

If Men Were Mice

M.W. Bassford
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Introduction.

- A. As most of you know, Lauren and I recently bought a house. As part of this purchase, we received a number of things we were expecting: a kitchen, two bathrooms, three bedrooms, and so forth. However, with the house, we also received a number of things we were not expecting, most notably, several nests' worth of mice.
- B. Sadly for the mice, my wife has a very definite idea about the number of mice that belong in her house, and that number is zero. Thus, I've spent the past several weeks setting out mousetraps baited with peanut butter to smite the furry inhabitants. So far, we've killed 30 of them, which we hope is all there are going to be.
- C. Naturally, the ongoing mouse genocide has appeared a great deal in our minds and in our conversations recently. One night a few days ago, when we were in the car together, Lauren just happened to remark, "Those mice sure are dumb, aren't they?" I replied, "What makes you say that?" She said, "Well, just think about it. Every night, you put out these traps, and the mice just say, 'Oh goodie! Someone left some peanut butter here just for me,' and they scurry in to their deaths. It doesn't get much dumber than that."
- D. I responded, "But what about all the human beings in Joliet who go to the casinos every night? Surely if they thought about it, they'd realize that the casino operators don't give money away out of the goodness of their hearts." We talked about it a little more, and we decided that the only difference between mice and people is that people have a greater capacity to rationalize the dumb decisions that they make, and let's face it, all of us make dumb decisions. Every time we sin, in fact, we make a decision that injures us both physically and spiritually, and yet, all of us, because of our wonderful rationalizations, continue to sin. This morning, friends, let's transpose these excuses for sin into rodent-speak. Let's see what we would say if men were mice.

I. Four Rationalizations.

- A. If people were rodents, the first justification they would give for approaching the mousetrap would be to say, **"I DON'T BELIEVE IN MOUSETRAPS."** They might say that the peanut butter just arose by itself, up from the primordial soup. They might say the peanut butter was left behind by the kindly Peanut Butter Fairy, who would never harm anything or anyone. But they would be certain that mousetraps did not in fact exist.
- B. People today who say they don't believe in God, or hell, or similar things, make the same mistake. They don't believe because they don't want to believe. Oh sure, the evolutionist is going to have this complicated explanation for what he believes, but that explanation is based on faith that is far blinder than ours. For instance, he must believe that millions of years ago, just the right combination of unliving chemicals came together to create life. No one has ever observed this event. No one has ever been able to replicate it. But they believe in it anyway, because the alternative is believing in God, and they don't want to do that because then, they have to obey Him. They need to consider the message of 2 Peter 3:3-7. Sure, we can disbelieve in mousetraps or God all we want, but sooner or later, we're going to end up paying the price for our delusion.
- C. The second thing that mice would say if men were mice is **"MOUSETRAPS DON'T HAPPEN TO GOOD MICE LIKE ME."** These mice would say that because they don't wander around in broad daylight and don't go across the street to play with the cat, they are being good, careful mice, and nothing they do will injure them. They'll admit that some mice get hurt sometimes, but those are only the truly bad and foolish mice.
- D. The people who would maintain this in rodent form are those who go around in human form secure in their own belief that they are good people. It's like they think that God grades on a curve, that as long as they do better than somebody else, they'll be fine. The problem is, though, that God doesn't compare our lives to other people. Instead, He compares us to the standard of His word. We see the result of this standard in Romans 2:9. If we admit that we have done evil at all, we stand damned by our own admission.
- E. Yet another category of mice would ask, **"ANYTHING THAT SMELLS SO GOOD CAN'T BE BAD, CAN IT?"** They like peanut butter; therefore, they should eat the peanut butter before them because they want it.
- F. Sadly, this chain of supposed reasoning, is the way that many people think about temptation. They say, "This temptation looks like a lot of fun, so I'm going to do it because I think I'll have a good time." That's exactly how Satan wants us to think. Why is it, do you think, that I've baited every mousetrap I've set out with peanut butter? I do it because I know that mice like peanut butter, and the way I get them to make a very bad decision is by fooling them into thinking it's a good decision. Satan does exactly the same thing. He doesn't say, "Here! Come try this sin! Look at how icky it is!" Of course not! Instead, he says, "Look at how wonderful sin will be! Try it! You'll see!" He makes sin look like the right decision. Consider what Proverbs 14:12 has to say about this. Satan dresses sin up as pretty as he can, but at the end of it, we're still dead.
- G. In similar fashion, I'm sure that some of our people turned mouse would also say **"I DESERVE THE PEANUT BUTTER."** They would think to themselves that they have been virtuous, hardworking mice, and so now, at the end of the day, they have the right to indulge themselves with the creamy goodness on the mousetrap.

- H. Of course, that absolutely does not compute, but people say the same thing about sin. They say that they've worked hard through the week, so they deserve to go out and get drunk on the weekends. They say that they put up with their toad of a husband most of the time, so they're entitled to get mad at him and really zing him once a week or so. The problem is, though, what can any of us do that actually would entitle us to sin? It's like we're trying to buy off God so that we can do what we want to, and that's a preposterous notion, because we have no bargaining power. We already owe Him complete obedience. There's nothing left to give. Ironically enough, though, when we sin, we do get what we deserve. Look at what Paul says in Romans 6:23. Sure, sin entitles us to something, but all it entitles us to is death.

II. Four More Rationalizations.

- A. Yet another category of mouse would be likely to complain, "**ALL THE OTHER MICE ARE DOING IT.**" They would only have to look around, see all the other mice who steadfastly pursue peanut butter, and assume that whatever any large mass of rodents is doing is a good idea, Pied Piper of Hamelin notwithstanding.
- B. Once again, what is so obviously not a smart way to go in the mouse world is a course that most people pursue in the human world. They do what everyone else does on the assumption that it will turn out well. Of course, the problem with that is that it also assumes that the majority usually makes good decisions, and that's not necessarily the case. Let me tell you, folks, any mice that are still alive in my house are alive exactly because they did NOT share the majority preference for peanut butter. I set my traps trying to get as many mice as possible, and Satan sets his traps trying to get as many people as possible, which means that following the majority is a very bad decision to make. Let's think about Jesus' words on the subject in Matthew 7:13-14. He promises us that if we follow the majority on earth, we'll follow the majority to hell too.
- C. Next in line are the mice who would insist, "**WITHOUT THE PEANUT BUTTER, I'LL STARVE TO DEATH.**" To their way of thinking, they must eat, which is certainly true, and the only thing they see to eat right now is the peanut butter. Therefore, it must be the only thing to eat, and they have to eat it.
- D. In the real world, we see people doing this all the time by means of what's called in logic a false dichotomy. They see something that they want to justify, some sin, and they justify it by coming up with another alternative that appears so awful that the sin seems good by comparison. For example, let's say Mom and Dad tell their teenage daughter that she can't go to the nightclub with her friends. In response, she screams, "So I never get to have fun again or spend time with any of my friends again, and I'll just stay in my room until I die of old age." She probably doesn't know it, but she's using a false dichotomy. She's trying to make going to the nightclub seem more reasonable by acting as though staying home forever is the only alternative.
- E. In more grownup terms, we often do this with our own temptations. We give in to sin because we've allowed Satan to persuade us that there's only one other alternative, and it's horrible. For example, we might lie for our boss because we've become convinced that if we don't, he'll fire us, and we'll never work again. The problem is that the false dichotomy is always an illusion. Let's examine what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13. Basically, God promises us as Christians that there will never be a time when we will have to do wrong because the cost of doing right is unbearable. Let's remember that, and learn to see through the illusion.
- F. After this, we might encounter some mice who claim, "**I'M SMARTER THAN THE MICE THAT GOT CAUGHT.**" This is self-explanatory. They see the corpses, but they figure they can beat the trap.
- G. There are plenty of people who think this way too. They think that they are smart enough to get what they want out of sin without getting burned. They say, "Well, yeah, he started using drugs and became an addict, but I'll never let that happen to me." There are not one but two problems with this way of thinking. In the first place, we might be smarter than the poor schlub down the street, but that doesn't mean we're smart enough to avoid all the physical consequences of sin. This reminds me, actually, of one of the more amusing mice I trapped. When I picked him up one morning, he was just as dead as the others, but it was his hindquarters, not his head, that got caught in the trap. Also, all of the peanut butter had been eaten off the trigger. This was a mouse who was smart, but not smart enough. He came up to the trap and very carefully ate all the peanut butter off the trigger without disturbing it. After he finished his meal, he decided to leave, but he left by climbing over the mousetrap, stepping on the trigger in the process. The second problem, though, is that even if we avoid the physical consequences, we can't avoid the spiritual consequences. Let's remember Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. Everyone else might miss something we do, but God won't.
- H. Finally, the last group of mice are the mice who say, "**JUST ONE NIBBLE WON'T HURT.**" These mice apparently would believe that mousetraps are only set up at the bottom of jars of peanut butter, and as long as you just take a little from the dribbles of peanut butter scattered here and there, you'll be fine.
- I. Once again, this sounds ridiculous, but we all think this way sometimes. Looking back, I can think of times that I myself have thought this way. We justify some sin to ourselves by saying, "Well, it's only a little sin, and it's not nearly as bad as this other sin I could be committing." We think that we have to get serious about our sin before it really comes back to hurt us. Of course, that's absolutely not true. James rebuts this idea in James 1:14-15. All sins, friends, all of them, lead to death, not just the "big" ones.

Conclusion. If you've eaten even a little bit of sin, you're in the mousetrap now, and you need God to get you out.