

Putting On the New Self – Part II – *Ephesians 4:24*

Sermon by Associate Pastor Joe Davis

Union Baptist Church – 10/25/2015

I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Well, we're going to be back in Ephesians today as we continue to study how to put on the new self that God created for us at the moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ. Today's message is titled, "Putting on the New Self – Part II." So if you would, turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4, and our focus today will be verse 24.

You may have noticed in our study of Ephesians that we've spent a lot of time on three verses, verses 22 to 24 of chapter 4. You may be wondering if we'll ever get through the book of Ephesians at this rate?! Well I want to encourage you that we will pick up the pace again once we finish up with verse 24. And I've intentionally spent a lot of time on verses 22 to 24 because I believe that understanding the three life-changing truths in these verses is absolutely essential if we are ever to be able to walk worthy of the calling we've received...If we're ever going to be able to live out the way of life that will be described for us in detail in Ephesians 4, verse 25 through Ephesians 6, verse 9. Without learning what it means to take off the old self, be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and put on the new self, we will never be able to consistently walk the way God calls us to walk in the remainder of Ephesians and throughout Scripture for that matter.

Now last week we began looking at what it means to put on the new self and we discovered four important truths. First we learned that it's possible for a believer to not put the new self on. It's possible to experience new life in Christ and then get off track and never move beyond the elementary principles of the faith. It's possible for us to continue walking in the ways of our old self and never learn in a practical way what it means to walk in newness of life. God is always working to bring us into our new self, but we can resist it and allow ourselves to be deceived by Satan into thinking we can never really walk the way the Bible teaches us to walk.

Secondly, we were reminded that there's an intense battle going on every day between our old self and the new self that God has created for us. And the only way we can win the victory over our old self is through the power of God Himself and the new life He gave us through Jesus Christ. We can't do it by our own strength and willpower. We were reminded that in order to win this battle, our focus must remain on Jesus Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, we learned that if we are in Christ, we each have a new self that has been created in Him and is ready for us to put on like clothes. According to Ephesians chapter 4 verse 24 this new self has been created...past tense. And we saw that this new self truly is new. The Greek word for "new" speaks of being new as in a completely different kind, unprecedented, novel, uncommon or unheard-of...something entirely new and different, as opposed to just a cleaned-up version of our old self. We saw that in Christ our new self is spiritually alive and in fellowship with the God of the universe and has the power to break free from sin and leave behind the empty ways of our old self. And that when we put on our new self we CAN live the way the Bible teaches us to live... There is not a command in Scripture that cannot be lived out when we put on the new self and learn to walk in by the power of the Spirit.

And finally last week, we examined how our new self has been created in righteousness and holiness. We saw that in Christ we are complete and acceptable to God and righteous because of Christ. And our new self has also been created in holiness. It has been set apart for God and His purposes. Your new self has been designed to be completely different and separated and devoted to the God of the universe. The challenge for us now is to learn to walk in this new identity and righteousness by putting on our new self and consistently through the Spirit putting to death the ways of our old self.

So let's go a little deeper this week and see what else Scripture teaches about putting on the new self.

II. YOUR NEW SELF CAN BE PUT ON LIKE CLOTHES (EPHESIANS 4:24; COLOSSIANS 3:10)

Have you ever had a pair of jeans that just fit you perfectly and were so comfortable that you wanted to wear them all the time? In fact you loved these jeans so much that you wore them way too much and sadly it wasn't long before they started wearing out and holes started developing in the knees. You still tried to wear them even with the holes because they were just so darn comfortable and you hated to give them up. And this worked for a while until one day your boss at work called you into his office and reminded you of the dress code which stated that jeans were allowed but needed to be in good condition and without holes. Sadly you finally had to give them up at work but at home you still wore them at every opportunity until they were finally in such bad condition that even you realized it was time to let them go once and for all. It was that day when your underwear started to show through that helped you finally turn the corner!

Now my son Isaac loves to be at home and if he had his way he would wear his pajamas 24/7. He loves his "cozy clothes" as he calls them. It's an especially sad day for him when he has to get dressed up in a button up shirt. Just this last week I got out a long-sleeved polo shirt with three buttons for him to wear to school. When he saw it in his stack of clothes for the day he said, "Dad, this is a church shirt. I don't wear these to school. They don't feel good." I assured him he would be fine and he reluctantly wore it to school. I tried to tell him how handsome he looked and that the girls were going to simply be in love with him, but that didn't seem to help. In fact, the thought of girls being in love with him seemed like the ultimate nightmare. So I guess I won't use that strategy next time!

Well today as we continue on in our study of Ephesians, we're going to be talking about letting go of our worn out jeans and our cozy clothes and putting on some new and improved ones as we look further at the concept of putting on our new self. We're going to talk about replacing those old worn-out clothes of our old self and putting on a beautiful new outfit purchased for us by Jesus Christ. And even though we may be very comfortable in wearing the clothes of our old self, what we will find when we finally give up on them and put them in the trash can, is that the new clothes provided for us by Jesus Christ will be infinitely more comfortable and attractive than those old worn-out clothes with which we were so enamored.

We will wonder why we were so attached to those old beat up things that made us look like a ragamuffin.

The first point I would like to make today as we begin our study is one you've heard me say quite a few times already in our Ephesians study. And that is the simple truth that our new self really can be put on like a new set of clothes. Let's read our central passage in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 20 to 24 and challenge ourselves to believe what Paul says there: that taking off our old self like an old set of clothes and putting on the new self is really something that we CAN do. Let's not make it harder than it is and tell ourselves that something major needs to happen before we can choose to put on that new self that has been created for us and is ready to put on. We can do it today and every day for the rest of our lives.

Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 20 to 24:

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Does that sound difficult? Does Paul lay out five steps we need to go through before we can be able to put on the new self? Does Paul say that we can only do this after 20 years of intense study and meditation? Is this only possible for a very select few of extremely mature believers?

What I see in this passage is a simple process that is within the realm of possibility for anyone who has come to new life in Christ. It involves simply laying aside the old self, being renewed in our ways of thinking through the truths of God's Word, and putting on the new self which already exists and is ready to be put on my clothes. Let's not make it more complicated than it is. Let's not keep excusing ourselves from making this a reality in our lives by the power of the Spirit. It starts with a willingness to let go of the ways of our old self and a seeking of God's strength and power to do it. It progresses as we read and study God's Word, asking the Spirit to help us understand it, believe it and act on it. And it becomes a

functioning reality in our lives as we began to daily choose to follow the ways of our new self as taught to us in Scripture.

Think about it. In every choice you make throughout the day you have options. Let's use a simple example of our daily commute to work. Just this week I was driving to town in the early morning hours to have breakfast with a friend. In my rearview mirror I suddenly became aware of a car that was riding my tail aggressively. The car seemed to be getting closer and closer and putting more and more pressure on me to speed up. This went on for a little while until the car finally found an opportunity and roared past me.

Now my old self was really wanting to rise up during that whole process. It really wanted to slow down and increase the frustration of the driver behind me. And when the car finally passed me, I felt like honking and turning my brights on. And there may be times when cars are driving so dangerously that you do need to send some type of message to them to get their attention. But I think it's safe to say that your new self isn't going to use your middle finger to do it. And in this day and age you might be taking your life in your own hands if you allow your old self to get involved in road rage.

This, of course, is a simplistic example, but one that still gives us a clear idea of the battle between our old self and our new self, and how it really comes down to making a simple choice to keep your old self dead on the ground and choosing instead to follow the ways of your new self which are so clearly outlined for us in the Word of God. We can, by the power of the Spirit within us, put on our new self each and every day in every choice we make.

III. YOUR NEW SELF HAS LOOKS AND ACTS LIKE JESUS CHRIST (EPHESIANS 4:24; ROMANS 13:14; COLOSSIANS 3:10-11)

The second point I'd like to make today in our journey to understand what it means to put on the new self, is that your new self looks and acts like Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:24 tells us that our new self has been created in the likeness of God. Our new self looks like God in its choices and actions and ways of thinking. And what is the best way to know what God is like? We know what He is like through His Word and especially through studying the life and actions of Jesus during the time He spent on this earth.

In John chapter 1 Jesus is referred to as the Word. Have you ever wondered what the significance of this title is? As I think about Jesus as the Word, what comes to mind for me is that Jesus in His life and actions showed us, in a way that we could completely understand, what God is like. He spoke a profound Word about God in everything He said and did. Before Jesus came we had quite a few ideas about what God was like from the Old Testament Scriptures. But when Jesus arrived on the earth, God Himself took on flesh and blood and showed us in a profoundly personal way to which we could completely relate, what He is like. He spoke a Word about God that forever deepened and expanded our knowledge about what He is like in the most practical of senses. Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." He said, "I and the Father are one."

Philip, the disciple, in John chapter 14 asked Jesus:

"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves."

If you want to know what your new self looks like, look no further than Jesus Christ. As we get to know Him through His Word and through our personal relationship with Him, we will see clearly what our new self looks like and be able to know without a doubt the right choices to make in each and every situation we face in life. And He will give us the power through His Spirit to choose His ways instead of the ways of our old self.

Paul reiterates this truth that our new self looks like Jesus Christ in Romans Chapter 13, verse 14, where he says:

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

When we are truly putting on the new self, we are putting on the Lord Jesus Christ because our new self has been created in His likeness. As we see areas in our lives that are inconsistent or out of step with Jesus Christ and who He is, we can know that our old self has a foothold in that area and invite God to come have His way there. That old and overused acronym, WWJD, actually has a lot of truth and value to it. Though it's been mocked and abused, we really do need to be asking in every choice we make, what would Jesus do and how can I, by the power of the Spirit, make the same choice that Jesus would?

Is that beyond the realm of possibility? Absolutely not! It's only beyond the realm of possibility when we continue to view it that way and excuse ourselves from following the instruction of God's Word and from believing that it can actually become a practical reality in our day-to-day lives. And if that's where you are, you're right where Satan wants you to be. And I don't know about you, but I don't want to be in step with Satan and his purposes. I want to be putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and living, in the most practical of practical ways, just the way He's calling me to live. Am I going to do it perfectly all the time? Certainly not! But I'm going to continue on in the journey, forgetting what lies behind and pressing on believing that God can and will change me over time and give me the ability to leave my old self behind and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. YOUR NEW SELF HAS BEEN CREATED FOR GOOD WORKS (EPHESIANS 2:10)

The third point I'd like to make today about our new self has to do with the purpose for which it was created. And we actually have a really clear statement in Scripture about the purpose for which our new self was created and it's found in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10. What we learn there is that our new self has been created for the specific purpose of good works. Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Our new self has been created by God Himself in Christ Jesus for a very clear purpose: that it would walk in good works. So as we think about putting on our new self and what that will look like, we can know that our new self is going to be guiding us into loving other people in practical and meaningful ways.

I love this verse because it gives a clear sense that God has a plan for each of our lives in Christ. It tells us that God has thought about each of us personally and prepared a specific set of good works that we will be really great at doing when we learn to put on the new self and walk by the power of the Spirit. When we do this each of us can be fruitful and effective and used powerfully by God to accomplish His purposes and express His love to a world that desperately needs it. There is not a person in this room who has come to new life in Christ who cannot be used powerfully and effectively by God. Don't ever let Satan convince you otherwise.

Do you have dreams and hopes for your children? What do you pray for in their lives and what do you hope God will accomplish in and through them as they walk through the days they're given? My prayer for my kids is that they will understand and know the deep and personal love God has for them and that God will set them apart for His purposes and guide them into a forever relationship with Him that will be able to withstand whatever life brings their way and make them like Christ in their character and in the choices they make.

And similar to how we each have dreams and hopes for our children, God Himself has a plan or a blueprint for each of our lives. His plan involves us delighting in Him and sharing our lives with Him. His plan also involves us walking in our new self by His power and being used powerfully by Him to show the world and each other what He is like, offering the hope found only in Christ to all those who cross our paths. But does that mean that we will each automatically walk in this plan that God has for us?...Definitely not. God gives us freedom and does not force us to live the way that He has designed us to live. As we discussed last week, we can resist Him even as true believers and never learn to effectively put on the new self and walk in those good works that He has prepared beforehand for us to walk in. He will be actively working to guide us onto the right path and get our attention and He may allow us to go through some really tough times if we're continuing to walk in our old self, but He will not force us to follow the ideal path He has set before us.

But one thing I can tell you with certainty today, and that is that God's plan is perfect and fulfilling and will make you fruitful and effective in Him when you choose it. I can also tell you that remaining in your old self is a recipe for

emptiness and frustration and it will bring tough consequences in your life, as well as serious harm to the effectiveness of the body of Christ.

A really great example of the contrast between following the will of God in our lives as opposed to the will of our old self is the exodus of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt. God's perfect will for the children of Israel was to powerfully lead them through the desert and into the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey, where He planned to pour out His blessings and show His glory to the world through His relationship with His chosen people. Now the Israelites could have chosen to put their full confidence and trust in the powerful God who had rescued them from slavery with 10 miraculous signs, who had opened up a path through the middle of the sea for them to escape from their enemies, who had given them daily food from heaven, who had caused water to pour out from a rock, who had shown Himself visibly to them daily as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, and who had given them victory after victory over armies that vastly outnumbered them.

But instead they continued to doubt God, they complained and complained and complained, they turned away from Him to worship a man-made idol, and when they were on the edge of the promised land they turned back in fear and refused to trust Him. And in doing this they refused to step into the perfect will of God and follow His one-year plan to get to the promised land, instead signing themselves up for the forty-year plan that involved all but two of them dying in the desert. They forfeited God's blessing for themselves and ended up wandering in the desert for their entire lives, leaving only their children to enter the beautiful promised land that God had waiting for them.

What a perfect illustration of the choice each of us has today and every day of our lives. We can agree with God and put aside our old self and its ways, allowing His Word to transform the way we think and live and guide us into the good works and fulfilling life He has planned for us. Or we can sign ourselves up for the 40 years in the desert plan, where we remain in our old self, complaining and thinking it's impossible to leave it behind, and experiencing the emptiness and frustration of a mediocre Christian life that does nothing to further the kingdom of God and show His glory to the world.

The choice is ours every day and we CAN choose God's way and the ways of our new self by the power of the Spirit. But beware that it's also within your power to keep yourself walking in the desert for your entire life.

V. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

So as we wrap up today, I want you to ask yourself: does my life look more like I'm wandering around in the desert, parched and dry and empty, or am I beginning to catch a glimpse of that beautiful promised land, flowing with milk and honey? Am I still holding tightly to my worn out pair of holey jeans or have I thrown them away and exchanged them for the beautiful new outfit Jesus Christ bought for me? When I look at my life and choices and conversation over the past week, does it bear any resemblance to Jesus Christ and His life and choices and conversation and priorities? Do I genuinely care about other people and am I showing that to them in practical ways?

As each of us asks these questions, I'm convinced that none of us will be able to say that we're exactly where we need to be in each of these areas. We're on a journey, aren't we, and we don't just wake up one day and become perfect for the rest of our lives. But what matters is that we are continually delighting ourselves in the Lord and that we are being honest with ourselves and recognizing those areas in our lives that are out of step with who God is calling us to be. And that when we recognize those areas where our old self is taking root, we repent of them and release them to God and ask Him to transform our minds so that we can finally strike them down with the sword of His Word and leave them dead on the ground.

The challenge I would like to leave with you today, and the truth that is central to enabling us to put on the new self, is that you would allow yourself to approach God and His Word with a heart attitude of belief... Belief that it's possible to live the way God has designed you to live... Belief that God can and will transform you when you come to Him humbly and ask Him to do it. I've heard so many times in my life that the Bible sounds great, but it's just not practical and possible to live that way in our day-to-day lives. Some people just say that outright... Others beat around the bush, but basically say the same thing...And still others don't say that with their words, but they show by their actions that they don't believe God's Word can really be lived consistently in a practical way.

Think about Abraham and what was so special about him. Was he perfect in all his choices and the way he lived his life? Definitely not. He made some really big mistakes in his life. But what set Him apart and allowed God to do some amazing and miraculous things in His life, was that He trusted God and believed that He could do whatever He promised to do. And because of that simple faith that resulted in his obedience, God credited him with righteousness. And still that is the essence of what God is calling each of us to do daily. He simply says, "Trust Me. Draw near to Me. Make Me your delight. Read My Word and believe that every word of it is true and applicable to your life. And let that belief lead you to live it out as you rely on the power of My Spirit within you." Let's be people that believe our God in every sense of the word!