

Put off, Put On

(CAP Sermon dated 03 03 2019)

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Scripture: Ephesians

I've been looking at the letter of Ephesians that Paul wrote and just thought of some of the truths that are in this particular letter and I would offer it to you as well. It's a good letter to peruse during this period of lent. The prison epistles as they are called but which have great truth.

Paul in this is talking about God's purpose that God is trying to create a single new world order through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to invite the whole church and creation under God's leadership, under Christ's headship and to usher in a period of unity and end to division, discrimination and the beginning of oneness and equality and all of those beautiful things that we get through the promise of God and there are four themes that go through the Epistle of Ephesians—we have the theme of unity, then we have diversity and then purity and harmony. Each of these four get worked out—

1. Unity in their Christian fellowship
2. Diversity in their gifts and ministries
3. Purity in their walk
4. Harmony in their homes.

Even as I begin to start talking about Ephesians I want you to move it away from them to us to be able to look at ourselves and say,

“What is the unity that I need in the fellowship of Christian believers that we are a part of? “

What is the diversity in the gifts that I have that needs to be used in and through their different ministries.

What is the purity that I must have in my walk with God? Am I seeking after purity?

What is the harmony that I must have in the hope? Is that present?

Then, as Paul looks at these four themes and says “Be aware that while God wants these themes to be opened up unto our lives, Satan also wants them to be diminished in our lives. So where there is unity he comes to sow cords of discord and bring disunity and where there is diversity among the gifts he brings jealousy and so brings down the value of the gifts and where there is purity he brings in just the things of the flesh that can take away what is spiritual and make it so mundane and ordinary and crude and then with the harmony that we must have he begins to sow discord.

To be able to recognize that these are schemes of the evil one and that if we find ourselves caught in any these to recognize them. Satan is using us in these areas to bring down the church that Jesus gave His life for. So we need to look carefully at the things that we are engaged in to be able to know whether we are a tool in Satan’s hand or not.

Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones wrote this and he said: “I am certain that one of the main causes of the ill state of the Church today is the fact that the devil is being forgotten. All is attributed to us; we have all become so psychological in our attitude and thinking. We are ignorant of this great objective fact, the being, the existence of the devil, the adversary, the accuser, and his fiery darts.”

Somehow, we’ve left Him out of the equation and then we wonder why we are going through this kind of a time in our lives, so I want us to look at what he says to us and today I would like for us to just focus on the fourth chapter verse 17 down till verse 29.

Ephesians 4:17-29 where he is talking about holiness and it’s actually right down to the 21st verse in chapter 5 but he talks about putting off the old self, putting on the new self, not grieving the Holy Spirit, walking as children of light and then being filled with the Spirit. All of these, these five conditions become necessary for us to walk in holiness before the Lord, but I am just going to look at these two areas from verse 17 to 29, if you will read with me.

“¹⁷ So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. ²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²² 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, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

²⁵ Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ BE ANGRY, AND *yet* DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸ He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need. ²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

Two things that Paul is talking about in this passage, he says there should be a putting off of the old self and then a putting on of the new self so there's something that you put-off and something that you put-on if we are to peruse holiness in our lives.

What are the things that we need to put off. He outlines them in 4:17-22. He says futile thinking— futility of the mind. Vain exercises of the mind, ignorance of what is good and right and perfect and then a hardness of their hearts or becoming callous, then indulging in the sexual things— things that will draw you into the lust of the flesh.

As we look at this, I think it's a good kind of preview to the Lenten time that we are going to spend as we look at ourselves and say, Lord, what are things that have crept into my life? What are things that have crept into my heart that I have carried along side of me and not gotten rid off? How is it that it's still with me and as we look at this period of forty days, this may be a good time to engage and say Lord, “Here's an area, I didn't think I had, I didn't think I had hardness of heart or a calloused heart. I didn't think that I had grown bitter. I didn't think that there was no way to speak into my life. I didn't realize I had become so callous towards your Word.

Lord, I'm a Christian. I'm a disciple of yours, yet Lord, how is it that your Word has no meaning for me? How is it that the things that are written in your Word, don't seem to inspire me? How is it that I am walking alongside of things that are sinful? Things that are not good. How did this happen? And Paul is saying these are the things that you need to put off if you have to peruse a life of holiness, then put away these things, put away the hardness. Ask the Lord to come and soften your heart. Make it more malleable to the molding of His hands. Sometimes hardness and callous hearts come from various places. Sometimes we are responsible for it, sometimes we're not and we just had some kind of injustice placed upon our hearts and we've rebelled against it, and we say, this is not right and so there's a part of us hard and we say, I won't in any way think about justice in that particular way as God sees us and then we become bitter then very soon that area begins to be a landing ground for Satan because anything that is not in the light is open to darkness and darkness is where Satan operates.

So we need to be so careful about the things that we allow into our lives— things that can allow Satan to manipulate us.

Put off he says, these things. Then he says in verses 23 to 29. “Put on the new self.” What is the new self? To be renewed in the Spirit of your mind. To allow God to come and replenish, refine your thinking as Philippians 4:6 would say, what so things that are good and pure and noble and excellent, praise worthy and worth looking at. Think on these things, to be able to renew our minds in such a way that there’s a filter that just stands there and says, that doesn’t cross there and come and sit in my mind. It doesn’t cross that eight-fold grid that we have in the bible. I will not allow to come and rest and capture my thinking— to be able to renew our minds, to lay aside falsehood not embrace it. I was reading the newspaper probably ten days ago now and I read a news item that said in France from this year onwards students who are entering school will not be able to tick the boxes that say, “mother” or “father” those two boxes will be removed instead it will say “parent one” “parent two” no more mother no more father. It grieved me so much because God instituted motherhood and fatherhood, did He not? And it has been taken out of the equation.

Ten years from now there will be a generation that will not know what mother means or what father means they will just know what “parent one” and “parent two” means. We have bought into that situation because we bought into a lie early on. Paul is saying, when you put on the new self and self must be devoid of this kind of falsehood—these kind of lies. He says; speak truth with your neighbors. And he says, be angry but do not sin. Don’t let the sun go down on your anger. We have looked at that before that anger is an emotion that God has given us. God has given us the ability to be angry about things that would make us angry—injustice.

But here’s what makes it sin or not sin. It’s what we do with that emotion. What’s the behavior that is associated with that emotion that will one day say whether this is sin or not. What kind of behavior? When you get angry, do you abuse? When you get angry, do you throw things? Do you diminish people? What do you do to the person who is facing your anger? Hear me clearly, don’t take this lightly, and watch the behavior that is associated with that emotion because that will determine whether you have sinned or not sinned.

Then he says don’t steal, don’t take what is not yours, and watch your speech, don’t let any unwholesome words cross your lips. This is what we need to put on. We need to put on good talk. We need to stay away from crude coarse talk— jokes as he would say later on. That’s what we need to put on, that our conversation would be so edified. Put off he says and then put on. But as I said earlier there’s a battle because just as you try to start putting off and putting on, Satan is going to come against you and try to make sure that you fall in this area. Paul would say, in chapter 6:10: Finally, being strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might, he says, God has given us a way to handle this and it’s at His strength and His might.

Then he goes on and says, “Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil for your struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Because of this he says; therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything— stand firm.

Then he starts verse 14 with “Stand firm.” Notice how many times he says, “Stand firm”. In pilgrim’s progress Bunyan says to the pilgrim, “Remember that there is no armor piece behind you, there’s nothing protecting your back so don’t ever turn and run.” Stand firm he says, and face the evil one, then you will be able to resist in the evil day. How do we do it? What kind of armor is he talking about? There are six pieces that he has placed before us and I’d like for us just to look at 3 pieces today, those three pieces are pieces that the bible says that we already need to have in place before we enter the battle. This should already be part of who you are.

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Having put these things on already, then you are ready he says to take up the shield of faith, take up the helmet of salvation and take up the sword of the Spirit but these three things he says, must already be part of who you are. What are those three things?

1. The belt of truth: what is the belt of truth? Truth is what is right, isn’t it? What is true and for that you need to ask the question what are truth claims in my life? What are truth claims in your life? What are things you can say, this is a truth claim and nothing or anything that anybody says will diminish this claim.

What is the truth claim – **Jesus is the Son of God**? Let’s just bring it home a little bit more. What other truth claim would you say? **I am made in the image of God**. Is that a truth claim for you? Is it a truth claim for me? Because you really bought into the fact that you are made in the image of God, then nothing that anybody says to you or about you will ever diminish what you think and who you think you are. If you truly believe that you are made in the image of God nothing that anybody says to you will diminish who you think you are.

Is that a truth claim that I am made in the very image of God. Job would say I know that my Redeemer lives. That was his truth claim, a truth claim that in the midst of all kinds of problems that were happening to him. Everything that he had was taken away. Those of you who read Job know that it was the cosmic battle that was going on between God and Satan. Satan was saying, “of course, he will continue to honor you because you bless him.” God says, “No, take away the blessing and he will still worship me and that’s what

happened to Job. Everything was taken away from him and in the midst of this he says, I know that my Redeemer lives!

I ask you this morning; some of you are going through difficult, difficult situations. Is this a truth claim in your life? Or have you begun to question whether your Redeemer lives. Whether God is really working on my behalf, is He really living or has he gone off on a hiatus, taken a vacation. Can you say with that kind of certainty—I know that my Redeemer lives and as long as long as He lives, He will walk with me through the valley of dark shadows. All His claims are true.

“I will never leave you.”

“I will never forsake you.”

“My grace is sufficient for you.”

Are these your truth claims, beloved?

Ephesians 2:10 says: “I am God’s workmanship.” Ever thought of yourself as God’s workmanship— looked into the mirror and said, “My goodness, God made me! He did me good! Or do you look at the mirror and say, “My goodness, what a loser; I wish I could be somebody else.” God’s workmanship, God made you phenomenal; I am a new creation (Romans 6) the old has passed away, behold new things... Is that a truth claim in your life? Are you able to say, I am a new creation.

We often look and say, that’s what baptism means, isn’t it? That you remember that going down and then coming up and say, “I am a new creation, the old has passed away, behold new things are in store for me. I am loved of God.” Do you know that? Is that a truth claim? For nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. The bible gives a whole list of things. Nothing can separate us! Do you believe that this morning? For those of you who are going through a difficult time not being loved by people around you, do you know that God’s love for you will never ever cease. Never! That’s the kind of belt that you need to have on, that you have already put on, that you have your own set of truth claims.

2. The second piece is the breastplate of righteousness. He is not talking here about the righteousness that God sees when He looks at us, when He allows us access into His presence; at that point God sees the righteousness of His Son which is an imputed righteousness, which is the righteousness of Jesus upon us that allows us to come before the throne room of grace. It’s not that. It’s about the righteous living about our behavior.

Is our behavior consistent with being a Christian? Do I try to do the things that are right, and good and honest before God? Do we submit to each other out of reverence to Christ? So often the submission word is used in only one context isn't it? (Pastor smiling) and I know you men will quote it right back without hesitation. (Where is that let me find that, you dare disagree with me... where is that verse about submission) and yet long before it talks about husbands and wives it says submit to one another out of reverence to Christ. Do you know that? Submit to one other out of reverence. Do we submit to each other? It's like a part of our behavior? Is there unity in the body or are we causing disunity by the things that we do—bringing discord in the church. Are the gifts being used? Are we using the Spiritual gifts that God has given us?

I keep saying this and I will say it again. If you are a member of CAP and are not using your gifts then the church is limping, the church isn't fulfilling the potential that God has for it, if you are not using your Spiritual gifts in the context of the church. You've got to because that's how it builds up the body. It's like greed—sensuality. Are you able to live a life that showcases God or are you living a life of the flesh? Your behavior, your dressing, your speaking does it honor God? You need to put on the breastplate of righteousness. That's the kind of righteousness that we need to have that we already have put them on.

3. The Gospel of peace: Shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. God has made peace with man through Christ. God's anger and sin was assuaged by the death of Jesus and so once again there is harmony between God and man, And I say that to married men and women, Paul is saying with that in place, that reconciliation has that happened, do you have the gospel of peace?

Romans 5:1 says having been justified by faith, we now have peace with God. So having taken that step, God gives us His peace. Are we holding on to that peace? It is interesting that he talks about peace in the context of shoes.

There used to be a song that says, "those boots are made for walking" it's a good analogy...boots were not meant to stand in the same place, we wear them and we move which means we take the gospel of peace with us. Do we offer it to people around us? Are they aware of the gospel of peace? It's such a nice thing and I think about it. God's love towards us is manifested to us in and through Jesus. Then why would you not let people know about it, that they can experience peace and joy and hope and love and eternity. Beautiful things, that are all part of the gospel that we take but all three of these, Paul says, having put on— truth, righteousness and peace, these three components must already be in place.

So I ask you as I ask myself, are they in place in my life, in your life? Are you making sure that Satan can't get through to you? Making sure that when you want to put off things, that you are able to do that and Satan does not win that battle—that you are able to put on what we are expected to put on?

As we enter this period of spiritual renewal it will be a good thing for us to ask ourselves the hard questions—ask ourselves about truth and righteousness and peace. Is there place in my life or somewhere on the way has it got corroded and left behind and that's why I like this period where we can ask the hard questions.

We come on Wednesdays and with intentionality saying Lord, I am here. Maybe, I've not seen who I've become but would you put on the spotlight on me and show me so that I can change and invite the Holy Spirit to do more, going to a time of fasting and prayers. I have said this before, fasting is not an end in itself, and it's not taking off something for forty days for its not going to get you anything.

Fasting is a means to an end. It's when you miss that thing that you are fasting from that you turn around and say, "Lord I will take that reminder to turn to you." Fasting must always point to God. Just saying, I'll stay off meat for forty days and then at the end of it having a feast on Easter, doesn't mean anything for your spiritual life. You may cut down a little bit on weight but if the absence of meat doesn't turn you towards God in more real ways, to make you more spiritually discerning then that fasting has not been of use. Whatever you are fasting from must turn you towards God. So look at this time and say, I will fast for the salvation of somebody I know. I'll give up this and every time I think about it I will pray for this person that's how it must be. So beloved, let's look at this season and say Lord, I want to let everything that you have for me and want to do in me, I want it to happen, I give you permission Lord, because ultimately it's an act of our will, I give you permission. Come and start doing things in my life. So there'll be just a glorious resurrection Sunday that I can be a part of, and I say Lord You've done a wonderful renewal work in me. Amen!

Our Father, we are so thankful for your Word. Thankful that you continue to require us to move in a sanctified manner Lord that you want us to seek after holiness and righteousness. Lord, we want to submit to you, and say Lord, would you do a work in us, would reach into the deepest corners of our hearts and dredge up those things that we have long forgotten or decided to forget and not deal with them. Bring them up to the top Master, and help us to yield during this time. Lord, as we come to the table this morning help us to submit ourselves to you in fresh new ways, that even as we partake of the bread and juice that we would be reminded Lord, that we have such access to you that we can come boldly before you, and that's what the brokenness, the

broken bread reminds us of. Lord, the juice reminds us that however dark and stained our lives maybe because of sin that you can forgive and cleanse. So Lord, help us to come boldly with a sense of openness and allow you to do the renewing work in us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
