

Are We Renewed

Eph. 4:17-24

For three chapters Paul told us who God said we are: We are **blessed, sealed, alive** in Christ, **united** to God and one another, **confident** in our eternal hope and **indwelled** by the Holy Spirit.

Now Paul is taking the last 3 chapters of Ephesians to, not only tell us what it looks like to be who God says we are ...

... but to remind us that God has given us the resources we need to “BE” who God says we are...

... Christianity gives us the resources we need to make real and lasting change in our lives and in today’s passage Paul is describing how we can experience real change in our lives.

You make a decision to “put off” the old self and you change from the inside out by “putting on” the new self.

- Verses 17-22 is Paul telling us about “putting off” the old self.
- Verse 23 Paul talks about changing from the inside out
- Verse 24 is about “putting on” the new self.

1. You must **PUT OFF** the old self.

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 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. (Eph. 4:17-22)

These phrases, “put off” and “put on” are quite unusual ...

... throughout this passage Paul coins new words and uses words in extremely unfamiliar ways because he is trying to communicate and explain some really amazing truths.

... and being the intellect that he is, Paul makes full use of the Greek Language.

In our English language there are only three tenses: **past, present future** ... however the Koine Greek language has 7:

Present, Aorist, Imperfect, Future, Perfect, Pluperfect, and future perfect

These two phrases (put off and put on) are in the AORIST tense ...

AORIST means that it happened in a moment in the past, but its effect continues.

Paul says that they need to “put off” the old self and continue **keeping off** the old self.

... make a deliberate conscious decision to change and KEEP IT!

In verse 17 Paul says that they should “**no longer walk (or live) as Gentiles do.**”

... that’s odd ... the Ephesians are Gentiles ... what does Paul mean?

... “*the way of the Gentiles*” is an idiomatic phrase that means “unbeliever” ... “idolater” ... “pagan”

Paul is describing how the Ephesians have come to realize that their old way of life was “*in the futility of their minds.*”

... **and** Paul says they lived this way because “*they were darkened in their understanding.*”

Point: Unbelievers live the way they live because they do not see and do not believe that what they are doing is wrong.

... You know the old adage, “*don’t ask a fish about water because it will say “what’s water?”*”

This is the reality of life before salvation ...

Paul describes this as a life of futility ... pointless, a waste, without purpose.

At some point in the past, these Ephesians came to see that everything they were doing, the life they were living ... was **meaningless**

... their lives were **meaningless** because they were alienated (separated) from the life of God.

Let's go back to the example of the fish that doesn't know it is wet because it doesn't know anything but being wet ... it's always been in water.

... many people go from day to day thinking they have a meaningful life ... blindly going through the motions.

... and until the Holy Spirit gives them the ability to see they are separated from the life of God, they will never think otherwise.

I want to be as clear as possible:

... if you are separated from the life of God, then you are totally unaware of how meaningless your life really is.

BUT when you began to realize that there is a God and that you are separated from HIM that is when everything begins to change.

Seeing the life of God makes you realize that all of those things that we believe make life meaningful, only do so because of God!

... love gives meaning because there is a God of love.

... all good deeds and moral behavior only matter because there is a moral and righteous God.

Paul tells the Ephesians that before they became aware of the life of God:

- Their sinful hearts were hardened

- They were callous
- They were “given over” to sensuality
- Greedy for every kind of impurity

Unbelievers are slaves who think they are free ...

... but when a person begins to see that their life without God is a life of bondage without meaning and purpose ...

... that is when they are getting ready, coming to the place, to make this **decisive change**

... that is when they begin to understand change is needed.

I remember when I came to the place where I said, “**I don’t want this life anymore.**”

- I want to be free...
- I want my life to matter ...
- I want my time on this planet to count for something.

When that happens, when that fire begins to rise up in you ... **you don’t like what is** and you want something better.

... this is when you make the decision to “**put off**” the old self

Paul came to this place himself in Romans 7.

2. You must **PUT ON** the new self

²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self

What is on the **inside of us** is the **fountain source** of our **behavior**.

We are NOT going to get to verse 25-32 today but, in those verses, Paul gives us a list of Christian behaviors.

... but that list doesn't make sense without going through verse 20-24 first.

You see ... when Paul is talking about “putting off the old self” and “putting on the new self” He is **not** talking about **behaviors** ...

Paul is talking about putting off one “self” and putting on another “self.”

... In other words **what you ARE** comes before **what you DO**.

... being a Christian means **being something** before **doing something**.

... a **comprehensive internal change** is the first step into **spiritual life**.

Do you remember the story of Achan at the fall of Jericho?

... God had said for them to destroy everything and take nothing... but Achan disobeyed and took clothes, silver, and gold.

Look at his confession.

"Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. (Jos. 7:20-21)

... the word “**coveted**” means to for your heart and mind to be possessed by something.

Achan is saying, “these things captured my heart, and I couldn't help myself, so I took them.”

Paul is saying the opposite of this ...

... Paul says, if you let God capture you heart and mind it will change you from the inside out.

This right here is what most **people do not understand about** Christianity.

Christianity is not becoming more moral ...

... When you talk to people about Jesus they will ask, “do I have to do this or stop doing that to become a Christian.”

... that is the wrong question

Becoming a Christian does mean some behaviors will stop and others will begin... but you’ve **got to go through** verse 20-24 first.

The way we live changes because God captures your heart and mind ... desires change ... what drives us changes **AND THAT AFFECTS BEHAVIOR**

... Paul writes it this way “**be renewed in the spirit of your minds**”

This really impacts two things;

- Being renewed in the spirit of your mind means that your **motives** change.

*How do you get a child to behave right ... **punishment** ... **fear** (you might lose your job) and even **pride**—you don’t want to be like those awful people who lie do ou ... that’s not who we are.*

We are taught to be honest and good because it pays off.

*Here is the problem, if that is your motivation then one day you will justify doing the wrong thing because it **pays off** for you.*

Some people are in church because it “pays off for them” other people are in church because they are captivated by God.

As true Christians we should take the time to examine their motives ...

- Being renewed in the spirit of your mind also means you embrace a **new epistemology**

Epistemology is a ten-dollar word that means ... how you know what is right and wrong.

Being renewed in the spirit of your mind means that your **opinion**, what **suits you**, even **what you want** doesn't inform your decision about right and wrong ...

... Everything shifts to the Word of God ... **You let the Word of God dwell in you richly.**

You no longer say, "*I do this because I am this or because it is expected* ...

... you now say this is the life I live because this is what pleases my Savior ... my Lord ... my King.

Consider:

If the distance between the earth and sun (92 million miles) was the thickness of a sheet of paper

... then distance between here and the nearest star would be 72 feet high,

... and the distance to the edge of our galaxy would a stack of paper 310 miles high

... Then we are just a speck of dust in the part of the universe we can see

... So, if Heb. 1:1 is right and there is a God who created all of this by the power of His Word and he holds it all together with just a thought ...

... then IS THIS the kind of God you ask into your life to be YOUR ASSISTANT?

NO!!! This is the kind of God you make the Lord of your life!

- **Who** are you living your life for ...?
- **What** are you living your life for ...?
- **Who** is calling the shots in your life ...?

Meditating on this is how you change from the inside out.

3. If you “put off” the old self and “put on” the new self you will be CHANGED from the inside out.

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. (Eph. 4:23-24)

Paul doesn't say make yourself new or renew ... he says “BE renewed”

In other words, this is not something you can do ... it is something you must receive

When you “*see the life of God*” you begin to long for something more, so you **PUT OFF** the old self, then as you do that you “*become captivated by Christ*” you **PUT ON** the new self.

... this is the process of you changing from the inside out.

But what exactly is the **NEW SELF**?

It is a self that is in the “likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

I love this phrase ... this word “likeness” is powerful!

Gen. 2 says that humanity was made in the “likeness” or “image” of God.

The “likeness” of God refers to 3 things **thinking, living, and longing.**

A RENEWED MIND thinks biblically and truthfully ... Paul said, “*let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*” ... “*what is pure, holy, and of good report, think on these things.*”

A RENEWED SELF, lives for Christ ... Paul said, “*but what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ*” ... *if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*”

A RENEWED HEART longs for a world where sin is gone and justice and righteousness reigns. ... *it means to look at Jesus Christ and say, “that what I want to be, that's my ideal, Christ is all in all!*”

This longing, this desire for a renewed mind, self, and heart has **always been** at the core of God's people ... and it is a longing that will be satisfied.

I leave you with these words from the prophet Isaiah.

²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. ²⁹ He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power.⁷ ³¹ Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. (Isa. 40:28-31)