

EPHESIANS 4: 22-32

TAKE OFF THE OLD, THE RUINED -- PUT ON THE NEW, THE FRESH!

. . . Put off, concerning your former conduct, the **old man** which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and [that you] put on the **new man** which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

1) Therefore, putting away **lying**, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. 2) "Be **angry**, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. 3) 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. 4) Let no **corrupt word** proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 5) And do not **grieve the Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 6) Let all **bitterness**, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

7) And be **kind to one another**, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Sometimes when children are playing, things don't go well. Perhaps the children aren't getting along. perhaps a child alone can't get the toy to accomplish what he wants the toy to accomplish. "Playing" becomes aggravation. At that point mother says, "Time to put that away and get out something new." The same is true of anything else. When it's not working or can no longer be fixed, it's time to be done with it and get something new.

That's exactly what Paul is saying regarding your life and conduct. You are "children of God." Your old life, the life of your unbelieving nature, old Adam, or "old man" as our text says, is no longer workable, profitable, helpful—in fact it is detrimental—for you. The old life, the life of sin and unbelief, is rooted in corruption which destroys all that is good. Sin does not bring blessings. Sin brings disappointment, ruin, death, hell. That's Satan's game. He is very successful, because his deception and lies seem so appealing to evil, lustful, self-serving—not God-serving—sinners. It's time to put it away, put it off—like taking off an old tattered coat that is no longer warm or safe to wear because it gets snagged on everything.

Put on a new coat. It's time to start afresh, to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, in the thoughts and desires of your heart. Time to put on the new man, like a new, warm, safe coat, which is a gift from God and is knit together in true righteousness and holiness in Jesus. The new man coordinates with God's blessed desires and goals for your forgiveness and life everlasting in Christ, not your destruction.

Does it sound like one more thing you're supposed to do? "Put off the old man. Put on the new man." Perhaps it does. But consider the thoughts that precede them in the first part of the letter. In chapters 1 & 2, Paul shares line after line of beautiful truths regarding what God has done for you in Christ. We will review them.

Paul makes it very clear that the Christian is a child of God who has been chosen by God in Christ (not by good luck, skin color, or superior abilities). God chose you in Christ, your Savior, already before the foundation of the world--before you were even here to impress Him or to curry His favor. It has nothing to do with you—only God. God predestined you, chose you, to be His adopted child! Imagine the joy for an orphan of no special note to be specifically, particularly, and deliberately adopted by a royal family! "They want me and I am nothing!") This is likewise your status before God. And, to use police language, you come with a whole list of "priors"--undesirable crimes and baggage! Here's the true marvel--your priors are made right for you, you are ransomed, set free, redeemed, by the blood of a dear and beloved member of this royal family! your new brother, God's own Son, Jesus! In Him you belong! You are not viewed with a skeptical eye, nor subject to temporary probation. You have peace and joy, not just some peace and joy, but abundant peace and joy. Paul says that in Christ you have a great inheritance! Have ever received an inheritance--a valuable and treasured gift, from someone who loved you? It is a gift of grace, not a right. (Here is an example of a gift of grace: Our principal at Lutheran elementary school had jumped overboard from an aircraft carrier during World War II to avoid being burned to death in an accidental fire. By wartime rules, the ship did not go back rescue him. Hopeless. A discarded orange crate drifted his way--his life raft! Ultimately another ship "happened" that way and rescued him. It was a gift of God's grace! Likewise the Holy Spirit has brought you life in Christ. What a marvel! Ponder your plight. You were actually dead in your disobedience and sins before God. But in Christ, God has made you alive! Forgiveness, pardon, resurrection from the grave, and eternal life in heaven! God's grace! For you who are not even of the chosen family of Abraham, but Gentile, outsiders and foreigners. You are welcomed into God's family through Christ! (Ephesians 1-2).)

Is it just another thing to do, just a drudgery, to put off the old man of sin and put on the new man of righteousness serving God! It is not a burden, but your *privilege* and joy, to put off the old man and his fleshly ways from which you have been saved by Jesus who was punished and died in your place and rose in glorious resurrection for you! It's your *privilege* to put on the new man *created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness!*

What does that look like? What is involved? The text gives examples—I have numbered them in the printout of the text—six actions to avoid, and one very positive to carry out.

LYING— It's easy to lie so as to cover up a mistake or a sin, or to lie to convince someone that you are right and someone else wrong. It's easy to stretch things a little (have you ever heard of a lie being called “stretcher”?) so as to cast yourself in the best possible light. Realize that the “neighbor” to whom you lie is one of God's specially made creations, and the Christian is your brother. The TRUTH is in order, spoken in love. It is your privilege!

OVERWROUGHT ANGER-- Anger of itself is not a sin. God gets angry at sin and with sinners. Think of His anger with wayward Old Testament Israel. Think of Jesus; anger driving the merchants out of the temple. When sin makes you the Christian angry, get to the bottom of it with whoever is involved, iron it out, then let it go. To let anger stew, even over night, does not help one iota whether the matter involves husband, wife, brother, sister, neighbor, or fellow church member. “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over” (Matthew 18:15). A heart stewing with anger is an open invitation for the devil to step in. It is your privilege in Christ, to inhibit overwrought anger.

STEALING-- Taking what belongs to someone else is simple when it can easily be done. Shaving the figures on government documents, keeping for yourself what someone else has inadvertently dropped or left behind, when you know whose it is or you can easily find out. Stealing items that no one will notice—paper from your work place for your copy machine at home, pens from the bank, toilet paper from the courthouse restroom. If it is a genuine need, ask for them. Beware of becoming so “shrewd” and “thrifty” in business transactions that you become dishonest in getting a good deal. Paul says, rather than “taking,” work for your possessions and be ready to give to those in need. This is likewise your privilege!

CORRUPT COMMUNICATION-- It is easy to speak things that damage others—to their face to hurt them directly, or behind their back to hurt them more subtly. That's not what speech is for. Corrupt words certainly includes misusing God's name to call Him in mockery as your witness or to damn others to hell. Let words come out of your mouth that “edify”—build people up, not to make them proud of themselves and full of themselves, but to build them up in their Lord their Savior. Such communication is your joy and privilege.

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT-- The Holy Spirit works in your heart through the Word of God bringing you to faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The Holy Spirit has sealed you in Jesus secure for the final day of rescue at the End. As a king puts his seal on items not to be tampered with, the Holy Spirit seals you in faith and keeps you safe. Do you suppose the Holy Spirit is joyful or grief-filled when you sin and pick away, break off, and discard that precious seal? It's like giving someone a new shirt only to see them use it to wipe their shoes. It is to your shame to grieve the Holy Spirit. It is your joy and privilege to respect and please Him.

BITTERNESS, ETC.-- This entire statement wraps up all the previous. Take off and cast away, the old man, the old Adam. Say No to sin. Count it your privilege to live for Christ. To this end, get rid of all bitterness. When one has “done you dirt,” the Lord knows. He will deal with the evil doer. Put away bitterness plus WRATH AND ANGER—Do not let rage, revenge, and grudge matches—which are like real matches—burn your heart and your love for the Lord and others. Also put away CLAMOR AND EVIL-SPEAKING—being loud and obnoxious, so as to make self the center of attention and the great one, while squelching others. Such is the work of the old Adam pushed by Satan, to cause hurt and harm to self and the others in God's Kingdom, Bitterness, rage, anger, clamor and evil-speaking besmudges your precious Savior and His salvation for you and others.

But—KINDNESS!-- It is your privilege in serving the Lord to , ***Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*** Let the warmth of your heart lead you in dealing with your brothers and sisters. Doesn't this verse apply well to families—parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives! What a special wedding text and marriage motto! Being tenderhearted. Remember what God has done for you in Christ—a gift of His grace.

Your old Adam and sinful nature? It's time to put it away. You new Man and heart of faith in Christ? It's high time to put in on and wear it boldly! A privilege!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---