



THE MOUSE IN MY HOUSE

MINISTER RYAN STEMMONS, GMI VOLUNTEER

Psalms 136:2

*“O give thanks unto the God of
gods: for His mercy endureth
forever.”*

A couple of years ago, my lovely wife and I spent some time in Paris, France. Paris, a world class city, is known as a global center for art, fashion, culture and gastronomy (look it up). Even with all its beauty, most people don't realize the city is also known for something that isn't considered beautiful by many and maybe even disgusting.

Have you ever seen or heard of the movie “Ratatouille”? It's a movie about a rat who loves to cook and gets a job as a chef at a restaurant in Paris. No, there aren't rats cooking in restaurants in Paris, but there is a rodent issue. When you think of the city's beauty, the last thing you want is to see something so unappealing.

One night while on our trip, we decided to take a walk to a nearby neighborhood for dinner. While coming down the hill, I happened to hear some squeaking noises. Curiosity got the best of me and as I looked toward the direction of the noise, to my surprise it was a field full of rats. The situation made me wonder about how many of the nearby homes have a rodent issue. Have you ever had a mouse in the ceiling of your house? Can you remember the sound of it scampering around in your ceiling? What's more irritating...the fact that you have a mouse in your house or the fact that you can hear it making noise?

My point is not to talk about Paris' rodent problem, but to have you think about what is the real purpose for the mouse in your life. Paris is a beautiful city but visitors may not be able to get over experiencing the encounter with its bad parts. When people visit you, are they able to see the beauty and wonderful creation God made you or are they left telling stories about experiencing your bad parts? If it wasn't for the mouse making noise in the ceiling, you probably wouldn't even know it was there. In spite of all the evidence of things around being destroyed, you refuse to accept the possibility of a mouse in your house. That is until you hear the mouse in the ceiling.

Look at loved ones as the mouse in this example. Do you view their attempts to help you change your ways as irritation instead of seeing it as help? Even though you may have your bad parts (**Psalm 139**) tells how you have been wonderfully made by God. So, don't look at them as the source of your irritation, instead look at your house and realize the mouse is only there to let you see you have some cleaning to do.

What if David didn't listen to Nathan (**2 Samuel 12**)? Nathan acted as the mouse in the situation and the squeaking noise served as a warning to let David know he had some cleaning up to do. The best thing about serving our God is that he is merciful. (**Psalm 136:2**) tells us “Oh, give thanks to the **God of gods!** For His **mercy endures forever.**”

So the next time someone tries to tell you about the things you may be doing that are detracting from the true beauty of who God made you to be, remember they are simply making noise so you can see you have some cleaning to do.

GOOD GROUND

“Make your heart a fertile ground for seeds of opportunity”

CYNDI JOHNSON, GMI EXECUTIVE SECRETARY



Spring symbolizes a time of new beginnings. As a lover of flowers, I can't wait until Spring to get my hands into the soil and begin planting a new flower garden. However, there's more to planting a garden than just digging up some dirt and sprinkling a few seeds.

If I want to enjoy a beautiful garden throughout the summer months, my seeds must be planted in good ground. This requires careful preparation. First the soil must be tilled, rocks and weeds must be removed and fertilizer applied before the ground is ready to receive the seeds. Once the seeds are planted, the garden must maintain an adequate amount of water and sunlight, and occasional plucking of weeds to allow the roots to take hold and the plants to flourish.

May is one of my favorite months of the year. It's not only a time when I expect a few sweet surprises as new buds begin to blossom, but each time I see the fruits of my labor, I'm reminded of the parable of the sower (or parable of four soils) in the Bible (Matthew 13: 3 – 8). You may be familiar with the parable where Jesus talks about what becomes of seed that is sown in four different types of soil. As the sower scattered seeds, some fell by the way side on hard soil which prevented them from growing and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on rocky places where there wasn't much soil. They sprang up quickly, but were scorched by the sun and they withered away because they had no deep roots. Others fell on thorns so as the seeds began to grow, the thorns grew up and choked them. Still others fell on good ground and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

The seed is symbolic of God's Word. The hard ground represents someone who is hardened by sin; he hears but does not understand the Word, and Satan plucks the message away, preventing the Word from making an impression. The rocky ground describes one who claims to delight in the Word, but his heart has never been changed or rooted in the Word, so when trouble shows up, his so-called faith quickly disappears. The thorny ground represents someone who seems to receive the Word, but being carnal-minded, the things of this world take his time and attention away from the Word, and he ends up having no time for it. The good ground represents the one who hears, understands, and receives the Word, and then allows the Word to accomplish its result in his life.

Our reception of God's Word is determined by the condition of our heart. Just as we plant our seed in good ground to bear a beautiful and bountiful garden, we must condition our heart to be that good ground that receives God's Word and allows it to grow in us by giving it the proper care and attention. Occasionally we may have to pluck a few weeds that sprout up in life and try to choke out God's word so that we can bear fruit as proof of our salvation.

GET OUT OF THE WAY...TO FIND THE WAY

ORMOND L. WIMBERLY, JR. – LANSING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

How many of us have been told more than once that “You’re your worst enemy?” These words ring true today for many of us who struggle to serve God and have victory over sin. With this thought as our starting point, I’d like us to look at this question. “What does it take for us to have victory over sin?” A more basic question might be “Do you desire victory from sin?” The Word of God gives us the answer to both of these questions. 2 Peter 1:3-4 tells us, **“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”** II Timothy 2:15 says to, **“Do your best to show yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”** Being honest with you, I failed miserably in doing this for years. All along I was relying on my worldly knowledge which couldn’t save me from living a disobedient (sinful) life. In looking back, had I taken the time to do as commanded by 2 Corinthians 13:5 which says, **“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test”**; I could have avoided the consequences which accompany disobedience. “Examine”, according to Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament words, means “to tempt, try”. From this definition, as it applies to the above scripture, I am (you are too) to try myself to see if I am in the faith. What does this trying do for me (you)? First, it answers the question “as to whether I’m obedient or not?” Second, it reveals where I’ve placed my trust. Third, this trying or testing is working to develop my character (Godly).

Understand that the above cannot and will not happen in our lives as long as I (you) rely on my (your) way of thinking. Until I get out of the way...I will never find the way. In John 14:6 Jesus says **“I (Jesus) am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** No matter if Satan, falsely accused and even lied on you, you can stand firm on the Word of God. This is what I’ve relied on during this time of spiritual growth. I can testify that Jesus will stick closer to you than a brother. The only way is Jesus. You may have occasion to stumble but confess your shortcomings and continue to seek the Lord immediately. What’s important is that you not fall back into your previous way of thinking, in spite of life’s problems. I am being asked, like yourself, to, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”** (Proverbs 3:5-6)

How we respond to this testing depends on your faith. God has given each of us a measure of faith according to Romans 12:3. What is faith? Hebrew 11:1 says, **“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”** The testing of my faith is to see if I have confidence that Jesus is able to do what I’m hoping for...victory over sin. So, according to your faith it shall be done unto you. Is it easy? Certainly not! However, **you can do all things through Christ which strengthens you (Philippians 4:13)**. Growing in spiritual maturity is a process. For me, this has taken a personal commitment to seek the Lord consistently. I’ve completely surrendered to the Lord. It is **“in Him we live and move and have our being”** Acts 17:28. You will not achieve spiritual maturity overnight. Be encouraged by realizing that your failures or past cannot hold you back unless you refuse to get out of the way. Paul tells us in Philippians 3:13-14, **“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining forward toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ.”** Allowing the devil to hold me hostage to what God has erased from memory shows that my thinking hasn’t been renewed yet. It is imperative to read, believe, and do what the Word of God tells us to do. Our thinking keeps in the way of God doing what He has purposed for in our life. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus, which is why your past no longer has control of you. Who are you listening to? Who will you believe? **“For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.”** (Philippians 2:13). Remember to test (examine) everything. **Hold on to the good.** (I Thessalonians 5:21) If you commit yourself to the Lord you will get out of the way in order to find the way.

Until next time, stay blessed of the Lord. **You are more than a conqueror.** (Romans 8:37)

“WORDS TO GROW BY”

LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Three places that are most valuable in this world:

1. The nicest place is to be in someone's **THOUGHT**,
2. The safest place is to be in someone's **PRAYER**,
3. The best place is to be in **GOD'S HANDS**.

We at GMI are thinking of and praying for each of you.

And remember that God understands our prayers even when we can't find the words to say them.

Time for a little word search fun. This puzzle was provided by *Garnett Tolen of Lansing Correctional Facility*.

ABRAHAM

ACTS

ABOMINATION

ANOINT

BAPTISM

BEGOTTEN

DEATH

ELDER

ETERNAL

FELLOWSHIP

HARVEST

IMAGE

INIQUITY

JUDGEMENT

JOB



A	C	D	B	E	G	O	T	T	E	N	I
B	B	F	J	U	D	G	E	M	E	N	T
R	Q	O	Z	W	X	A	E	F	C	N	B
A	B	X	M	E	L	D	E	R	I	U	E
H	O	A	N	I	M	L	B	O	M	D	T
A	S	P	P	R	N	U	N	I	A	E	E
M	C	N	S	T	C	A	V	X	G	A	R
U	K	I	T	F	I	Y	T	T	E	T	N
F	E	L	L	O	W	S	H	I	P	H	A
U	O	F	Y	D	Z	H	M	I	O	M	L
A	T	I	N	I	Q	U	I	T	Y	N	C
H	A	R	V	E	S	T	N	E	K	P	X

CLOSING WORDS

LONNIE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I was recently asked if I (a Black man) got along with White men. I didn't hesitate to say "Yes". I followed up with, "That does not mean that everyone I meet has that same love for me". I do not let a person's character defect keep me from treating them with dignity and respect. This goes for race, religion, politics, etc. I know you have heard the saying "Two wrongs don't make a right..." I truly believe in that. Regardless of what people feel, you have a responsibility to love everyone unconditionally just as God loves you. Tell another brother "I love you" today.

Growth Ministries Inc. is a Christian based nonprofit organization with a passion and desire to assist individuals improve spiritually and socially through a variety of services, activities, and events.