3 says, "Break up your fallow ground and do not sow among thorns." And so thorns, we're told by Jesus and Luke 8 and Mark and Matthew, that thorns, those are things like cares, riches, pleasures, and lusts. And these things are like thorns and they spring up on

our life as we let them.

And then what happens? They just choke the word of God. You know what the Bible says, these are the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby in 1 Peter chapter 2. I've had people say this, "Well, you know what, I've asked God to give me hunger for the Bible and he doesn't do it and I'm through in five minutes." One preacher told me, he said, "Five minutes a day is all I can do when it comes to reading the Bible. I just don't get anything out of it." You see, the problem is, you have to look at the text in its context.

There's an old saying that a text taken from its context becomes a pretext for anything. What's the context say? It says, "Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and enmities and all evil speakings, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word." Now if these things are in your life, malice, that's secret hatred, malice and guile and hypocrisy and enmities, evil speaking, and what's this evil speaking? We're simply saying something about a person you'd never see if they're standing in front of you. And these are things that choke the word of God.

You're not to sow them on thorns. It's useless. You study the Bible all you want, if you have these things, these thorns, lust and all these other things in your heart, you'll never get anywhere.

The word of God will do nothing for you. It's one of those little things again, you see. We're told to study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing, rightly handling the word of truth.

Like I say, you've got to leave it in the context. You've got to deal with these things, these thorns that are choking the word of God in any person's life. Well, I think of a preacher one time down in Idaho, and he came to me after some meetings and he said, you know, I'm just, when it comes to the Bible, I just want to be honest.

He said, I just have no love for it at all. I get my sermons elsewhere. He said, I get nothing from studying the Bible.

So I said, well, what, what, you know, what, what's in your life that's wrong? What, what sins are there? What's in there? And I, I quoted from first chapter two, malice is a malice there, hypocrisy and evil speaking of these things there, they'd seem like small things, you know, but small things can become big things because they can jam the pipes of the water, but I can't flow. This is his problem. And so he went to his knees and cried to God and God showed him some of these little things in his life.

He began dealing with them one by one. He was back. He wasn't in the church.

I was holding meetings and he'd been visiting from some distance away and he, he came back about four nights later and he told me after meeting, he said, man, he said, you know what? I read the Bible five hours to have such a hunger for it. I just can't leave it alone. You see, he got rid of the weeds.

You're not to sow among weeds. First time that you eat says, I will therefore that men pray everywhere. Do you do that? You pray everywhere? No, not usually.

As a matter of fact, if a couple of Christians meet, they just talk about the weather or their kids or something going on in politics or something going on in the church. Maybe, you know, but, um, I will therefore that men pray everywhere. We don't pray.

Why don't we pray when first Timothy two, eight says, I will therefore that men pray everywhere. All right. You see, we, we need to do this.

We need to pray everywhere. I remember reading, leading a lady to place one time. She was a high Anglican church, but she came from Wales originally and she was there as a child during the great Welsh revival, not, you know, far.

And, um, she said, you know, many wonderful things happened in those days. And she said, I'd be walking down the sidewalk and here's five or six men kneeling on the sidewalk with arms around each other and crying to God in prayer. And I knew they had something I never had.

I've known it all these years since. And I want to, I want to have what they had. And I led her to Christ.

Those men never realized when they were praying the way they did. There was a little girl walking by that was going to get saved in Canada many, many years later as a consequence of what they were doing then. You know, there's a bunch of us during those revival days after the revival in 71 and we were flying and we stopped at, we flew from Saskatoon to Winnipeg and we stopped in Winnipeg for several hours.

So, we just gathered in the rotunda there and lots of people walking by and we had a prayer meeting. And people stared at us wondering what in the world we were doing. There was five or six of us and we just prayed around the circle again and again and again.

Well, the Bible says we should do that. I will therefore let men pray everywhere. Otherwise, you know, a little folly, little foxes.

This spoil of ours, a little folly sends forth a stinking smell, you know. Okay. The ointment of the apothecary.

You see, an apothecary is a druggist or a pharmacist and he's talking about some things they might mix together. He's probably referring to something in a more primitive place than we understand today. But that's what it says.

You know, just a little folly is like dead flowers. And it causes the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking smell. And sometimes our life stinks because we have tried a little folly, a little foolish.

Not a big thing, but a little thing. Well, that's what it says. Solomon 2.15, Ecclesiastes 10.1. And then, 1 Peter 1.22, Seeing you have purified your souls and obeying the Spirit, it says we are to have fervent love among yourselves.

Fervent love. Seeing you have purified your souls and obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto what? Unto unfeigned love of the brethren. See that you love one another with a pure heart, fervently.

Do we do that? That's one of those commandments of God that we should be obeying, you know. We're told, for example, 1 Corinthians 16.14, Let all your things be done with love. Love is not something you put on for a special occasion, when a bunch of relatives are coming to stay at your place, uninvited.

They're just coming for a weekend, you don't know how you're going to put up with it. I remember a couple telling me they had this happening to them, so they stood in front of the mirror each day for an hour or two and practiced smiling. Because they didn't love these people.

We're supposed to love one another with a pure heart, fervently. That's one of those least commandments, you know. Ephesians 5 says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

Love your wife as you love your own body. And love your wife as you love yourself. Three times we're told to do this.

And, you know, someone said the only time my husband speaks Slovenian is in the bedroom. And we know, of course, what that means. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

And then wives, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. I heard a preacher say something recently, he quoted that, and then he said, now, wives are to be submissive to your husband in everything, but remember, it says that we Christians are to submit to one another in the fear of God. Submitting to one another in the fear of God.

And so he said, that means husbands have to submit themselves to the wives, too. So this sort of wipes out this sort of statement. I was very sure he said it.

He had a wide radio audience, and I'm sure he created problems in some homes. You see, in the first case, God was talking to wives and husbands. In the second case, he was talking to the church.

And you can't mix the two together. He tried to, he did. And it was really sad.

I'm not saying that husbands have to be belligerent and dictatorial in the home. It's not that at all. But in a loving way.

And the wife, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. I say again, that was to husbands and wives. And the other, submitting yourselves one to another fear of God, that was for the church.

Okay, again, it's making sure that you're not taking a text out of its context. Timothy 2.10 says we're to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. The word adorn there is a word, a Greek word, from which we get the English word cosmetic.

It means we're to make the gospel look as attractive as possible. It doesn't mean we change the message. But we live a life that's so attractive, so close to Christ, that we are literally adorning the doctrine of the gospel we witness to and perhaps preaching.

And so, we're to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Are we doing that? Well, it's one of those little things, you know, I don't bother. We have a good preach in our church.

And then, we're not to grieve or quench or resist or insult the Spirit of God. There's seven different ways of sinning against the Spirit of God. I mentioned a few.

Ephesians 4.30, we're not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you receive the day of redemption. And we can do that in many different ways. We can do it by just being garrulous and critical and judgmental and speaking harshly and not walking in love.

We're to walk in love, we're told. Remember Christ told us that in Ephesians 5, as Christ also loved us. He gave himself for us in offering a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling fragrance.

But again, dead flies cause the fragrance to stink. This is the problem. And then, lying out one to another.

Seeing you put off the old man in his ditch, you're not to lie because he remembers one of another, it says. And you know, they did a poll recently in the States. I read about it.

And it was really shocking to find that most people admit to lying every day about something. I saw a sign in a motel, a big sign. And it said, in the next 20 minutes, somebody will lie to you.

That's all it said. And people would read it and laugh and walk away. But dear people, sometimes we tell little fibs.

We call them white lies. A lie is a lie. People don't do that.

Don't do that. Because you agree with the Spirit of God. Lying out one to another.

Because, as Paul said in the context there, we put off the old man with his deeds. We're not to do that. All liars will have their parts in the lake of burns and fire and brimstone.

So we read in Revelation 21. Then we're told in Hebrews 3, 8, and 15, don't harden your heart. There's full reference to that in the Bible.

Who has hardened himself against God and is prosperable? Of course, nobody has. People try to, but you can't. Don't harden your heart.

We're supposed to have not a hard heart, but a very tender heart. So let all bitterness be put away over there in Ephesians. Put bitterness of any kind, every kind, away.

And be kind, tender-hearted, it says, forgiving one another. Even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. The Spirit of God, in inspiring Paul to write that, he foresaw that we would have people say things.

They'd sin against us, and we're going to have resentment in our heart. So we're to be kind and tender-hearted, forgiving one another. Even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.

So it's on the basis of God's forgiveness for us. He has freely forgiven us all trespassers. So on that basis, he's calling on us to forgive others, you see.

You know, a man in one of my meetings, he came to me. He told me the Lord spoke to me the other night. I went home, and I sought God.

And he showed me 35 different things that are wrong in my life. Small things, he said, but important things. And so, he said, I call it my death list.

I sing in a quartet. I told him I will not sing again until I've dealt with all 35 of these problems. And they were small things, like we're talking about here.

Small things, but he saw it was a death list. It was choking the Word of God. You're not to sow among thorns, remember? All right.

Dead flies cause the armpit of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor, a stinking smell. So does a little folly, him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor. Just a little folly, dear people.

And then the little foxes in Solomon 2.15. Little foxes spoil the vines. What are we doing about this? In Matthew, Jesus spoke about doing things to him, you've done it to me. Matthew 25.40 is what he said.

Inasmuch as you've done it to one of these, you've done it unto me. It might be a little thing you did for somebody else. But if you did it for somebody else in Jesus' spirit, you did it unto me, he said.

And if you teach men so, if you break one of these least commandments, Christ said, and teach men so, you'll be called the least in the kingdom of God. We've got to stop. We've got to absolutely stop.

That's Matthew 5.19. You've got to stop doing that. Categorizing sin. And saying, this is a big thing, and this is a small thing, and this small thing, that won't bug anybody.

The Lord won't bother, won't really jug him or jar him at all. And yet, you know, in James 2.5, this is a verse, it's very unlikely that anybody listening to this message today, wherever you are, whoever you are, it's very unlikely that you've ever heard a message from James 2.5. So what does it say? Well, it tells us...

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