



## OTHERS

Through a crack in the wall, a mouse watched the farmer and his wife open a package. The mouse wondered what delicious food might be in the package. But when he saw it was a *mousetrap*, he was devastated! Rushing out to the farmyard, he proclaimed the warning: "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!"

The chicken clucked, scratched, raised her head and said, "Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is of great concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it."

The mouse turned to the pig and told him about the mousetrap. The pig sympathized and said, "I am so very sorry Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it. Be assured that you are in my prayers."

The mouse turned to the cow and told her about the trap. She said, "Wow! Mr. Mouse, I'm sorry for you. But it's no skin off my nose."

Dejected, the mouse returned to face the mousetrap alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house—like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to check things out. In the darkness she did not see that it was a poisonous snake whose tail had been caught in the trap.

The snake bit the farmer's wife and she developed a serious 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.

But the condition of the farmer's wife worsened. Friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To provide food for them, the farmer butchered the pig.

Unfortunately the farmer's wife did not recover and, in a few days, died. There were so many people that came for her funeral, the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide meat for all of them.

So:

The next time you hear that someone else is facing a problem and think it doesn't concern *you*, remember that when one of us is threatened, *we all may be at risk!*

(If any are critical of using a make-believe story to illustrate a point, we should keep in mind the Bible itself does the same. In Judges 8:8-15 we read of trees talking to one another, carrying on a debate as to whether the olive tree, the fig tree, the vine, or the bramble should be chosen as king!)

"No man is an island" are famous words that have come down to us from a centuries-old sermon. With the passing of time, it has become even more apparent that what affects others may affect us:

Political upheaval in an oil producing country, though far away, can cause the price of gasoline to soar in the USA!

As gasoline prices rise, the price of consumer goods grows higher, because of transportation costs.

Bad weather in Florida can devastate crops, causing the price of fruits and vegetables to rise even in states far away.

If drought hinders crops in mid-western states, it costs more to feed cattle, and the price of meat is adversely affected.

A plane grounded because of a storm in one city, can impact the traffic flow at another part of the country, though the weather there may be perfect.

A massive oil spill, though far out in the ocean, can eventually drift to shore, contaminating fish, killing birds, and devastating tourism.

An earthquake centered in one part of the world, may send a tidal wave of death and destruction far away.

Back in the '60s when the economy was in a slump, President Lyndon Johnson went before the television cameras and said, in effect, that the American people should go out and spend some money. If they needed to buy something, if they had been planning to buy something, to go *do it!*

I am certainly no expert regarding all the inner workings of a complex economy, but it is not difficult to understand this: If no one buys, then no one sells. If no one sells, employees are not needed, and jobs become non-existent.

Consider this: In any given day a \$10 bill can purchase \$100 worth of goods—if it continues to change hands:

Early one morning a neighbor boy is paid \$10 to mow a lawn. This makes it possible for him to pay back \$10 he borrowed from his father. The father pays a barber \$10 for a haircut. The barber buys \$10 worth of groceries. The grocer owes one of his workers \$10, so pays him. The worker uses the \$10 to put gas in his car. The owner of the gas station uses the \$10 to buy a shirt. At lunchtime, the man at the clothing store takes his wife out to eat and spends the \$10. The café owner pays a baker \$10. That night the baker goes to church and puts the \$10 in the offering.

So, in this example: \$10 became, as it were, \$100. People all along the chain benefited—saints, sinners, and even the church!

As Christians, we look to God to supply "our daily bread." Yet *people—all kinds of people*—gather the grains, *people* mix the dough, *people* do the baking, and *people* drive delivery trucks! Some of these are sinners, yet *all* become part of God's provision.

As Christians we are to:

- "Be loving toward *all men*" (1 Thes. 3:12).
- "Be patient with *all men*" (1 Thes. 5:14).
- "Pray for *all men*" (1 Tim. 2:1).
- "Show humility to *all men*" (Titus 3:2).
- "Pursue peace with *all men*" (Heb. 12:14).
- "Honor *all men*" (1 Peter 2:17).

Sam Walter Foss (1858-1911) expressed it this way in his noted poem:

*Let me live in a house by the side  
of the road  
Where the race of men go by—  
The men who are good and the  
men who are bad,  
As good and as bad as I.  
I would not sit in the scorner's seat  
Nor hurl the cynic's ban—  
Let me live in a house by the side  
of the road  
And be a friend to man.*

Back in the early 60s I had a program that aired five days a week on a Fresno radio station. A regular listener to the program invited me to come visit him. When I had some difficulty finding his house, I pulled my car over and asked some teenage boys

on bikes if they knew where Mr. Lewis lived. “Oh, you mean ‘Ole Crazy Man Lewis’? Sure we know where he lives!” It ended up I was only a few houses away.

It was somewhat of a poor area of town, and a portion of the yard at the Lewis’ house was loaded with discarded appliances and what appeared to be junk. But “Ole Crazy Man Lewis” was a wonderful man, loved the Lord, and believed in helping OTHERS. If anyone had a problem with an appliance, chances are he had the needed part, along with a willingness to fix it. There would have been nothing wrong if he charged for what he did, but he did it *freely* as a good neighbor.

We know from scripture that we are saved by grace, not works (Eph. 2:8,9). But this is no reason to downplay good works, as though having a concern for OTHERS is unimportant. Like Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, some ask: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen. 4:9).

At the time of Jesus, there were those who claimed to love their neighbor, as the Scriptures said, but questioned: “Who is my neighbor?” (Lk. 10:29). Many trusted in *themselves* that they were righteous, yet despised OTHERS (Lk. 18:9).

Works of kindness are often commended in the scriptures: giving a cup of water, going the second mile, helping the poor, having compassion, showing mercy. Believers should assemble together to encourage each other to “good works” (Heb. 10:24,25). “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). In his messages to the seven churches, Jesus was concerned about their “works” (Rev. 2:5, 19, 23; 3:8, 15, etc.).

If we care about OTHERS—if we feed the hungry, cloth the naked, and visit those in prison, even those who are *least*—Jesus said we have done it unto *him* (Matt. 25:35,36).

Jesus said: “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you” (Matt. 5:44,45).

Years ago a pastor told me about a situation he faced earlier in his life. In addition to pastoring, he worked as a meat cutter to support his family. When he suffered a stroke and was unable to preach or work for nine months, another church in town stepped in and provided support and groceries, helping him until he got back on his feet. What makes this story of special interest is this: that “other” church was a different denomination, had some doctrinal dif-

ferences, a church the pastor had actually preached *against*!

As I understand it, that “other” church did have some incorrect doctrines, but they were willing to help OTHERS—not just themselves. On this they were correct, practicing pure religion. Remember the words of James: “Pure...religion before God...is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

Jesus said, “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them” (Lk. 6:32).

Many people never consider OTHERS; they think only of themselves.

There is an ancient story about a man who wanted to find the true God. He collected a bunch of idols and put them in a sack. As he walked down the street he tripped and all were broken, except *one*. He figured this one must be the true god. He set it up and began to worship it.

Then a cat came along and knocked it over. So he figured the *cat*, being more powerful, must be god!

But then a dog came along and chased the cat off. So he worshipped the *dog*.

When his wife saw him worshipping the dog, she threw a broom at the dog and it fled. He then decided his *wife* must be god!

He put her upon a pedestal and began to worship her! Being overcome with this attention, she fainted. As she fell into his arms, she said, “Oh my god!” The man thought she was talking about *him*! So he concluded that *he* must be god!

It is a fact: the “god” many people serve is SELF.

I know a pastor in Texas who won a neighbor girl to Christ. I am sure his desire was for her to attend his church. But because his church was small, he realized a larger church with more young people could provide better fellowship. He recommended a different church for her—not *his own*.

Unlike this pastor, some develop a self-centered attitude. It happened even in the early church. John wrote: “Diotrephes, who loves to have the *preeminence*...does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church” (3 John 9,10).

As a young man, my desire to travel and preach the gospel, became possible because pastors invited me to come hold meetings in their churches. Had they been self-cen-

tered, like Diotrephes, this would not have happened. Because they were open to someone else’s ministry, they gave me an opportunity to develop and gain experience in the Lord’s work. I am grateful.

Many have heard the interesting account regarding the famous London Bridge that once spanned the River Thames in England—but is now in Arizona! Purchased by Robert McCulloch, developer of Lake Havasu City, the exterior granite blocks were disassembled, numbered, transported to the United States, and reassembled. The project was completed in 1971, becoming an Arizona tourist attraction second only to the Grand Canyon.

While at Lake Havasu City some years ago, I was pleased to see a monument about William Booth—how it was under a portion of *this* bridge (well over a century before, when it was still in London) that he witnessed alcoholics, derelicts, poor and homeless people living in dire straits, prompting him to found the Salvation Army.

When Booth was advanced in age, for the first time in his life he was unable to attend the Convention in London. He sent a telegram to be read at the opening session that was attended by thousands. The message of the telegram was short—one word—but very meaningful: “OTHERS.”

The words of a hymn recorded years ago by Tennessee Ernie Ford come to mind:

*Lord, help me live from day to day  
In such a self-forgetful way  
Then even when I kneel to pray  
My prayer shall be for OTHERS.*

*Help me in all the work I do  
To ever be sincere and true  
And know that all I do for you  
Must needs be done for OTHERS.*

*OTHERS, Lord, yes, OTHERS  
Let this my motto be;  
Help me to live for OTHERS  
That I may live like Thee.*

May we not forget the Golden Rule: “Do unto OTHERS as you would have them do unto you” (cf. Lk. 6:31).

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