

EPHESIANS | The New Life

Rob Rogers June 25, 2023

Introduction

Last week we ended by talking about the outcome of Unity in the body of Christ... when we're all growing in Christlike character and functioning in our gift under Christ who is the head of the church, the end result of unity in the body like that is the Maturity of saints.

And then Paul gives us specifics, some imperatives on what a supernaturally changed life looks like... how maturity in the life of a believer shows up in the practical details of life.

Ephesians 4:17-32

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to **put off** your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to **put on** the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore, having **put away** falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

THE NEW PERSON THE NEW POWER THE NEW PROCESS

The New Person

PERSONAL: The team and I were talking about this passage on Monday, talking about putting off and putting on... like clothes.... and I shared with them that in my closet at home, there are clothes that I have that fit. And then there are my other clothes... Clothes that I've had for far too long, that I'm wishfully thinking one day, I'll be able fit into again... and Jimmy looks at me and says, "*Rob, it's not going to happen. Get rid of them.*"

- He missed the part in last week's message where Paul says, "**Speak the truth in LOVE.**"

And what's true is most of us have clothes that we should wear. Clothes that we shouldn't wear, and clothes we should put away... just give up and get rid of.

But when Paul is using the language, of “*putting on, putting off, putting away*” — he’s telling us that we ought to be incredibly intentional about our character and our behavior. That there is a disciplined, and decisive action that must take place in the life of believers... because there will be times when you’re tempted to put on your old self... your old life... to revert back to old patterns and old ways of being in the world.

How do we do this? How to we put off the old and put on the new?

Let’s look at the contrast that Paul gives us in this passage... it’s pretty comprehensive.

PUT OFF	PUT ON
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sensuality• Impurity• Falsehood• Theft• Greed• Destructive speech• Bitterness• Slander• Wrath	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Righteousness• Holiness• Speak the Truth• Labor• Generosity• Constructive speech• Forgiveness• Kindness• Compassion

Paul is giving us imperatives in this passage, and how we are to live now that we’ve been rescued and redeemed by Christ. If we had time I’d go through each of these individually and bring some definition to them. For now what I want you to see is that when you look out all many of the worldviews and religions out in the world... they all say something along these lines.

- You shouldn’t lie, speak the truth. Don’t steal. Don’t be greedy. Work hard, be kind and share with those in need.
- Islam, Buddhism, even many irreligious people would say, “Yes, you should live this way.”

And yet, what we find in the world, and at times in us... are all the things that Paul says to put off here. If we’re honest, we all have *moments* where we find ourselves at the very least, tempted to be given over to falsehood, to greed, bitterness and unforgiveness, speaking in a destructive manner.

Why is that? How do we overcome it?

- Notice, that Paul doesn’t say, put off falsehood, and sensuality, don’t lie, don’t steal because that’s the wrong thing to do (*even though it is*). Just stop it! Cut it out. He doesn’t say it that way.
- He also doesn’t just say, speak the truth, be kind and forgiving because that’s the right thing to do (*even though it is*).
- He doesn’t say, don’t lie because it’s wrong. And tell the truth because it’s right.
- ***He says, don’t lie because that’s no longer who you are.***
- He doesn’t say, tell the truth because it’s right. He says, tell the truth, be generous and forgiving, why? Not just because it’s the right thing to do, but because *that is who you are*.

This is what sets Christianity apart from every other religious system on the planet. Because only Christianity says, when you become a follower of Jesus... when you trust in Him for salvation from sin... **it’s not about behavior modification, it’s about identity transformation.**

What's so incredible about this, is it means that you don't have to get your life cleaned up before you come to Christ... you don't even have to get your life cleaned up before you read the bible, or jump into a community of people who do believe...

PERSONAL: I'm so grateful that the people that led me to Christ, allowed me the space to be a royal mess while I was exploring faith in Jesus. Because if I had to change first, in order to be accepted by them, or be accepted by Christ, I never would have come to know Him — **because I didn't have the power to change myself.**

- I'd been an addict for 7 years, and no matter what I tried I couldn't get free. But as I came to know Christ and enjoy Him... all of sudden, the things that used to have such power over me began to lose their grip...

The invitation of Jesus is not, "be changed and join the party." "But it is, "Join the party and you'll be changed."

But once you've come in... you receive a new identity. A new power. You become a new creation... AND you still have some old patterns, temptations, and ways of living that you are going to have to put off or fight against. The difference is that's no longer who you are.

Ephesians 4:17, 22

...you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds... ²² to put off your **old self**, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires...

Even though we have a new identity, and what we're told here is that **we must be intentional** about putting off the old life, and putting on the new... but in order to do that, you need.

The New Power

Paul mentions this so briefly it's easy to miss...

Ephesians 4:30

And do not grieve **the Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

When you become a follower of Jesus, you're sealed with the Holy Spirit of God. You have a helper, and advocate, a conscience on steroids living in you. Helping you understand and discern what is pleasing to God and giving you the power to live according to your new identity in Christ... to put on the new, and put off the old.

And this is why Paul says...

- Do not grieve the Holy Spirit...
- **1 Thessalonians 5:19**
Do not quench the Spirit.

Both are in the context of our actions, our behavior... how we live, what we do.

So what does it mean when Paul says, don't grieve, and don't quench the Holy Spirit? I love the way Pastor Dave Buehring clarifies it.

- When you're tempted to do something, or say something and the Holy Spirit says, "No, don't do that," and you say, "I don't care, I'm doing it anyway." **You grieve the HS.** It breaks His heart because He's fighting for you best, even when you're not. When He says "no" and you say "yes" you grieve the Holy Spirit.
- But quenching the Holy Spirit, is when the Holy Spirit is saying, "Do this, go encourage this person, or make amends with that person," and you say, "No" you're **quenching the Holy Spirit** and what He wants to do in you and through you for your sake and for the sake of those around you.

We have this active agent, the Spirit of the Living God at work in us, guiding us, speaking to us to help us put off the old, and put on the new.

Are we listening? Do we pay attention to when the Holy Spirit says "yes" or "no." Are we deferring to His leading? Or are our lives too loud, too busy, too full, too fast, to even notice when the still small voice of God is guiding us?

He's always speaking. The question is are we listening, cooperating, co-laboring with Him in order to help us put off the old and put on the new self?

The New Process

Puritan John Owen, in the 1670's wrote something called the *Mortification of Sin*¹. In it, Owen wrote about how we put sin to death in our lives.

He didn't say, "The way to eradicate sin from your life is you just say to yourself, 'How terrible to do such a thing! Respectable people don't act like that. Human beings don't act like that. Christians don't act like that. Don't you feel badly that you've done that?'"

Owen writes about how that has the opposite of the intended effect. Shaming yourself, or beating yourself up, is not how we change. It doesn't work. It just makes things worse. Instead, he says you have to look at Jesus Christ on the cross, and you have to see all that He's done for you when you didn't deserve it, and allow that reality, that truth to sink in. When it begins to sink in, you'll find yourself not only changing, but you'll be thrilled about the ways in which you are being changed.

Ephesians 4:17-20

...you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you **learned Christ!**

Paul doesn't say, "Don't do all these things, behave in these ways because that's not the way you learned about Christ." He says,

Ephesians 4:20

But that is not the way you learned Christ!

I can *learn about* Winston Churchill. But I cannot learn Winston Churchill. *I cannot know Him personally.*

¹ John Owen. *Mortification of Sin* (Reformed Church Publications, Nov 29, 2015)

But Paul says here, you and I CAN learn, experience Christ — meaning, you can know Him, you can enjoy Him, you can be in relationship with Him... why? ***Because He's alive.*** Because He rose from the dead. Because He ascended to His throne and sent His Holy Spirit to indwell the life of believers — to be an active agent that guides us in putting off the old and putting on the new.

Look at everything we're told to put off in this passage...

Falsehood, Greed, Destructive speech, Bitterness, Slander, Wrath, Malice

And you see all that Christ endured for us...

He endured falsehood, slander, wrath, malice, sinful anger and violence against the only one in human history that didn't deserve it. And yet, He endured it for you and for me. and He took all of it upon himself on the cross, so that you and I could be made new. So that we could walk in the newness of life.

When that sinks in, when you see Him, when you know Him personally, and enjoy Him, you can sense His enjoyment of you.

You look at all of that and the only appropriate response is to say, "I owe Him everything. How do I repay someone who's done this for me?" "I see Jesus on that cross, and I see how He's forgiven me. How can I not forgive others who have wronged me."

I see God's kindness and compassion toward me, even while I was His enemy — how can I not be tenderhearted toward others in need or even others that I might consider an enemy.

The process that Paul gives us is we have to see all that Christ has done for us, and that even now in the power of the Holy Spirit, we have relationship with him, and the power to put off the old life, and put on the new.

The beauty and the power the gospel is... Christ lived a perfect life, and yet died a sinners death, so that we could become a brand new person, with a new power, and a new process for growing to become like Christ.

How could I not surrender everything to the one who gave everything for me?

Today, may all of us be encouraged to walk in the newness of life. To put off the old, and put on the new, to walk in the power of the spirit of God, and continually be in awe the depth and beauty of Christ's love for us in the gospel.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss *grieving* the Holy Spirit and *quenching* the Holy Spirit? Do you remember when you have done either?
2. What is the difference between NOT doing something because you know you shouldn't, and choosing to do the right thing because of "who you are"? Behavior modification vs. identity transformation.
3. What is one thing from my old life that God is inviting me to put off?
4. What from my new life in Christ, is God inviting me to put on in its place?
5. God is always speaking, are you listening and co-laboring with Him?

NOTES