

Mousetraps, Spirals, and Chains

1 Tim 6:9-10

- Paul is trying to convince Timothy of something with extremely unpleasant consequences — temptation (testing), ruin, destruction, pierced selves through. The love of money has an ugly end.
- One of the most important things the Bible teaches us is that things in life are not always what they seem. In particular, sin is far worse than it appears.
- I wanted to take some time this morning to explore some of the Bible's images to describe sin.
- Sometimes we struggle with what sin is.
- Sometimes we struggle with why sin is such a big deal to God and to us
- Sometimes we struggle with getting too close to the line of sin
- These ideas will help us gain some clarity about sin.
- Along the way, we'll think some about why it is we sin and how God can help us so that we stop.

1) Mousetraps

- 1 Tim 6:9—Snare. This is a Greek word for mousetrap. The word snare is very common in the Bible—traps for bird or game.
- The idea is that these desires, this love of money *entrap*. We are not expecting it. It is not what it appears.
- We think we are getting one thing (\$ and therefore pleasure) but instead we get another (ruin, destruction, pain). Like a mousetrap.
- 1 Tim 3:6-7—Conceit, disgrace are ways the devil traps us. He thinks he is serving God, but instead he is puffed up or torn down by those outside.
- The picture here is of Satan finding ways to entrap by offering something we want. The hammer comes down. We are trapped. It is the “snare of the devil.”
- 2 Tim 2:24-26—As Timothy deals with others outside, he should do so with gentleness because they have been ensnared by the devil. They have ben (v 26) *captured* by him to do his will.
- Sin is a trap by which the devil captures and enslaves us. It is a state that should engender pity and humility as we see it in others.
- Now it makes sense how this knowledge affects our behavior. Stay away from the traps!
- Prov 7:21-27—Don't even go near her door! It's a trap! It's not what it appears!
- As we age and we gain more experience in dealing with sin, we see this with more clarity. Whatever you think you're going to get there is not what you'll get.
- So we warn about drugs or about promiscuity. We warn about alcohol and corrupt language. They are not what they appear.
- “*The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God*” (Deut 7:25).
- Notice how this mentality goes a step beyond simply *avoiding using* the idols. Burn them. Don't want them. They are a trap.
- We just treat things differently when we're convinced they're traps. So this image helps us.

- We see why sin is such a big deal to God and to us. It's not what it appears and it hurts us.
- Would we ask "I don't know why I need to stay away from mousetraps! What's the big deal"?
- Would we try to get close to it? Would we start to argue about what part of the trap God had actually condemned?
- But why would we go toward the mousetrap at all? What draws us? We'll come back to that in a minute.

2) Spirals

- I wanted a picture that accurately describes another aspect of sin as described in the Bible— that it grows and goes progressively downward.
- Sin is not static. It grows, infests, corrupts.
- Rom 1:21-31 – Things get worse and worse. Not acknowledging God leads to not being thankful. Leads to useless thinking. Leads to idolatry. Leads to false sexuality. Leads to a debased mind.
- Sin leads to more sin – to *worse* sin – it is a downward spiral.
- This is how it works with addictions. They worsen. Gateway drugs lead to worse drugs. The lines of physical intimacy being crossed. Anger. Corrupt speech. These things don't just resolve themselves. That's not how sin works.
- 2 Sam 11:1-4, 13-15, 26-27
- In such a short span, David moves from seeing a woman bathing to adultery to getting Uriah drunk to killing Uriah to taking Uriah's wife.
- Sin doesn't naturally stop. It progresses. It is a downward spiral.
- *"But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness and their talk will spread like gangrene"* (2 Tim 2:16-17).
- James 1:13-15 – Sin grows. It leads somewhere. Not somewhere good. It gives birth to sin, which grows up to death. Notice the theme of growth.
- Sin is a spiral. Once we enter it, we go deeper and deeper down the rabbit hole. It corrupts whatever it touches and grows until it kills.
- This image helps us. It shows us why sin is such a big deal. Shows us why we don't want to get close to the line or let "little things" go. Why would we want to get close to the spiral?

3) Chains

- John 8:31-36 – The kind of freedom that truth brings – the kind of freedom that the Son provides – is freedom from slavery to sin.
- *Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.* Sin makes slaves. Sin clamps chains on us. Sin becomes our master, dictating our behavior. When we choose to sin, we form a relationship with sin. It holds power over us.
- Titus 3:3 – Paul describes the former life, before we were set free by Jesus. In that life, we were "slaves to various passions and pleasures." We had to do whatever our passions and pleasures told us. We had no choice in the matter.
- And sin consumes us. It is what we live for. It becomes what makes life exciting, even when it disappoints us and leaves us feeling guilty. We keep coming back to it. It dominates our thinking. It poisons our idea of who we are.

- Rom 6:15-18 – Paul’s answer to the “keep sinning” question is no – because sin is a slave-maker. There is no such thing as a casual relationship with sin. Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.
- *“There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited”* (1 Kings 21:25).
- *“For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity”* (Acts 8:23).
- *“They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved”* (2 Pet 2:19).
- All the images we would associate with slavery – the service we cannot escape, the loss of the ability to decide what we will do or be, the need for external help – God teaches us to associate with sin. Sin brings the chains.
- This helps us. It helps us see why sin is a big deal. It helps explain how sin can have such a grip on us that we keep coming back to it. It shows us what Paul means when he describes wanting to do right but being unable to.
- Sin is not what it seems.
- All of these images show us that sin is not what it appears to be. The devil uses it to trap us, to take us further from God, to enslave us.
- When God tells us something is wrong, it is not arbitrary. He is warning us about a force that will trap us and enslave us and corrupt us until we are consumed. We would not fault someone for telling us about mousetraps, spirals, or chains. We cannot fault God.
- Sin will take us further than we wanted to go, keep us longer than we wanted to stay, and cost us more than we wanted to pay.
- But why do we sin? What is the draw, if we know all of this? What’s the bait in the mousetrap?
- *Sin is a perversion of things that are good.* It takes good desires, proper desires, and corrupts them. Encourages us to pursue them in evil ways, or to pursue perversions of the real thing.
- We exchange what we’re really seeking – true intimacy with another person – for the perversion, promiscuous sex.
- We exchange real self-worth for egotism and pride.
- We exchange real religion for idolatry.
- We exchange real value for materialism.
- We exchange real connection with others for manipulation, for false respect.
- We exchange real work for shortcuts.
- We exchange real conversation for gossip or criticism.
- We exchange real respect for arrogance or flatter.
- We exchange real inner peace for attention to our physical bodies.
- We exchange God’s love and acceptance for the love and acceptance of people
- We sin because we want these things deeply – we were *made* for them – but we are *unwilling to do the hard work of pursuing the real and instead settle for the fake.* So we are caught in the snare.
- We all want the warmth and joy from a deep, open relationship – but that’s often hard work, and it’s easier to just click on pornography.

- We all want God's acceptance and peace – but that's often hard to pursue, and it's easier to fashion God into someone who already approves of whatever I think.
- So while on one level, I've written this sermon to change our attitudes toward sin – to see it vividly in the way God describes it – on another level, I want us to probe the question "why do I sin?". Why do I keep doing things that entrap, corrupt, and enslave me?
- And when we are honest with ourselves about it, I am convinced that we will find we have done one of these exchanges, accepting some perversion of good.
- The good news is that the real thing is available! God has made himself available to us! He doesn't want us to be enslaved. He wants our good.
- Are you enslaved by sin? Jesus can set you free.