

Living As New Humans...Or At Least, In Process

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- [0 : 00] Over the past weeks, as I have grappled with this text in preparation for preaching it, I have felt how offensive it can feel in a savvy, sophisticated city like Vancouver.
- Then we experienced what we did last Wednesday night. This is a dense text. It does not flow as easily as other texts in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians.
- So, before diving into the text, let me lift up what I think is the Apostle's basic burden, his major burden.
- The Apostle of Jesus Christ is wanting us to walk as new humans. He wants us to live as the new humans we are becoming in relationship with Jesus Christ, the one true human.
- Lay aside the old and put on the new. In this dense text, the Apostle is continuing his exhortation, which he began at the turning point in the letter, at the halfway mark, at Ephesians 4.1.
- [1 : 32] I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Worthy.
- Worthy. Worthy. And not in the sense of measuring up, but in the sense of fitting in. Paul is calling us to live in a way that is congruent with.
- In a way that is suitable to the alternative reality brought into being by the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.
- So, this I say. It is literally, this I say, therefore. The second therefore in a series of therefores in the second half of his letter.
- And I affirm this together with the Lord. Not just giving his own personal advice, but speaking with the authority of the Lord himself. This I say, therefore, that you walk no longer as the Gentiles walk.
- [2 : 41] Why put it that way? This letter, after all, is addressed to Gentiles. Chapter 2, verse 11. Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh. Why then say, walk no longer as the Gentiles walk?
- Because here, Paul is using this word Gentiles not to mean non-Jews. He's using the word Gentiles to mean all people who have not yet encountered Jesus Christ.
- Gentiles here means those who have not yet been brought into the new reality shaped by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those not yet grabbed by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.
- Walk no longer as those who do not yet walk in the new reality centered in and filled with Jesus Christ.
- Rather, walk in this new reality as the new humans alive in the new reality. Imagine a room, a restaurant, an office, a library, this sanctuary.
- [3 : 53] When you move into a new room, you soon discover that there is a way of being. There is a way of living inherent to the room.
- What you cannot express in other rooms, you can express in this room. And what you do in other rooms, you cannot do in this room. It would be hard to play a round of golf in this room, in this sanctuary.

It would be a little dangerous to try to play tennis. It would be out of place. It would be unworthy to throw Frisbees. This room, this sanctuary, calls for different behaviors because it evokes different attitudes because it invites us into a different space.

Or imagine moving into a new home, which Sharon and I have recently done. One has to learn to live a new way. Oh, we bring with us the old values that help shape the way we live in the old home.

But in the new home, things are arranged differently. In our case, we downside some 50%. So we have now gotten used to the fact that a lot of things we used to have didn't really matter.

[5 : 11] The new home is now calling us into new and different values. We are learning how to live in a way that is congruent to a townhouse in which the Lord has now called us.

Or imagine moving into a new city, as many of you in this room have done, either willingly or reluctantly. Every city has a particular ethos.

No two cities of the world are alike. Every city develops a particular personality. And for the most part, most of the people in a city live worthy of this city.

They fit into the ethos. Which is why most Vancouverites find what happened in our city last Wednesday so disgusting and so repugnant.

This is why we want to say to the rest of the world, what you see on television and on YouTube is not the real Vancouver. We do not celebrate violence in this city.

[6 : 22] Or at least not gratuitous violence. We are not anarchists here. Oh, sure, some of our citizens don't pay their taxes. And some people downtown cross the streets after the red hand starts to blink.

And many people have illegal grow-ups. But we are not a bunch of violent anarchists. The behavior we witnessed last Wednesday night is not worthy of Vancouver.

Vancouver. It does not fit into the reality called Vancouver. Or imagine moving to a new country with a whole new culture, as Sharon and I did when we lived in Manila, the Philippines.

In order to function in a new culture, one is forced to learn how to live in all kinds of different ways. In Manila, for instance, learning a different way of relating.

Not confronting anyone directly. Always doing it through a third party. And never putting your hand over your face when you talk to another person, because this suggests that you're hiding something.

[7 : 34] In Manila, learning to walk differently. Literally. Walk differently. Those of you who have ever taken a walk with me know that I can walk very fast.

I just get moving down the sidewalk. Not in Manila. If I were to walk in Manila the way I walk in Vancouver, I would be dripping with sweat within a block.

In Manila, one has to learn. In order to survive, one must learn the Manila stroll. Slow, smooth, easy steps, graciously making your way through the humidity.

In fact, in Manila, you have to take off the clothes you had on before and put on other clothes, like these beautiful Barong Tawales. You put this thing on, and you are dressed even to meet the president in the palace.

In a new culture, in a new reality, it requires a new mindset that issues in new values and behavior. And that is what the Apostle Paul is getting at in this dense text before us today.

[8 : 47] His letter comes in two halves. It's written in two halves. Chapters 1 to 3 and chapters 4 to 6. In chapters 1 to 3, Paul is opening up for us this new room, this new city, this new culture, this new nation brought into being by the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

It's a new reality invading all other realities. A new reality encompassing all other realities. A new room encompassing all rooms. A new society encompassing all societies.

Then, in chapters 4 to 6, through many, many exhortations, Paul helps us navigate this new reality. But we miss Paul's intention if we turn his many exhortations in chapters 4 to 6 into new rules and regulations which we now are supposed to follow.

We miss what he's getting at if we read his many exhortations as a matter of right and wrong, of truth and error, of justice and injustice. No, through these exhortations, Paul is simply describing the way of life that is inherent in this new reality.

Therefore, walk. Walk worthy. Not in the sense of measuring up, but in the sense of fitting in. Therefore, walk in unity.

[10 : 19] One body, one spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of us all. Therefore, walk toward maturity. In this new reality, Jesus Christ is giving gifts to his one body, enabling the body to live in the unity of the Trinity, enabling the body to grow up into Jesus Christ himself and to begin to think his thoughts and begin to believe in the way he believes.

And then, walk no longer as the Gentiles do. Leave behind the way of life you had before you knew Jesus Christ and learn to live the new way that is inherent to this new room, this new house, this new city where Jesus Christ is the head.

Now, notice the phrase right in the middle of this dense text. The phrase, learn Christ. It is the key to living in the new reality that encompasses all realities.

Ephesians 4, verse 20. Look at verse 20. But you did not learn Christ in this way. At the center of this reality that encompasses all other realities is Christ.

And living in this reality that encompasses all other realities means learning to learn Christ. Now, where did Paul get this phrase, learn Christ?

[11 : 40] I think he got it from Jesus himself. Jesus says, come to me all who are weary and who have overburdened yourselves and I will rest you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

The key to living congruent with this new reality shaped by and centered in Jesus Christ is to learn Christ.

Now, that's an interesting way to put it. Is it not? Learn Christ. We speak of learning piano or learning physics or learning hockey. But do we ever say learn a person?

Would anyone ever say learn Roberto Luongo or learn Tim Thomas? Would anyone ever say that? Well, as a matter of fact, yes.

Learn from Tim Thomas but more, learn Tim Thomas. If you want to be a world class goalie, learn from Tim Thomas but more importantly, learn Tim Thomas.

[12 : 42] Learn why he is able to keep his eye on the puck all the time. Learn why he is able to move his body in all kinds of contortions to get in front of the puck all the time.

If you will, get inside Tim Thomas and understand, learn what makes Tim Thomas tick. Learn Christ.

Get close to Christ. Get inside Christ. Learn what makes Christ tick. Thus Paul can say, you have heard him, verse 21.

Not just you've heard him, you've heard him. You got close enough to him that you could hear what is on his mind and heart. You were taught in him, says Paul, verse 21.

In relationship with him, you were taught by Christ himself, through those gifted to teach him, and through his words recorded for us in the Gospels. Just as truth is in Jesus, says Paul.

[13 : 44] Again, in verse 21. Truth. This word truth that Paul uses doesn't mean only truth as over against false. The word means genuine or authentic or the real deal.

In Jesus we discover the genuine, the real deal, the authentic. Learn Christ. He knows what makes creation tick. He knows what makes the world tick.

He knows how to make chemistry tick and economics tick and superconductors tick. He knows what makes humanity tick, psychologically and intellectually and sexually. And he knows what makes God tick.

Learn him. The truth about everything and everyone is in him. Then in this dense text, Paul summarizes what he believes we learn when we learn Christ.

Look at verse 22. Verse 22. That in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, literally the old man, the old human, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new self, again, literally the new man or the new human, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness, holiness, and truth.

[15 : 04] when we learn Jesus Christ, we are taught to lay aside, be renewed, and put on. He teaches us to lay aside the old human we were before we met him.

He teaches us to be renewed in the spirit of our mind so that we operate with a different mindset, and he teaches us to put on this new human we are becoming since meeting Jesus Christ.

The new human who like its creator is holy and knows how to make relationships work in the truth. Lay aside the old, put on the new. If you will, change clothes.

Makes sense, does it not? Different spaces, different rooms, different houses, different cultures call for a different set of clothes. We have been called into a new world that encompasses all worlds.

Lay aside the old human you were and pick up, put on the new human you are becoming. You might know that Paul speaks this way in a number of places.

[16 : 14] He says this to the Colossians. He says it to the Romans. The night is almost gone, the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ. When we learn Christ, we learn to lay aside all that is not in sync with him and his desires, and we learn to put on all that is in sync with him and his agenda for the world.

We've been called into a new reality. It only makes sense that we change clothes. clothes. It only makes sense that we want to change clothes. Now, here is the major emphasis of this dense text.

It all happens through the renewal of the mind. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Notice in verse 22 that between the phrase, lay aside the old human, and the phrase, put on the new human, is the phrase, be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Paul is telling us that changing clothes happens through the renewing of the spirit of our minds. I think Paul's phrase, the spirit of the mind, means what makes the mind tick.

[17 : 48] Be renewed in what makes the mind tick. Learn Christ so that your mind ticks the way Christ's mind ticks.

Be renewed. It's in the present tense, and the present tense emphasizes continuous action. Be continually renewed.

Why this continual? Because a lot of renewing has to take place. Walk no longer as the Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind.

Walk no longer as the old humanity does in the futility of their mind. It is what we are up against as we seek to lay aside the old and put on the new.

The futility of the mind. It's what we're up against when we seek to live as new humans in this new reality shaped by the gospel. The futility of the mind.

[18 : 51] Now, what is Paul getting at? What does he want us to know? Or more precisely, what is it that he believes Jesus wants us to know? The truth is in Jesus.

What truth does Jesus want us to know as we seek to live as new humans? He wants us to realize that the fall has affected our minds.

He wants us to realize that the fall has affected our minds. When the first humans, Adam and Eve, chose to go it alone without God, when they chose to disobey God's one command, that we not be our own gods, their disobedience affected the human mind.

Clearly, the fall affects our bodies. We all die, right? Clearly, the fall affects the created order. It all decays. Clearly, the fall has affected our relationships.

All of us experience alienation somewhere. What Paul wants us to realize, what he believes Jesus teaches us when we learn Christ is that the fall affects our brains.

[20 : 08] Our brains are not able to function the way they were intended to function. The futility of the mind. Paul is not saying that the old humanity mind is dumb.

Hardly. Look what the mind can do. By futility of mind, Paul is meaning that the old humanity mind cannot by itself on its own arrive at the truth, at the genuine, at the authentic, at the real deal.

Why? Because the old humanity mind begins its reasoning process from untruth.

The old humanity mind begins with the untruth that there is no God. Or, if the old humanity mind believes there is a God, it begins with the God that the mind imagines.

which because the mind is finite will never accurately imagine the infinite God. You see, if we start with a faulty presupposition, our reasoning, however otherwise brilliant, if we start with a faulty presupposition, our reasoning, however otherwise brilliant, will slowly but surely move from futility along a trajectory toward futility.

[21 : 49] So Eugene Peterson, in his *The Message*, paraphrases Paul this way, they have refused for so long to deal with God that they have lost touch not only with God but with reality itself.

Now, I know that what Paul is telling us in this text is offensive to the modern and post-modern mind.

I know. But then there is what happened last Wednesday night. Paul in this text lays out for us the trajectory of futility.

He shows how the mind spirals downward. Being darkened in their understanding, says Paul, it's a frightening fact about the mind.

Exclude from our thinking the light of the world and our thinking will go dark. It cannot see clearly. Excluded from the life of God, says Paul, leave the living God out of the picture and we end up out of touch with life itself.

[23 : 05] And then we grab for life anywhere it's offered. Because of the ignorance that is in them, says Paul. Again, Paul is not saying the old humanity mind is stupid.

He's just saying that if you leave a crucial factor out of the equation, how do you expect people to understand themselves in the world?

Because of the hardness of their heart, says Paul. The willful choice to ignore the heart of reality turns the heart hard to reality.

Being callous, says Paul, numb to holy reality. Giving themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness, says Paul.

J.B. Phillips translates it this way. They have stifled their conscience and then surrendered themselves to sensuality, practicing any form of impurity which lust can suggest.

[24 : 17] The trajectory leading finally to this awful fact of life, being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit, says Paul.

The lust of deceit, the desires that are born out of untruth, fueled by the deceiver himself, the father of lies.

Lay it all aside, says Paul. Jesus teaches us to lay it all aside, the untruth, the deceit that awakens desires that only lead to degradation and violence.

Leave it aside, the untruth made appealing by the promises of pleasure the spirits in the fallen city make, those promises they make, leading to destructive behavior.

Walk no longer as the old humanity does in the futility of the mind. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Be renewed.

[25 : 22] It's passive. And it's passive as a way to remind us that we cannot do this renewal ourselves. The futile mind cannot renew itself.

It has to be renewed from outside itself. Which, thank God, is what Jesus Christ comes in the world to do.

He enters into the world ruined by the choices of the futility of the mind. And he heals the human mind. He takes our brains in his hands and he rewires them so that we can think clearly.

Only Jesus Christ can heal the mind because only he really knows what makes us tick. only he can straighten out our twisted thinking.

The truth is in Jesus, says Paul. The truth is Jesus. And Jesus says you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free. He takes us into the furnace of his holy truth, his holy love.

[26 : 33] He melts our hardened hearts and he remakes our minds to think as his mind thinks. And he changes our clothes.

souls and we begin to walk as new humans like the only true human who ever lived. As I worked through this dense text the past days, a story from the Chronicles of Narnia kept coming to mind.

Narnia, as you may know, is another world. It's a world created out of the being renewed mind of C.S. Lewis. And in many ways, Narnia is, Narnia feels more real than the world we think that we know through our hands and our eyes and our ears.

And the lead character in the Chronicles of Narnia is a lion. His name is Aslan. He's the Christ figure. And if you're like me, you can't help but fall in love with Aslan. The story that kept coming to mind is the story about Eustace Clarence Scrub.

He's a precocious, obnoxious little boy who the other children in the story, like Lucy and Edmund, find very irritating. In fact, the first line of the book, it's The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, is this.

[27 : 51] There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrub, and he almost deserved it. Eustace wanders off by himself and he finds himself in the cave of a dragon.

The cave is filled with piles. He's a treasure. All that gold awakens lust in him and so he covers himself with gold jewelry. After some time, he falls asleep on the pile of gold and he has this gold bracelet around his arm.

When he wakes up, he discovers to his horror that he has become a dragon. We become like that after which we lust. A week later or so, he meets Edmund and we pick up the story as Eustace is describing his beastly experience.

I won't tell you how I became a dragon until I can tell the others and get it all over, said Eustace. By the way, I didn't even know I was a dragon until I heard you using the word when I turned up here the other morning.

I want to tell you how I stopped being a dragon. Fire ahead, said Edmund. Well, last night I was more miserable than ever and that beastly arm ring was hurting like anything. Is it all right now?

[29 : 09] Eustace laughed, a different laugh from any Edmund had heard him give before, and slipped the bracelet easily off his arm. There it is, he said, and anyone who likes it can have it as far as I'm concerned. Well, as I say, I was lying awake and wondering what on earth would become of me.

And then, but mind you, it may have all been a dream. I don't know. Go ahead, said Edmund. Well, anyway, I looked up and I saw the very last thing I expected. I saw a huge lion coming slowly toward me.

And one queer thing was that there was no moon last night, but there was moonlight where the lion was. So it came nearer and nearer. I was terribly afraid of it. You may think that being a dragon, I could have knocked any lion out easily enough, but it wasn't that kind of fear.

I wasn't afraid of it eating me. I was just afraid of it, if you can understand. Well, it came closer to me and looked straight into my eyes. I shut my eyes tight, but that wasn't any good because it told me to follow it.

You mean it spoke? Well, I don't know. Now that you mention it, I don't think it did, but it told me all the same. And I knew I'd have to do what it told me, so I got up and followed it. It led me along the way into the mountains, and there was always this moonlight over and around the lion wherever he went.

[30 : 22] So at last we came to the top of a mountain I'd never seen before, and on top of this mountain there was a garden, trees and fruit and everything, and in the middle of a garden there was a well. I knew it was a well because you could see the water bubbling up from the bottom of it, but it was a lot bigger than most wells, like a very big round bath with marble steps going down into it.

The water was as clear as anything, and I thought if I could get in there and bathe, it would ease the pain in my leg. But the lion told me I must undress first.

Mind you, I don't know if you said any words out loud or not. I was just going to say I couldn't undress because I had any clothes on, when I suddenly thought that dragons are snaky sorts of things, and snakes can cast their skins.

Oh, of course, I thought. That's what the lion means. So I started scratching myself, and my scales began coming off all over the place. And then I scratched a little deeper, and instead of just scales coming off here and there, my whole skin started peeling off beautifully, like it does after an illness, or as if I were a banana.

In a minute or two, I just stepped out of it. I could see it lying there beside me, looking rather nasty. It was the most lovely feeling. So I started to go down into the well for my bath.

[31 : 37] But just as I was going to put my foot into the water, I looked down, and I saw that it was all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly, just as it had been before. Oh, that's all right, I said.

It only means I had another smaller suit underneath the first one, and I'll have to get rid of it, too. So I scratched and tore away, and under this skin, peeled off beautifully, and out I stepped and left it lying beside the other one and went down into the well for my bath.

Well, exactly the same thing happened again. I thought to myself, oh dear, how many skins have I got to take off? Anyone ever felt that way? For I was longing to bathe my leg.

So I scratched away for the third time and got off a third skin, just like the two others, and stepped out of it. But as soon as I looked at myself in the water, I knew it had been no good. Then the lion said, but I don't know if it spoke.

You will have to let me undress you. I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now, so I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it.

[32 : 46] The very first tear he made was so deep, I thought it had gone right into my heart, and when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off.

You know, if you've ever picked a scab of a sore place, it hurts like billy-hoo, but it is such fun to see it coming away. I know exactly what you mean, said Edmund. Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off, just as I thought I'd done it myself the other three times, only they hadn't hurt.

And there it was lying on the grass, only ever so much thicker and darker and more knobbly looking than the others had been. And there I was, as smooth and soft as a peel switch, and smaller than I'd ever been.

Then he caught hold of me. I didn't like that very much because I was tender underneath, now that I had no skin on, and he threw me into the water. It smarted like anything, but only for a moment. And after it became perfectly delicious, and soon I started swimming and splashing, I found that all the pain had gone from my arm.

And then I saw why. I turned into a boy again. You'd think me simply phony if I told you how I felt about my own arms. I know they're not muscular, they're not, they're not, they're pretty moly compared with Caspians, but I was so glad to see my arms.

[34 : 06] After a bit, the lion took me out, and he dressed me. Dressed you? With his paws? Well, I don't exactly remember that bit.

But he did somehow or other, in new clothes, the same I've got on now, as a matter of fact. And then suddenly, I was back here, which is what makes me think it must have been a dream.

No. It wasn't a dream, said Edmund. Why not? Well, there are the clothes, for one thing, and you have been, well, undragonated for another.

Father, what do you think it was then, asked Eustace. I think you've seen Oslo, said Edmund. I think you've seen Jesus Christ.

I think you've heard Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. I think you've learned Jesus Christ.

[35 : 17] And he is renewing your mind, freeing you to lay aside the old and put on the new. him. A few pages later, Lewis writes this.

It would be nice and fairly nearly true to say that from that time forth, Eustace was a different boy. To be strictly accurate, he began to be a different boy.

He had lapses, relapses. There were still many days when he could be very tiresome. But most of these I shall not notice.

The cure had begun. Like he was 25 minutes later. And he couldn't like him, but of he can make achtdog as join back.

And youenos of ■ muerte. He gave a hundred to pass.

[36 : 28] I