`" Put off Your Old Self, then Put on Your New Self" Ephesians 4:14-24

Facilitator: Min. Joseph Williams

(All Scripture quoted from the NIV Bible unless otherwise noted)

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND & BIBLICAL CONTEXT

A. Historical Background

In Rome**,** Paul was in official custody. Although his movements were restricted, he continued to guide the early church and preach the gospel. The Romans could imprison Paul, but they could not imprison the spread of the Good News. Numerous local assemblies had sprouted up along the routes of Paul's three missionary journeys. The members of these churches were still proclaiming the gospel, not only by what they said, but also with their lives. Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians to strengthen these congregations. He wanted them to understand the spiritual reality behind the numerous groups that gathered in houses all over the Mediterranean world, and he wanted them to encourage each other in the faith. They were the body of Christ.

B. Biblical Context

The gospel has always been about change and choice. Change or transformation from an old way of life without Jesus Christ to a new way of life with Jesus Christ is the staple of God's message to us in Scripture. From Genesis to Revelation, Jesus is present and paramount regarding the salvation and eternal destination of mankind. Choice, however, regarding what we do with our new status in Jesus Christ has been an equally important part of the message. Does it really make a difference, this new status, in the way we live? Do our choices really reflect the change adequately? Change and choice might be called the twin pillars of the Good News. First comes the "choice" to trust in Jesus, "then" and only then comes "change/transformation". However, this transformation is not instantaneous. We are spiritual beings living out a human experience. It is this human existence of the believer that the Apostle Paul is addressing in our lesson. Evidence of transformation in us should be apparent in how we live this new existence.

I. The Lesson: "Put off Your Old Self, "THEN", Put on Your New Self"

1. **vv. 17-19.** The Apostle Paul is urging the church to take heart to his teaching. Paul's readers cannot go further in their Christian journey without making an ethical decision. Here is where the rubber hits the road. Paul asks his Gentile readers not to live like Gentiles! Paul is using the term Gentile in a moral sense and not an ethnic sense. In the second century Christians would speak of themselves as a "third race" (refer to 1 Cor. 10:32). Paul is not making a general statement about an ethnicity here, but speaks specifically of the non-believing Gentiles that his readers live among. Paul is letting them and us know that though we are living in this world, we are not of this world (we are spiritual beings living a human existence).

Paul's primary concern here is not a list of specific sins, but with a distortion and a disorientation of the mind and callousness of the heart that led to a false sense of morality. Compare these verses to **Romans 1:21-32**. Both texts view sin as a malfunction of the mind. With one single word (futility) Paul describes the majority of the inhabitants of the Greco-Roman empire as aiming with silly methods at a meaningless, worthless, useless and empty goal.

The Gentile way of life is meaningless because they do not have the "Light of God", to give them life and guidance. Darkness ingulfs the Gentile mind because they are "separated from the life" God gives, who is the source of the light. They are separated from God because of the deliberate "ignorance" (refuse to know what they know) that resides in their souls. The heart is the source of all loyalty, but a callous heart prevents one from being loyal to God.

Paul insists that the result of a hardened heart is a loss of sensitivity towards the ways of God; that is, an inability to discern right from wrong. This in turn brings about giving in to the idolatrous and selfish sins of sexual immorality and greed.

2. **vv. 20-21.** These verses are in stark contrast to the previous verses. Paul is reminding us here that upon our expression of faith in Jesus, we now have the knowledge of the light of God, and with that knowledge we should be aware of the difference in

the way the world (Gentiles) lives with a distorted view of reality and the life of truth that Christ lived and taught. Paul is reminding us that transformation is an essential ingredient in the making of a disciple of Jesus Christ. He says in Romans 12:2*; "Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will".* In others words, with the light of God we can now discern the contrast between what we formerly *thought* was true and the *truth of Christ that we have now come to know*. Paul's point for us is that Jesus embodies and encompasses the truth. Find Jesus and you find truth. Find truth and you find Jesus. Truth does not exist apart from him. The Philippian church was reminded; *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus".*

3. vv. 23-24. *"Put off Your Old Self, "THEN", Put on Your New Self"*

There are three things Paul wants us to see in these passages:

- Putting off of your "Old Self"
- Be made new in the "attitude of your mind"
- Put on the "New Self"

Put off your old self

Here Paul uses the analogy of stripping off old, filthy clothes to describe repentance from sin and submission to God at the point of salvation; the putting off of our old worn out, useless and unconverted sinful nature that had been corrupted by deceit. Our salvation is a spiritual union with Christ Jesus that is described as the death, burial of our old selves and the resurrection of the new self, walking in newness of life with the Lord. (**see Romans 6:2-8**) By placing saving faith in Jesus, we all have been spiritually immersed into the person of Christ, that is, united and identified

with Him and having been united with him, his death becomes ours and his resurrection to life there are as well.

Be made new in the "attitude of your mind"

Salvation intrinsically involves the mind which is the center of thought, understanding and belief, as well as motive and action. The attitude of your mind is another way of expressing "Spirit of your mind. It is by the Spirit that all things are made new. When a person expresses faith and dedication to Christ and becomes a Christian, God gives that person a completely new spiritual and moral capability that a mind apart from Christ could never achieve (see 1 Cor. 2:9-16)

Put on your new self

The renewal of the mind in salvation does not bring a simple renovation of character, but transformation of the old character to the new character (self). 2 Cor. 5:17 teaches us that if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here. With this newness we have moral responsibilities to God and to our fellow man. These moral responsibilities are rooted in living lives that are a reflection of the righteousness and holiness of God, by the Holy Spirit.

II. Conclusion:

Paul has reminded us the because of our faith and trust in Jesus, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we now possess the truth of God in the face of Christ, with which we are able to discern the truth from a lie. We have the ability to distinguish the distortion of the truth in the immoral behaviors of today that have become commonplace in our world. Integrity and living moral lives, is not accidental but involves consistently living out what we have discerned is right. When we know better (the truth), we must respond with better **(RIGHTEOUSNESS).**