

Put On The New Man – Part 1

Ephesians 4:22-24

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

For two weeks now, we have been studying the effects of our having lived so long within our former life of unbelief, with all its many corrupt and destructive habits and behaviors that it is ever so difficult to turn away from them now that we have given our hearts to Christ in salvation; and how now, we naively and very mistakenly find ourselves bringing those “old” ways over into our new life with Christ; and how God’s Spirit is telling us that such things will not be permitted, that in Christ we are brand new creatures, and the old things of our old life must be left behind, abandoned, as we become the “new man”, the “new woman” that God wants us to be. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

As I have pondered these exhortations from God, an analogy has come to my mind. For the past several years, some of the most-watched programs on television have been those that feature some manner of “makeover” or “fix-up” of one “old” thing or another, old houses, old cars, even “old bodies”, all seeking to fulfill the impossible hope, as the saying goes, to make a “silk purse out of a sow’s ear”.

But as with most everything in this natural life, the results and the success of those efforts, though most often being presented in their best light in those programs, are relative.

Yes, good craftsmen can do wonders and make an old house look really good. And a good make-up artist can present an old face as flawless and beautiful. But the real truth remains that beneath the surface of that new looking house and that younger looking face are still many of the same “old flaws”. And those old flaws will surely someday re-surface and become more of a problem than they ever were before.

As I again read these words for us, beginning in verse 17 and following on through verse 24, may I ask that you consider carefully the truth that God is conveying regarding your and my “old man”, and especially His commands regarding the only real “fix” that really works! Follow along with me . . .

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the

ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:17-24)

As we consider these words again, may I first ask, “Are you “personally” prepared to recognize your own self and your own behavior within these words?” Before you received Christ as your Savior, were you some version of the “old man”, the “old woman” that is spoken about here?

And more importantly, now that you have received Christ as your Savior and have received His Holy Spirit into your soul, has His presence begun to make the necessary changes that He intends for you. Or have perhaps some of those old “flaws” in the foundation of your soul begun to resurface. Have those old wrinkles that once defined the way you used to look begun to re-wrinkle? Simply put, are you still living in much the same manner and lifestyle you lived in before you were saved? Have you brought some, or many, of your “old favorite” habits and behaviors with you into your new relationship with Christ?

For two weeks now, as we have studied these words, we have said over and over again that “old sins” left unattended will surely do exactly as these words declare to us. They will begin to “regrow” corruption according to deceitful lusts”.

Thankfully, as we read these words, we see that God’s exhortation does not stop with the simple instruction to “put off” the “old man”, leaving us to wonder and to decide for ourselves about when and what we should do next. He knows that if we do not take strong, immediate and preventive measures with our souls, the empty void left as Christ cleansed our soul with His salvation will surely leave a convenient opening for the evil one to come back in and begin all over again. Recall those words in Matthew 12, 43 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. 44 Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. 45 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first". (Matthew 12:43-45)

Dear friends, this is very, very real. We dare not simply “put off” our old self and do nothing more. We must immediately begin replacing that “old self” with a whole new creature, our new “born again” self. As these scriptures admonish,

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:17-24)

Considering these words, I want to emphasize the warning that I have given so often; that God does not and never will simply clean-up and renew our old self. Our old self is incapable of being “fixed”. Such efforts will always be futile and worthless. Why is that so? May we, for a moment, re-visit the words we studied a few weeks ago in Ephesians 2 . . .

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Folks, there is no way of mistaking God’s meaning in these words. Simply put, unless and until God does His miraculous work of salvation within us, our soul is “dead”, completely dead, undeniably dead. We look dead, we think dead, we act dead. And to add even more misery upon us, these words tell us that while we are in that dead condition, we are inhabited by the demonic spirits of death. And with them in control of us, we conduct the matters of our daily lives in a manner that not only speaks back to our own soul that we are dead, it speaks that same message of death to anyone and everyone we encounter.

And that is the “old man” that God is telling us that we must absolutely “put off”. Considering the analogy of renovating an old house . . . while yes, those homeowners may be trying to hang onto an old family home, and those television producers are in the business of restoring old buildings, sometimes the simplest truth is that those homes are beyond “fixing up”. Their basic structure is “corrupt to the core” and unfixable. And if the structure is truly “dead”, no matter how nostalgically important it is, sometimes, it is the better part of wisdom to simply tear that structure down and begin all over again. And that is God’s conclusion regarding the old dead soul of every unbeliever.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

God knows His creation well. And He knows that there really is no way to completely clean up and fix up our “old man”, our “old self”. The old must completely die and we must become a completely new creature, be “re-born” by the Spirit of God. It is then and only then that God can begin to do His miraculous “regenerating” work within us. But strangely and certainly beyond my rational sense to comprehend, God has providentially decided to allow the remnants of our old nature to continue to have access and influence into our “new” souls. And because of that, you and I have our required part within the “regenerating work” of God’s Holy Spirit. And so we read the instruction . . .

22 . . . you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Folks listen . . . because for all of our former life, we were so accustomed to giving in to the power and the guidance of our “old self”, it is easy to slide right back into those old ways, to give in to the urgings that our “old self” whispers into our ear. And God is telling us here in simple terms, “don’t do that”. Instead, we must quickly and firmly deny the urging of those old ways, “put off” that “old man” and begin to put on the “new man” and get about the “new” life that God has for us. Else, as with the example of the person who had been completely cleansed of his old demons, those same demons absolutely will return and bring with them many more, and our new condition will be far worse than we ever were before.

We must immediately fill our heart, soul, mind and spirit with the “new man” who is filled with the presence of Christ. And again, thankfully, God does not leave us to wonder how to do that. Listen to these words!

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. 26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil. 28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. 29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:24-32)

Here again, just as God so generously gave us instructions about how we are to “put off” the “old man”, so also, here He gives us very practical and “doable” instructions about how we should conduct ourselves as a “new man”, a “new woman”. And indeed, these words sound very much like the ones we studied about as “putting off the old man”, but these instructions are a stepping forward into the “new man”.

And may I say again, in Christ, we really can do all these things. God will only give us commands that He also intends give us the strength to carry out. Turn back with me and let’s consider some of these words. We’ll not finish them all today, but the Lord willing, we will return to them next week. Listen . . . in verse 25 . . .

25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. (Ephesians 4:25)

Curiously, God ranks our telling of a lie right up at the top of the most loathsome of sins that we can be involved in. May I give us one example of His disdain for liars, this from Revelation chapter 21 as He deals with eternal judgment! There He says

8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8)

As you read these words, you can’t escape the intensity of God’s hatred for lying. Here, He has grouped liars in with the “worst of the worst”, the cowardly, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, the sexually immoral, the sorcerers and the idolaters.

Simply put, the Bible nowhere presents an instance where lying is considered to be the right thing to do. In Exodus 20, the ninth commandment prohibits bearing false witness. Proverbs 6:16-19 lists “a lying tongue” and “a false witness who pours out lies” as two of the seven abominations to the Lord. And there are many, many other scriptures that speak about lying, Psalm 119, Psalm 163, Psalm 120, Proverbs 12 and on and on. Yes, there are at least two instances in the Bible where lying produced a favorable result, the lie the Hebrew midwives told Pharaoh when they allowed the new-born Hebrew babies to live seems to result in the Lord’s blessing on them. That is found in Exodus 1:15-21. Another example is Rahab’s lie to protect the Israelite spies in Joshua 2:5.

It is important to note, however, that despite the “positive” outcome of those lies, God never condones lying. And the Bible nowhere states that there are instances where lying is the right thing to do.

There is one other warning about lying given here in verse 25 that bears serious consideration . . .

25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. (Ephesians 4:25)

The entire first portion of this chapter is dedicated to our learning how we should live in "the unity of the Spirit of the bond of peace" within the Body of Christ. And these words here in verse 25 warn specifically about speaking truth with other believers.

And no, that does not mean that we can, at times, be untruthful with those outside the Body of Christ. It just means that it is especially egregious when we cause our brother to stumble and bring corruption into the whole Body of believers through our lying.

Learning how to live as a "new man", as a "new woman" truly is very difficult. But we can be confident that as we take each of these steps into our "new self", Christ will give us the strength to do them.

The Lord willing, we will pick up from here next week! For now, may we close with these words from our text . . .

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)