

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

FOXES, VINES, AND TENDER GRAPES

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

Song of Solomon 2:15

In the beginning the LORD created the Heavens and the Earth and all that dwells therein. Every creature and plant was designed by HIM to perform exactly as HE intended. HE made the beasts of the field, sea, and air for HIS determined purpose. The complete and complex diversity of that creation has never, even to this day, (thousands of years after the fact) been discovered by mankind whom HE also created according to that same design when HE had finished HIS work of creation.

While the beasts and plants were made to serve HIS purpose and to manifest HIS glory (as were all things), HE created man to manifest the glory of HIS grace in their redemption. While the natural creation contains many fierce and powerful beasts, yet HE made man “*in HIS image*” as a sovereign over them all. “*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*” (Gen 1:26-28)

Thus, HE created the world for man’s habitation and made him its ruler in a natural sense (of course with the limitations which HE also purposed in order to remind men that HE alone is the ONE TRUE SOVEREIGN.) In order that men might not be lifted up with pride or forget their station before GOD, HE made them a little lower than those angelic beings which HE also created to be HIS servants and to do HIS bidding; both those which were elect and those which were not. (see I Tim.5:21; Jude 1:6)

When HE walked among men, the LORD JESUS used the natural creation to illustrate many Spiritual truths, in HIS various parables and teachings. Who can forget the SOWER of the seed and the various types of “ground” upon which those seed were sown? HE mentioned the goats and the sheep quite often in order to demonstrate the difference which HE makes in that creation. Sheep will always be sheep and goats will always be goats. HE used the “leaven” which “*leaveneth the whole loaf*” to illustrate the pernicious danger of false doctrine. The mustard seed, the pearl of great price, and the barren fig tree were set forth by HIM to manifest HIS kingdom. HE created all of these things unto the purpose of declaring HIS determination to redeem that people which HE set apart in CHRIST. “*In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.*” (Luke 10:21)

We read about foxes in both the OT and the NT. One of the most amusing accounts of the use of foxes was carried out by Samson. “*And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.*” (Jdg 15:4-5) Thus we see judgement brought upon the Philistines through the use of these creatures. The LORD used them to

illustrate HIS own solitary and sorrowful sojourn in this world. *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."* (Mat 8:20)

Foxes are sly creatures, both crafty and cunning, as they stalk their prey and pounce upon it without warning. Ezekiel likened the false prophets of Israel to foxes. *"O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts."* (Eze 13:4) He said that they *"prophesy out of their own hearts"*, and they *"follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!"* (see Eze 13:2-3) We can see Ezekiel's description quite vividly portraying the multitude of false prophets which abound in the world today. *"They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken?"* (Eze 13:6-7)

Solomon says that the most dangerous of "foxes" are those which are "little" (i.e.; they appear harmless like little pups, almost in some instances quite adorable.) The most insidious liars are those who speak much truth but yet subvert their hearers by interjecting the vain philosophies of men into what they say. Paul warned his hearers of such; *"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."* (1Cor 2:4-5; see Phil.3:18) He prefaced these remarks by reminding them that he had a very simple and straightforward message, *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."* (1Cor 2:2)

Any other message than this cannot be "the gospel". More than this is too much and less than this is too little. The work of CHRIST in the redemption of sinners cannot be overemphasized and any attempt to interject the will and ability of men in their natural state into the obtaining of salvation is a travesty which swerves from the TRUTH into "vain jangling" (see I Tim.1:6). The "little foxes" are often fond of saying we must be "balanced" and not forget the "responsibility of men". To try to put the "responsibility of men" on an equal footing with the obtaining of eternal redemption by the shedding of the blood of CHRIST is to lurch into the ditch and lead men to destruction. CHRIST is ALL.

"Little foxes" love to harp upon this issue or that. They love the "culture wars" and seek to involve the people of GOD in them or to excuse the wickedness of evil men. Paul very plainly dealt with this notion when he said, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* (2Cor.10:3-5) As reprehensible as we might find abortion, wokeness, and the current wickedness of this evil world, we are not called to do battle here. Evil men shall wax worse and worse as the cup of their iniquity is filled up. Let the dead bury their dead. *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."* (Gal 6:14-15)

The greatest field of battle which we will ever fight upon is in the warfare which takes place between our flesh and the SPIRIT of GOD, who leads us into all truth. Our sinful flesh will constantly engage our mind to consider that we are somehow going to improve ourselves in some fashion as to make ourselves more pleasing in the LORD's sight. This fleshly mind is one of those "little foxes" which would endeavor to "spoil the vines" by causing us to take our eyes off of HIM who is all of our RIGHTEOUSNESS. When Paul exhorted the children of GOD to "reckon ourselves dead unto sin" he at the same time exhorted us to recognize that we are "alive in CHRIST." This is not "make believe" but is rather a statement of fact which rests upon the finished work of CHRIST in our behalf.

Quite often the children of GOD find themselves bloodied and weary upon this battlefield, and in their own mind the outcome of the battle seems to hang in the balance. Yet these "tender grapes" are preserved by HIM who is their DELIVERER reminding them that *"Greater is HE that is in you than he that is in the world."* (I John 4:4) *"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."* (1John 3:20) *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom 7:24-25) *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."* (1Cor 1:30-31) Beware of the little foxes. Let no man beguile you. CHRIST is ALL.

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