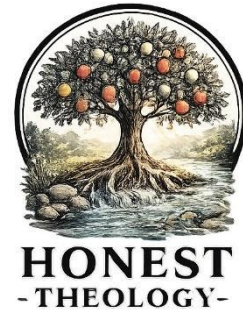


Rats In My Basement

I bet that title caught your attention, lol. (I could also say ‘cockroaches in my kitchen’ or ‘mice in my pantry,’ I suppose.) Thankfully, I’m free of any of these *in my physical house*.

C.S. Lewis used the analogy of rats in his book *Mere Christianity*, and, in my typical fashion, this is how I’ve applied it to myself and my [Christian Witness](#):



1. **Our Personal Goals Regarding Ourselves:** Within our chosen community, we all wish to present ourselves in an honorable, acceptable, (even) impressive manner to others. (We dress nicely, act kindly, speak in an acceptable manner, etc.) This behavior is how we wish to be remembered and recognized. This reality (with few exceptions) applies to work, personal, and even [spiritual](#).
 - a. **Our hypocrisy:** This behavior can also morph or change depending on our environment. We can be different within varying groups in an effort to be accepted. Sometimes it’s so drastic that we might even shock others that know us causing them to question our integrity.
2. **Our Regular Failures:** Scripture tells us that [all humanity](#) is no longer the creature that God created or intended. (Why did God bother to create us then? That’s another post...) We slip up all the time saying and doing things that we *know* are wrong, cruel, or unloving. These times are sometimes unintentional (“Why did I do that?!”), sometimes misunderstood (“I didn’t mean it that way!”), sometimes passive-aggressive (“I was only kidding...”), and sometimes uncontrollable in the midst of passionate emotions (“I couldn’t help myself! I was so stunned it just came out!”)
 - a. **And It’s Even Harder Today:** Lately, with the explosion of social media, we have become freer and bolder to say things to others that we would never have the courage to articulate to someone’s face. Believe it or not, it’s actually a [named psychological condition](#)!
3. **Our Promised Transformation:** Within Jesus Christ’s Gospel Message, believers are called to be shining examples of what Jesus Christ taught and exhibited. He likened us to being [salt and light](#) in the world. This is a result of our belief and the presence of God within us – the Spirit. We are literally transformed into new creatures. (C.S. Lewis compared this transformation to becoming completely different creatures - a new kind of metamorphosis.) It’s more than just being nice; it’s a whole different kind of human. This is what Paul tried so hard to get his readers to understand – [the extent of the transformation](#) and the impossibility of getting it right on our own without the blessing of the Spirit’s internal help.
 - a. **Our Belief:** Those of us who identify as believers often fail as “shining examples.” Rather than denying these failures, *acknowledging* them, working towards reparation, and seeking honest forgiveness can sometimes be The Best Witness. You see, the Spirit can work with just about anything and [the extremes in our transformation](#) often speak the loudest!

4. **Spiritual Rats:** Paul was a guy who knew all about having “rats in his basement.” He spent a lifetime of wanting to get it right and failing miserably. His “extreme transformation” went from [trying to kill](#) those who believed in Jesus to becoming a world-renowned champion of all things Jesus. He would [be hunted, tortured, and executed](#) as a result by the Romans. He spoke about these struggles and how he tried to do right and [regularly messed up](#).
- a. **My Rats:** My first new car purchase was a Mazda Rx7 sportscar. I washed that thing every morning (even the engine much to my father’s exasperation), it got covered every night, and had a fancy (expensive) front protective cover (“car bra”). It was an expense I chose rather than getting my own apartment as I was a very poor new teacher. At the movies one evening, I came out to find that someone had stolen my protective (remember, expensive) front cover. I stood in that parking lot with two friends and let loose a string of curse words, dire life wishes on the thief, and the degradation of society in general. The police came and I’m sure my fury and indignation remained as they explained that nothing could be done. Finally, all of us decided to leave the scene of the crime and I finally realized that my two friends were just standing there looking at me with open mouth ... incredulity. “I never thought...,” my friend stuttered, “I never imagined that *you of all people* would get so angry or say the kind of things you said tonight...” They laughed and I ... died inside. Those are the kind of rats I have ... and they can still be very, very active.

The last thing I want anyone to think about me is that I’m “good.” I’m flawed, selfish, often annoyed, frustrated, and unloving. I share these things with those I love and those who don’t even know me personally. The last thing in the world I want to be accused of is hypocrisy. Personal honesty is a critical aspect of my spiritual witness – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

- I take heart in that *no biblical personality* (besides Jesus) was perfect and many did far worse than I have done (so far, anyway.) And, for those who sought to repair their relationship with God, they were lovingly and completely embraced.
- I take heart in the promise that, as we [forgive](#) others, God also forgives us.
- I take heart in the truth of my life that every time I’ve [honestly confessed](#), attempted reparation, and offered forgiveness *I* have felt a physical peace and personal joy. Even when the action was rebuffed.
- I take heart in the fact that I have worked to name my rats, know what they look like, and come up with alternative methods to avoid them. Sometimes this is successful. Methods are still in development.
- I take heart in the evidence in my life of my gradual, perpetual, endless transformation to be the woman God knows I can become. My goal is to be better than I was yesterday...or, at least this morning. 😊

Maybe the goal of the Christian life is not pretending we have no rats in the basement, but learning to bring them into the light where God can deal with them.

Scripture to maybe check out:

- [2 Timothy 2:14-18](#) Timothy’s wise instructions to all of us!
- [David’s prayer](#) for forgiveness for ... adultery and murder.

Bibliography notes:

1. For this post, *The Message*, by Eugene H. Peterson, copyright 1993, 2002, 2018. Feel free to check these passages out in whatever Bible version you prefer—almost all of them are available on [Bible Gateway!](#)
2. My reference to “rats” by C.S. Lewis is from his book, *Mere Christianity*. (*The Complete C.S. Lewis*, Signature Classics (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 154.) In its entirety: *“On the other hand, surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is? Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth? If there are rats in a cellar you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats: it only prevents them from hiding. In the same way the suddenness of the provocation does not make me an ill-tempered man: it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am. The rats are always there in the cellar, but if you go in shouting and noisily they will have taken cover before you switch on the light. Apparently the rats of resentment and vindictiveness are always there in the cellar of my soul.”*
3. My reference to C.S. Lewis’ description of our transformation into new humans comes from his book *Mere Christianity*, in particular his chapters entitled, *“Nice People or New Men”* and *“The New Men”* pp. 164-177. (Forgive C.S.’s continual use of only “men” – it’s one of his “misunderstood rats” as far as I’m concerned. I read “human” instead.)

What are your thoughts about this post? Email me and let me know!

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