

Putting Off and Putting On

Ephesians 4: 25-29

9/15/02

Intro

- Work is progressing well at the new church.
- New Growth Groups starting this week.

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In these verses we are studying today Paul is teaching us about an essential part of how to live as Christians in this world. Last week we heard from him that there are two important steps in not walking as the world walks; putting off and putting on.

Now we see that that there are four elemental and foundational things that God wants us to put off and also to put on as a response to all that God has given to us. Let's review the first two and then look at the last two in greater detail.

I. The new self is about truth and relationships.

A. The first principle is to put off lies and to put on truth.

Vs 25

- Paul begins with lying because it is the one quality that most reflects the character of the world's system.
- When someone is living out the world's system, lying is the most common first indicator.
- Truth is more than just a way to speak, it is a way to live. We have a phrase, "living a lie," we can also live the truth.

B. The second principle is that we should put off anger and make relationships a priority by keeping short accounts.

- Paul tells us to put off anger because it is so hurtful to others. *Anger has many forms –*

pouting, resentment, holding onto grudges, withholding relationship, yelling, throwing things, etc.

- At first it seems that anger ought to be justified because it has a trigger – someone else's action. But the scripture says that, "the anger of man cannot bring about the righteousness of God."

Illus – if someone pulls out in front of you, it is not the anger of man that will bring about God's righteousness.

- Rather we should keep short accounts as a response to God's pouring out His love onto us.

II. We must put off stealing and put on honest work.

Vs 28-29

A. At first look, this seems like an admonition that we would have little trouble with.

- We might have truly stolen something when we were young.

Illus – I remember when I was 11 or 12 and stole a 2 cent piece of candy.

- But there are many types of stealing today that God does not want His children doing; *such as borrowing and not returning, obtaining money under false pretenses, false advertising, cooking the books, lying on taxes, and not correcting mistakes.*

Illus – shopping at Target and noticing they didn't charge is for a pair of gloves.

- Stealing is essentially taking a short-cut to get what we want. There is an urge in all of us to do this, *but this is completely self-centered and shows complete disregard for the other person.*

B. But if we put this off only, we have missed the most important part – we must put on Christ.

- Work for honest gain that we might have something to share with the one in need.
- In other words, that we would put off selfishness and put on a care for others.

III. May we put off rotten words and put on grace.

A. Literally, the phrase is, “let no rotten word proceed from your mouth.”

- This is a reference once again to the principle that the world is decaying or rotting and therefore those principles stinketh.
- Rottenness of mouth has a large range of meaning such as: *obscenity, coarse joking, filthy talk, idle rumors, gossip, false accusations, and words that are put-downs and hurt others.*

See also 5:4

B. The tongue is difficult to control.

James 3:5-6

- Words can be like flaming lightning bolts that set afire whatever, or whoever they strike.

- But the tongue is reflection of the heart. The scripture says, “*Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.*”

Illus – Matthew 12: 33-37 Jesus said that a tree is known by its fruit. A good tree produces good fruit, etc.

Illus – some people say, “Look, this is just who I am, Ok?”

This is supposed to excuse certain behaviors.

Actually, that's who they were, or are, but the question now is who will they become?

They are under the false assumption that who they are is somehow locked into some kind of genetic code and they have no choice but to live out the disposition given to them. This may be true of alligators, crocodiles, and hyenas, but there is something much higher at work in those who are in Christ Jesus.

C. But if we watch our tongue, we've only done half the verse.

- We are called to give grace by speaking words that edify, or build up.
- Remember that grace is treating people better than they deserve.
- This is how they will know we are Christians, because edifying others is such a heavenly quality that when people see it in abundance, they will believe that God is there.

Conclusion

If you could choose to live in a place where everyone was selfish and uncaring, or a place where everyone edified the other, which would you choose?

Those that are gracious will find themselves around people that are gracious. We reap what we sow.