

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON SIXTY-SIX)

“PUT THE NEW MAN ON”

EPHESIANS 4:20-24

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

The Message translates the passage in the following way:

20 But that's no life for you. You learned Christ!

21 My assumption is that you have paid careful attention to him, been well instructed in the truth precisely as we have it in Jesus.

22 Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything — and I do mean everything — connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life — a God-fashioned life,

23 a life renewed from the inside

24 and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you.

In **Ephesians 4:22**, Paul exhorts the believers in Ephesus to “*put off...the old man.*” The term, “*the old man,*” refers to the unsaved person, spiritually dead, totally dominated and controlled by the fallen, unregenerate adamic nature, or the **flesh**. It is a reference to all that we were as sons of Adam, prior to our conversion. Paul exhorts us to “*put off,*” the **old man**. Since, as believers, we are no longer positioned “in Adam,” we must stop living as if we still were. We must order our lives to reflect the fact that we are now positioned “in Christ.”

When persons believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, the **old man**, with his affections and lusts, is crucified. The believing sinner receives the **actual** benefits of his or her identification with Christ in His death on the Cross. These benefits were only **potential** at the time of His crucifixion. The believer’s identification with Christ in His death, resulted in the breaking of the power of the fallen, unregenerate adamic nature, or the **flesh**, over his or her life. This victory over sin which the Lord Jesus secured for us at the Cross, is made actual and operative in our lives as we yield to the Holy Spirit and trust Him for that victory. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to apply in our lives, the deliverance from the power of the **flesh** which Christ secured at Calvary.

We have stated that the Holy Spirit has a twofold ministry in the life of the believer, that of making actually operative in his or her life, the victory over sin which the Lord Jesus procured for us at the Cross, and that of producing His fruit in the believer’s experience. But the Holy Spirit is only able to do this twofold work in full and rich measure as the believer puts himself or herself deliberately and consistently, under the Spirit’s control. The initial act of faith in the Lord Jesus which resulted in the crucifixion of the old man, resulted in the believer being separated from the power of the fallen, unregenerate adamic nature. He or she is no longer a slave to the **flesh**. He or she is free to say a positive **NO** to sin and to stop yielding himself or herself, and his or her members to sin.

This is Paul's argument: believers no longer belong to **the old corruption of sin**; they belong to **the new creation in Christ**. So, they are to put off or lay aside their grave clothes!

The changed life not only requires us to "*put off...the old man,*" it also requires us to "*put on the new man.*" In verse **24** Paul writes, "*And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*"

In verse **23**, Paul informs us that the bridge that leads from the putting off of the **old man** in verse **22**, to the putting on of the **new man** in verse **24**, is the renewing of the spirit of the mind. He writes, "*And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*"

Paul is urging believers to allow the Holy Spirit to continually renew their thought processes. This renewal has reference not only to what we believe, but to that belief having the effect of transforming our affections, our attitudes and our behaviour. It is Paul's desire for every believer to partake of the miracle of a renewed mind which will enable them to have a divine perspective on everything. This renewal points to a radical change in the believer's thinking as a consequence of the increasing influence of the Holy Spirit over his or her thought processes, so that he or she increasingly sees everything from God's viewpoint.

The words "*be renewed*" are in the present tense in the Greek, which indicates that the spirit of the mind is continually being renewed. This renewal is an ongoing process that God performs in us as we cooperate with the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does the renewing as we obey Him by saturating our minds with God's transforming Word of truth and applying it to our lives.

Commenting on this verse, **Dr. John Phillips** wrote the following:

"Many of our problems have to do with the way we have been trained to think. The human mind is brilliant. It can unravel many mysteries of the

universe, find ways to split atoms, unravel **DNA**, and weigh stars. But without *God* it cannot think properly about matters of faith and morals.

Satan always attacks the mind. Ever since our first parents ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the human mind has been vulnerable because it has a natural bent toward evil thoughts. It is attracted to sin. It is blind to spiritual truth, unless it has the Holy Spirit's illumination.

The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit brings the mind of Christ into the human personality. The Holy Spirit gives a new direction to the thought life of a Christian. His carnal mind wants him to continue in the old direction, but he must deliberately put it off. There are some books he is not to read, some shows he is not to watch, some conversations he is not to have, some stories he is not to tell. He puts off such evil, and he is renewed in the spirit of his mind."

Brothers and sisters, it is not possible for us to put on the new man if the spirit of our mind have not been renewed!

To what is the Apostle Paul referring when he uses the expression "**the new man**?" Earlier, we noted that the term, "the **old man**," referred to the unsaved person, spiritually dead, totally dominated and controlled by the fallen, unregenerate adamic nature, or the **flesh**. It is a reference to all that we **were** as sons of Adam prior to our conversion. In contrast to the **old man**, the **new man**, refers to the saved person, spiritually alive, dominated and controlled by the **divine nature**. It is a reference to all that we **are** as sons of God, "in Christ," **since** our conversion. This new man "*after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*" It is of this **new man** that Paul speaks in **2 Corinthians 5:17**: "*So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away—look, what is new has come!*" (**New English Translation**)

The **new man** is the essence of what believers are now in the new covenant with Christ. The term describes our new position in Christ

which gives us the potential to practice daily the putting off of the filthy rags which characterized the **old man**, and the putting on of the righteous garments which characterize the **new man**. The source of the potential to “put off” and “put on” is the indwelling Holy Spirit. The **new man** is not our work-it is God’s creation. Our responsibility is not to weave it, but to wear it. We do not **create** the new man, but we must **clothe ourselves** with him. Paul is exhorting believers to a daily appropriation of that which we already possess.

As believers, we are to “**put on the new man.**” The phrase “*put on,*” is the translation of the Greek word **enduó**, which means “to put on as a garment, to clothe or to dress.” The uses in the New Testament of the word **enduó** by Paul, **all** have a **figurative** meaning. In other words, he uses the word, not to refer to the putting on of literal garments but to the putting on of ethical, moral or spiritual garments. In the verses noted hereunder, the phrase “*put on,*” or “*putting on,*” are translations of the Greek word **enduó**:

Romans 13:12

*“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us **put on** the armour of light.”*

Romans 13:14

*“But **put ye on** the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”*

1 Corinthians 15:53

*“For this corruptible must **put on** incorruption, and this mortal must **put on** immortality.”*

Galatians 3:27

*“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have **put on** Christ.”*

Ephesians 6:11

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

Colossians 3:12

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.”

1 Thessalonians 5:8

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”

In **Colossians 3:9** and **10**, we have expressions which are very similar to those in **Ephesians 4:22** and **24**:

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

In verse **10**, the phrase “put on,” is again the translation of **enduó**.

Commenting on **Colossians 3:10**, the biblical Greek Scholar, **Joseph Thayer**, wrote that the Greek word **enduó** means, “to become so possessed of the mind of Christ...as in thought, feeling, and action to resemble Him and, as it were, reproduce the life He lived.” Thayer’s comment reinforces the point we made earlier that the bridge that leads from the putting off of the **old man** in verse **22**, to the putting on of the **new man** in verse **24**, is the renewing of the spirit of the mind, and that it is not possible for us to put on the new man if the spirit of our minds have not been renewed.

Ray Stedman gave the following illustration regarding the putting on of the new man: “When I get up in the morning I put on my clothes, intending them to be part of me all day, to go where I go and do what I

do. They cover me and make me presentable to others. That is the purpose of clothes. In the same way, the apostle is saying to us, 'Put on Jesus Christ when you get up in the morning. Make Him a part of your life that day. Intend that He go with you everywhere you go, and that He act through you in everything you do. Call upon His resources. Live your life in Christ.'

Brothers and sisters, according to **Ephesians 4:20**, when we were saved, we learned a new way of life. We experienced a change of heart that resulted in a profound change of mind (**Ephesians 4:23**). God put a new desire within us that made us want to live differently than we used to live. The **new man** is a brand new self that did not exist before we were saved. This new self is a consequence of our being "born again" according to **John 3:3**, and it has made it possible for us to live and serve in a new way, a way which was impossible before.

We now have a brand new life with a brand new source of power which enables us to live out that brand new life to the full. This brand new source of power is, of course, the Holy Spirit. As we learn to submit intentionally and consistently to the Spirit, we will increasingly experience in our lives the reality of this brand new life!

Marvin Vincent, the noted Greek New Testament scholar, made the following insightful comments: "The things of God's kingdom are not apparent to the natural vision. A new power of sight is required, which attaches only to the new man...The object of the new birth is declared to be that a man may see and enter into the kingdom of God. But the kingdom of God is an economy. It includes and implies the organized Christian community. This is one of the facts which, with its accompanying obligation, is revealed to the new vision of the new man. He sees not only God, but the kingdom of God; God as King of an organized citizenship; God as the Father of the family of mankind; obligation to God implying obligation to the neighbor; obligation to Christ implying obligation to the church, of which He is the head."

The **New English Translation** renders verse **24** as follows: “*and to put on the new man who has been created in God’s image—in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth.*” Brothers and sisters, the new man has been created in God’s image! He has been created in the likeness of God! The Greek is literally, “according to what God is!” This is an almost incredible statement! It expresses the wonderfully amazing reality of our salvation. Those who have been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, have been made like God! As Peter tells us in **2 Peter 1:4**, we have been made “*partakers of the divine nature.*” The new man is what a believer has been created to be in Christ. It is the new creation, in which old things have passed away and all things have become new.

John MacArthur has noted that a feature of many rescue missions is a room where homeless persons who have not had a bath in months, get rid of their old, foul-smelling clothes and are thoroughly bathed and disinfected. Their old clothes are discarded and they are given new clothes. He goes on to say, “The clean man is provided clean clothes. That is a picture of salvation, except that in salvation the new believer is not simply given a bath but a completely new nature. The continuing need of the Christian life is to keep discarding and burning the remnants of the old sinful clothing. The many therefore’s and wherefore’s in the New Testament usually introduce appeals for believers to live like the new creatures they are in Christ. Because of our new life, our new Lord, our new nature, and our new power, we are therefore called to live a correspondingly new life-style.”

It is the privilege and responsibility of this **new man** who has been created in God’s image, to demonstrate the radical change that has occurred by living in the atmosphere of **righteousness** (right conduct before God and man) and **true holiness** (the state of a proper attitude toward God which is exhibited in action, specifically in a lifestyle which is separated unto God and separated from the world). The **new man** is created after God and in the family likeness of God. He is known by the Christlikeness exhibited day by day in living out the new life. **J. Vernon**

McGee explains that the words “*created in righteousness and true holiness,*” indicates that this is the imputed righteousness of Christ, and that all is to be done consistent with the holy character of God. Since we have been declared righteous and we are seated in heavenly places “in Christ,” our earthly life-style should correspond with our position.

As believers we are righteous in the righteousness of Christ and holy in the holiness of Christ. Paul’s appeal, then, is for us to become what we are, or to put it another way, we are to put on the garments with which we have already been clothed.

Commenting on the matter of believers **putting off the old man** and **putting on the new man**, **Ruth Paxson** wrote the following:

“This twofold clear, crisp exhortation marks the meeting-point between God’s part and ours in our sanctification. It is the crossroads between God’s sovereign work through grace and man’s cooperative action through faith. It is an exhortation to practical holiness in every phase of one’s daily life.

Paul takes us immediately to the very source of life in each sphere and shows us two things. **The character of life is due to its source and the character determines the conduct.** Life in the old sphere is tracked to its source, ‘the **old man**,’ and the conduct is corrupt because the character is such.

Life in the new sphere is traced to its source, ‘the **new man**,’ and the conduct is righteous and holy because the character is so.”

This is basically what Paul writes to the believers in Philippi in **Philippians 3:12-13**:

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

What Paul is saying in effect here is “Get what is on the inside on the outside.”

Brothers and sisters, in the **putting off** of the **old man**, and the **putting on** of the **new man**, Paul does not direct our attention to a creed, or a code of conduct, or a set of rules and standards. He directs our attention to Christ! In **Ephesians 4:20** he writes, “*But ye have not so learned Christ.*” In a very real sense the very thread of the clothes that we are to wear is the Lord Jesus Himself. It is Jesus Christ who we are to “put on.” We are in a sense to “put off” ourselves and let Jesus be Jesus in our lives! We are **not** to work out our own righteousness. We are to work out the righteousness of Christ which He has worked in us! The flesh loves to perform **religious activity**, but the Holy Spirit is not interested in merely changing our spiritual appearance. He is interested in our radical internal transformation.

Beloved, I am concerned that we may have learned more about a denomination and an organization, than we have learned Jesus Christ. We may still be so focused on observing rules and regulations that we are missing Christ. We may still be more focused on **doing** than on **being**. We may still be trying so hard to work **for** our salvation, that we not allowing our salvation to work for us. It is Christ in us brothers and sisters, Christ in us! It is Jesus on the inside, working on the outside, oh what a change in my life!

This change will be present in every believer, but he or she will not achieve sinless perfection in this life. He or she will still commit sins, even serious sins, and may occasionally fall into “seasons” of sinful behaviour. But if they are genuine believers they will eventually be brought to a place of repentance.

The **new man** is made pleasing to God through Jesus Christ and his new nature is entirely godly and righteous. He has not yet been perfected or

glorified, but he is spiritually alive and The Holy Spirit's work of sanctification is slowly but surely conforming him to the image of Jesus Christ. No matter how sporadic and insignificant the growth of the **new man** may seem to be, because he is alive, his growth is assured, for, by its very nature, life grows. **There is no such thing as divine life without divine living.**