

Untitled (24)

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[0:00] Let us pray. O Lord, our Heavenly Father, we come to you now asking for your mercy and grace to be showered! upon us as we sit under the hearing and preaching of your word. Give us ears to hear what you have! to say to us. Help me, Lord, as I deliver your word to be faithful to it. Help me, Lord, to be a vessel so that your people can hear you rightly and truly. And give us all the enablement of your spirit to obey and to do as you have instructed us. We pray all of this in Jesus' name, our Lord. Amen.

Our text this morning is Ephesians chapter 4. We're starting from verse 25. And if you don't have a Bible, you can grab a pew Bible there. It should be on page 1161 in your pew Bible.

Last week, Brian preached about the old man and the new man. If you remember, he wonderfully spoke about the futility of life of those that are outside of Christ.

That kind of futility of life is marked by a hardened heart. Ignorance. Alienation from the life of God. Alienation from the life of God. That leads to a darkened understanding. A callous heart and conscience. Slaves to the sensuality of the flesh. Greedy to practice all kinds of impurity.

[1:53] All of these reveals the futility of man without Jesus. All that knowledge and advancement in the civilization.

All of it adds to a futile existence. When we fail to acknowledge the God who made us. And Paul reminds us that we were once like these Gentiles.

But now, outside of Christ, we were outside of Christ. But now, we are inside Christ. And therefore, we have wisdom in life.

Outside of Christ, we had no wisdom and we had no life. We were alienated from the source of life. But Paul reminds us that we have been made anew. For those who are in Christ, we have a new life.

We are no longer sons and daughters of darkness through the first Adam. According to the flesh, we are now sons and daughters of God through the second Adam.

[3:03] Jesus Christ, according to the Spirit. We've been given a new nature. You can even say that all of us who are in Christ are a new race of humanity.

That's the way Paul puts it. This is why Paul says then, that we are to continue to put off and then put on.

We have to put on We have to put up the old self, the old man, which belonged to the former dead nature. And we have to put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God, a true reflection of his righteousness and holiness.

And this is all possible because the new man we put on is Christ himself. We learn Christ as Paul so curiously put it.

Where Adam failed to represent God faithfully, Jesus Christ has succeeded and succeeded triumphantly. And he has given us his resurrection power and the ability to be like him.

[4:19] This is what the new man looks like. And this is what we are to put on. Now I want you to know that this manner of putting up the old and putting on the new is not a one time thing that we do.

This is to mark our Christian walk. Remember that Paul has given us advice on how to walk in the Christian life. And it is marked by a constant, continuous putting off and then putting on.

Our lifestyles as followers of Jesus is to be a continuous putting off of the old self, which is dying to the flesh. We are to die to the flesh. And then a putting on of the new self, which is living by the Spirit.

To be a Christian is to be dying continually. In one sense, that is what it means to be a Christian. To continually die to the flesh.

And it also means to continually to be made alive. We are continually being made alive in the Spirit. Therefore, if you notice throughout the New Testament, this putting off is often followed by an advice and instruction to put on something.

[5:41] The more alive we are in the Spirit, the more we reflect the image of God in increasing Christ-likeness. I want us to think of a child who has just been adopted.

The new child is now a member of the family that has adopted him. He has a new family name with all the privileges of being a child in that family. But studies have shown, especially when the child is adopted from a broken and abusive past, that the causes and effect of such a broken past must be gradually unlearned while earthy patterns and expectations are now learned.

Well, our adoption, brothers and sisters in Christ, our adoptions as sons and daughters into the family of God is no different. We constantly have to unlearn our past and learn what it means to be part of the family of God.

Our putting off the old self is unlearning the brokenness and futile living of our past. This is an essential aspect of being in God's family.

This is an essential aspect of being part of the church. And the act of putting it off is not what makes us sons and daughters, mind you. We've already been adopted.

[7:14] We are already sons and daughters. The papers have been signed, if you will. Our sins have been forgiven. We possess now a new nature. We have a heart of flesh, a conscience awakened by the Holy Spirit.

Now we are being taught to live in a way that reflects the new family to which we belong. We are to learn Christ, Paul says to us.

We are to grow in Christ-likeness. We are to adopt a godly lifestyle. Both of this aspect of the putting off and the putting on our important aspect of our sanctification.

And this is what the next verses, verse 25 to 32 now emphasizes. In these verses, Paul shows us the life patterns that should mark the Christian.

As he tells us, he tells us to put something off. God and then he gives us corresponding things that we need to put on in exchange for those things that we put up.

[8:30] We are to exchange the lifestyle that is marked by the futile way of thinking with a new lifestyle that is marked with godliness, by a life that is being renewed in the knowledge and love of Christ.

It is as if Dr. Paul, the apostle, is warning the body of Christ, put away among you these things that are marks of deadness, viral infections that might threaten to infect the body.

They can only kill and destroy. And instead, take on these spiritual antidotes of vitamins, if you will. Take them on.

Ingest them. They will help you to live the godly life. Firstly, he tells us that truth must replace falsehood.

He says it there in verse 25. I have been put away falsehood. Let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. I have been put away falsehood.

[9:38] What is falsehood? What are the markers falsehood? It's lies, pretense, hypocrisy. On all of these things, when they're marked, they show something about a body or a person.

It's a lack of integrity. Isn't it? And Paul is saying that these things, these falsehoods are harmful to the body of Christ.

Instead, what are we to take on? Truth. We are to speak the truth with our neighbor. Who is your neighbor?

Your brothers and sisters sitting around you here. We are to speak the truth with one another.

That's not something that's often easy to do, is it?

Speaking truth is costly. Speaking truth to people we even care about, there needs to be courage that attends that, because we don't want to hurt the people we love.

[10:53] Truth can hurt, right? But we are to say it, we are to say it, there's no pretense in the body of Christ. There's no falsehood in the body of Christ. There's also no hypocrisy in the body of Christ.

There is a, there's a, there's a way in which this, this word is also self-reflecting to us as we say it and we see it, right? Speaking the truth also means speaking the truth to ourselves as well.

We are not to live by lies and falsehood. We are to be people of truth. This marks us as the people of God because we are members of one another.

Imagine when the arm tells a lie to the legs and the body. There's no unity there. There's disjointedness.

There's brokenness. Really, probably physical brokenness. That's what it looks like. That's what Paul is emphasizing. We are members of one another. We are to be people that walk in truth with one another.

[11:59] Now, that truth is marked, it's steeped, it's in the context, in the soil of love, right? He said that earlier to us. We speak truth in love. We cannot divorce truth and love in the church.

Oftentimes, we tend to do that. It's one or the other. That's at least the way our society often tries to tell us. You either love, and with this true love, then you can't really be truthful.

You just got to accept everything and everyone as it is. Or, you speak truth in an harsh and domineering way, and there's no grace and there's no love. Well, the Bible says we ought to be people who are truthful to one another.

And if we are members of one another, of the same body, we do it in a way that shows love for the other. Secondly, anger that is righteous must replace anger that controls.

anger that is righteous must replace the anger that controls. It says be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil.

[13:18] Now, if we're honest with ourselves, we seldom exhibit righteous anger. Seldom. we often try to justify our anger as being righteous.

For example, I'll use myself as an example. I often exhibit righteous anger. At least I think I do. My anger is righteous, people. But seldom, seldom, seldom do I recognize the same kind of righteous anger in people when their anger is directed at me.

It's never righteous. Curious that, isn't it? That's the way we are.

We can fool ourselves to thinking, wow, yeah, I'm righteously indignant at that person. But we don't offer that same level of grace to others.

So when is anger sinful? It's sinful when it starts to control you. And you start to obsess over how you might bring justice upon the object of your anger.

[14:32] I love this line by the poet Robert Burns. He puts it this way. This is what anger looks like. It's nursing, nursing, as a mother nurses a baby, nursing your wrath to keep it warm.

warm. Isn't that a good picture of what anger sometimes looks like? We nurse it. We keep it alive. Keep it warm.

Things might come along that might want to dissipate it. But we are not pushed that in the side. I want it. It becomes a baby almost to us. Precious. anger is becoming sinful.

It's starting to control you. What does righteous anger look like? It is anger that does not lead to sin. It's as simple as that.

Anger that does not lead to sin. But it's a simple thing to say. But we can all admit that that is a really difficult thing.

[15:42] It's so easy in our flesh to have our anger spill over to sin. This is why the apostle gives us a sound and practical, very practical advice here.

Do not let the sun go down on your anger. That means simply before you go to bed, before the day is over, if you still have anger in your heart towards anyone or anything, bring it to God.

Bring it to God. Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. And as his children, he has promised to fight our battles.

anger in God's anger in God's love. Secondly, if there is any sin on our part, as we bring that anger to God, if there is any sin on our part, we can confess it.

Oftentimes we're angry, but it's not always, as we've already admitted to ourselves, it's not often tainted by our own sin. Never, rarely is our anger purely righteous.

[16:57] tainted by our own sin. So when we bring that anger to God, we confess our own sins in which way we have exacerbated the situation or caused there to be destruction or brokenness.

And then we receive forgiveness. We receive his forgiveness, God's forgiveness. And then we commit to ourselves to seek reconciliation. So if it's the end of the day, confess, reconcile, and commit yourself to seeking reconciliation with whoever it is that you're angry with.

If it happens to be someone in your family, perhaps your wife or your husband, don't wait till the morning. Just go there and there and seek reconciliation. Thirdly, if there is a need to reconcile, we can ask God to help us.

This is why Paul says, do not let the sun go down in your anger. And this practical advice will allow us to seek, to be people who seek after each other, to reconcile, and to seek health.

Why is this all necessary? You might say. It's because we have an adversary who is far more cunning and crafty than we are often willing to admit.

[18:24] anger. The devil is well practiced and he's very good at using our anger to master us. Anger gives him a foothold which he can turn into all sorts of malice.

See how anger often proceeds to bitterness and then to gossip and to slander. anger and all of it because it's from anger, all of it is with a feeling of self-righteousness.

But it alienates us from God and alienates us from one another. And before you know it, the devil takes hold of that and all of it and the whole entire forest are set ablaze in the church of God, in the body of Christ, among believers.

And so, we are to take Paul's advice. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

Thirdly, Paul tells us what else we need to put off and what we need to put on. We have to put on generosity. And generosity replaces theft.

[19:45] Right? Let no let the thief no longer steal. He says in verse 28. For rather, let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Let the thief no longer steal. To which we all can say a hearty amen. Right? No one likes thievery. Even in, even in, at this time in the pagan culture, you know, thieving is considered, you know, a no-no. So he says, let him no longer steal.

He also says, let him do honest work with his own hands. We say amen to that too. But what is the antidote though? What is the antidote to greed and thievery?

Curiously, the Bible says it's generosity. generosity. Now, if you have asked me that question before I read this passage, I wouldn't have said the antidote to thievery is generosity.

[20:48] But that's what Paul is offering here. Put off thieving and put on generosity. When we learn Christ, we come to know that all that is ours is given by God.

It is all a gift from God. He has been so generous to us beyond what we deserve or can hope for. And as recipients of God's generosity, we are to be in turn generous to others.

It is a uniquely Christian thing. Something that is alien in the world of the first century Roman Empire. And I think it's also alien in the 21st century that we live in.

The purpose for art work is so that we might be able to bless others. radical generosity is a faithful family trait of those who are in God's family.

After all, our Lord is an example of someone who gives generously, isn't he? Even sacrificially to help those who are needy.

[22:01] We have all been recipients. We have been needy and we've been recipients of his generosity. So we ought to be in turn exemplify that family trait and be generous.

Fourth, Paul tells us that words of blessing, words of blessing must be put on to replace person.

let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, he says, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that he may give grace to those who hear, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

conversation. The Greek word for corrupting talk is the same word used by Jesus in Matthew 17 to describe a diseased tree that bears bad fruit.

It's a word used to describe something that is rancid and rotten or diseased. That's the way the Bible describes cursing.

[23:10] Rancid, diseased words. Rotten, words. And by the way, it doesn't just mean swearing here. It's not just swear words that Paul is telling us we have to put off.

In fact, it primarily adds in minds, words that tear down. Gossip and slander falls under these categories.

It also does cover crude speech. Speech that tears people made in the image of God down. Such things are part of the old man, the old self, and we are to put it off.

Instead, notice the antidote. Our words are to be words that bless us. We are to speak graciously to one another. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Jesus told us in the Gospels. It's not a matter of policing our tone. It's not a matter of not speaking our truths because it might hurt someone's feelings.

[24:24] That's not what we're saying here. That might be what our society tells us. In order to be loving and blessing, watch your tone.

Don't say things that will hurt people's feelings. Don't speak truth. Don't be objective. Don't say things about the Bible. That's not what Paul is offering us here.

But the Bible shows us that a heart that is inclined to God and is filled with God's love will bear fruit of that condition in the way it talks, in its speech.

A person who is in Christ, such a person's speech will be focused on glorifying God and building others up, seeking to lead them to Christ, the wellspring of life.

Essentially what Paul is saying here is that in our speech, in us talking to one another, in our speech to the world outside, we are to equip one another.

[25:27] That's what blessing is. That's how we bless one another. Right? So that we can offer to one another words of encouragement in times of need. When that is marked, when that's what marks us as the body of Christ, we build each other up.

We equip one another for the work of ministry. Rather than tear, and you see what the opposite is, rather than tear one another down and make ourselves ineffective for the work of ministry.

So we are to be people that in our speech, we draw people closer to Jesus, the one who imparts grace to all. But when we, there's a thing here that Paul says at the end there, and he kind of, he alludes to ancient Israel, when we, like them, like Israel, when we're full of grumbling and complaining, we reveal a heart that has grown ungrateful of God's redeeming love.

Then, we grieve the Holy Spirit. We grieve the Holy Spirit. Such a thing possible. Well, it is, because we are joined together, we are bound together into one body, the church, through the Holy Spirit. So when you speak ill of your brother or your sister in Christ, it grieves the Holy Spirit. But if we indeed have a changed heart, redeemed by Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we will impart grace instead, truth, and love to one another.

[27:08] lastly, Paul tells us that we are to put on kindness, which must replace malice. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. So this is Paul's final admonition. He says for us to put off, to remove every speech that stems from anger and malice and threatens to destroy the church.

Rather, we are to be kind to one another, tender hearted or compassionate. Tender hearted or compassionate. Who does that remind you of?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was tender hearted and compassionate to the lost. it's not that we wouldn't grieve one another in the church.

It isn't that we wouldn't hurt one another. We are a family after all. There is often no deeper wound than familiar ones. The assumption here that Paul makes is that that will happen in the family, in any family.

[28:29] We hurt each other, we bruise each other, but we are called to forgiveness. We are called to kindness and compassion because this is uniquely a family trait.

This is what it means to be part of God's family. We were so undeserving of mercy and grace, weren't we? Yet God in Christ, through its perfect obedience and sacrificial debt, he forgave us. You and me, we were servant, we were the servant with insurmountable debt. Remember that parable of our Lord Jesus Christ? We couldn't pay it.

If we had a thousand lifetimes, we couldn't pay our debt to God. But yet, God in Christ forgave us. Our debt was forgiven when Christ took it upon himself and paid for it.

So how can we not, in turn, forgive our fellow brother and sister? So we are to exhibit, we are to exhibit that we are members of God's family when we readily seek forgiveness.

[29:48] Note that, we are to seek forgiveness. So that tells us something. If you've been hurt by someone in the body, you're not just to sit there, nursing your anger to keep it warm, nursing your hurt that grows into bitterness, you're to seek out the person that has hurt you in love.

In love and truth, tell them what they've done. And if you're the one that have hurt, whether willfully, whether by accident, whatever it may be, we are to seek, you are also to seek forgiveness.

Right? If a brother approaches and you've hurt me this way, you've said this about me, I don't know in what context, you're not to dismiss, or to invalidate, or to lessen the severity of what that person is saying, you're to hear them out.

And if you are rightly, if it's right that you've done that, you're to seek forgiveness, ask forgiveness. We are to be a people, it's a currency, this is the point that Paul is saying, forgiveness is a currency in the family of God.

It is that inexhaustible currency that we give away to one another because we have it in abundance, because Christ has lavished his love and forgiveness upon us. So we are to extend it to one another.

[31 : 22] This is primarily what marks us as Christians. This is why even when the Lord taught us how to pray, we are to pray that our Lord will forgive us our sins and trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.

Implied in that is that this is what it means to be in Christ, to be a follower of Jesus Christ, to be a Christian, is that we freely extend forgiveness to one another. Therefore, Paul says, he buttons this whole thing up in the beginning of chapter 5.

Therefore, be imitators, imitators of God as beloved children. Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The admonition is to imitate God. That may sound absurd God. At first hearing it, how can we imitate God?

But Paul's old exposition in the previous verses has led to this call for us to be imitators of God. It is we who have the power to do it because we're in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, because we've been made anew.

[32 : 39] Remember that. We are new creatures. in this new nature that we've been given, we are able now to imitate God. You are not your old self anymore.

You are Christ's own inheritance, as Paul tells us earlier in Ephesians. You are a new creation, a new humanity, a beloved child of God, who is your father.

Remember that. Be imitators of God, his beloved children. There is no greater honor, there is no greater joy and fulfillment than to reflect the character trait of so loving a father.

What prize do you take if you're a father here or mother when you see your son or daughter imitating you? Because we're sinful people, sometimes that's scary.

but when they're imitating us in the right way, it brings pride and joy. And that's really what we do.

And this is as children of God, we are to imitate our father in the same way.

[33 : 55] But how are we to do this? Yes, Paul has told us, we are God's children and we are to be like him. But we are adopted, you see.

And it was a rough adoption. we don't really know how to imitate this father, do we? Because we've become too accustomed in imitating our abusive former master.

So Paul tells us out. He says, Jesus Christ exemplified what it means to walk in love. Jesus Christ exemplified a deep sacrificial love that reveals the father's heart.

God. And so we walk in his steps. And when we walk in the steps of Christ our Lord, we are imitating God.

He's given us an example. He is the image. He is the mirror. He is the image of God. He faithfully, perfectly honors and represents and imitates God the father.

[35 : 04] and when we walk in his footsteps, we will do the same. Let us pray.