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Putting On The New Self

EPHESIANS 4:17-24

Introduction

1. The text before us tonight takes me back almost fifty years to the time of my early teenage years.
2. I served as a new Christian on one of the church buses which we used at Walnut Street church of Christ to pick up young people and bring them to Bible Study and worship.
3. Those buses were rolling classrooms.
4. Those who rode with us learned the Bible stories and a number of songs.

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5. One of those songs included the following lyrics:

**The best thing in my life I ever did do,
Was take off the old robe and put on the new.
The old robe was ragged and tattered and torn,
The new robe was spotless and never been worn.
The best thing in my life I ever did do,
Was take off the old robe and put on the new.**

6. Those lyrics are taken directly from Paul's letter to the Christians in Ephesus here in chapter four.
7. It is in these verses that Paul teaches us to "lay aside the old self" and "put on the new self".
8. We find almost the same language in Colossians 3:9-10 where Paul writes, "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of One who created him."
9. Tonight, as we contrast the old self which we are to "lay aside" and the new self which he encourages us to "put on," I encourage you to take note of the

difference between the two.

10. Ask yourself, have I truly taken off my old self and replaced it with the new self which as Paul said earlier in chapter 2, has been “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10) ?

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I. The Tapestry of the Old Self

“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.”
(Ephesians 4:18, ESV)

A. HARDNESS OF HEART

1. Our sinful condition prior to our salvation began with the hardening of our hearts.
2. The Greek word for “hardness” is *porosis* which means an unwillingness to learn, mental stubbornness, closed minded.
3. It comes from the word *poros*, which originally meant “a stone harder than marble.”
4. Mark used it in his gospel to describe the hearts of those in Jesus’ home synagogue of Nazareth who determined to kill Jesus when they witnessed His healing of the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:5).
5. Here, Paul writes of the Gentiles’ “hardness of their hearts” to describe their inability and unwillingness to respond to God’s truth.
6. In Romans 1:18, he also writes of those men “who suppress the truth in their unrighteousness.”

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B. DARKNESS OF HEART

1. As a result of this “hardness of heart” Paul says the Ephesians were “darkened in their understanding” (v. 18a).
2. It isn’t that they were not intelligent individuals, but that they lacked spiritual understanding.

3. Paul says the same thing in his letter to the believers in Rome:
 - a. “. . . they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” (Romans 1:21b, NASB95)
 - b. “Professing to be wise, they became fools,” (Romans 1:22, NASB95)
4. The more they suppressed the truth, the less able they were to discern spiritual reality.

3b**C. DEADNESS OF HEART**

1. When you mix hardness of heart together with darkness of [heart] understanding you get, deadness of heart.
2. Paul describes this state as being “excluded (alienated) from the life of God” (v. 18b).
3. Earlier, at the beginning of chapter 2, Paul said that these Gentiles in Ephesus were “dead in [their] trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).
4. This is what sin does to us, it sucks all the life out of us.
5. As a result, we approve of and engage in sins we never would have considered.
6. Such a state makes it possible for us to call “evil good and good evil” to “put darkness for light and light for darkness” (Isaiah 5:20).

Slide 4**D. RECKLESSNESS OF HEART**

1. In verse 19, Paul describes for us the result of this downward spiral:

“and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”
(Ephesians 4:19, NASB95)
2. Many of you are familiar with hands calloused from years of hard physical work.
3. Those callouses prevent you from feeling pain from a needle prick or

something else of like nature.

4. People who have reached such a point in their spiritual lives are beyond feeling — they have lost all sensitivity.
5. Now, because nothing hurts, they give themselves over to “sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity.”
6. Sadly, they are never satisfied, but always greedy for more.
7. Sensuality does not satisfy — it only creates a greater appetite.
8. If we go back to the beginning of our text, verse 17, we find Paul saying this — “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord . . .”
 - a. Paul is telling us that this is not just his assessment of the world, it is the Lord’s assessment as well.
 - b. It is important that we also see our world without Christ in the same way, because only then do we see it as truly lost and in need of Christ.

[It is easy for us to become pessimistic toward such a world and to give up hope, but that is not the way Paul wants us to leave things. He pushes for us to see the world and ourselves as well in our new clothing!]

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II. The Tapestry of the New Self

A. OUR NEW WARDROBE STARTS WITH CHRIST

“But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,” (Ephesians 4:20–21, NASB95)

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1. He is our Subject Matter

“You did not learn Christ in this way”

- a. When Paul speaks of us learning Christ, he points to us learning everything we can about our Lord.
- b. We study His life — the Gospels paint a most complete picture for us.
 - 1) How did He live?

- 2) How did He treat those around Him? (Love, Compassion)
- 3) What was important to Him? (Values, Faith)
- 4) What was His relationship with His Father like?

6a**2. He is our Teacher**

“... you have heard Him”

- a. Jesus invited His disciples to “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29, NASB95).
- b. How many times do we find Jesus saying to His followers . . .
 - 1) “Listen to this” (Mark 4:3) or “Listen to Me” (Mark 7:14).
 - 2) “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15; 13:9).
- c. Go back and re-read the Gospels — let Him teach you.

6b**3. He is our Environment**

“... you have been taught in Him”

- a. Everything that is important to our salvation is found in Him.
- b. In Him we have life (John 1:4)
- c. Our redemption is made possible in Him (Ephesians 1:7).
- d. Grace and truth are found in Him (John 1:14)
- e. It is in Him that we were sealed “with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13).

Slide 7**B. WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF OUR NEW INSTRUCTION?**

1. First, it teaches us to “lay aside the old self” (v. 22).

“... you ... have been taught ... that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit” (Ephesians 4:21,22, NASB95)

- a. We began this process when we first obeyed the Gospel.
- b. However, it is not something we do one time and never think about it again.
- c. Every day we continue to put off the old garments. Why?
- d. It's like that old shirt we like to wear.
 - 1) It is broken in and comfortable.
 - 2) We enjoy wearing it.
- e. Old sins are the same way.
 - 1) We are used to them.
 - 2) They are second nature to us.
- f. Every day we must make a conscious decision to walk a different path.

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- 2. Second, it teaches us to “be renewed in the spirit of our mind” (v. 23).
 - a. We cannot effectively put on our new clothing unless our thinking is altered and renewed.
 - b. In Romans 12:2, Paul said “be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2, NASB95).
 - c. The only way we can do this is by consistently reading and studying God's Word and asking God to continue His renewing of our minds.
 - d. Ask God “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).

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- 3. Third, we are taught to “put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteous and holiness of the truth” (v. 24).
 - a. We received this new self at our new birth.
 - b. It is “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (NIV84).

Conclusion

1. We live in a world in which Satan is very much alive.
2. He is constantly at work to harden the hearts of those around us so that they do not listen to truth.
3. Eventually those hearts become dark, unable to discern spiritual reality.
4. The next step is a person who is spiritually dead, unable to tell right from wrong, good from evil.
5. They finally lose all sensitivity and hunger for more and more of what led them to where they are at.
6. You and I know that people can change, and that change begins with the good news of Jesus Christ.
7. He alone is the One who can open blind eyes and change hardened hearts.
8. This is what He did for each of us who wear His name here tonight.
9. Perhaps you are a person who longs for that same change in your own life.
10. It can be yours if you are willing to turn from your sin and turn to Christ in obedient faith.
11. Let Christ wash away your sin and create in you a clean heart.
12. Are you willing to do that tonight?