

Little Foxes and Big Sins

by Michael L. Brown

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being aware of and taking heed of small, seemingly insignificant sins or issues that can ruin one's relationship with God or others.

Duration: 1:22:13

Topics: "Personal Holiness", "Accountability"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the dangers of allowing small sins to remain in our lives. He shares personal experiences of being tempted by pornography and how it led to more serious sins. The speaker emphasizes the importance of accountability and being open to correction in order to avoid destructive behavior patterns. He also highlights the issue of busyness and encourages listeners to evaluate how they spend their time. The sermon concludes with a reminder that three out of four pastors or leaders destroyed their ministries with adultery, emphasizing the need for vigilance in maintaining a godly lifestyle.

Transcript

Heavenly Father, as many here, the moment they stood, reached their hands up to You. Lord, it wasn't just habit, but we're reaching out to You, and we're acknowledging Your greatness and supremacy, and we're also standing in a posture, Lord, of complete openness to whatever You want to say to us, whatever You want to do in us. Lord, we recognize there are no big men and big women of God, no superstars.

We recognize You are the only great one. You are the only one worthy of praise and adoration. And Lord, we come to You in that mindset and ask You to help us to be all that You want us to be.

Help us be all that You have called us to be. Touch us, change us, meet us, transform us. In Jesus' name, give us ears to hear and a heart to respond, Lord.

Amen. Amen. You can be seated.

We're going to read from Song of Songs, Song of Solomon, the second chapter in a moment, and then we're going to go to Colossians 3 after that. I'm going to talk to you about little foxes and big sins. Little foxes and big sins.

I just want to give you a praise report before we start. We had a man interested in the revival, very gifted photographer, not a believer, Jewish background, decided he wanted to do some photography of what's happening in revival, miracles, and so on. And he asked if he could come visit here.

We said we'd spend time with him. My personal assistant, Scott, is Jewish. My wife and I are Jewish.

It was a great opportunity for us to share with him. He came the first night, being Thursday night, and we allowed him, with certain restrictions, to take some pictures in our midst. At the end of the service, the church photographer that was with him asked, would you like to receive prayer? And well, okay.

Steve lays hands on him. The power of God hits him. This heat goes through his whole body.

He falls to the ground, overcome by the spirit, begins weeping, has to find a corner, and just sobs in the corner, and says, this is not supposed to be happening. This is not supposed to be happening. She asked him would he like prayer again.

No, no, not yet. Someone else is praying later. He ends up getting prayed for.

Same thing, he's overcome. Last night, he's in the meeting again. We met with him for some time before the service and talked more.

And I said, you know, often the heart goes before the head. Often something's going on on the inside and you don't fully understand it. That's how God saved me.

He started changing my heart before I fully caught on with what was happening. You'll even have sinners sometimes beginning to defend the gospel that they once fought against. And you realize something's going on they don't even realize.

Well, last night when Steve said turn to the person next to ask him if they need forgiveness. Sure enough, he comes forward to the altar call with his camera in hand, gets on his knees crying, and then at one point just kind of stands up, you know, on his knees, but full, you know, as high as he can get himself, and takes his camera, and takes a shot of the altar call. I thought that is a good shot on your knees crying, taking a picture of other people at the altar.

I like that. And then I said, listen, make sure I get to pray for you. So he came over last night, and I prayed for him, and the power of God hit him again.

He's on his back sobbing and weeping. And I said, listen, we have an all-night prayer meeting at the school Friday nights from midnight to five. We'll have a couple hundred students that could be there praying.

You could come and be my guest. If you just want to come, we'll have one of the students walk around with you, so people will know you're authorized. And if you want to just see what's happening in our midst, I just want to expose in what God's doing.

Let him see. Let him be touched. I don't know if he's fully in the kingdom yet or not.

God knows. But it's an awesome thing. We've had it.

I love to see it when someone comes, and they've got on their jacket press. You know, we give them a press tag. They're a correspondent from a newspaper, a news magazine, or something.

I love it when they answer the altar calls, when they put the pen down, and they get on their knees and answer the altar calls. Praise God. Amen.

I'm going to tell you a story, and then I'm going to talk to you about little foxes. I'm not going to talk to you about fox hunts. I don't know much about fox hunts.

But Steve is getting ready to preach a fox hunt message. It's going to be an amazing message. But you may have heard the saying, little foxes spoil the vines.

And you may not have known where it is. Is it in the Bible? What's the context of it? When I was first saved, many of you know my testimony. You can get a copy of it over at our book table.

It's called From LSD to PhD. It's got a picture of me before I was saved, when I was shooting heroin and all that. And when I got saved, there was a huge void from where I'd been filled with drugs and junk and all this other stuff.

Now I was saved. So I just began to pursue God with all my heart. I was going for the devil all out.

Now I was going after God all out. And after I was saved some months, I started getting hungrier and hungrier and hungrier for the Word. I wanted to read the Word more and memorize Scripture more.

I tried to memorize a verse here and a verse there, and then started to memorize a verse every day. And I got to memorizing two verses a day. And by the time I was saved a year, I was memorizing 20 verses a day.

And I was in the Word, and God touched my mind. I was reading Scripture so much, and so much living in the Word, I could memorize 20 verses in an hour, and did it for six months running. In the midst of this time period, when I memorized all these verses and so on, a Jehovah's Witness, a woman, Jewish woman, who lived down the block from me, came by our house and wanted to talk to us.

My mom was home, and my mom was not particularly interested in religion. She's Jewish, but was not particularly interested in Judaism. And this woman begins to talk to her.

Now, of course, she's a proud Jewish mother, though. I'm her number one son. And the woman says, look, she says, I'm not really interested.

She said, wait for my son to come home. She said, he'll talk to you. She said, he'll convert you.

He converts everybody. Well, I didn't have all the wisdom in the world at that time, and I certainly could have used some more compassion and sensitivity. But man, I could quote Scripture.

And my mind was sharp. And as this woman was leaving, I happened to drive up, and just got my driver's license, happened to drive up. We started talking, and everything she threw at me, I had a Scripture answer for, but I could see she was thinking.

She was different than some of the others I had dealt with. And God really began to deal with her, and she ended up leaving Kingdom Hall, leaving Jehovah's Witnesses. But her husband, Jewish man, brilliant guy, college professor, eccentric, he would come after me day and night.

I mean, I think he lived for the times I'd come over, so he could just harass me with questions. And he'd be reading the Bible in every possible question. I mean, any question that anybody had ever raised through the years, they were in his head somehow, as he was reading.

And I was supposed to have a discussion. This woman, while she was still with Jehovah's Witnesses, arranged for one of her elders, who also happened to be Jewish, and the wife, the elder and his wife, to come over to the house, and we were going to have a debate and discussion about our faiths. And the husband wanted to witness it, to see which of us was right.

And I got over there, and then we get a call, listen, they can't make it, the guy is sick, and so on. And the husband was so disappointed. He was like a little boy.

And he pulled out these charts that he had made. He went through Galatians 5, and listed the fruit of the Spirit, and then the qualities of love in 1 Corinthians 13. He had them in colored, like crayons or colored markers on these big white boards, and he had my name, and the name of the other guy, and he was going to rate us during the debate to see who was more Christian.

I'm serious. He thought, well, you're known by your fruit. And one time, in the middle of one of, you know, he's after me with this point, and that point, and this point, and that point, and this point, and that point.

And he says, listen, he said, listen, how do you explain this? And he quotes some verse with rules about lending money. If you're lending money to a fellow Israelite, etc., you have to do it like this. Principles of, you know, lending and borrowing.

He says, how do you reconcile that with the verse that says, neither a borrower, nor a lender be? That's a good question. Where is that verse? Neither a borrower, I know everybody knows the verse, but how come it's not registering in my mind? So I think it's got to be somewhere, like it's obviously in Proverbs, but so the proverbial sayings like that start in the 10th chapter, and it's like, you know, where is it? Where else could it be? You know, and this, remember, I've been memorizing 20 verses a day at this point for months. I got a lot, just instant recall.

I mean, it's still in there, but you know, a lot of instant recall. So then finally, I did the thing I would normally do only as a last resort. I pull out the concordance, and I look, you know, and I mean, if it's there, it's there.

And I'm looking, and this thing's tormenting me for days. I can't find the verse. I can't find the thing.

We all know it's in the Bible. I can't explain the... Wait a second, that's Shakespeare. That's not in the Bible.

I don't know who among us realized, like, wait a second, that's just a proverbial saying. That's not even in the Bible. Well, I believe what the Bible says, God helps those who help themselves.

Chapter and verse, please. I believe what the Bible says, cleanliness is next to Godliness. We've got all these little sayings.

Most of them are not even in the Bible. Some of them are unscriptural in what they teach. And then you have little verses that are pulled out of context, where there is no vision, the people perish.

So, praise the Lord. We want to now show you a picture of what our new building is going to look like, so you can have a vision. And so, that's the great building.

Every time any church in America starts a building fund, you'll see it. We do that at any church, but you'll see it all the time. We start a building fund, and there's a picture.

It's like a thermometer. You know, we need a hundred thousand dollars, and we need a million dollars, and there's nothing wrong with this thing. You know, here's the thermometer, and it's going up in red.

You know, we've got twenty thousand, we've got fifty thousand. And then often you'll see a scripture where there is no vision, the people perish. Proverbs 29, 18.

Of course, it's got absolutely nothing to do with that. In Hebrew it's, which is, where there's no vision, meaning prophetic revelation, where there's no fresh prophetic word, the people cast off restraint. In other words, when there's not a word from God calling people to get right, and a fresh prophetic revelation of what the Spirit is saying, people cast off restraint.

But He who observes the Torah, keeps the law, is truly happy, is blessed. We have those kind of things where we pull a verse out, and it's not really what it means. How about, money answers all things.

Look, it's in the Bible, money answers all things. It is scripture. I mean, we need money.

Now, we agree, we need money. If you've got a few million dollars, and you don't know what to do with it, give it to our school, man, we'll use it. We'll use it.

We'll use it to send laborers out around the world. We'll use it. Every ministry uses money, needs money.

Last time I remember, to go to the grocery store and buy groceries, you had to pay for it. Last time I remember, had to pay for the phone bill, and the electric bill, and so on. Somebody was, major evangelist, was on television once, and he said, listen, let's be honest, without money you can't do anything.

Lennon Ravenhill heard that and said to me, Mike, I thought Jesus said, without me, you can't do anything. Well, where does it say money answers all things? Is that in the Bible? Yeah. Ecclesiastes 10, 19, at the end of a godless philosophy of life, you don't have to turn there.

This is the whole verse, probably reflecting the philosophy of the godless king. Prince has mentioned a few verses earlier. A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, and money is the answer for everything.

That's the philosophy of the world, not the church. Anyway, we've got these little verses, pulled out of context, that we misuse, or verses that don't even exist that we think are biblical verses. What about this little foxes? What about it? Little foxes spoil the vine.

Is it in the Bible? And if so, what does it mean? I have good news. In fact, I have doubly good news. The first good news is, it is in the Bible.

And the second good news is, it's quoted correctly. What do you know? You say, well, then why did you just give that whole introduction? Well, first thing, if you didn't hear it and learn it here, where would you learn it? You could have gone through the rest of your life deprived, especially visiting ministers. Just think of that.

You could have gone through the rest of your life without knowing that neither a baron nor a lender be as Shakespeare. Okay? If you're literate, you knew it was Shakespeare the moment I started talking. But most of us Americans are not that literate.

And if you didn't hear about money answers all things, and where there's no vision, the people perish, or somebody has to shoot back to your church immediately and just change that big banner in front of your church with the building fund scripture. But I said it in all seriousness, because in saying these things, it's going to help you to just remember this one little saying, this one little phrase, this one little teaching, this one little fact of scripture, of life, that's so important. It comes from a passage where sin is not the issue.

It comes from a passage where a relationship between man and woman is the issue, probably a relationship that is moving from courtship to marriage to marital intimacy. And you have the words of the lover and the beloved. Look at what it says in Song of Songs, chapter 2, verse 14.

My dove in the clefts of the rock in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face. Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is comely. This is the man speaking to the woman, often pictured as Jesus and his bride.

The church, the ancient rabbis pictured it as God and his bride, the people of Israel. But in its first and most natural sense, the man and the woman, courtship. My dove in the clefts of the rock in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face.

Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in full bloom. We just read you that same verse from the New Jewish Publication Society version.

Catch us the little foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, for our vineyard isn't blossomed. What's the image? In Ezekiel, the 13th chapter, God speaks of the false prophets being like jackals among the ruins. Rather than repairing the ruins, these jackals would run in and out of the holes and make the ruins worse.

There would be a wall that was supposed to be fortified in the city and there'd be these little animals running through it and burrowing and weakening it. There's a picture of what the false prophets did. This is a similar picture.

Little foxes, they're cute little things, bushy-tailed little things. If you didn't know, if you were maybe a dog lover and a cat lover and then you just saw a little fox somewhere, you probably wouldn't know that this thing could be vicious, that this thing was different, that this thing was wild, that this thing could be destructive. It's just a little fox though.

The property where we're building our house is in some wooded, wet area and it's a place where you've got a lot of poisonous snakes. This part of the country has them. And my wife on the property has seen some deer in nearby woods.

She's seen some foxes. Those don't bother her. Someone said that there are bears somewhere in the woods there.

That wouldn't be too pleasant to come on one of those. Someone mentioned some other animals. I can't believe out in the woods over there.

Yeah. Poisonous snakes, bad news, bad news. They're guns people specifically get, kill snakes, rattlesnakes, water moccasins.

Some of our workers or my wife different times have encountered these things and they just hold their ground, stare you down, come after you, some of them. But a fox, you're not going to get a gun for fox. A little fox, cute little fox.

There goes a little fox. You don't think of it as a threat. You don't think of it as a danger.

If I said now listen, listen, listen, we're going out on this expedition. There are lions and there are tigers and there are bears. Some of you saw that movie too.

And they're all out there. It's dangerous. They're cobras.

And they're foxes. You're not going to worry about the fox. If I said there could be lions, you're not going to worry about that fox, little fox, cute little fox.

I'm not going to feed the thing out of my hand. But that's no threat. That's no problem.

The fact is little foxes could go running through vineyards that were in full bloom. And they could go running through those vineyards and destroy those things. And eat up all the grapes and the vines and the tendrils and everything.

Little foxes. Totally destructive. And it's talking here.

He's not talking about a literal fox hunt. Although learning about a fox hunt would be a neat way to find out more about this passage and the way foxes have been hunted in history. It would be a neat way to figure out how we have to deal with them in our own lives.

And it may well be that you'll hear about that in the next night or two. But the image is let's not let anything get in, no matter how innocent, no matter how cute, no matter how little, no matter how non-threatening it seems, let's not let anything get in that's going to mess up our love, our relationship, our intimacy. It's the little foxes that spoil the vines.

Listen to what some of the writers of old have said. Listen to what Spurgeon said. If thou wouldst live with Christ, and walk with Christ, and see Christ, and have fellowship with Christ, take heed of the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.

Listen to what Thomas Brooks said, a Puritan author. There is great danger, yea, many times most danger in the smallest sins. Greater sins do sooner startle the soul, and awaken and rouse up the soul to repentance than lesser sins do.

Little sins often slide into the soul, and breed and work secretly and undiscernibly in the soul, till they come to be so strong as to trample upon the soul, and to cut the throat of the soul. There is oftentimes greatest danger to our bodies in the least diseases that hang upon us, because we are apt to make light of them, and to neglect the timely use of means for removing of them, till they are grown so strong that they prove mortal, or fatal to us. If you look over in Colossians 3, you'll see something interesting.

When we get saved, those of us that came out of overtly sinful lifestyles, God cleans us up quickly. If we're truly saved, we're going to get cleaned up. If we don't get cleaned up, you can question whether we were ever truly saved.

We can turn our backs on God, we can backslide, we have that capability. It's a difficult thing when you really are walking with God to utterly and completely turn your back on Him, and deny Him, and damn your own soul, but you can't. But the fact is, when you're truly saved, there's going to be a change in your life.

If there's no change in your life, then I question whether you were ever truly saved. So you're going to deal with the real serious junk right up front. You're going to deal with, if it was drugs, like in my case, or maybe pornography with somebody else, or maybe alcoholism with somebody else, or maybe violence in a street gang with somebody else, or maybe being a criminal, a thief with somebody else, or a child beater with somebody else.

Or an adulterer, or a homosexual with somebody else. You get saved. And what does it say in Colossians 3? Because we've been raised up with Jesus, we're now seated with Him.

Ephesians 2 tells us that. We've died, we're seated with Christ in heavenly places. We're seated with Jesus, the Messiah.

Verse 5, put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived, but now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these.

Anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you've taken off your old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge and the image of its creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, scythian, slave, or free, but Christ is all and in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you, and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

See, there is a progression in Colossians 3. First, dealing with things that bring down the wrath of God on the world. Sexual immorality, idolatry, these kinds of things. Interestingly, on all of Paul's lists of sins, it varies elsewhere in Scripture, but every time Paul lists sins, he always lists sexual immorality first.

Fornication, adultery, nothing's changed in human nature to this day. But after he lists those things, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, then he says, now listen, you gotta also get rid of anger, and rage, and malice, and slander, and filthy language, and don't lie. And then, after putting off all the junk, he says, then you gotta put on the image of Jesus, the Messiah, and clothe yourselves with love, and kindness, and compassion, and forgiveness.

When I first got saved, I put off the drugs. That was the first big thing. God, I'll never put a needle in my arm again.

Right before that, I had said I wouldn't drink anymore, but drinking wasn't as big a deal to me. I won't do drugs anymore. Then after, you know, I'll turn away from this, I'll turn away from this.

It was some weeks before God dealt with me about profanity. Some weeks before He convicted me about all, you know, every kind of profane word, just that's the way I talked. In fact, I was so used to talking like that, that I just substituted, you know, to try to change my speech habit, substituted another word.

You know, everything became stupid. Yeah, this stupid guy called me on the stupid phone the other day and stupid said to me, and I thought, this is not much better. I got rid of some of the words.

Some of you that spoke like that know what I'm talking about. But then, you know, a little bit after that, God deals with you another thing about attitude, about forgiveness, about this, about that. For most of us, most of our Christian lives, if we're serious about God, the big, big sins, if you know what I mean, the heavyweight sins, the ones that Paul lists and says, listen, anyone who lives like this does not make it into the kingdom of God.

If you're a drunkard, you don't make it. If you are sexually immoral, that is a characteristic of your life, that's who you are, you don't make it. If you're a murderer, you don't make it.

He lists these things categorically. If you're homosexual, practicing homosexual, you don't make it. Most of us, as believers, serious about God, those sins are not our ongoing problem.

Most of us dealt with that a long time ago when we got right with God. Now, if you're not careful, and I'm going to end with this, if you're not careful, if you're not vigilant, if you don't walk a circumspect life, if you don't keep the standards high, if you don't keep the little foxes out, one day those big sins could come back to haunt you. How many of you know ministers that have committed adultery? Ministers that have destroyed their lives through one sin or another.

Those big sins, that old man can try to resurrect after he's been killed. You've got to consider him dead, and you've got to not open the door. Some of us, though, have gone beyond even dealing with the big sin issues.

We've gone beyond, you know that, we got saved, we got cleaned up. Some here never dealt with those things. That was never a problem for you.

You were raised in a God-fearing home. When you were eleven years old, you truly came to know the Lord. You've never dealt with that.

Well, then what about the other things? What about the attitude stuff? What about gossip? What about jealousy? What about maybe a lustful thought, a fleeting thought? Some of you say, hey, listen, I'm human, I have battles, I have temptations, but, you know, I'm not struggling day and night in these things. I'm really going after God. And yet, you're still dull spiritually.

And yet, you know something is wrong. And yet, things are holding you back. And yet, you look at your life, and you're not really productive.

You may be running around like crazy, but you're not really productive. Perhaps, your problem is little foxes. Hebrews 12 tells us to lay aside, what? Every weight and the sin that so easily entangles.

You may be carrying weights that in and of themselves are not sins. You may be carrying weights that are slowing you down in your effectiveness for God, not sins, not things that in themselves are wrong, things that in themselves are perfectly neutral, or even acceptable, or even wholesome, or even praiseworthy, but they have become little foxes. They have become time stealers, time sappers.

They have become distractions. Listen, we're going to be in a battle until we see Jesus face to face. There's not going to be a whole lot of truth time.

There are some times you just rest in the Lord. You know, you may just, I don't know, maybe where you live, you're near a body of water, and you may just get out one time, maybe, sir, in a rowboat, and just sit there as the boat just drifts, or maybe just lay out there, and float, and just quote from Psalm 23, The Lord is my shepherd. Oh, peace, rest, quiet.

It's not long into that, Pastor, Pastor, we got an emergency. Sister Molly's daughter, the demon possessed one you prayed for yesterday, she just tried to kill herself. Mom, we got a problem.

Jamie just fell down, I think he broke his knee, and the dog peed on the rug. Mommy started screaming. Get on your knees to pray, and a million distractions.

It's an amazing thing, the moment you get on your knees to pray and focus in on God, everything that you remember that you haven't done. Why, why is it, why is it you get on your knees to pray, and balance the checkbook, I've got to balance the checkbook. That checkbook's been unbalanced for a day, or a week, or a month, or six months, or whatever it is, but the moment you focus in on prayer, I didn't call Molly, I didn't call Sally, I didn't talk to Pete, I didn't send that letter out.

I've got to clip my nails, my nails are long, yikes, I've got to... I actually found myself on more than one occasion, almost drawn, unconsciously, you know, while I'm praying, and then I'm praying in the Spirit, praying in tongues, and flipping through the checkbook, it's like, what? What are you doing? Or walking over to the bathroom to get, you know, nail clippers. While praying in tongues, of course, it's like, what are you doing? Listen, there's always going to be a battle, and then you're doing just fine, and, whoa, temptation hits you. Could be somebody really wrongs you, and you're fine with it, and all of a sudden it starts to, it's going to eat away at you.

Look, what they did is wrong, you're going to have, you can't, you forgave them, you let them off the hook, you can't do that. Or somebody starts coming to your church, you know, and years before you had a problem with pornography, and now someone starts coming to your church, and some attractive person stands up, and they praise the Lord, I used to be in X-rated movies, and God saved me, and then the devil starts saying, yeah, well, you need, they're going to be right in your church, how can you have them in your church, and you're going to fall, don't you want to, it's like, out of the blue, temptation. Listen, whatever it is, whatever the nature of the thing is, oh, no, what's going to happen? We just had a baby, and when they get older for college, will we have enough money to put them through school? What's about their grandchildren? What if they get called to the mission field? Worry over stupid things.

It's going to be a battle. I have never in all of my life consistently seen the level of attack that we've had here in the midst of revival. We joke about it.

It's either heaven or hell. I mean, you won't know from one day to the next what's going on. You know, we'll be in here, you know, for service.

And it could be, like last night, we were in the middle of a situation, dealing with someone that apparently lost their mind, went off the deep end. You know, they were going to drive to China. And then moments after that, and we were talking, you know, one of the pastors, he was involved, we were trying to get some wisdom as to how to help this person.

He's going to drive to China. That's moments before he determined that he was the Antichrist, because he was going to drive to China to do missions work. Somehow drive across the water.

God was going to get him there. And then he determined he was the Antichrist. Then he was going to kill himself.

You think, oh, gosh. We've got to pray. We've got to help this person.

And then right after, you know, moments before that, just meeting with a couple that just lost a baby after a protracted difficulty with pregnancy. And the baby was born. They lost the baby.

Just meet with them. And then this one that just gets back, led family members to the Lord after speaking at his dad's funeral, who just died of cancer. I mean, real life, we're all in the midst of it.

But that, everybody has to deal with that kind of stuff. But the waves of oppression, the waves of attack, the junk that hits, this mental oppression, these weights, these darts, it's wild. And it's part of being in the midst of a move of God, and it's part of being in the midst of revival.

You've often seen it in frontline ministry in different areas. It's intense. And it's just fine, because we're here to do battle, and we win.

That's just fine. No complaints. No problem.

There's going to be a battle. There are going to be problems. There are going to be difficulties.

We're in a race. We're in a war. If you're not in a battle, if you're not experiencing opposition, it's because you're not worthy of it.

Can I say that again? If you're not experiencing opposition, it's because you're not worthy of it. Why should the devil wake up someone who's sleeping? Why should the devil wake up a sleeping soldier? Someone's happy to play with toys. Why should the devil start attacking them so that they start playing with weapons? Some of us, everything, we're just kind of coasting.

No problem. We're no threat to the devil. We're no threat to the demonic strongholds of our society.

We're no threat to where the devil's ruled and reigned around the world, in different parts of the world, in different countries. We're no threat to that. You're happy, he's happy.

I believe sometimes he encourages people to give to some of our building programs. Because he figures if you're happy with a nice new building, you won't bother me, I won't bother you. We'll get that thing built, you'll be happy in your nice little nest there.

Breed, have a few more harmless chicks, it's no problem. The fact is, if you're going to be on the front lines, and if you're going to be going after God, there's going to be opposition, there's going to be battle, difficulty, temptation. And you may be vigilant when it comes to sin issues.

You may be vigilant when it comes to areas that you know would displease the Lord. Lord, I wouldn't watch anything that would displease you. Lord, I wouldn't go near places that would displease you.

Lord, I wouldn't dare speak a judgmental, negative word against a fellow brother or sister. Lord, I'd never raise my voice at a child. Lord, I'm careful to seek your face daily in song.

Could be that that's how you walk. Let me ask you a question. Are there little foxes chewing at the branches of your vines? Are there little foxes running around, plucking off some of those grapes, some of

them are nice, ripe, plucking them off, stealing.

You say, well, what do you mean? Let me come at this from two different angles. Let's first talk about things that are not sins in themselves. I'm amazed that I've always got to be as vigilant with little foxes as I have to be with sin.

I write a lot. I'm an author. And a lot of research and work I do, I've got a lot of information in the computer.

Bibles in Hebrew and Greek and Latin and German and other things like that, and then other Jewish literature in Hebrew and Aramaic. I do a lot of searching and study right there at the computer. And then with my writing and other things.

So I'm at the computer a lot. And I'd be amazed when God would really be moving on me, moving on me, to write, to write, to write. And I'm spending hours.

I'll get home from revival, and then maybe Nancy will go to sleep, maybe start at 1, 1.30 in the morning, I'll start writing, and go right till 2, 3, 4 in the morning. Sometimes even later, just writing, going after God. And all of a sudden I'll find myself.

You have a computer, it's about every computer. Windows computer, Windows-based computer has a couple of computer games on it. And I normally keep my computer free from computer games, because years ago, when I was getting a little cold spiritually in the late 70s, early 80s, I found myself addicted to video games.

I don't mean, you know, this demonic, I'm talking about just stupid video games. Car racing, baseball video game, those kind of things. This was years ago when they weren't nearly as seductive as they are today.

I mean seductive meaning good, appealing, challenging. But I'll find myself just, yeah, I think I'm just going to take a break and play the solitaire game that's on the computer. It's not a stupid thing.

But then I'll find myself, yeah, I think I'll be writing for a half hour, yeah, I think I'll take a break and play a solitaire game. I think I'll play another, well, I'm behind, you know, because you keep track of the money, you know, I'm behind. Let me at least see if I can win.

Then I realize 10 minutes has gone by, 15 minutes has gone by. This is unbelievable. And it's, I'm not saying it's the end of the world, the sin of all sins to do this.

What I'm saying is, before you know it, I'll get a little, you know, computer gadget. One of them's got a chess game in it. And you set the thing at different levels.

You know, every so often just to relax my mind a little bit, I'll just, you know, play a game like that, a chess kind of thing. Get away just from the writing and the heavy thinking and just think in a different way and just kind of relax doing it. It's like, oh man, I made a stupid move.

I'll play another game. Oh, I should have won. I'm going to play another game.

And then it's like, another little fox has just crept its way in. And before I know it, I'm spending more time doing that than reading the Bible before I go to sleep. It's like, I'll just play this one game before I go to sleep.

Look at that. Time waster. Time sapper.

Maybe you're a sports fan. Maybe just once a week or once every two weeks or something, or just kind of a regular thing, once a month, whatever. Not an addictive thing, but just in a time of relaxation, you say, hey, I just enjoy watching a ball game.

And maybe you have a son and he's really into the sport too. And you enjoy, once a month, you sit down and you watch the game. Not like just TV time, but you enjoy the thing together and, oh, what a shot.

And you explain how the game is played. It's just kind of fun, nothing time, just to unwind. But then what happens is you're a team which always, always, always loses.

This year is having a great year. And you find a way to work. You flip on the radio.

What happened last night? You get the score. Oh, they won again. Neat.

Over lunch, you'd always be reading the Bible, or just reading some other stuff, or godly edifying stuff. It's like, man, I've got to get the newspaper and hear about it. I hear it's a wild game.

And you read the whole thing. It's like, oh, man, look at how they're doing. Boy, they're leading the league in this statistic.

And you start checking the statistics every day. Next thing you realize, man, I'm going to watch this. There's another game on.

Hey, tell you something. There's another game on. They might make the playoffs.

Before you know it, you're watching this thing two nights a week, three nights a week. There's a prayer meeting. You always go to a prayer meeting.

Well, I don't have to go to a prayer meeting. They're in the playoffs. I've got to watch a playoff game.

This is the first time in 20 years they made the playoffs. Little Fox, before you know it, you're hooked. It's got you.

Oswald Chambers made a statement. Make it your habit to have no habits. Chew on that one.

Make it your habit to have no habits. Some of you think, well, if I write it down, then that conviction is going to stay with me. Don't worry about it.

You have entered it into your memory banks already. Write it down or not. Maybe, ladies, you're into decorating.

My wife's brilliant like that. Our neighbors used to have her over where we lived in Maryland. They do the same in New York, friends would.

But our neighbors in Maryland would ask her, hey, I just bought this. Could you come over and see how it looks? They knew two things. They knew she had good taste, and they knew she was totally honest.

She was the most honest person I've ever met in my life. I mean that bar none. I honestly mean that, bar none.

She'd go over to the house and say, I got this furniture, and I'm thinking of putting up this wallpaper. What do you think? She'd say, oh, no, that won't match. It's a nice piece of furniture, but that wallpaper won't match.

Yeah, I wasn't sure. And then they'd call back, what do you think? She'd say, oh, that's nice. If she says it's nice, it's nice.

Well, maybe you're, you know, you're decorating. That's fine. You have a house.

You want it to look nice. That's okay. Hmm.

I wonder what carpet's going to. Boy, there's a sale at this place. Check.

Ooh, look, there's a little thicker. Hmm. Maybe we should try.

I wonder how it's going to compliment the next room. If it matches this wallpaper. Before you know it, all of your daily thinking time is consumed with, should I go with the blue and the white? How's that going to affect the cabinet color? And you've got catalogs stacked this high.

If the catalogs fell over next to your bed, you'd die of suffocation. Well, the thing itself was fine. But next thing you know, little fox.

I gave a list of little foxes. Remember, I was discussing with my wife after the book came out. She said to me, where did you come up with this list? I said, that's just the things that came to me.

Let me just give you a list of little foxes. If the essence of holiness is serving God with an undivided heart. Okay, simple, workable definition of holiness.

Serving God with an undivided heart. Then anything that divides your heart detracts from holiness. Amen? Anything that divides your heart cools your love for God.

According to Wesley, anything that cools your heart is backsliding. It's an element of backsliding. I enjoy life.

If I watch a sports event with a friend. We were in an airport, had a few hours the other day. We sat down, my assistant and I, we got a bite to eat.

And there was a TV with a basketball game or football game we enjoyed watching. I can enjoy it, I can get into it. Enjoy playing sports with friends and enjoy just a... What's it called when you go away for a few days and you do nothing? Vacation! Vacation, that's right.

In theory, I can enjoy that too. No, I don't want you to think that we have a weird schedule here at all. Or that my wife and I have a weird schedule.

I wouldn't want you to think that at all. We took, last year, we went on vacation for three days. Which made up for no vacation in the previous two years.

But, you know, if we're just gonna have fun, we'll just have fun. Go out, have a nice meal, enjoy it. I don't rebuke the calories, I just eat it and suffer the penalty.

You know, just enjoy it. We've got these two little dogs, these two little Shih Tzus, 10 pound and 12 pound. One we inherited from someone, we call that one the step-dog.

We don't really like that one as much as the one that we raised. Our younger daughter, who's now married and out of the house, she was responsible for praying the dogs in. You know, how many kids have done that? You know, pray the dogs in, then leave.

But the little one, the one that we, you know, raised from a puppy, I mean, she just loves to play. And she's smart, I can't get rid of her. You know, I'll be at the computer and she'll come over and start barking.

And I'll say, alright, go find, and I'll tell her the specific toy. Go get the bag, go find Porky. Go get the kid, I mean, whatever, she's got a stack of toys.

By the end of the day, the house is strewn with her little toys. And we lived in Maryland, she'd have to run all the way through the house, you know, out of my study, down the hallway, through the kitchen, into the family room. And she'd come back a second later with that specific toy in her mouth.

How can you not then play with her? Unfortunately, playing with her means you now have to chase her around the house. She looks over her shoulder to make sure you're chasing. I enjoy playing with the dog.

I'll thank the Lord for her. Come home from Revival ready to collapse. There she is, ready.

Ready to play. I walk in the door from a trip, I'll be in India for a week, and come home ready to collapse. The moment I walk in the door, she sees me, yelps for joy and gets a toy and runs.

I have to chase. I enjoy it. Sometimes I have to tell her, enough already, enough already.

I've got to pray, I've got to work. Enough. But what I'm saying is I don't sit around all day saying, it is my goal to have no fun.

Lord, I'm going to please you today by living an absolutely boring life, devoid of any, nothing with any color. Everything has to be black and white only. Nothing with any fun, excitement, variety, taste.

No. No. I don't go to a restaurant and say, make it tasteless, please.

How do you like your steak? I like my steak medium rare, so burn it to a crisp. You know, if I'm going to have dessert, would you like dessert, sir? I don't ask them, oh yes, could you bring out another roll? I'd like a roll in butter. Now I get chocolate suicide or chocolate decadence or death by chocolate.

I don't know why it's always the chocolate desserts that have these names. Have you ever seen death by cheesecake? Or apple pie suicide? I want you to understand I'm not a killjoy. The point I'm making is this.

If you are not vigilant and diligent and always watching and keeping yourself disciplined, it could be an eating habit. I've often had to have no sweets for a month or two months. Last year just went two months without anything sweet.

Because otherwise it's like a habit. I'll be out on a mission trip somewhere craving a chocolate bar at midnight. I'd say this is no good.

This can't be. It's another little pull, another little thing, another annoying habit. So I just made a list of things.

Sometimes years past I would, because I'd normally have something sweet after lunch or after dinner or something every day. Sometimes I've lived for a year having something sweet once a month just for discipline purposes. So here's just a little list.

If you have Go and Sin No More, it's pages 115 and 160. Here's a little list of some of society's shrewdest little foxes. Sports.

Is there really a good reason to get so excited about someone throwing or kicking or catching a ball? And is it really that big a deal, seemingly something of cosmic, almost eternal importance, if someone breaks another record? Stocks. Many hearts literally rise and fall with the stock market. Computers and gadgets.

Yeah, I put that in for myself. This is one fox I deal with all too often. Cars.

You may be either lusting after the latest car or polishing and caressing your current car. News. How many times do you need to hear the same headlines in a day? There are people here that are news addicts.

You may have mastered the big sins. Sir, maybe you can't remember the last time you were tempted in a serious way with lust. Ma'am, you may not remember the last time you were tempted in a serious way with covetousness or greed or women with lust or men with greed or whatever the thing is.

You may not remember the last time you lost your temper. Better yet, your spouse may not remember the last time you lost your temper. I'm not yelling.

I'm just speaking clearly. It's like my first trip to Italy. We've been there.

Next month will be 14 times. My first trip, this poor translator who's an American who lived in Italy 20 years. But dear God, but it's just kind of burnt out, emotionally going through a tough time.

And the place we stayed, the family we stayed with only spoke Italian. So that meant we wanted to speak to them. Our translator had to be there to interpret.

The guy spoke a little German. I can read scholarly German. I don't speak German, so we try a little German.

So otherwise, the translator had to be there. And he was just back and forth and getting confused. And, you know, he'd be talking in English, Italian, English, Italian, back and forth.

When I spoke to the others, he had to translate into Italian. Then he translated back into English for me. And one day the guy at the table said something to me in Italian, and he repeated to me in Italian.

The translator repeated it to me in Italian. And his wife was sitting there, and she said, speak to him in English. And in Italian, I could at least understand these words in Italian.

He said in Italian, I am speaking English. I haven't lost my temper. So maybe you can't remember the last time you lost your temper.

Maybe you can't remember the last time that you were prayerless for days. You can't remember the last time you neglected the Word. You can't remember the last time that you had to get on your knees and grieve over an ugly sin that you had committed on a daily basis.

You know you fall short on a daily basis. You ask for cleansing on a daily basis. You understand that we're not perfect.

Our feet get dirty as we walk through this world. You understand that. Maybe your big battle is little foxes.

Maybe you're a newsaholic. Books. You read everything but the Bible.

Gardening. You spend hours on your knees planting and working, but minutes on your knees praying and worshiping. Cleaning.

Must everything in the house shine? Food addictions. Lack of discipline is contagious, and if you can't discipline your belly, you'll find it hard to discipline your brain. Should I repeat that? Lack of discipline is contagious.

If you can't discipline your belly, you'll find it hard to discipline your brain. Technology. Do you really need to be current on everything? Antiques.

You can't take them to heaven anyway. Fashion. Vanity, vanity, vanity.

Meditation. Decorating. Your mansion down here will never be perfect anyway, so why not moderate your taste a little? Documentaries or nature shows.

These can become fetishes too. Puzzles. Nancy said to me, why did you put puzzles? And I said, oh, it just came to mind.

Somebody out there is just addicted to puzzles. How in the world can you give more time daily to crossword puzzles or 1500-piece puzzles than to the word and prayer? Information. Internet overload.

Surfing the net until you drown. Talk radio. What would happen if God had your ear as much as the talk show host? Chat rooms.

Internet. So many hours, so little content. Video games.

They're only going to get better, more exciting and more addictive, so you better get control over them now. Leisure and vacations. Life does not consist of the amount of free time we can find.

Movies. This would be fine, a good movie to watch, but they can be little foxes. Weather.

Weather? I figured somebody reading that book is going to have a weather channel habit. Success. Whatever form it takes in business, in the arts, in education, it can be a harsh task master, always calling you one step higher, always needing one more minute of your time, never releasing you to spiritual pursuits.

Do those things tomorrow, it always says. Busyness. I'd encourage you to chart your week for one week and jot down over the course of a day how you spend every hour.

I'd encourage you to try doing that. Chart how you spend one week. What time you go to sleep, what time you get up.

Spend this amount of time. Meals, just eating, family, talking, doing nothing, meals, whatever. This amount of time, you know, showering, doing my hair, putting on makeup, whatever you do, sir, not putting on

makeup for you.

If you're putting on makeup, sir, I would suggest your problem is not what we would call a little fox. And you chart it out. Time spent on the telephone.

I'm not talking about if you're a salesperson and your job is you're on the telephone. If you're a pastor, okay, time spent on the phone with church matters. Time spent watching television, if you have a television.

Time spent going through email. Time spent in the Word, time spent in prayer. Time spent witnessing.

You just chart it out at the end of a week. Now probably, because you're checking yourself, you'll be a little bit better than normal. You know, if you're a big American football fan, and it's NFL Sunday, and there are going to be games, two games in the afternoon and one in night, that you may not watch two games.

You may watch part of one because you're going to be writing it down. But you ought to just live the way you'd normally live for a week. One of my friends in ministry that was really into American football, really into it.

For those from America wondering why I'm saying American football, because football around the rest of the world is soccer to us. And one Sunday he watched the first game on a Sunday afternoon, and then the second game on a Sunday afternoon, and then did some things, and then watched the third game Sunday night, and realized he had watched nine hours of football in a day. And God really dealt with him heavily about it.

I mean, he had to swear off watching football right through the best part of the season. And for him, it was a tough thing to do. Could be God will tell him to give it up for life.

In fact, I'll probably encourage him that that's probably what the Lord's telling him. You chart out your week. You know what's amazing though? I don't spend a lot of time watching television.

Maybe. I mean, I read the newspaper headlines briefly. News magazine I scan through maybe takes me half hour in a week, hour in a whole week.

Or maybe. I'm not a big talker. I'm not on the phone a lot.

I'm not on the phone a whole lot. Maybe. But you know how much meaningless, busy time there can be in our lives, especially as leaders? Do you realize how much purely wasted time that will have no kingdom significance whatsoever? Leaders can get bogged down with administrative matters, and buried under a paperwork avalanche, even though most of it is really petty and unessential.

And then there's silly stuff. Like filling out sweepstakes coupons. I got somebody in there.

I did somebody. Reading every piece of mail. Especially you're in ministry, you got to read the mail.

I'm on 90 mailing lists. It's only right that I read what the people say. It's only right if you're not praying for them, if you're not supporting them, to write them a note and say bless you, but you could spend your money better than sending me one of your newsletters.

Or email. Email is daily a blessing and a curse for everyone involved. Listen, you are going to have to give account to God one day.

In the book *How Saved Are We*, I have a chapter called *Redeeming the Time*. And I talk about the way some saintly people of old lived. I talk about some entries from the journal of Robert Murray McShane.

Steve and I have read the same types of authors for many years. That's why our hearts are in tune in so many of these issues. McShane one time just spent a day frivolously and said nothing meaningful came out of this day, to paraphrase him.

He said yet I'm going to have to give account for these 24 hours. If you can grab me a copy of *How Saved Are We*, I just want to quote what Wesley said, how he lived. Henry Martin, Cambridge scholar, brilliant young man, then called by God to the mission field.

All of his family died young from tuberculosis. He also died young. But served God till his last breath effectively.

During the work of many years, during the work of a lifetime, in just a few years, last century. When he was at Cambridge, he was known as the man who never lost an hour. I'm not driven like that.

I'm not obsessed as if oh no, God's mad at me because I wasted time. I'm mad at me when I waste time. You can get sick and you can recover your health.

You can mess up a friendship and recover that relationship years later. You can lose money and get it back. But when you lose time, you can't get it back.

It's one of the few things if you lose it, you can never, ever, ever get it back. And the clock is ticking, constantly. What do I have to show for my life? What do I have to show with the hours that God has given me? I remember my pastor in the church where I was saved made a comment, if you want something done, get it to a busy person.

The more time it seems you have on your hands, the less productive you can be, the less effective you can be, the less fruitful. Listen to John Wesley's rule of conduct. Here's a man who sought God earnestly for years, in the word, in prayer, reading classic Christian literature, but not truly saved until May 24th of 1738 at the age of 35.

And then was ablaze for God the remaining 53 years of his life. So he went to be with the Lord at the age of 88. What was produced out of his life is mind-boggling.

This was his rule of conduct. Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can. That's how he lived.

And he said, though I'm in haste, I'm never in a hurry. Why is it? Because I never undertake to do anything except I can do it with perfect calmness and spirit. Because whatever I'm going to undertake, I can do this, I can handle this, and I do it with perfect calmness and spirit.

Constantly on the move, yet not in a hurry. Listen to his rule of conduct again. Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

Traveled about 5,000 miles a year by horseback or carriage, preached over 50,000 sermons, wrote 233 books and pamphlets, from biblical commentaries to medical works. He read and reviewed everything of interest that was published in Europe. 1771, John Fletcher, who was considered the godliest man, the most Christ-like man of his generation, contemporary of Wesley.

Listen to what he said. He described Wesley as flying with unwearied diligence through the three kingdoms, speaking of the United Kingdom, calling sinners to repentance and to the healing fountain of Jesus' blood. Though oppressed with the weight of near 70 years and the cares of nearly 30,000 souls, he's shamed still by his unabated zeal and immense labors of all the young ministers in England, perhaps in Christendom.

He has generously blown the gospel trumpet and rode 20 miles before most of the professors who despise his labors have left their downy pillows. As he begins the day, the week, the year, so he concludes them still intent upon extensive services for the glory of the Redeemer and the good of souls. Exchanged after spending an evening too lightly, wrote this in his diary, my heart must break off from all these things.

What right have I to steal and abuse my master's time? Redeem it, he is crying to me. I want to speak in particular to the many ministers that are still here with us from the pastors' conference. Years ago, I was at a meeting ministering to a group of leaders.

One of the brothers in that group was used prophetically in the midst of that church and he had been proven in that and I sensed that gift in him. And when we were praying together one day, he came to me with a word. He said, Satan is going to try to chip away at your knees.

And I've never forgotten that and often I have not sufficiently heeded it. I'm convinced that everything in our lives flows out of our prayer life and our private walk with God. And the deeper our roots are in our private devotion to God, the more sturdy and firm our tree will be, the more people will be able to take refuge and shade under it, the more lasting fruit it will produce, putting down deep roots under the ground.

Is Satan chipping away at your knees? Have a million other things got to administrative load, fundraising, everybody's problem, paperwork, petty things. There is a pastor, a student of mine from Long Island that's pastoring with wonderful impact and effectiveness now on Long Island. And he never wanted to ask the church to do anything for him or hire people to do things he could do himself.

And he was going day and night. He was leading the worship. He was doing a lot of counseling.

He was doing all the preaching. He was doing everything day and night. And I came over one day.

I was going to be ministering there and I think he had just finished mowing all his yard. It wasn't just that he enjoyed doing it, wanted to get outside and do it. And he had a decent sized lawn and everything.

It was that, well, I don't want to ask anybody else to do it or hire somebody else to do it. I said, listen, man. I said, you are pushing to the limit.

It wasn't a matter of getting exercise. It was a matter of, well, I don't want to pay somebody to do it, you know, and I feel funny doing that when I can cut my own lawn. I said, listen, buddy.

You don't have the luxury of mowing that lawn and taking all the time being wiped out. You should have been meeting with God. You should have been praying.

You should have been with your family, whatever it was. And he knew it. His schedule was such.

I'm not saying if you mow your lawn you shouldn't. I'm saying his schedule was such that for him to do it or for him to do something himself on his house when 20 people in the church would have been more than glad to have done the work for him. They would have been thrilled to help him with it.

They would have been glad to do certain things themselves. I said, what are you doing? You've got more valuable things to do. I'm surrounded by godly people in our organization, in our school of ministry, in our traveling ministry.

One of the main things they try to do is free me to do what God's calling me to do. I still have to be responsible. I could still waste my time doing other things.

I still have to be disciplined and push when it's late and I'm tired to press in prayer or to do that writing. But the primary call on your life, sir, ma'am, if you're in the ministry, especially if you're in the ministry of the word, the primary calling, the most important thing that God is calling you to do is spend quality time with him in the word and prayer. Not figure out how that extension should look on that building.

Not figure out what new software is going to be best for the mailing list. Not figure out how to organize the church picnic. Now, you may have a certain setting in ministry where you have time to do some of these things after you're spending quality time with God alone.

You may have 20 or 30 people you're working with and, hey, you know, you're going to have to figure out some of these things. But I'm saying you have to look and see what's taking your time, what's taking your energy, what's taking your focus, what's taking your vision. Are little foxes spoiling your vines? Are the little things eating away? And you look at the end of the day, at the end of the week.

I'm really encouraging you and challenging you to do this. When you get home, check things out. Chart your time for a week, but do things the way you normally do them.

Or else, as you chart your time, do things the way you know you should and see at the end of the week how much more time you spent with God, how much more productive you've been in other activities, how many things you've gotten to that you hadn't gotten to before. And keep your eyes open for fresh new distractions. Little foxes can also be little sins.

Little sins. There's an interesting Jewish saying in the Talmud that when a man commits a sin one time, then a second time, it seems to him that it's permitted. You get used to it.

Did it once, it was bad, second time, it's really not that bad. Keep doing it, it's okay. One of the Puritans said first we practice sin, then we defend sin, then we boast about sin.

Practice it, and you start defending it, then you start boasting about it. That's the decline. Or there's some little sins.

Look, I used to be into pornography. I mean, this is hardly pornography. Split second of nudity in the movies I watch.

I used to have a fierce temper. Yeah, I do speak negatively about people all the time. I bad mouth people, but you don't know what my tongue used to be like.

Yeah, I berate the kids and call them jerks and stupid idiots, but I used to beat them. It's probably not the best thing for me to be watching, but it's a whole lot better than a lot of the other stuff. Are there little sins? It's the other way little foxes can come.

The problem with little sins, I think I've got a list in here about it, in fact. Little sins can become big sins. Little sins slow us and distract us.

Little sins dull us and desensitize us. Little sins sap our strength and steal our time. Little sins can more easily be justified and excused than big sins.

Little sins multiply more quickly than big sins. Spurgeon exhorted, asked then the question, what has driven Christ from thee? He hides his face behind the wall of thy sins. That wall may be built up of little pebbles as easily as of great stones.

The sea is made of drops, the rocks are made of grains, and the sea which divides thee from Christ may be filled with the drops of thy little sins, and the rock which is well may erect thy bark may have been made by the daily working of the coral insects of thy little sins. Let me tell you the other problem with little sins. I said that they can become big sins.

Let me explain. Let's say, sir, you're pastoring a church. Everyone thinks very highly of you.

One day you're caught having stolen a substantial amount of money from the offering to pay off a major debt you had. You've been putting money aside, pulling out of offerings. This big special offering was taken and you're caught misusing funds.

And people think, my God, how did it happen to Pastor Solis? How did it happen to that event? How did it happen? How did it happen to that sister? Sister, how in the world? That was such a godly person. And then you say, look, I was not a total hypocrite. But you know, I let little financial sins in for years.

I cheated on my income tax for years. I would figure out a way to underpay a bill and then dispute the bill and get some of the money back. I did that for years.

I did. And you know, I opened the door and then when the devil came with a big temptation, I had never thought of anything like that. He caught me in a weak moment.

But honestly, I opened the door crack for years. Maybe it's adultery. How did it happen? That person, he was so holy.

She was so holy. And we say, look, I've not been a hypocrite. Most everything you think about me is true.

That's how I've lived for God. But you know, in the area of sexual stuff, I never closed the door all the way. Like every few months, I was just fleeting.

It was never more than a minute or two. I look at some stuff on the internet. And you know, a few times on the road, I rented like a pornographic video.

I mean, I watched like five minutes and I was disgusted. But you know, it must have happened over the years. A lot of times.

I opened that door. I opened that door. And then those, quote, little sins.

I mean, those are pretty serious, what I just said. But led to that even more dramatic and ugly one. So let me present something to you.

Because the big sins that once used to get you, can still come back and get you, if you let the little ones stay around. Let me leave you this last thought. Brothers, sisters, new Christians, older ministers, is there anything in your life, in the pattern of your life, in your ongoing conduct, in the ongoing things that you allow? Behavior patterns, areas where you refuse correction, where you won't let yourself be accountable.

Three out of four pastors or leaders I worked with from 1971 to 1987, three out of four destroyed their ministries with adultery. Three out of the four. The one common denominator that I would find, because they were all totally different men, and excellent leaders in many ways.

The common denominator I found, looking back with each one, was a lack of accountability. Look at your own life, and ask yourself, if God forbid, some big fall came in some area, and people were shocked, would you say, yeah, but for years, I let those little foxes. Think about it.

Think about it in that context. Not the context of, well, the blessing of God is on me, and I mean, I don't plan on doing these things, it just happens, and really, you know, it's not that bad. Don't think, well, God's still using me, God's still blessing me, good things are still happening.

Don't think in that context. Think in the complete flip side. If a big fall came one day, would you say, yeah, let me explain how it happened.

In fact, let me warn you, because I never ever thought I'd take this, I never ever thought I'd commit this sin. Little foxes, I let them in, and they gnawed and gnawed and gnawed and gnawed and gnawed, until one day, the bottom fell out. I haven't preached in a normal way of preaching, I've been just talking to you from my heart, which is what I felt God wanted me to do in this session today.

But let me encourage you, and trust me, I preach this to myself on a regular basis, I examine myself. I was thinking about, God, you want me to speak on little foxes, and I was thinking about it, I thought, you know, I think I'm just going to play that little computer game on that, that little gadget. But interesting, huh? Careful.

Let me just read the closing words. I normally don't read stuff out of a chapter like this, but I was able to communicate this clearly, so I just want to leave this with you, and those that will be here tonight, I believe this will be a fitting introduction to Steve's message. Every outbreak of sin in our lives, every spark of the flesh rising in our souls, every little fox in our vineyards must be utterly purged, and relentlessly pursued.

Those bushy-tailed, bright-eyed creatures may seem cute and harmless, but they are gnawing nuisances and miserable marauders. They must be caught, they must be captured, and they must be killed. After all, the branches they chew on and the tendrils they tear apart are attached to the chief vine, Jesus himself.

That's why Spurgeon urged us to go with Jesus to the hunting. So, animal activists, out of my way. This fox hunt is for me.

Are you coming along? Why don't you stand at your feet with me? Let's pray. You know who you are. You know how you have to respond between you and God.

If you're here through the day, through the night, God will continue to work on these things in you. Father, I pray for me, I pray for each of us here. Help us, help us, help us to ruthlessly, vigilantly, patiently, diligently capture the foxes and kill the foxes that are spoiling our vines.

That our vineyard flows from you, O God. That our vineyard might not only be in full bloom, but come to full fruition for your honor and glory. May these words be planted in our hearts, not just today, but in the weeks and months to come.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.

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