

# The Rat Trap

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1 Samuel 30

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A rat looked through a crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife holding a rat trap. Retreating to the farmyard the rat proclaimed the warning; "There is a rat trap in the house, a rat trap in the house!" The chicken raised her head and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Rat, like this bothers me?" The rat turned to the pig and told him, "There is a rat trap in the house, a rat trap in the house!" "I am so very sorry Mr. Rat," sympathized the pig, "you are in my prayers." The rat turned to the cow. She said, "Like wow, Mr. Rat. A rat trap? I am in grave danger. Duh?"

So the rat returned to the house to face the trap alone. That very night the farmer's wife heard the sound of the rat trap catching its prey. But in the darkness, she did not see that it was a venomous snake. The snake bit the farmer's wife.

The farmer rushed her to the hospital. She returned home with a fever. Now everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient. His wife's sickness continued, and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well. She died, and so many people came for her funeral that the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide meat for all of them to eat (I love telling that story to the city folks. There like, "What's butchered"?).

I'll tell you why this seems so funny. It's because in our minds we're thinking it's just a rat. Who in their right mind would care about a rat? Well, oddly enough, that's just what God would like us to do. Not the actual rodent, but those individuals whom the world would call a nuisance; those who have no value, and who do not contribute any worth to society.

As Moses stood and addressed the Nation of Israel, he reminded them that God *"ensures that orphans and widows receive justice. He shows love to the foreigners living among you and gives them food and clothing. So you, too, must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of*

*Egypt.*"<sup>1</sup> (Deuteronomy 10:18-19). Now I know we spend a great deal of time talking about how God's attention is focused upon His people, but the truth is, He also cares quite deeply even for those outside of the family; those that live at the margins of society. And as you read through the Old Testament laws, there are many times when God instructs the Jews to be considerate of the poor, the oppressed, the orphaned, and the foreigner. Even when it comes to the harvest, God's instruction is to be gracious and caring to these people. *"When you are harvesting your crops and forget to bring in a bundle of grain from your field, don't go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Then the Lord your God will bless you in all you do."*<sup>2</sup> (Deuteronomy 24:19) I get the impression that how a Jew treated others was very important to God. They were to recognize a person's need, care for that need, and never forget that at one time they too were once living separated and apart from His family.

It was this teaching that David would have learned while growing up. And there's a good chance he heard the story of his Great Grandmother Ruth, a foreigner from Moab who was shown kindness and courtesy by Boaz. Did the lesson's stick? Did David do as the Lord commanded? Listen to this story from *1 Samuel 30*.

Two things are significant in this story. First, this Egyptian slave is treated with dignity, kindness, and respect even though his own master had left him to die. And the soldiers who remained behind at Besor likewise are given the same honorable treatment as those who had gone to battle. Why do you think David was able to see these people differently than those who were trouble makers? I believe it's because David knew all too well what it was like to be on the outside looking in; to be the oppressed, the outcast; to be a person whom the world would rather forget.

As the early Church was forming, we read that people from all walks of life were coming to Christ and joining with other believers to become the Church. But the people of this church were made up of a central core group of Christians who were Jewish as well as those who had lived apart from God for years; the foreigner

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<sup>1</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>2</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

and the outcast. What happens is that some of these Jews, who were trouble makers, begin pointing out that they were the better Christians because of what they did. And these Gentile believers were still of lower value because there were things they did not do. I absolutely love Peter's response to this conflict. Look at what he says in *Acts 15*.

I believe this is an essential lesson for all of us. You see, David was able to look at the man some had seen as a rat and instead see the person within. He looked at those who did not go to battle and yet saw their value within God's Kingdom. Instead of looking at a person's religious credentials, Barnabas, Paul, and Peter were able to see that God had accepted them by giving them His Spirit. And as I think about the church today, I believe we need to be reminded of where our value lay, as a person, within the kingdom, and in the eyes of God.

Too often our society will treat a person as a rat; looking at them as having no worth, no significance, no value. But in God's Kingdom it is not so (*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*<sup>3</sup> Romans 3:23). And yet in spite of this, Christ died for us even while we were still sinners. Within the church we have a tendency to place a higher value on the more noticeable levels of service. But to God each part of the church body has value and is important (see *1 Corinthians 12*). But the main reason we all stand before God as equals is because regardless of how we've lived or how long we've been a part of His church, we do not stand before Him dressed in our own righteousness. We stand before God dressed in the righteousness of Jesus our Lord, whose work upon the cross has taken people from all parts of society and made us one. *<sup>26</sup>For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*<sup>4</sup> (Galatians 3:26-28)

I guess what I'm hoping you learn is that because of Christ, you have value within His kingdom. And that because of Christ, you see that value in others as well.

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<sup>3</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>4</sup>*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Ga 3:26-29). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.