

Rat Extermination

Jesus Has Crucified Our Old Self

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin . . . count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Romans 6:6, 11–12

We had been warned that the time would come and been told how to do it. Still, my husband proved reluctant to snuff out the life of the critter living in the laundry room, mostly due to the method of execution.

In Indonesia, rats were commonly killed with rat glue. This seemed like no big deal until we realized the glue only performed its intended purpose—to stick two surfaces together. In this case, the rat to the paper. This meant the rodent still breathed even when trapped, and Mark would need to choose a method to do the poor creature in. To further complicate the situation, this was his first experience with a rat. Mice? No problem. Cockroaches? Common stuff. But rats?

After two weeks of stalling, my intrepid spouse finally mustered bravado and decided to give it a go. Not fully understanding the procedure, he asked our helper to set the trap. She spread the glue onto some wadded-up newspaper and placed the bait in the center of the goop.

A few hours later, Mark peeked through the window of the condemned room. It had worked. Stuck in the glue, Mr. Rat wiggled desperately to get out of the mess. For a split second, Mark actually felt sorry for the rat, but before he could change his mind, he rushed in and bashed it over the head with a pipe. There, done.

After surviving this first rat kill, Mark didn't relish the thought of having to repeat the process. But we soon discovered our deceased rat came from a community inhabiting our house. It was not uncommon to be watching a movie at night only to have a rodent scurry along the floor, behind the cabinet, and out into the courtyard.

Mark continued eliminating our rodent colony, imagining himself quite the pest control, until we encountered a particularly pesky one. Every night for several weeks, the sound of feet scurrying around the curtain of our bedroom window awakened us. He put out rat glue with various bait. When that failed, he located rare and more expensive rat traps. Nothing worked. We sought the advice of friends and "experts." All concluded this must be a nesting mother rat. Why else would she ignore the various and sundry treats we had set out for her?

Finally, one night we could take it no longer. When the rat woke us, we jumped out of bed. My husband threw on the light, causing the creature clinging to the curtain to take a flying leap across the room and run for cover behind the wardrobe. Mark grabbed a local broom (a tight bundle of coconut or palm leaf ribs) and slowly pulled the piece of furniture away from the wall. I planted myself at the other end. The critter tried to run in my direction, but I wildly swung another

broomstick in its path, so it headed back towards Mark. He jabbed and caught the creature in the fibers of the broom, spearing it like a kabob. Empowered by adrenaline and lack of sleep, Mark thrashed it up and down until it finally lay dead in its own bloody pool. We had waged the battle and won.

Looking back, I'm amazed at how much energy and persistence it took to kill one rat, let alone exterminate them all. Similarly, the apostle Paul instructed us to not let sin reign in our lives or obey its desires (Rom. 6:12). So why don't I tackle my flesh with the same intensity and focus as we did in eliminating our rat infestation?

I have let idolatry, pride, discord, unkind words, and envy creep around the walls of my heart. If I indulge them, they will multiply and govern my life (Rom. 8:5-7). However, since I belong to Jesus, I am a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). My old self was crucified with him so that I am no longer a slave to sin (Rom. 6:6). He has set me free, and I don't have to gratify those desires (Gal. 5:1, 13-21). Therefore, those fleshly desires are dead to me (Col. 3:5-8 NASB). Instead, I choose to live by the Spirit and follow his leading (Gal. 5:24-25).

Read

Meditate on the verses above along with Romans 13:12-14.

What provision has Christ given you to deal with the "rodents" in your life?

Recount

Recall a time when you overcame an old sin pattern. Who might be encouraged by your example?

Respond

Precious Jesus, you tell me that my old self has been crucified and that I am a new creation. Teach me to live out of my new identity, not gratifying my old desires, but instead walking in your Spirit. Just like we strategized, worked hard, and consistently waged war on the rats in our home, help me to reject my flesh so it will not take over who I truly am.