

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

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I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Well if you've been around the last 2 weeks, you'll remember that we've been studying what it means to put on the new self, a concept that is shared with us by Paul in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 24. Today we'll wrap up this topic with "Putting on the New Self – Part III." And my prayer as we begin is that the Holy Spirit would open up our minds to understand in a practical way how we can do this consistently in every moment of every day.

Now in Parts I and II, we examined 7 important truths about putting on the new self. First we were learned that it's possible for a believer to not put the new self on. 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.

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 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 do each have a new self that has been created in Him and is ready for us to put on like clothes.

And this new self is not just a cleaned-up version of our old self. Instead it's completely new and different in substance. 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.

Fourth, we examined how our new self has been created in righteousness and holiness. This means that in Christ we are now complete and acceptable to God and righteous because of Christ. Our new self has also been set apart for God and His purposes, and the challenge for us now is to learn to walk in this new identity and righteousness by putting on our new self and through the Spirit putting to death the ways of our old self.

Fifth, we learned that our new self CAN simply be put on like a new set of clothes. We don't need to make it harder than it is. Putting on the new self 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 for us.

The sixth truth we examined in our study of putting on the new self is that your new self looks and acts like Jesus Christ. It has been created in the likeness of God. So if you want to know what your new self looks like and whether or not you're consistently putting it on, look no further than Jesus Christ. 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. What we really do need to be asking in every choice we make is what would Jesus do and how can I, by the power of the Spirit, make the same choice that Jesus would?

And finally last week, we ended by examining the purpose for which our new self has been created. We saw that our new self has been created for good works and that 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.

Then I ended last week by using the example of the children of Israel and their choice of the 40-years-in-the-desert plan over God's 1-year plan to walk them powerfully into the promised land, flowing with milk and honey... a plan that would have been completely possible had they simply trusted Him and learned to walk by faith in His power. And we saw that we are each faced with this same choice when it comes to putting on the new self. 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.

Now is there anyone here who can tell me the seven points again?! I just need to know if you were paying attention or if I've lost you already. Well, I won't subject any of you to that, but I'd least I've got your attention again.

So today as we wrap up this study on the new self, we're going to be getting really practical and looking at some tools and attitudes and strategies that God has given us to help us in putting on the new self. And today we won't really be in Ephesians, but instead will be looking at several other passages that help us understand how we can actually put on the self in our day-to-day lives.

The first passage we'll examine is in the book of Romans, chapter 6, so turn there in your Bibles if you would. We're going to start by reading verses 1 through 11:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

II. CONSIDER YOUR NEW SELF DEAD TO SIN, BUT ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS (ROMANS 6:11)

So this is a big passage with lots of deep truths we could spend weeks studying. But today I'm just going to summarize a few things for you and then share with you a key truth that we need to have a firm grasp on as we seek to put on the new self.

First we see that this passage addresses the issue of continuing to walk in our old selves. Paul asks the question: in light of salvation being by grace and not by works, should we just continue in sin so that even more grace can be poured out? And he answers this question with a resounding NO! He says, ***“May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”***

Sin is what got us into the mess we were in in the first place. Sin and the ways of our old self are what made Christ’s death on the cross necessary. That being the case, how could it make any sense that we would continue on in the sin out of which we were saved and rescued?... the sin which caused the wrath of God to be poured out on His one and only Son? Jesus didn’t rescue us so that we could just continue being the same old person walking in the same sinful and empty ways. He saved us so that we could walk in newness of life! Amen?!

In fact, when we placed our faith in Christ, we were placed into Him and our old self was actually crucified on the cross with Him. And this death of our old self is what gave us freedom from sin, because ***“he who has died is freed from sin.”*** News flash: we don’t have to be slaves to sin anymore. Our chains have hit the ground and we’re free to put on our new self. Our old self was put to death and we need to keep it there!

And the really great news is that even though our old self and who we used to be was put to death on the cross, God didn’t just leave us lying there dead. He raised us to new life just as Christ was resurrected from the dead... He created our new self in righteousness and holiness... a new self that no longer lives for itself, but rather lives to God and for His glory. And this newness of life begins NOW... the promise of an abundant life in Christ is a reality right now and not just something we get after our physical bodies die and we enter heaven.

We were not given new life so that we can just stay chained to our old self, waiting to die and finally enter eternal bliss. We were given new life so that right now we can have sweet fellowship with the living Christ and allow Him to guide and direct us into an abundant life unlike anything we’ve never known...
...Not a life where we get lots of money and all the worldly treasures we could want... but a life that is filled up with the power and presence of God Himself.

In light of these truths, Paul says in verse 11:

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

And this is the key attitude and belief that I would like you to get a firm grasp on as you consider how to put on your new self. Do you believe in your heart that you really are dead to sin and have the power by the Spirit to say no to it? Do you believe that you're truly alive and empowered by God to leave sin behind and walk in your new self?

The Greek word translated "consider" or "reckon" in some translations is a word that has to do with numerical calculation. The notes on this word in the Blue Letter Bible state: "This word deals with reality. If I reckon that my bank book has \$25 in it, it has \$25 in it. Otherwise I am deceiving myself. This word refers more to fact than supposition or opinion."

Now as an accountant this concept makes a lot of sense to me. The rules of math are really great because they don't change and you can rely on them and know that 1+1 is always going to equal 2. 9x9 will always come out to 81. Now at my current part-time accounting job we have an Excel spreadsheet that we prepare each month to break out all the details we need for the water and sewer billing payments, charges and credits, and that when prepared correctly computes the total balance of all our customer accounts as of the end of the month.

There is another report we have that prints directly out of our water and sewer billing system and it also shows the total balance of all our customer accounts as of the end of the month. And that's the total we can rely on since it comes directly out of the billing system. So if you've prepared your Excel spreadsheet correctly, the total at the bottom should always agree to the total on the billing system report. If it doesn't, you've made a mistake somewhere on your Excel spreadsheet.

But the funny thing is that when I was first training the staff to prepare the spreadsheet, inevitably they would get to the bottom and find that the numbers just didn't quite agree. They would then carefully check over their work and still come up with different numbers. And this often seemed to lead them to conclude that we have some kind of a weird problem.

However, I would reassure them that unless the rules of math have changed, we should still be able to get these two numbers to agree. And I was 100% certain that the rules of math hadn't changed and that if we carefully looked at the numbers we would find there was an error somewhere. And guess what? We always eventually found an error in the spreadsheet, that when corrected allowed both numbers to finally agree. Sometimes it just took a fresh pair of eyes to find the problem.

So as we think about this concept of considering ourselves to be dead to sin, we need to think of it in terms of the rules of math. In other words, the fact that we truly are now, at this very moment, dead to sin and able to leave our old self behind is a concrete reality and can be counted on just like we can count on the fact that $1+1$ is always going to equal 2. Do you feel like you're that convinced in your mind right now that you can leave sin and your old self behind? Isn't it so easy for us to doubt that we really can leave sinful areas in our lives behind?

Well, my friends, God is calling us out of that mindset where we've given sin control over us and think that we're just not able to let it go and break free. He is calling us instead to accept in our minds that we can right now walk away from sin because of the new life He's given us and the power of the Spirit that is available to us right now. And this new life He's given us is just as much a concrete reality as the rules of math and the fact that we are now dead to sin. Notice that Paul says that we are not only to consider ourselves to be dead to sin, but that we are also to consider ourselves to be alive to God in Christ Jesus. Do you believe that today?

If you're struggling to accept these facts as true in your life right now, start persistently asking God to change your mindset and give you the firm, rock solid conviction that you truly are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. And if you've never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, make sure you do it soon, because if you haven't you're still alive to sin and dead to God and will never be able to leave sin behind until you come to the new life that is found only through Christ. And if that's where you are please talk to me after the service or this week sometime and I'll guide you through a few simple Scriptures that will show you how to come to new life through Christ.

III. PRESENT YOURSELF TO GOD AS THOSE ALIVE FROM THE DEAD AND PRESENT THE PARTS OF YOUR BODY TO HIM TO BE USED FOR GOOD (ROMANS 6:13-23; ROMANS 12:1-2; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:15)

Now as we look a little further at this Romans passage, we discover the next important concept we need to understand as we learn to put on the new self. Let's read Romans chapter 6, verses 13 to 23:

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now I know that's a lot of Scripture to process in one reading. But the main concept I would like us to see here in relation to putting on the new self is that as we learn to walk into our new self, our mindset will change from our previous way of life where we offered the parts of our body to sin and to serving our own wants and desires, to a new way of life where we offer the parts of our body to God, allowing Him to use them for His purposes.

Think about this concept for a moment. In our old selves we were constantly offering the parts of our body to sin and to Satan's purposes whether we realized it or not. Think about that part of your body called your mouth. Let's imagine that before you came to Christ you had someone in your life who treated you very poorly and made you extremely angry. In response to what they did to you, you gave them a verbal beating, you talked to many others about how terrible that person was, and you spent a lot of time scheming ways to get back at them and repay them for what they'd done to you. In short, you offered your mouth to sin to be used for its purposes. You also offered your brain to be used for figuring out a way to take vengeance into your own hands. And you may have offered other parts of your body up as well if you actually went to the point of taking vengeance.

Now contrast that with what we're called to do in our new self. Instead of giving that person a verbal beating, you decide to offer your mouth to God and He empowers you to calmly and lovingly confront the person about the hurtful thing they did to you. And while that person may not accept responsibility for their actions, they will, at the very least, see a reflection of Christ in you, because you still treated them with respect and love and were willing to confront an issue rather than just being mad about it and lashing out in anger. You also offered your mouth to God when you decided that it was not productive to spend your time bad mouthing this person to other people. And you offered your mind to God when you handed the issue over to Him and left it in His hands, refusing to spend your time scheming ways to get revenge. You offered other parts of your body to God when you continued to treat this person with love and continued in relationship with them and even did nice things for them.

And this contrast between offering the parts of our body to sin versus offering them to God can be worked out in an infinite number of other areas in our lives, from sexual and other addictions to the ways we handle our money to how we spend our time and on and on and on. I'd like to encourage you to get in the habit of thinking about each situation in your life in these terms, considering how you can start offering the parts of your body to God instead of to the ways of your old self.

And before we move on from this Romans passage, I want you to also notice that key phrase in verse 13, “present yourselves to God.” This is another reminder that we can’t do this in our own strength. Instead we offer our bodies and our minds up to God, as those alive from the dead, and ask Him to use us for His purposes and enable us to choose His ways over the oh-so-natural-and-comfortable ways of our old self. We present ourselves to God. It’s only when we begin to offer ourselves to Him and ask Him to change us and mold us and make us like Christ that we finally begin to walk into our new selves.

This way of living is so beautifully described for us in that familiar passage found in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2:

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

This is true worship, when we offer our bodies up to God to be used for His purposes and allow Him to transform the way we think and live by His power and His Word, walking into our new self and into His perfect and fulfilling will.

IV. MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH (ROMANS 13:14)

Turn with me now in your Bibles a few pages to the right to Romans chapter 13, verse 14. Here we will find the final instruction I will share with you today that will help us put on the new set of clothes purchased for us by Jesus Christ. We touched on the first part of this verse last week, but today we’ll focus on the second half. Paul says here:

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

Last week we focused on the truth that as we put on our new self we are putting on Jesus Christ, because our new self was created in His likeness. Our new self will live and act like Jesus Christ. But today, I want you to notice the key truth

that goes hand-in-hand with putting on the new self: In order to put on our new self successfully we need to make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Now what does it mean to make provision for something? Well the Greek word translated “provision” here means forethought. So if we’re making provision for the flesh we’re thinking ahead of time about how we can meet its “needs” and making sure we provide opportunities for it to survive. Isn’t that an interesting idea? And when we think about sin in our lives isn’t that how we handle it? When we have deep rooted sin in our lives we hold tight to it and secretly protect it, because we believe it’s providing something for us we need in order to survive and cope with life. In our hearts we don’t think we can face life without having the opportunity to participate in this sin from time to time.

We justify it by telling ourselves, “That’s just the way I am,” or, “I’ve just been hurt too much and had too hard of a life to be able to leave this behind...It’s my only comfort in life and it’s really not that big of a deal. I mean, compared to some of the terrible people in the world, I look pretty darn good.” In doing this we’re making provision for the flesh...we’re justifying our need for it and making sure we don’t eliminate opportunities to participate in it.

A great example of this was in the movie, “Courageous.” In the movie Kirk Cameron was a firefighter who had let pornography take root in his life and it was destroying his marriage. He was so attached to it that he just couldn’t let it go even though he was about to lose his wife over it. The only way he was finally able to get it out of his life was when his computer was destroyed and removed from his house. The availability of pornography on the internet was just too much to resist and by keeping his computer he was making provision for the flesh. He was keeping that opportunity available for himself and allowing the thing that repeatedly caused him to fall into sin to remain accessible in his own home.

To make no provision for the flesh is to do whatever it takes to eliminate or avoid those situations that draw you irresistibly back into that sin area in your life. We need to stop planning how we can keep the option of returning to our sin available to us in case we need it, and instead start actively planning how we can avoid the situations that tend to cause it to arise. And uprooting these ingrained areas of sin in our lives takes some serious prayer and seeking of God, because unfortunately we can’t eliminate all things from our lives that lead us into sin.

Sometimes it's our relationships with certain other people or own internal weaknesses that tend to lead us repeatedly into sin. So to remove all opportunities for sin, would be to remove ourselves and all other people from the picture.

My sister-in-law, Kim, has a funny thing she likes to say that relates to this. She says, "Ministry would be so easy if weren't for all the people." The fact is we need to learn to operate effectively and graciously in relation to all the people we come into contact with and if our sin struggle arises out of how we relate to other people, God can and will give us the victory as we seek Him and trust Him... As we present the parts of our bodies to Him and ask Him to get to work on us. Isolating ourselves will not solve the problem and will really just make it worse, because we'll have lots of time to sit around and think and feel sorry for ourselves... As a good song says, "There's a problem with the world, and the problem with the world is me."

V. A BEAUTIFUL NEW YOU (COLOSSIANS 3:12-17)

So as we review what we've learned today about the new self, we see again that putting it on is always tied in with heart belief and trust in God and complete moment-by-moment dependence on Him: 1) Belief in the concrete fact that we truly are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. We're chained to sin no longer and have the power by the Spirit to leave it behind; 2) Belief that as we daily present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead and the parts of our body to be used by Him, He will honor that request and begin changing us and using us for His glory; and 3) Belief that Jesus Christ is all I need and could ever want and that I don't need to plan ahead for how I'm going to meet my needs apart from Him by continuing to make provision for my old self and its ways. He has so much more for us than sin could ever offer and instead of the death that sin brings, He promises life and life abundantly.

So as we close today, I want to leave you with a picture of the beautiful new you that is waiting and ready for you to put on like clothes. This picture is found for us in Colossians 3, verses 12 to 17, a passage which we briefly looked at in a previous message and which I encouraged each of you to meditate on. This passage gives us a concise overview of what the practical daily life of someone walking in the new self looks like.

The doubters will say that this way of living is not practically possible and will excuse themselves from ever trying to walk this way. But those with a heart of belief will see it as within the realm of possibility and a way of life that God is truly leading them into as they walk more and more closely with Him.

Let's read it and allow God, as we close today, to give us a vision of where He is committed to leading us when we're ready to get in step with Him and allow Him to have His way in every area of our lives:

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Do you believe today that you can walk this way by the power of the Spirit as you offer your body to God as a person alive from the dead and allow Him to guide and direct each moment of your life? God's ready for you when you're ready to go further on the journey with Him. And you won't be disappointed when you do.