

The Doctrine of Putting Off and Putting On

Ephesians 4:17-24

Ephesians 4:17-24 (ESV) 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.

Introduction

- A. Overview: *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians* contains six chapters. Chapters 1-3 emphasize doctrine (theology) and chapters 4-6 emphasize behavior (practice).
 - 1. Chapters 1-3 are about spiritual blessings in Christ. The only thing we are told to do is to “therefore remember that at one time we were separated from Christ, without hope.”
 - 2. The apostle Paul never really gets over this reality. In Ephesians 3:8 he calls himself “the very least of all the saints.” Grace was given by God and Paul is always amazed.
- B. In Ephesians 4:1-16 Paul urges Christians, in view of the doctrine of Ephesians 1-3 (a second therefore), to walk in a manner worthy of the calling we have received by maintaining and pursuing unity.
 - 1. Unity is based on objective truth.
 - 2. To walk in the unity of the Spirit is to be mature. To this end we need leaders, we need the Holy Spirit, and we need one another to grow up into Christ.
- C. Here in Ephesians 4:17-24 we see that Christians are to walk (or live) a certain way. In addition to a corporate expression of unity we now see that purity (righteousness and holiness) matters.

Purity is as indispensable a characteristic of the people of God as unity. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians Commentary*, p 174

- 1. The way we are to walk is described as putting off your old self and putting on your new self. My title is **The Doctrine of Putting Off and Putting On**.
- 2. Paul returns to doctrine to make his point before making application. We always practice what we believe and what we desire.
- 3. Next week, Lord willing, Mark Prater will be here with us but the following week we plan to look at the application of putting off the old self and putting on the new self.

D. Here we will look at the command, the reminder and the response.

I. The command (see verse 17) is negative. You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

- A. Must is a strong word meaning necessary. We do not have an acceptable option.
 - 1. Paul will only use ‘must’ one more time in Ephesians (see Ephesians 5:3). Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you.

2. Paul writes as one who testifies in the Lord meaning that Paul is writing on the authority of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (not just red letters). God is speaking.
- B. You must no longer walk (or live) as the Gentiles do (all ungodly people of the world).
1. What does that mean? How are we to be different? Clearly Paul is generalizing. This is a broad statement about the ways of the world. What do we do?

Ex: Buying houses, driving cars, using cell phones, dress like Amish, using TV, iPods, movies, what is it we must not do?
 2. Paul takes us to doctrine. What matters in our walk is what and who we know. Don't miss the centrality of the mind in the text. What we think matters.
- C. Paul gives three vivid descriptions of the mind of the unbeliever.
1. They walk in the futility of their minds.
 2. They walk darkened in their understanding.
 3. They walk with ignorance in them.

The unregenerate person plans and resolves everything on the basis of his own thinking. He becomes his own ultimate authority and he follows his own thinking to its ultimate outcome of futility, aimlessness, and meaninglessness - to the self-centered emptiness that characterizes our age. John MacArthur in *Ephesians Commentary*, p 168

- D. The fruit in their life is tragic.
1. They have become callous.
 2. They have given themselves up to sensuality.
 3. They are greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

2 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV) But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. [2] For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, [4] treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, [5] having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. [6] For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, [7] always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

- E. The mind of the unbeliever is a wasteland.

II. The reminder. Notice what is different about the Christian.

- A. The Christian also has a mind. The Christian also thinks. The Christian has three vivid descriptions of their mind (see verse 20) which center on Jesus Christ.
1. You learned Christ.
 2. You heard about Christ (or heard Christ).
 3. You were taught in Christ who is the truth.
- B. We will each reach a verdict regarding Jesus Christ.
1. You will either see your sin and subsequent need for a Savior which means you love and follow Jesus Christ wherever the road leads.

2. Or, you will walk in the futility of the darkness of your mind, alienated from God who is love and light and joy and peace now and forevermore.

C. When Jesus Christ came to earth he came full of grace and truth with a message:

Mark 1:15 (ESV) And saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

1. When you learned Christ, heard Christ, and were taught in Christ you repented, you died to sin and you were raised up with Christ (symbolized by water baptism).

Colossians 3:1-7 (ESV) If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. [3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. [5] Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. [6] On account of these the wrath of God is coming. [7] In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.

2. Before we get to specific practice and application it is important that we understand what God has done for us.

The great mistake many of us make is to look only at our sin and failure, and then ask, a little despairingly, What can I do? But our need is not to do, it is first to understand what God has done. Sinclair Ferguson in *The Christian Life*, p 141

The conviction that Christian doctrine matters for Christian living is one of the most important growth points of the Christian life. Sinclair Ferguson in *The Christian Life*, p 2

D. Do you remember what God has done for us (for you)? God has acted on our behalf which is why Ephesians 1-3 contains such good news.

1. Chosen by God, adopted by God, redeemed by God, sealed into God by God, all for the praise of His glorious grace.
2. We were dead in trespasses and sins, enslaved, and condemned but God, being rich in love and mercy, saved us.

E. The result is that we are new creations in Christ. The result is that we know God.

III. **The response. It is unacceptable to walk like this change never happened.**

A. For God to receive glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations the command is given to us to put off the old self and put on the new self.

It is because we have already put off our old nature, in that decisive act of repentance called conversion, that we can logically be commanded to put away all the practices which belong to that old and rejected life. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians Commentary*, p 180

1. We act like who we are.

B. How do we put off the old man and put on the new man? In two weeks we will look at six specific examples of the gospel is applied to our lives.

1. The answer is tucked away in the text (see verse 23). If you aren't careful you will miss it. Be

renewed in the spirit of your minds.

2. The arena in which the game is played is our mind. That is why the Bible says things like:

2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV) Take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Romans 12:2 (ESV) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

3. Conviction regarding putting off and putting on is essential. No change without it.

- C. How do we renew our minds? If you've been around Living Hope at least six months you know this as well as I do. God's Holy Spirit helps us in:

1. The Word of God
2. Prayer
3. Fellowship
4. Repentance

Close

- A. Our hearts will respond to Ephesians 4:17-24 in one of two ways. Namely, faith or unbelief.

1. The response of faith (right thinking) for the Christian is a desire to sin no more. Won't it be sweet when we no longer fight the presence of sin within (sin's power is broken)?
2. The response of unbelief (wrong thinking) looks for an out.
 - Weary or tired? God's burdens and commands are easy.
 - It doesn't work? God gives grace to the humble.
 - My focus is really elsewhere. God says this we must do.
 - I'm busy. This priority cannot be avoided by the fruitful Christian.
3. Commend Living Hope Church for their example and desire to apply this.

- B. Let me address a question this text may raise in your thinking. What do you do if you are living with a Gentile (spouse, child or friend)? They aren't out there ... they are close to you

1. Pray (see Ephesians 6:18).
2. Walk with all humility, gentleness, patience and love (see Ephesians 4:2).
3. Forgive their sin against you (see Ephesians 4:32).
4. Fathers (heads), train them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (see Ephesians 6:4).
5. Model an example of the love of Christ to them (see Ephesians 5:1-2).