

Let's Put Off the "Old Man" and Put On the "New Man"

Ephesians 4:17-24

Ephesians 4:17-24 - *"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you 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."*

Background Notes

Ephesians 1-3 is the doctrinal portion of the epistle, and Ephesians 4-6 is the application portion. There are a number of exhortations for believers in chapters 4-6, based on the teaching of the first half of the letter. In the first part of chapter 4, we have the exhortation to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Remember, we don't have to form the unity of the Spirit - it's already formed! We are one in the Spirit. So, we are exhorted to keep the unity of the Spirit.

One of the ways we keep the unity of the Spirit is to recognize the "oneness" of the body of Christ. The minute we raise denominational or sectarian barriers, we stop recognizing the oneness of the body, and we're not maintaining the unity of the Spirit. We may not see eye-to-eye with every Christian on every point of view, and we may choose to go to a particular church or fellowship rather than another, but the minute we put some of our fellow believers in a "lower class" of Christians because they don't "see it our way," we are refusing to recognize the oneness of the body of Christ. When we don't acknowledge that some fellow believers are just as much in the body of Christ as we are, we are not recognizing the oneness of the body. We are not keeping the unity of the Spirit.

As you know, Emmaus Bible College (where I teach) is not a "Pentecostal" or "charismatic" college. However, a couple of Pentecostal believers from Brazil are part of our current student body, and it's great to see how the other students are recognizing the oneness of the body, and how they're keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!

In Ephesians 4:7-16, we are exhorted to recognize and use our spiritual gifts. Every believer has been given a spiritual gift, and that there are a wide variety of spiritual gifts. Believers who are gifted with various spiritual gifts are given to the Church, so that the body of Christ is nurtured and functions well. This aspect of spiritual gifts is especially in view here:

the great truth that our risen, ascended Lord has given gifts to His body, the Church. But it's very important for gifted believers to live a Christ-like life, so we must "put off the old man" and "put on the new man."

Doctrinal Point

Believers should put off the *old man* and put on the *new man*.

Before we look at the sub-points, we need to define the terms "*old man*" and "*new man*." They are closely related to, but not synonymous with, the terms *old nature* and *new nature*. The old man is all that we were apart from Christ. We were dead in sin, separated from God and could not please God. The *old man* was completely characterized by the old nature, the sinful nature that we were born with.

On the other hand, the *new man* is all that we are in Christ. When we became Christians, we were given a new nature. The new nature is sinless. 2 Peter 1:4 says that we are "partakers of the divine nature," because we now have the life of Christ within us. We also have the Holy Spirit who lives within us to empower and enable this new life. So, the *old man* is completely gone. It was crucified with Christ. There is only the *new man*, as far as our position goes before a holy and righteous God.

However, we still have the old *nature* that we were born with, and we will have that sinful nature until we get our resurrected bodies. Very important point here: although we have a new nature, we can still *choose* to live like the *old man*! Even though the *old man* is gone, because still have the sinful nature, we can choose to live like the *old man*. We don't have to, and we shouldn't, but unfortunately we often do.

Ephesians 4 teaches us that we are to *put off the old man*! What does that mean? It means that we should not allow our lives to be governed by the old sinful nature! We are to "*put on the new man*" - we are to be governed by the divine nature that we have in Christ.

a. **Characteristics of the old man** (v17-22). In these verses, we have five characteristics of the "*old man*," characteristics of every human being apart from Christ. These characteristics governed our lives before salvation.

1. The old man is **living a futile life** (v17). "*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind.*" Life apart from Christ is a big "zero" - regardless of what you accomplish in this world. To accomplish something in this world apart from Christ is like winning money in a card game on the deck of the Titanic. The *old man* is living a futile life.

2. The old man is **ignorant of the truth** (v18). Notice these expressions here: *darkened understanding, ignorant, blind of heart*. Non-Christians may have high IQs and may be very well educated, but until they come to Christ, they are ignorant of the truth. Their philosophies of life and worldviews may sound good up-front, but ultimately their world view doesn't hold together. Without God, there is no moral foundation. All is relative; there is no ultimate truth. The *old man* is ignorant of the truth.

3. The old man is **separated from the life of God** (v18). *"being alienated from the life of God."* Ever since the Fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden, humanity has been cut off from God, separated from God, alienated from God. No one is born a Christian - you must become a Christian. The *old man* is separated from the life of God.

4. The old man is **never satisfied** (v19&22). *"Who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness,"* and *"the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."* Whether it's in the areas of money, or sex, or selfish pleasure, or some other greedy desire or lust, a characteristic of people without God is that they are never satisfied. Only in Christ are the needs and desires of the human heart satisfied. Do you agree?

5. The old man is **not like Christ** (v20-21). *"But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus."* A man once told me that he didn't want accept Christ as his personal Savior because he didn't need salvation - but he still wanted to be "like Christ." Can you believe it? In essence I told him that if he didn't become a Christian, it was impossible to be like Christ. In fact, his life would just be the opposite of Christ. It's possible to wear a lot of masks, but behind the masks, the *old man* will never be like Christ.

b. **Characteristics of the new man** (v23-24). Here we have the exhortation to put on the *new man*. Remember, the *new man* is all that we are in Christ.

1. The new man is **created by God** (v24). *"And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."* 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that *"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away; all things have become new."* The new life that we have in Christ is not a "make-over" of the old life. It's not like the new life was within us all along but it was lying dormant, only sleeping - but now that we've accepted Christ, it's awakened into new life. No! Apart from Christ, we were *spiritually dead!* But in Christ, we've been made alive. We've been given new divine life. This life is righteous and holy (v24). The *new man* does not have to be taught not to sin. *The new man automatically does not sin!* The *new man* was created by God in true righteousness and holiness (v24).

2. The new man is **renewed in mind** (v23). *"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind."* The *new man* loves the Word of God. As believers feed on the Word, their minds are continually renewed, and they are increasingly conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit enables believers to understand the Word, and thus the believer is renewed in mind.

Practical Application

Let's be who we are!

Who are we? We are new people in Christ. In Christ, we are new creations. We have divine life. The old man is gone - it has been crucified with Christ. However, because we still have that sinful nature that we were born with (and we'll have it until we die and get our resurrected bodies), we can still choose to live like the old man.

Let's not do that! Let's put off the old man and put on the new man. Romans 12:2 says, *"Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Let's put on the new man. Let's be who we are!