

DEAD FLIES IN THE OINTMENT

(Eccl. 10:1)

INTRODUCTION: You have probably heard and used the saying, "There is a fly in the ointment". But, did you realize that this saying has its origin in the Bible? (text) We usually employ this saying to suggest that something otherwise good has been made bad by the presence of an undesirable element. (Example.)

Among the Jews, oil made fragrant by the perfumer was used for various important purposes. "With it priests and kings were anointed when they entered upon their offices; guests at the tables of the rich were treated to it as a luxury. It was used medicinally for outward application to the bodies of the sick, and with it corpses and the clothes in which they were wrapped were besprinkled before burial. Very great care was needed in the preparation of the material used for such special purposes. Elaborately concocted as the ointment was, it was easily spoiled and rendered worthless. It was, accordingly, necessary not only to take great pains in making it, but also in preserving it from contamination when made. If the vase or bottle in which it was put were accidentally or carelessly left open, its contents might soon be destroyed. A dead fly would soon corrupt the ointment, and turn it into a pestilent odour." (*Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 9, pg. 269*) Weight for weight there would be an enormous difference between the precious fluid and the wretched fly, but the fly will contaminate all the fluid in the container.

I. A LITTLE FOLLY, IN AN OTHERWISE GOOD MAN, OR WOMAN, WILL CORRUPT HIS, OR HER, REPUTATION (TEXT)

- A. "It is a painful fact that a little folly, one foolish act, one silly peculiarity of manner or disposition, will suffice to impair the real value of a man's wisdom and the estimation in which he was held. The little element of foolishness, like the little insect in the ointment, obscures the real excellence of the man, and deprives him of the honour that is really his due. And in religion we know that one fault unchecked, one secret sin cherished, poisons the whole character, makes a man lose the grace of God." (*Ibid, pg. 249*)
- B. We should fervently desire a good reputation (Prov. 22:1; Eccl. 7:1)
 - 1. One of the qualifications of an elder is that "*he must have good testimony from them that are without*" (I Tim. 3:7)
 - 2. Timothy had a good name for he "*was well reported of by the brethren*" (Acts 16:2)
 - 3. A little folly in our lives will keep us from influencing others for good (Mt. 5:16)
- C. A little folly is what people remember about someone rather than all their good deeds and words of wisdom (text)
 - 1. A secretary may: come to work always on time; dress modestly; and, efficiently do her work. However, if she has an affair with someone, that is what others will remember about her
 - 2. A preacher may have his sermons well prepared and deliver them fluently, but if he doesn't pay his bills, that is the thing for which he will be remembered
- D. Dead flies are inconspicuous in such places as pig pens, dumps, etc., but they are very noticeable in our food and drink (Example: Fake fly in ice cube for Aunt Gwen)
- E. A little folly in the lives of sinners goes unnoticed, but a little folly in the life of a Christian is very noticeable (Give example)
- F. Flies contaminate and corrupt (Ex. 8:24)
- G. Sin, also, contaminates and corrupts (I Cor. 5:6)

1. The whole church at Corinth was in danger of being corrupted (I Cor. 5:1,6)
 2. They were to withdraw from this sinful member (I Cor. 5:13)
- H. Sin corrupts and destroys our souls (Rom.6:23)

II. CONSIDER SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW THE LIVES OF GOOD MEN WERE CORRUPTED BY A LITTLE FOLLY

- A. Eli was both priest and judge (I Sam. 1:9; 4:18)
1. He had a good influence upon Samuel and gave him good advice (I Sam. 3:9)
 2. He humbly accepted God's will (I Sam. 3: 18)
 3. ISBE describes the character of Eli as "sincere and devout...full of humility and gentleness." (*Vol. II, pg. 928*)
 4. But there was "a fly in the ointment" – he did not restrain his sons from evil (I Sam. 2:22-25; 3:11-14)
- B. The rich, young ruler wanted to know what he must do to inherit eternal life (Mk. 10:17-22)
1. He showed respect for Jesus (vs. 17)
 2. He was concerned about the salvation of his soul (vs. 17)
 3. He had kept all the commandments Jesus had mentioned (vs. 20)
 4. His character was such that Jesus loved him (vs. 21)
 5. But there was "a fly in the ointment" – he was unwilling to practice self-denial (vs. 21,22)

III. LET US NOTICE A FEW OF THE LITTLE FOLLIES THAT CAN RUIN OUR REPUTATION AND INFLUENCE AS A CHRISTIAN. THE LITTLE FOLLY OF:

- A. Uncontrolled anger (Jam. 1:19,20) ,
1. God holds us responsible for controlling our tempers (Eph. 4:31; II Pet.1:5,6; Gal. 5:23)
 2. We often do great harm to ourselves, and the cause of Christ, when we lose our temper (Prov. 16:32)
 3. (Illustration: A woman, trying to justify her explosive temper, told the preacher that she became angry quickly, but she got over it quickly. He said, "A shotgun blast is quick, but it can do a lot of damage!")
- B. Saying curse words
1. No corrupt speech should come from our mouths (Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:8-10)
 2. A Christian told me that when he became a Christian, one of the men who worked for him said, "Mr. Arnold, you are going to have to stop cursing." He did!
 3. We shouldn't be telling, or listening, to dirty jokes (Eph. 5:3,4)
 4. Pure speech comes from a pure heart (Mt. 12:34; Phil. 4:8)
- C. Immodesty in dress (I Tim. 2:9,10)
1. (Read article "Modest Apparel" by Connie Adams.)
 2. (Read article "Three Views of Modesty" by Bill Hall.)
 3. (Read "Practicing Pornography" by Thomas Eaves, Sr.)
 4. Immodest apparel is lascivious (Gal.5:19-21)
 - a. The word "lascivious" is defined, "1. Having wanton desires; lustful; lewd. 2. Tending to produce sensual desires." (*Funk & Wagnall's Standard Dictionary*)
 - b. Nothing tends to produce lewd emotions in men more than a scantily attired female
 5. Your indecent apparel could cause someone to sin by having lustful thoughts (Mt. 5:27,28; Lk. 17:1,2)

6. Modesty must be found within one's heart. When one has modesty and a sense of shame in the heart, such a one will: possess "*a meek and quiet spirit*"; not defy God; not want to call attention to self; not be a stumbling-block to others; and, know what is decent and indecent articles of apparel (I Pet. 3:1-6)
 7. Does your manner of dress show that you honor God's dress code?
- D. Negligence in worshiping God
1. One of our duties as a child of God is that of assembling regularly with the saints to worship Him (Heb. 10:25)
 2. Some attend regularly at home, but miss while on vacation
 3. Some will attend one congregation for awhile, and then another congregation. They play the game "Can-you-guess-where-I'm-worshiping-today"?
 4. Those, who really love the Lord, enjoy studying the Bible, singing hymns of praise, praying to God, partaking of the Lord's Supper; etc. They really want to worship Him! (Ps.122:1)

CONCLUSION: Let us give attention to the little follies in our lives so our influence for good and our souls will not be destroyed! We should always strive to be as holy as God "*in all manner of living*". (I Pet. 1:15) In order to be as holy as God, we must have all sin removed from our soul. This is accomplished in baptism. (Acts 2:38)

~ Don Hastings ~