

## Ephesians 4:17-32

Genuine faith in Christ ought to cause a noticeable change in the life and conduct of the believer. In this section Paul encourages us to quit living like the rest of the world. Moreover, he shows us *how* our transformation takes place. We perform this process consciously, by “putting off” our old sinful self, changing the way we think, and “putting on” the newly formed self, which God has already created within us. Paul then concludes with some specific sins that need to be “put away” and shows how they can be replaced with something better. **Put off, put on, put away.**

- I. No longer walk as the nations all walk. 4:17-19
- II. Put off the old, put on the new. 4:20-24
- III. Put away sin once and for all. 4:25-32

- I. No longer walk as the nations all walk. 4:17-19

A. Paul here urges the Ephesians not to fall back into their old way of life. The church at Ephesus was mostly Gentile; the sins described here were more typical of a Gentile than a Jewish lifestyle.

B. This passage teaches us that living apart from God’s grace blinds a person to the nature and will of God. People can easily defend any way of life because sin can control our reason. Sin hardens our ability to think and leads us away from the life God wants us to live. Sin can give us a consuming desire to do what is wrong. For example:

- i. 4:17 **The futility of their mind** Ephesus was full of idolatry and witchcraft. Here Paul points to the foolish beliefs underlying Gentile behavior.
- ii. 4:18 **alienated from the life of God** separated, estranged; non-participants
- iii. **The ignorance that is in them** They were without knowledge (agnostic); their views expressed an ignorance of all spiritual reality.
- iv. **The blindness of their heart** This kind of ignorance is as much moral as mental. The Gentiles chose not to respond to the light they had, and in hardening their hearts against it condemned themselves to wander in darkness. They were held captive by beliefs rooted in falsehood.
- v. 4:19 **Being past feeling** Their hardened hearts are no longer capable of distinguishing between right and wrong.
- vi. **Have given themselves over to lewdness** They have become the victims of their own passions, the captives of their own sinful desires. What at first must have felt like the exercise of freedom has now brought them into the bondage of sins from which they cannot escape.

**Principle:** People who refuse the light that they have, eventually become ignorant, morally blind, corrupt, and the slaves of their own sinful tendencies.

**Illustration:** Don Richardson, *Peace Child*: the Sawi of Dutch New Guinea (Irian Jaya). They were cannibals whose highest aspiration was to deceive people, kill them and eat them. When he was finally able to communicate the gospel to them, they considered Judas the hero and Jesus a laughable fool.

**Application:** Many of us also once had our reason was clouded by sin. We once considered sin normal. This old life needs to be rejected. This is not who we are any more if we are in Christ.

II. Put off the old, put on the new. 4:20-24

- A. Paul reminds us that both old and new possibilities exist within each believer. God has given us a new self, but we now need to choose to **put on** that new self. We should now live by a new conscience that is informed by the word of God.
- B. 4:22 **Put off the old man.** This is our old self, the person we were before we came to faith in Christ. We are to consciously put this old man off – take him off like an old, worn-out shirt. God does not want to patch up this old ragged self and reuse it. He doesn't want to mend it; He wants us to throw it away.
- C. 4:23 **Be renewed (being constantly or continually renewed) in the spirit of your mind** We sometimes make a distinction between knowledge of the head and of the heart. There may be a difference, but the Bible shows us that we need to love and serve the Lord with both of them:

*Matt 22:35-38 NKJV* <sup>35</sup>Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

<sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”* <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment.

- i. Think of it this way: a renewed mind is a mind that thinks like the Bible.
- D. 4:24 **put on the new man** Putting off the old man is not enough. We can't just stop an old habit or activity. It needs to be replaced with something else.

**Which was created** The beautiful thing is that this **new man** already exists.

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

III. Put away sin once and for all. 4:25-32

- A. 4:25 Put away. We cannot keep the old stuff around if we are serious about trying to get rid of it. Consider it garbage. Just carry it away to the dump.
- B. Four examples of sins that cannot stay:
  - i. 4:25 Lying needs to be replaced with the truth. **Put off** the one and **put on** the other.
  - ii. 4:26-27 **Anger** needs to be dealt with that very day. Anger can be devastating if we hold onto it. It gives the devil a foothold.  
**The devil** is the accuser or slanderer; don't give him any room to work.
    - 1. In theory, not all anger is sinful. God displays anger at sin. Jesus displayed anger on rare occasions (Mark 3:5).

2. My anger may all be sinful, but again in theory, if we could be angry at only those things which anger Jesus, then that would not be sin. The danger is that our response to one sin (someone else's) can actually become another sin (our own) because of a damaging response.
- iii. 4:28 Stealing should be replaced by hard work – leading to generosity.
    1. **Illustration:** Patrick Tisdale's tools – give back, plus buy a present.
  - iv. 4:29 **corrupt words** are "rotten or putrid"; a term used to describe rotting fruit or fish. Some people's mouths are like open garbage cans with the garbage continually flying out of them. The old food scraps just won't stay in there.
- C. 4:30 The fact that we can **grieve the holy Spirit** shows that He is a person. What's more, that He loves us. We don't grieve unless there is a sense of personal hurt or disappointment. We may think that some event is sad or wrong, but we only grieve when there is some kind of personal attachment – when we care.
- D. 4:31 Again, these are all things that we need to **put away**.
- E. As we **put off** the sins listed in 4:31, we **put on** the virtues of 4:32. We replace the first with the second.

### Conclusions: Putting it into Practice

- Three different "puts": **Put off, put on and put away**.
- This chapter is full of very practical advice, but we may find the task daunting. Can I really do this thing? Can this old dog really learn to do new tricks? God says yes and He promises to help.
- Remember this: We are not expected to carry out this procedure in our own strength or ability.

***Ephesians 2:10 NKJV** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

- Now remember also that God's power is at work in us – the resurrection power of Jesus. Think back on Paul's prayers for the Ephesians. See the following:
  - **Ephesians 1:15-21, esp 1:19**
  - **Ephesians 3:14-21, esp 3:16 & 3:20**
- So in this whole process we are working together with God.
- God in His almighty power is working in us and through us, as we:
  - **Put off** our old habits, activities. **Put off** our old way of thinking - the old person we once were.
  - **Put on** new beneficial, constructive habits and actions. **Put on** the new person God has made us in Christ.
  - **Put away** sin once and for all.
- **Once again: Put off, put on and put away.**