

Taking Off And Putting On

9-27-09

Ephesians 4:25-32

Here in the fourth chapter of Ephesians

Paul is dealing with Christian conduct

He gives us the practical application of

The great doctrinal teaching of the first three chapters

First Paul has reminded us what we were like before salvation

We were hardened against God

Darkened and futile in our thinking - .separated from God

Insensitive to holiness and indulging in every kind of sin

And he states – **But you did not learn Christ in this way**

A great transformation has taken place

God has brought us into the knowledge of Jesus Christ

And as His followers we are to live completely different than the world

So what is this new way – how shall we then live

Listen carefully - The only reliable evidence of salvation

Is not a past experience of receiving Christ

I believe there will be myriads of people who have said a prayer

And Jesus will say to them - I never knew you

The only true evidence of salvation is a present life that reflects Christ

1John 2 – The one who says, “I have come to know Him”, and does not keep His commandments - is a liar

They have not learned Christ

2Cor 5 – If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature

When you received Jesus as Lord and Savior you became a new creation

New creatures act like new creatures

God doesn't make you a new creation and allow you to live in old ways

Paul says lay aside the old self - Put on the new self

Although God in His power and sovereignty made us new creatures

He has not made us robots

He commands us in the strength of His Spirit
To subdue our unredeemed humanness which Paul calls the old self
We need to die to the old self and put on the new self
We are to live as new creatures in submission to Christ our Master

The paradox of the Christian life is that
It is both God's sovereignty and man's free will at work
God in His sovereign love chose you called you saved you
And blessed you out of your socks
You need to choose to live for Him

Let's revisit last week for just a second READ (22-24)

We are to change from grave-clothes to wedding garments

Paul tells us about this new way of life
In terms of taking off one set of clothes and putting on another
We live in a society of casual dress – and I like that
But we still recognize that
Some kinds of clothing are more appropriate at times than others
When my grandmother passed away
My aunt wore a spring outfit with a very low cut top to the funeral service
And she must have used the handy spray-on makeup
I walked in took one look at her and my mouth dropped open – literally
She spent her time at the funeral service crying about her choice of dress
Everybody else spent their time talking about her choice of dress
She was dressed for a singles party – but she was at a funeral
When a prisoner is released he takes off the old prison garments
And replaces them with clothing more fit for society

You are a prisoner who has been set free

Paul says put on the new clothes and live like you don't want to be sent back

You are a corpse that has been raised from the dead

You are not only alive you are the bride of the Son of God
So when Paul tells you to change clothing

He wants you to take off your grave clothes and put on wedding garments

You have been set free – you have been made alive

Live like you are free – no longer captive to sin

Live like you are alive – no longer walking around dead

Sin no longer has power over you – it calls you but it cannot command you

Christians are the only people in the world who can choose not to sin

So choose not to sin

Live like you are the bride of Christ – ready for His return

Choose to live for Christ

God has already made you a new creation – that is His work – not yours

You are no longer in prison – you are no longer in the tomb

Christ set you free – God raised you from the dead

So live like a follower of Christ

We are to live a new life precisely because God has made us new

Don't try to live in both worlds

Take off the old nature and put on the new – they cannot co-exist

They are like two different masters

Which ever one you choose to follow you will hate the other

Like Lazarus we have been raised from the dead

Remember Jesus first command when Lazarus walked out of the tomb

Remove his grave-clothes

They were appropriate for a corpse but not for a living body

You were a corpse now you are alive

You have been reclothed in wedding garments

In preparation of the great wedding supper of the Lamb

From now on live like you are a member of the wedding party

Now if you are like me you might ask

What does that mean - How do I live for Jesus

Paul gives us the general command

Take off the old self and put on the new

And then because he knows there are a whole lot of believers just like me
He tells us precisely how the new self lives
He gives us five specific examples
Believers are to change from lying to speaking the truth
From unrighteous anger to righteous anger
From stealing to sharing – from filthy talk to edifying words
And from natural vices to supernatural virtues

READ VSS 25-30

The first thing Paul mentions is to put off lying and speak truthfully

The word translated falsehood literally means – “the lie”

Laying aside the lie, speak truth each one of you to your neighbor

We are not to lie because lying is satanic

Satan is a liar and the father of lies – we don’t want to be like him

And every lie emanates from the first lie

But here Paul is telling us to speak the truth of Christ

“The lie” is the same word John uses when he writes of the antichrist

1John 2 – I have not written you because you do not know the truth, because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is “the liar”, but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

Paul’s phrase “the lie” and John’s phrase “the liar” are the same root words

In becoming a Christian you have repudiated the lie and embraced the truth

You have turned from Satan to Jesus who is the Truth

Christ doesn’t have truth – He isn’t part of the truth

He isn’t a way into the truth – He is truth

Christ is the truth that needs to be known

And you should always speak the truth of Christ

Unbelievers do not know the truth – they believe “the lie”

They are darkened in their understanding

Unable to discern the things of God

We do know the truth and need to share it

To those who believe the lie the greatest truth you can give them

Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Speak that truth in love

But the meaning goes beyond that

Because of your new position in the kingdom of God

You are quit lying and always tell the truth - always

Lying about anything is like visiting the prison you were in because you miss it

I saw a survey on TV about lying

Who lies most – men or women – men 2 to 1

What is the most often told lie

Let me give you a clue – you hear it every Sunday –

And I am guilty of it – the most often told lie is - I'm fine

Now I don't think people want to hear a litany of every ache you have

But when your brother or sister asks you how you are

I do think they are interested in the truth of how you are

Some of you came into church today frightened or depressed or anxious

Hurting in some way

And when you leave no one will know – so no one will be praying for you

If we were honest with each other

There would be more prayer going on in the church

And sometimes we're careless about truth

We repeat stories about others without verifying the facts

Samuel Johnson wrote – It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying that there is so much falsehood in the world

We represent Jesus who is truth

We need to be real careful before we repeat something about others

There are a lot of false statements running around this world

Even within the church of Jesus

Let's not be part of sustaining a lie

Finally we need to stand for truth even if it is to our disadvantage

The biggest lies told are those that give the liar an advantage

Or keep him from having trouble

But there is no such thing as a single lie - one lie always leads to another
And one thing about telling the truth is
You don't have to remember what you said
Or cover it with a second or third lie
When you begin to lie you will find that lying becomes habitual
And you will lie even when you don't have to
Please don't be a practiced liar – you're not fooling anybody
And nobody – not even those you call friends will trust you
One last thing about lying

Someone who lies easily always seems to become involved with other types of sin

Alcohol drugs or sexual promiscuity all seem to follow habitual lying
So put off lying and save yourself some grief

And then put off anger

Not all anger is sin

Sometimes God is described as angry

Scripture tells us we can be angry and yet not sin

So anger itself is not sin

Everybody loves that – “God says I am allowed to be angry”

However most of us become angry for sinful selfish reasons

And almost for no other reason

We tolerate that which should make us angry

And become angry over those things we should tolerate

So if you are angry it is almost certain that you are already sinning

The only anger that is not sinful is righteous anger

The same anger that Jesus would have about a situation

And if left unchecked even righteous anger can lead us into sin

So Paul writes that when we become angry

Regardless of the cause we need to deal with it quickly

To allow anger to fester for an extended period of time is dangerous

It gives the devil a foothold in your life

When you are angry deal with it – and deal with it quickly

Unresolved anger will lead to bitterness of soul

Ever know someone who was real touchy

Say or do the wrong thing and it sets them off

They are carrying a load of bitterness caused by unresolved anger

Don't be angry unless God would be angry

Then Paul says quit stealing and start working for a living

Paul actually goes further than just stop stealing

He writes - Get a job and share with those in need

Isn't that great – instead taking from others – give to others

Paul is not calling for a welfare state

In another letter he wrote – **if they won't work let them not eat**

But when someone is in need

Brothers and sisters help out brothers and sisters

Paul was continually taking up collections for the church in Jerusalem

Jews who left Judaism couldn't find work

So other churches helped out as they were able

The church at Philippi sent Paul financial aid while he was in prison

On the other hand before Paul was imprisoned

He worked to support not only himself but those who were with him

The command is this

If you are able to work, then do it; if you are able to help those in need, then do it

Then we are to put off unwholesome talk and instead speak grace to each other

The word translated unwholesome literally means corrupt or corrupting

It was used of fruit that is rotting

This command could have been translated

Take off rotten speech and put on uplifting speech

We should use words that build up other people

Not cause them sorrow

This life is a hard place and it isn't your job to make it harder

Paul is telling how we should relate to each other

How many here know someone who has the innate ability

To say the exactly wrong thing at the exactly wrong time to say it

And do it intentionally

That is rotten speech

I was a manager in St. Louis when the company decided to close branches

My boss showed up with the HR officer and laid off 90% of my employees

Most of whom I had hired or put into their present position

As he left he said – really this is good news - we still have our jobs

That was corrupt speech

James tells us that the hardest thing to do is control the tongue

Speech is a powerful tool for good or for evil

Hitler's corrupting speech plunged the entire world into war

Churchill's uplifting speech gave his country hope during the worse times

The words of Jesus have given hope to millions upon millions of people

Speak like Churchill – speak like Jesus

The truth is we cannot control our tongue by ourselves

We need to seek God's help

God controls our tongue when we allow His Spirit to control our minds

Frank Gaebelin wrote – Tongue control will never be achieved until there is first of all heart and mind control. When any Christian, yields to the Lord the full control of his life, the problem of managing his tongue will be solved.

It is in relation to the tongue that Paul talks about grieving the Holy Spirit

Why here

Because when our speech is used to tear down one another

Instead of build each other up it grieves the Holy Spirit

Where does rotten tearing down speech most occur

This may surprise you but it shouldn't – it occurs most in families

Parents to children - spouse to spouse – sibling to sibling

Almost everyone comes out of their family with wounds

There is an old song that goes – You always hurt the ones you love, the ones you

shouldn't hurt at all. You always take the sweetest rose and crush it 'til the petals fall.
You always break the kindest heart with a hasty world you can't recall.

Now listen - The church of Jesus Christ is filled with wounded souls

It is mainly wounded people whom He calls to Himself

We need to be very careful how we talk to each other

Ever say something to someone and it got a reaction that surprised you

You probably touched a wound that occurred during someone's childhood

And it is still tender

Most people in this building need help not criticism

Finally - Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Paul says lay aside the natural vices and put on supernatural virtues

Our natural tendency is to sin

Look at the world and what do you see – bitterness wrath anger malice

Played out in conflict after conflict war after war

Angry people saying mean things about each other

Bitterness is unresolved anger smoldering within a heart

Malice is the desire that harm should come to another

Clamor is shout or cry of strife indicating a loss of control

Slander is the defamation of someone's character

Turn on cable news and you will see all of these - every day

Paul says put them away - take them off

Don't be like that - this is no longer who you are

You didn't learn Christ in this way

So put on kindness – put on a tender heart towards one another

And for heavens sake forgive each other

Everything mentioned in these three verses

Is either an interpersonal relationship problem

Or an interpersonal relationship solution

And these last three kindness tender-heartedness and forgiveness

Are all graces that God has shown to you

God want you to show them to others – be part of the solution

Think about the conflicts you have had in your life

Imagine how they might have turned out if the other person

Had shown you kindness tender-heartedness and forgiveness

Now imagine how they might have turned out

If you had been like that to the other person

Finally these natural vices are what Jesus experienced during His life

The world hated Him – the world still hates Him

And if you live for Jesus the world will hate you

When we live for Jesus we are an aroma of death to death for the perishing

We had a mouse die in the walls of our house – ever had that

And for a few days we couldn't get rid of the odor of death

We held our breath when we walked past it – we sprayed air freshener

We hated that odor

That is what the Jews thought of Jesus

And that is how the world thinks of you

To the perishing you are like the odor of a dead animal

The church has suffered great persecution because it lived for Jesus

Those in the world will try to destroy the church

God doesn't want the church to destroy itself from within

So to keep us from doing just that he tells us how we should behave

Particularly towards each other

We are to be kind to one another tender-hearted forgiving each other

Why because this is how God treats you

This is how Jesus lived in the world

This is His character

Being kind to someone is simply treating them as you would want them to treat you

It is saying words of encouragement instead of words of condemnation

It is being a coach instead of a judge

Tender-hearted people literally feel the need of the other person

They feel the pain or hurt of the person who is suffering

They rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep

To make this complete God says

We need to forgive each other – just as God has forgiven us

And nobody has hurt you more than you hurt His Son

But in Christ you have complete forgiveness

And the promise that God would intentionally forget your sins

Now the body of Christ is a diverse group of people

Who only have one thing in common

They were chosen by God and are in His kingdom

Some of us are wealthy some are not – some are white collar some are not

We come from every tribe and tongue and nation on the planet

We come with some of that old flesh still alive

We come with scars

We come with expectations of others

Having scars and expectations means we will be easily wounded

To build unity in the church we need to forgive each other

Unity cannot happen without forgiveness

Forgiveness cannot happen without love

And of course unity and love are to be

The primary characteristics of the body of Christ

It is our unity and love that will attract others to Jesus

How can such a wounded group find unity

By being kind – by being tender-hearted and by forgiving each other

It is the only way

Don't hold grudges

If you find you are unable to forgive someone ask God for His help

If you do not forgive others God will not forgive you

Now that doesn't mean you will lose your salvation
You have been sealed – you are safe
But you will not have the power or the freedom
That you should be experiencing in Jesus
So – if you need to forgive anyone – I mean anyone
Even if that person is no longer around – do it
For your own good – do it