

Ephesians 4:25-32
Time to change your clothes!

Valley send off- Meyers, Williams, Moores during second service...

Scripture reading:

Ephesians 4:25–32 (ESV) — **25** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. **26** Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and give no opportunity to the devil. **28** Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. **29** Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Prayer: please join me in prayer...

Sermon introduction:

Imagine going to the club and working out like you have never worked out before. You play basketball for two hours, but that is not enough, you want more. So, you lift weights for another hour.

After three hours of working out every muscle in your body hurts, you are gasping for air, and your clothes are stuck to your body. They are smelly, salty, and drenched in sweat. Nobody wants to get within six feet of you and it has nothing to do with Covid-19.

You go home and try to pull your clothes off, but it is nearly impossible because they are stuck to your body. Eventually, with great effort, you get them off and throw them in the hamper.

After taking a long hot shower you dry off and figure out what to wear. Since you can't find anything suitable in your closet, you go back to the hamper and grab your dirty, sweaty, smelly gym clothes and put them back on.

Now... hopefully none of you would actually do this. Why? It is disgusting. Everyone knows, when you take off your dirty clothes, you are supposed to put on clean clothes.

We do both. We take off the old and we put on the new. It is not enough to simply take off the old, we must also put on the new.

This is how the Christian life must be lived. We take off the old habits and we put on the new habits, just like taking off our dirty clothes on putting on clean clothes. This brings us to Ephesians 4.

Paul urges us to put off our old habits and put on our new habits. Just like we take off dirty clothes and put on cleans clothes (this is the metaphor Paul uses in Ephesians 4).

How do we do this???. By understanding two things-

First, the power for putting off and on!

Second, the details of putting off and on!

First, the power for putting off and on!

Where do we find power to put off and on? We remember that our old self is dead, and our new self is alive!

Ephesians 4:25 (ESV) — 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Therefore.... What is the word “therefore,” there for? Paul is saying, in light of what I just told you in the previous verses you are now empowered to live a certain way. What did Paul just tell them? Let’s go back to the previous verses, which I explained two weeks ago. These verses are crucial, since they explain the source of power for putting off and on.

Ephesians 4:20–24 (ESV) — 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— **21** assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, **22** to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23** and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24** and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Who is the old self?

The old self describes who we were in our totality before conversion to Jesus Christ. This is who we were in Adam. The old self is the unregenerate person ruled by sin.

What does it mean to put off the old self?

According to Romans 6:6 and Col. 3:9, Paul says that our old self was already put to death at conversion.

Romans 6:6 (ESV) — 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Before conversion you were enslaved to the power of sin. Your old self was your task master, you had no power to resist its desires. But, thanks be to God, this is no longer the case. Your old self was crucified with Christ, which means you are no longer enslaved to sin. This happened in the past, it happened once, it happened when you were converted to Christ. Make no mistake, you will never be sinless, but you will never be enslaved to sin, ever again.

But, but, but...

sadly, we don’t always live out of this reality. As a result, Paul tells us to put off the old self. In other words, he tells us to live like the old self is dead, because the old self is dead!!!

To put it very simply, when Paul says to put off the old self, he is telling us to live like the old self is dead, because he is! Not only is the old self dead, the new self has been brought to life.

What does it mean to put on the new self?

Ephesians 4:24 (ESV) — 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Just like the old self was put off when you became a Christian, so too, the new self was brought to life in you when you became a Christian. This happened by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul describes the same thing in 2 Cor. 5:17.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV) — 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

When you became a Christian, your old self was crucified Christ. Then God the Holy Spirit gave you a new self or a new nature, this happened when you were regenerated.

Along with this new nature/new self comes new power. The same Spirit that made your new-self alive, now resides inside of you.

Application:

It is not difficult to obey the commands of Ephesians 4:25-32, it is impossible. So how are we going to do obey them? Where are we going to find the necessary fortitude, the self-discipline, and the will power?

Do we pull up our bootstraps, grit our teeth, and try harder? No!!! What do we do? We remember that the old self is dead, and the new self is alive. Since the old self is dead, the power of sin has been broken in us. Since the new self is alive, we have resurrection power working in and through us.

Illustration:

This fall my wife and I drove to Winthrop Washington to celebrate our 21st anniversary. On the way to Winthrop we drove by Grand Coulee Dam. I have not seen Grand Coulee Dam in 35 years.

The sheer size of the Dam blew me away...

“Grand Coulee Dam is one of the largest concrete structures in the world. It contains nearly 12 million cubic yards of concrete. There’s enough concrete to build a sidewalk 4 feet wide wrapped around the equator twice (50,000 miles).” (plaque at the site)

It took seven years to build, was completed in 1940, and cost \$300 million. In 2016, the total project would cost \$8.26 billion.

How much power does it generate?

“Grand Coulee Dam is the largest hydropower producer in the United States, generating more than 20 billion kilowatt hours of electricity each year to 11 states (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona) and Canada—enough power for 4.2 million households.”

This is mind blowing power. Grand Coulee Dam provides power for 4.2 million households, but God provides power for over 150 billion galaxies.

You and I have access to God's power. Our old self was put to death and our new self was brought life. The same power that brought our new self to life, (the Holy Spirit) currently resides inside of every believer.

Living the Christian life is impossible, in our own strength. But God has given us everything we need to succeed. We have his power coursing through our veins.

I understand we have power, but what are we supposed to do? This brings us to the details...

First, the power for putting off and on!

Second, the details of putting off and on!

As I just mentioned, the old self was put off and the new self was put on at conversion. If that is the case, what Paul is talking about in verses 25-32? He is not talking about putting off the old self, that already happened, he is talking about putting off the habits of the old self.

We can only put off the habits of the old self and the habits of the new self, since the old self is dead, and the new self is alive. And we can only put on the habits of the new self because the new self is alive and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Paul is never content to leave things in the theoretical, he demands application. Verses 25-32 are the application of verses 17-24.

But what exactly does this look like???

Paul list five examples of putting off and on...

First, we must put off lying and put on truth!

Ephesians 4:25 (ESV) — 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

In the original language Paul literally says, "having put away the lie," let each one of you "speak the truth with his neighbor."

Instead of lying we must speak the truth to the saints, even when it hurts. Why? Since we are members of each other. In other words, we are part of the same body and the same family. We must tell the truth to everyone, but lying to the saints is especially pernicious, since it destroys trust, ruins fellowship, and most importantly, it dishonors God.

Illustration:

Lie at the Pastor's college...

One scholar writes,

"We learned even as little children that while a lie is an abomination to the Lord, it is a very present help in time of trouble!" (Stedman)

Application:

What are some common lies?

We lie when we slander others...

We lie when we cheat on tests...

We lie (and steal) when we plagiarize the work of others. Sadly, I know of a handful of pastors who have been fired for plagiarizing sermons.

We lie when we exaggerate and shade the truth.

We tell “white lies” to spare people’s feelings, which usually means that we lack the courage to tell people the truth. Yes, we must be tactful and loving, but we also must also tell the truth.

We lie when we don’t keep our word. When we say, “I will show up at this time, I will pray for you, I will send you that document”, do we actually do these things? If not, we lied!

Christians must be known as people who tell the truth, no matter what the cost...

First, we must put off lying and put on the truth!

Second, we must put off unrighteous anger and put on righteous anger!

Ephesians 4:26–27 (ESV) — 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

Paul tells us to be angry yet not sin. This is a direct quotation from Psalm 4:4. This phrase has puzzled many, but it does not need to. There are times when righteous anger is appropriate.

God the father gets angry! (Eph. 5:6; Deut. 9:8, 20; Ps. 2:12)

Jesus got angry! (Matt. 21:12–13)

Our anger should be aroused when we hear about abortion on demand, sex trafficking, or the torture, abuse, and rape of the innocent. William Wilberforce was angered by the trafficking of human slaves, so he worked tirelessly to end the slave trade. Luther was angered by the false, gospel destroying, doctrine, of his day. So, he worked tirelessly to proclaim the gospel of God’s free grace. If sin aroused God’s anger, then it should arouse our anger.

With that said, anger is only permitted when it is grounded in love for God and love for neighbor.

But... we must be very, very, very careful with anger. As a result, Paul qualifies his permission to “be angry” with three guard rails...

First, he says in **4:26**, “do not sin...” We must make sure that our anger is not sinful. In other words, it must be free from injured pride, spite, malice, animosity and the spirit of revenge.

Second, he says in **4:26**, “do not let the sun go down on your anger,” meaning if you get angry, you need to get over your anger very quickly.

Third, he says in **4:27** “and give no opportunity to the devil” meaning that the Devil can easily tempt us to move from righteous anger to sinful anger, in the blink of an eye. We must be on guard.

Illustration:

The Bible says that anger can lead to murder (Matt. 5:21-26).

Living in Gaithersburg and Fairfax... I thought for sure I was going to hear gunshots!!!

One preacher writes,

“A woman tried to defend her bad temper by saying, ‘I explode and then it’s all over with.’ ‘Yes,’ replied a friend, ‘just like a shotgun—but look at the damage that’s left behind.’” (Wiersbe)

Application:

Let me ask a few questions.

What others describe you as an angry person? What would your friends and family say?

How do you react when someone cuts you off in traffic?

Do you yell and scream at your kids?

Nothing destroys credibility faster with your kids than hypocrisy in the form of anger, if you scream and yell in your house, your kids are not going to find your version of Christianity very attractive. When they leave the house, they will probably leave the faith.

First, we must put off lying and put on the truth!

Second, we must put off unrighteous anger and put on righteous anger!

Third, we must put off stealing and put on sharing!

Ephesians 4:28 (ESV) — 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Paul tells the saints that they must stop stealing. Instead, they must work hard in order to give generously to others. It is not enough to stop stealing, we must also give to others freely.

Illustration:

Stealing candy from old man Bates... God asks that we perform more than restitution, we must also work hard to be generous with others.

Application:

One scholar writes,

“Theft is a major problem in our land. A paper given at an American Psychological Association symposium on employee theft presented a breakdown on the 8 billion dollars that inventory shortages cost department and chain stores every year. Of these losses, 10 percent were due to clerical error, 30 percent to shoplifting, and a shocking 60 percent (sixteen million dollars a day!) to theft by employees.” (Hughes)

How do we steal?

We steal from God when we don’t give our money generously to the church!

We steal from our employers when we do shotty work or when we waste time on social media, surfing, the web, or talking to coworkers.

We steal when we borrow things from people and never give them back.

We steal when we shade the truth on our taxes.

We steal when we pirate music and movies and ignore copy write laws... (objection).

We steal when we pad expense reports at work.

We steal when we use office supplies for personal projects. Theft is theft no matter how big or small.

Instead of stealing, we must work hard so that we can give our money away...

First, we must put off lying and put on the truth!

Second, we must put off unrighteous anger and put on righteous anger!

Third, we must put off stealing and put on sharing!

Fourth, we must put off corrupt talk and put on edifying talk!

Ephesians 4:29–30 (ESV) — 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

What is corrupting talk?

The word corrupt refers to rotten, putrid, or filthy fruit. But, our words don't have to be "dirty" to be rotten or putrid. Yes, Paul is referring to coarse profanity and obscenity, but according to most scholars, he is primarily referring to unkind words.

In other words, Paul is simply saying, "We should only speak if it builds others up. Otherwise we should keep our mouths closed." Wow!!! This is hard...

(having my boys memorize this verse)

If we say things that don't edify others, we will grieve the Holy Spirit. Wow... this is scary. No one knows for sure why Paul says that this particular sin grieves the Holy Spirit, but regardless, the last thing we ever want to do is grieve the Holy Spirit.

Instead of speaking unkind words to others, we must speak edifying words. Imagine what the world would be like if we all obeyed this command???

First, we must put off lying and put on the truth!

Second, we must put off unrighteous anger and put on righteous anger!

Third, we must put off stealing and put on sharing!

Fourth, we must put off corrupt talk and put on edifying talk!

Fifth, we must put off bitterness and put on kindness!

Ephesians 4:31–32 (ESV) — 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Paul lists a series of sins in verse 31. More than likely they are related. How? Bitterness leads to wrath and anger, which leads to clamor and slander and malice (ill will toward others). But it all starts with bitterness.

Instead of being bitter, we are to be kind, tenderhearted and forgive. Why? Because God in Christ forgave us.

Illustration:

On January 23, 1999 a missionary named Graham Staines and his two sons (age 8 and 10) were asleep in a vehicle in a remote village in eastern India. This family had given their lives to serving lepers for 34 years.

While the man and his sons were sleeping, a group of militant Hindus doused the car with gasoline and set it on fire. The militants then prevented the father and his two sons from getting out. They perished in the flames.

This horrific event garnered media coverage around the globe.

When Graham's wife learned about the death of her husband and two sons, she wrote....

“When I learned that my family was dead, I told my daughter: We’ll forgive them, then won’t we?” She explained... “Forgiveness brings healing. It allows the other person a chance to start life afresh. If I have something against you and I forgive you, the bitterness leaves me... how was I able to forgive? The truth is that I myself am a sinner. I needed Jesus Christ to forgive me. Because I have Jesus in my life, it is possible for me to forgive.” (Chapell, 233)

Application:

Instead of bitterness, we must forgive as Christ has forgiven us.

Conclusion:

After your insanely hard work out, you are probably going to take off your wet, dirty, and smelly gym clothes. Then you are probably going to take a shower, and then you are probably going to put on fresh clean clothes.

If, for some strange reason, you decided to put on your nasty gym clothes after your shower, people would be concerned about your mental health.

Why? No one puts on smelly sweaty clothes after a hot shower. Instead they put on new clean clothes. Why? They have been cleansed.

Paul is telling us to take off our old nasty clothes. Why? We have been washed and cleansed by the blood of Christ. As a result, we are enabled to put on new clothes.

Our old self has been crucified with Christ, which means the power of sin has been broken, which means we have power to daily take off our old habits. Our new self has been made alive in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, which means that we have power to put on the habits of the new self. Let's pray...