

# The Little Foxes

## Lesson 4 - The Little Fox Of Double-Mindedness

**Song of Solomon 2:15 KJV** Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines *have* tender grapes.

**James 1:8 KJV** A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

### I. INTRODUCTION—THE NATURE OF DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS

Another of the little foxes that can come in and destroy our effectiveness for the Kingdom of God is double-mindedness. Double-mindedness speaks of instability, doubting, hesitating, wishy-washy, wavering, or uncertain. A double-minded man is being pulled by two worlds and two different masters. In fact, he is a man who looks forward to plow the harvest of the future, but he also looks back in consideration of the past.

Barry Lorch in his San Diego Union column some time ago told of a debate on the floor of the United States Senate about 140 years ago. The issue was whether alcohol should be sold in the territories seeking statehood. One notoriously anti-alcohol senator, who, according to one description, was so dry he was a known fire hazard, challenged one of his colleagues to state his position on alcohol.

Supposedly his colleague stood up and said this: "You asked me how I feel about whiskey. Well, here's how I stand on the question. If when you say whiskey you mean that Devil's brew, the poison spirit, the bloody monster that defiles innocence, dethrones reason, destroys the home, creates misery and poverty, yes, literally takes bread from the mouths of little children; if you mean the evil drink that topples the Christian man from the pinnacle of righteousness and gracious living and causes him to descend to the pit of degradation, despair, shame, and helplessness, then I am certainly against it with all my heart.

"But if, when you say whiskey, you mean the oil of conversation, the philosophic wine, the ale consumed when good fellows get together, that puts a song in their hearts and laughter on their lips, the warm glow of contentment in their eyes; if you mean Christmas cheer; if you mean the stimulating drink that puts the spring in an old man's footsteps on a frosty morning; if you mean the drink whose sale puts, I'm told, millions of dollars into our treasury which are used to provide tender care for our little crippled children, or blind or deaf or dumb, our pitifully aged, and our infirm, to build highways and hospitals and schools, then I am certainly in favor of it. This is my stand, and I will not compromise." . . . . Maybe he was running for president.

Double-minded men are those who are constantly speaking out of both sides of their mouth. If there ever were a time when this fox needs to be put out of our lives it is now! Double-minded men and women become guilty of fostering instability in every part of their existence. It plays over into their family relationships, job responsibilities, and most detrimentally into their progress in the Kingdom of God.

The man that is double-minded falls into the strange category of being carnal and spiritual, serious and sensual, heavenly and worldly, and manifesting evidence of fleshly drives and spiritual progress. It is evident that there are two different wills that are driving this man.

- He is a man who wants to be saved but wants to satisfy his own lusts too.
- He is a man who can be happy in the next world but wants the pleasures of this one too.
- He is a man who has fits and starts of godliness but never a consistency about his walk.
- He is a man who lets his relationship with God have great flows and ebbs, it rises and falls, it grows and then it decays.
- He is a man who has a heart that is bound with impurity and mixes with the world while trying to fellowship with the church. His behavior in both places is repulsive.
- He is a man who is trying to shoot a bulls-eye on two targets with one arrow.
- He is a man who will repent of his sins and then repent of his repentance.
- He is a man who has fluctuating opinions that are determined by his company he is around.
- He is a man who is given to emotions that can be as calm as a quiet lake and then change to an angry sea that is whipped by hurricane-force winds.
- He is a man who has a great civil war of trust and distrust battling within.

There can be a temptation for every saint of God to fall to the trap of double-mindedness.

In John Bunyan's allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, there are three cities that are named that hold great fame. First is the City of Destruction where Christian is escaping from. His destination is to the famous Celestial City which is Heaven. The third city that gains the most attention is the one called Vanity Fair where much worldliness and distraction takes place. But there is another little town that features a character that attempts to take Christian off of his goal. The town is called the town of Deceit where a character named By-Ends comes out to have a talk with him about what he is doing. This town is populated by many unscrupulous characters whose intent is to deceive those who are attempting to serve the Lord. He is accompanied by Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, Mr. Fair Speech and Mr. Two-Tongues.

Mr. Facing-Both-Ways is a character who looks one way but is actually working in another way. They are like the oarsmen who do competitive racing in the rivers of England. Mr. Facing-Both-Ways is a hypocrite who is double-minded. His behavior depends on his crowd that surrounds him. He is a man who can howl with the wolves and then bleat with the sheep when necessity and deception demands for him to work in such a way. Mr. Facing-Both-Ways is a man who has no principles in his life.

#### **A. Quotes on Double-Mindedness**

**John Mason**—The double-minded man is easily overcome in an hour of temptation.

**E. Stanley Jones**—If you don't make up your mind, then your unmade mind will unmake you. Here is the place where there must be no dallying. For any dallying will be the Trojan horse that will get on the inside and open the gates to the enemy. God can do anything for the man who has made up his mind.

#### **B. Biblical References on Double-Mindedness**

The Bible also has much to say about the little fox of double-mindedness.

**1 Kings 18:21 KJV** And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

**2 Kings 17:33 KJV** They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

**2 Kings 17:41 KJV** So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

**Isaiah 29:13 KJV** Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

**Hosea 7:8-11 KJV** Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. **[9]** Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth *it* not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. **[10]** And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this. **[11]** Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

**Hosea 10:2 KJV** Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

**Matthew 6:24 KJV** No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

**2 Peter 2:20-22 KJV** For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. **[21]** For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. **[22]** But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

## **II. JAMES 1:8**

The classic verse for the dilemma of double-mindedness is found in James 1:8. The double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. The Greek word in this verse for double-minded is which gives the connotation of being two spirited, vacillating in opinion or purpose. The word also gives the understanding that it is a man who has two souls.

When Elijah confronted the children of Israel on Carmel, his question confronted them. “How long will you halt between two opinions?” The double-minded find great wavering going on in a manner that they are distracted between their conscience and the carnal impulses that push them. Their feelings carry them toward Baal and their conscience moves them toward God. If the devil can keep the world just as important as spiritual priorities, then we will fall into the troubled existence of one being double-minded. Double-mindedness can lead men to sin. The danger of being double-minded causes our spiritual walk to slow to a crawl and we are easily distracted. Double-mindedness will cause us to become dull to the need for evangelism and desensitized to the call for personal holiness. Double-minded people soon find it easy to justify and excuse something that in their earlier walk would have never been considered as acceptable behavior.

### **A. The Causes of Double-mindedness**

An understanding of the causes of spiritual instability can greatly assist us in the battle against this little fox that longs to destroy the fruit. Scripture has a way of defining the reasons for the instability of double-mindedness.

#### **1. Deception of False Doctrine**

The trap of false doctrine can be overwhelming. There can be a tendency to look toward the majority and think that the small number of true believers cannot be the only people who are ready to meet the Lord. However, the Word of God is very clear in its directives about what the true salvation message is. The

doctrine of the New Birth (John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38) and separation from the world are non-negotiable no matter what size that is represented.

**Galatians 3:1 KJV** O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

**Ephesians 4:14 KJV** That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

## **2. Spiritual Immaturity**

Spiritual immaturity and ignorance of the Word of God can cause us to be double-minded. This is the reason that Paul instructed in the Pastoral Epistles that a pastor not be a novice.

**1 Timothy 3:6-7 KJV** Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. **[7]** Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

**Hebrews 5:12-14 KJV** For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. **[13]** For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. **[14]** But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

## **3. Spiritual Shallowness**

Spiritual immaturity is different from spiritual shallowness. Spiritual shallowness has the tendency to bob along the surface of spiritual truth but never dig into the real depths of a relationship with God and His Word. However, spiritual shallowness leads people into the trap of thinking they are serious, disciplined, and spiritual when in reality they are not grounded. Then when the

testing comes along they are like the man who built his house on the sand and the storm destroyed all.

**Matthew 7:24-27 KJV** Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: [25] And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. [26] And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: [27] And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

**Ephesians 3:17 KJV** That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

**Colossians 2:7 KJV** Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

**2 Peter 1:4-10 KJV** Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. [5] And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; [6] And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; [7] And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. [8] For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. [10] Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

**Psalms 37:31 KJV** The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

#### **4. Worldliness**

A prevailing hunger for the things of this world will ultimately lead a man to a place of soul-numbing existence. You have to make up your mind about how close to God you want to get and how much of the world you want to digest.

**1 John 2:15-17 KJV** Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **[16]** For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. **[17]** And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

**Colossians 3:1-2 KJV** If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. **[2]** Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

## **5. Subtle Distractions**

The distractions of the devil can make us unstable. When the love for the Lord fades for something else it leads to double-mindedness. The devil will use money, fame, people, jobs, and various other outlets to get us off track. Solomon started well but got distracted.

**1 Kings 11:4 KJV** For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father.

**2 Timothy 4:10 KJV** For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

**Revelation 2:8 KJV** And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

## **6. Disregard for the Will of God**

Our Christian walk is a constant battle of wills, our will versus the will of God. When we move to a place that we are willful against the principles of God and reject what God has to say, we become unstable. So many in life have worked hard to get what they want but then realize that it is not what they wanted.



**Judges 2:17 KJV** And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so.

## **7. Not Heeding the Directions of Spiritual Leaders**

The previous Scripture leads us into the thought that when people do not heed the voices of a spiritual leaders, instability will lead to their downfall.

**Ephesians 4:11-19 KJV** And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; [12] For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: [13] Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: [14] That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; [15] But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: [16] From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. [17] This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, [18] Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: [19] Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

**John 6:66 KJV** From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

## **8. Difficulties That Cause Doubt**

Another way that double-mindedness is brought about is by the difficulties and trials of life. Problems can overwhelm us and make us panic, become fearful, and doubt the ability of the Lord to help us. Our difficulties are a test of our faith

and you can meet those difficulties in two ways. We can alter the difficulties or alter ourselves.

**Luke 14:27-34 KJV** And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. [28] For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*? [29] Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, [30] Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. [31] Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? [32] Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. [33] So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. [34] Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

## 9. Discouragement

A deadly tool the devil uses on saints is that of discouragement. He causes you to put question marks where God has already placed a period. Don't fall to the temptation of believing your discouragements and discouraging your beliefs (faith).

**Hebrews 10:23 KJV** Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)

**1 Thessalonians 5:24 KJV** Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*.

## 10. Foolish Fellowship

The wrong crowd can have a definite negative influence on a person's life. Many have backslidden because of their carnal friends.

**Proverbs 24:21 KJV** My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: *and* meddle not with them that are given to change:

**Numbers 16:1-3 KJV** Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took *men*: [2] And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: [3] And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, *Ye take* too much upon you, seeing all the congregation *are* holy, every one of them, and the LORD *is* among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

**Proverbs 13:20 KJV** He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

**1 Corinthians 15:33 KJV** Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

**1 Corinthians 15:33 NASB** Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

## **B. The Cure for Double-Mindedness**

A recent article (May 3, 2012) appeared in *The Christian Post* online newspaper. It had some very provoking things to say about the dilemma of the instability of the modern day church. It was written by Ginny Mooney and was entitled "Is 'the Culture' Really the Church's Problem?" She interviewed author Ken Myers on this issue. He said some provoking things concerning the church. It is summarized as follows:

Author Ken Myers doesn't believe "the culture" is the biggest challenge facing the Church today. Rather, it's the culture *in the church* that's the problem as many believers live not fully transformed by the Gospel. Myers, a former NPR reporter, is himself a thoughtful social critic who thinks deeply about the interplay between the church and the larger world.

According to Myers the biggest challenge the church faces today is not "the culture," as we often hear, that poses the most significant challenge for the church today. It's the culture ***of the church***. What I mean is, we have reduced the

Gospel to an abstract message of salvation that can be believed without having any necessary consequences for how we live. In contrast, the redemption announced in the Bible is clearly understood as restoring human thriving in creation.

Redemption is not just a restoration of our status before God through the life and work of Jesus Christ, but a restoration of our relationship with God as well. And our relationship with God is expressed in how we live. Salvation is about God's restoring our whole life, not just one invisible aspect of our being (our soul), but our life as lived out in the world in ways that are in keeping with how God made us. The goal of salvation is blessedness for us as human beings. In other words, we are saved so that our way of life can be fully in keeping with God's ordering of reality.

The church has been influenced by the broader culture in the following ways:

- The way in which the dominant role of technology in our lives promotes the deep assumption that we can fix anything;
- The way in which proliferating mechanisms of convenience erodes the virtues of patience and longsuffering;
- The way in which the elimination of standards of public propriety and manners undermines assumptions about the legitimacy of authority and deference to the communal needs; and
- The way in which the high prestige accorded to entertainers creates the conviction that every valuable experience should be entertaining.
- And this is just scratching the surface.

According to Myers, one of the biggest and most consequential forms of cultural captivity of the Church is the way Christians have accepted the rise in the mid-twentieth century of what we call "youth culture," with its assumption that intergenerational disconnection is the norm. Given the fact that culture rightly understood is an intergenerational system of communicating moral convictions, the very term "youth culture" should be seen as a contradiction in terms.

Marketers have successfully entrenched the notion of youth culture by creating product lines that are intended to define adolescent identity as a deliberate rejection of parental expectations. Not only does this age segregation weaken the

family's ability to pursue the cultural task of moral transmission, it also weakens the understanding of the family itself. A proper understanding of the meaning of family is intergenerational in all directions.

Also according to Myers spiritual transformation is a key element. He said, "Eugene Peterson has written that, "It is the task of the Christian community to give witness and guidance in the living of life in a culture that is relentless in reducing, constricting, and enervating life." Rather than assuming that a way of life is OK if there's no Bible verse opposing it, we should ask, "Are we living in a way that honors as fully as possible the kinds of creatures we are and the kind of world we live in?" To do this, there are some things that pastors and churches must do.

First, pastors need to be committed to the long-term task of nurturing mature believers. I recommend they read books like Eugene Peterson's *Practice Resurrection* and Gordon Smith's *Transforming Conversion*, both of which deal with the often neglected but basic goal of pastoring and preaching: of bringing people to maturity in Christ. The people under their care need to understand that the goal of the Church's life is to encourage continual growth in faithfulness.

Then they should study the Church's history (especially the history of the early Church) to understand ways in which the church's shepherds have called believers to be distinctive in their way of life – not in superficial or showy ways, but from the heart of their conviction.

Robert Wilken made a very similar comment in an interview given in 1998 in which he reflected on the early Church's posture toward its cultural surroundings. Wilken pointed out that the principal way in which the early Church leaders sustained cultural influence was by discipling its members, by conveying to them that the call of the Gospel was a call to embrace a new way of life. The Church was less interested in transforming the disorders of the Roman Empire than in building "its own sense of community, and it let these communities be the leaven that would gradually transform culture."

Christians can best serve the health of American culture by striving to be deliberate about and faithful to a way of life that Church historian Robert Wilken has called the "culture of the city of God." If congregations in America were

deeply and creatively committed to nurturing the culture of the city of God in their life together, I think it would have an inexorable effect on the lives of our neighbors. The more faithful we are in living out the ramifications of a Christian understanding of all things, the more out-of-synch we will be in American culture. But why should we wish for anything else? What can we offer the world if we are just like the world?

### III. CONCLUSION—POLYCARP'S LAST STAND

Revisiting some of the scenes in church history can bring us some encouragement of how we need to stand against a double-mindedness that often attempts to choke out our progressive spiritual life. One such man who stood for all that was right and proper was Polycarp. He was the second-century bishop of Smyrna and was martyred for his beliefs.

There was a book that was written afterwards entitled *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* which detailed the account of his death. Here are a couple of excerpts from the text that struck me forcibly with his devotion to the cause:

*“And while he was praying, a vision presented itself to him three days before he was taken; and, behold, the pillow under his head seemed to him on fire. Upon this, turning to those that were with him, he said to them prophetically, ‘I must be burnt alive’”.*

After he was arrested, but before they took him away to be burned, he offered them hospitality:

*“Immediately then, in that very hour, he ordered that something to eat and drink should be set before them” (the “them” are those who came to arrest him). As a result of this kindness, some repented of doing harm to this kind old man.*

The following must be quoted at length:

*And when he came near, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On his confessing that he was, [the proconsul] sought to persuade him to deny [Christ], saying, “Have respect to thy old age,” and other similar things, according to their custom, [such as], “Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, Away*

*with the Atheists.” (NOTE: The atheists were the Christians in such statements.). But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, “Away with the Atheists” (meaning non-Christians). Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, “Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ;” Polycarp declared, “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?”*

Two chapters later, the proconsul threatens him with various tortures, but Polycarp answers as a man:

*The proconsul then said to him, “I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast thee, except thou repent.” But he answered, “Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous.” But again the proconsul said to him, “I will cause thee to be consumed by fire, seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, if thou wilt not repent.” But Polycarp said, “Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but art ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt.”*

May God forgive us for our double-mindedness!