

Take Off, and Put On

2.26.2023

Message 16

Ephesians 4:17–32 (CSB)

LIVING THE NEW LIFE

¹⁷Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thoughts. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. ¹⁹They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

²⁰But that is not how you came to know Christ, ²¹assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, ²³to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

²⁵Therefore, putting away lying, **speak the truth, each one to his neighbor,** because we are members of one another. ²⁶**Be angry and do not sin.** Don't let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and don't give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. ³⁰And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. ³²And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

1. The Apostle compares the two teachers available to humanity.

A. The first teacher is sin.

1. Sin teaches us to be angry.
2. Sin teaches futile ideas that lead nowhere.
3. Sin teaches us darkness.
4. Sin promises much while leading humanity to a life excluded from God.
5. Sin cannot teach truth.

John 8:44 (CSB)

⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.

B. The first teacher is sin, but the best teacher is Jesus.

²⁰But that is not how you came to know Christ, ²¹assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus...

1. The call of Christianity is the same that the first disciples heard and accepted:
 - a. They were invited to follow Jesus and to learn from Him.
 - b. Everywhere Jesus went, they called Him "Rabbi", or "Teacher".
 - c. The invitation to life with Jesus is the invitation to be taught by Him.
2. We are all learning.
 - a. The Apostle reminds the Ephesian believers that we have a choice to who our teacher is.

b. We can live like the world and continue learning in the ways of the Gentiles, or we can come to Jesus and be taught by Him in the manner of truth.

2. Take off the former, and put on the new.

²⁰But that is not how you came to know Christ, ²¹assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, ²³to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

A. Paul's word picture involves sets of clothes.

1. He pictures our old life as one set of clothes and our new life as another set of clothes.

2. Paul says what we take off is corrupted, soiled, and stained by deceitful desires.

a. That old way of life is not suitable for the new calling we have to follow Jesus.

b. **It's not enough to clean up our old selves, we must put on NEW ONES.**

B. **"The change of clothing imagery signifies an exchange of identities."¹**

1. Jesus doesn't offer Himself as an addition to our identity.

2. Jesus offers a new identity.

C. The Greek language Paul used is stronger than our English.

1. We are not being asked to merely lay aside our old life.

¹ Lincoln, Andrew T. 1990. Ephesians. Vol. 42. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

2. Nor is Paul offering us a chance to put away our old life in a closet for future use.

3. Instead, Paul says, "get rid of..." the old life that was corrupted.

a. I'm guessing that we all have clothes or shoes in our closets that do not need to be saved but thrown in the trash.

b. Our reasons for hanging on to them may be good or practical.

1. You have work shirts, stained with oil or paint, that you keep around for the next project.

2. You have old tennis shoes ready for when conditions are messy.

3. But there comes a time when it is time to throw them away and get something new.

D. Could it be that many of us in the room are still hanging on to pieces of our old life, just in case we "need" them again?

1. Have you ever pulled out a carton of milk that was going bad, and put it BACK into the refrigerator?

2. It doesn't get fresher.

a. Why is it we hold on to our old life, just in case it helps us in the future?

b. It didn't help us then, it won't help you in the future.

3. Putting off the old, and putting on the new, are INTENTIONAL acts.

A. Each time Paul says "take off" and "put on" he is referring to our responsibilities.

1. Throughout Scripture, there is a tension between what God does for us and what we do with God's help.

2. In the previous passages, Paul tells what God has accomplished for us:

- a. Seated us with Christ in the heavenly realm.
- b. Given us every spiritual blessing.
- c. We have received an inheritance.
- d. We are indwelt by Holy Spirit.
- e. This is ALL God.

3. Now it is time for us, with the Spirit's help, to put off the old ways and clothe ourselves with the new life.

B. Several times, Paul tells us to put away and to put on.

1. These are verbs, and commands meant for us to act upon.

2. We have a responsibility here:

- a. to "put off old self"
- b. to "Put away falsehood".
- c. to "Put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice.

3. There is also a positive command to "PUT ON the new self, created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth."

C. The work of the Holy Spirit does not leave us naked.

1. We are to remove the old clothes and the old ways and PUT ON clothes not of our own making.

- a. Spiritual Clothes created according to God's likeness.
- b. They are in HIS style.

2. It's time for us to put away the old life because the new life we haven't doesn't fit the old me.

4. Why is this all necessary? It's not what you think.

A. This is not tied to our salvation.

1. Paul never says, "do these things to receive or keep your salvation."

2. All of these changes are the results of salvation and sanctification.

a. As you put off the old ways of life and put on the righteousness and truth of Jesus, you cease doing these things.

b. Your language changes.

1. Even the world expects Christians to act differently.

2. When our behavior does not align with Jesus' teaching, people call us "hypocrites."

c. Your inner-thought life feels turmoil as you experience conviction.

1. What we used to be comfortable allowing into our lives suddenly is uncomfortable.

2. This inner tension is not guilt or shame, but conviction.

a. Shame and guilt are not redemptive in nature.

b. Shame and guilt want us to feel bad, and to never recover.

c. Conviction is redemptive and shows us where we are wrong and that help is available.

d. You stop lying, cheating, and stealing.

e. These changes are necessary as you become more like Jesus.

1. Because Jesus is not a liar, a cheater, or a thief.
2. These outward signs show the Spirit's work in our lives.

B. But Paul's context is not "me" focused, but "other" focused.

1. All of this is so we benefit and bless each other.

²⁵Therefore, putting away lying, **speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another.** ²⁶**Be angry and do not sin.** Don't let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and don't give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, **so that he has something to share with anyone in need.** ²⁹No foul language should come from your mouth, **but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.** ³⁰And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. ³²And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

2. Catch the significance:

a. We put away lying and speak the truth because we are a community, members of one another.

b. I should be angry and not sin by not letting my anger flow into the body.

1. This is why biblical conflict resolution is vital.

2. My physical body cannot handle sustained anger, nor can the Body of Christ.

3. When I choose to control my anger, I'm blessing myself and the Body.

Prayer? For those who struggle with deep-seated anger, can I pray for you right now?

c. When I work for what I have instead of stealing, not only am I not breaking a commandment, I am putting myself in a position to be a blessing to the rest of the Body.

d. When I choose to not use profanity, I have more room to speak things that BUILD up others and the Body.

3. When each of us put off the old ways and put on the new with the Spirit's help, ALL of the body benefits.

4. I do not change so that I, alone, am holy, but so we all are Holy.

C. The goal of Christianity, for too long, has been behavior modification.

1. We declare, "this is bad, so don't do it."

2. But the Jews had behavioral modification down to an art and religion.

3. Jesus' purpose is not merely to alter your behavior but to make you into a new person.

5. This is all possible because of Holy Spirit and Jesus' Forgiveness.

A. The Spirit is prominent in this passage.

1. We are told ²³to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

a. This really does not seem to teach that our minds have a spirit.

b. It actually makes better sense to read that the Holy Spirit renews our minds.

2. There is no way you will naturally put away anger, or lying, or anything of those things because they are part of the default design.

3. But, when we confess our sins, and repent of our ways asking for God's help, He gives us the power and the permission to lay aside all that hinders us.

- a. For some, that happens in an instant.
- b. For others, it feels like a much longer battle.
- c. BUT the Spirit does not ask you to do anything that He won't help you with.

B. Paul tells us to "not grieve the Holy Spirit."

1. First thing to notice is that the Spirit is a person, for He can be grieved and disappointed.

2. Second, this is a response of the Holy Spirit living inside of a believer.

- a. Paul is not talking to unbelievers here but to born-again Christians.

- b. Thus, it is possible for believers to live in such a way that our actions grieve the Spirit of the Living God.

- c. God's love for us is unconditional, but not His approval.

1. If God approved of everything we thought, acted, or lived, it would not be possible for us to grieve Holy Spirit.

2. Just because a child of God does something, it does not mean that the Father approves.

3. Thankfully, the Spirit lovingly convicts us to correct our path so we may walk "worthy of our calling."

- d. That is why we are asked to live so that we do not grieve Holy Spirit.

C. One of the many ways we grieve Holy Spirit is by allowing unforgiveness to live in us.

³²And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

1. Anger and unforgiveness are not appropriate lifestyles for us.
2. It was permissible for the Gentiles and for the gods of the Gentiles.
3. It was not permissible for followers of Christ.
 - a. Whereas the gods of Greece and Rome encouraged revenge, hatred, anger, and unforgiveness, the true God forgave us in Christ.
 - b. Therefore, we should live a life that does not permit unforgiveness to live in our body or the Body of Jesus.

Prayer:

- A. Each week, we have a call to prayer.
 1. It's always appropriate to pray for salvation.
 2. It's always appropriate to pray for healing, deliverance, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.
- B. I cannot shake the significance of praying for those of us who are angry or harboring unforgiveness.

Prayer?

Worship Time?