

“How to Put on the New Self”

August 11, 2024

Ephesians 4:25-32

I. Introduction

In the verses leading up to today’s Scripture, Paul wrote about the principles of being a Christian. He finished up in [verse 24](#) by writing: “**put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**” But rather than going on, Paul took time to explain how to apply these principles to different areas of a person’s life, i.e., “How to Put on the New Self.”

The only reliable evidence of a person’s being a child of God, i.e., being a Christian, isn’t a past experience of receiving Christ or being baptized or even joining a church. The proof of being a Christian is a life that reflects Jesus Christ. We might say, “*Actions speak louder than words.*” In [Matthew 7:20](#) Jesus said, “**By their fruit you will recognize them.**” In [1 John 2:4](#) the Apostle John wrote, “**The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**” God is not gradually making new creations out of believers; believers are those whom He has already made new creations. In [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) Paul wrote, “**If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**” Paul didn’t write “*He is becoming a new creation,*” but that “**He IS a new creation.**” And new creatures should act like new creatures. Christians are not robots who react automatically to divine impulses. Although God makes us new creatures, He commands us in the strength of the Spirit to subdue our old nature. [Romans 12:2](#) says, “**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**” Christians are not to allow the world to twist them or squeeze them into one of its creatures; we are to offer our bodies to be melted, molded, filled, and used by the Holy Spirit. In today’s Scripture, Paul named five common sins and then told Christians to avoid them and why.

II. Five Sins to Avoid

A. Lying The first sin to avoid is *lying*. Paul wrote, “**Put off falsehood.**” A lie is a statement that is contrary to fact, spoken with the intent to deceive. Lying includes more than simply telling direct lies or falsehoods. It also includes exaggeration—embellishing something that is true. Cheating in school or

cheating on income tax returns is a form of lying. Making foolish promises, betraying a confidence, flattery, and making excuses are all forms of lying. Paul wrote to put away all of this.

A believer can fall into lying just as he can fall into any other sin. But, if a person's life is characterized by a continual flow of lies that come from a heart that seeks to deceive, such a person needs to question who his spiritual father really is. The person who continually lies as a regular part of his daily life shows himself to be a child of Satan and not of God. In [John 8:44](#), when talking to those who were about to try to stone Him, Jesus said, **“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”** Satan lies about everything, and so do his children.

The Christian should have no part in any kind of lying. For Christians, truth is not a choice; truth is a necessity. Just as one takes off a coat, the Christian needs to **“put off falsehood”** so that he can do the righteous work of the Lord. Jesus is **“The Way, the Truth and the Life,”** ([John 14:6](#)). In [John 14:17](#) the Holy Spirit is called **“the Spirit of truth”** and in [John 17:17](#) God's **“Word is truth.”** When a person becomes a believer, he leaves the domain of falsehoods and lies and moves into the domain of truth.

Paul wrote the reason Christians are to tell the truth is that they belong to each other in Christ. We are to speak truth to everyone and in every situation, but we have a special motive to be truthful to other believers. We are fellow members of Christ's body, the church, and therefore members of one body.

Our physical bodies cannot function properly or safely if each member doesn't correctly communicate to the others. If one's brain were to give false signals to one's feet, he could stumble or walk in front of a moving truck instead of stopping at the curb. If it falsely reported hot and cold, one could freeze to death because he felt too warm or be scalded in a hot shower while feeling chilly. If the nerves in our hands and feet failed to tell our brain that injury was occurring, our foot could be mangled, or our fingers burned without knowing it.

Similarly, Christ's body—the church cannot function properly if its members shade the truth with one another or fail to work together honestly and lovingly. We cannot effectively minister to each other or with each other if we do not speak “[the truth in love](#)” ([Ephesians 4:15](#)). We would be like a brain that doesn’t function correctly.

B. Anger The second sin to avoid is *anger*. Anger is a revengeful passion or emotion against someone or something that displeases us. No one can make us feel anger; it is a choice that an individual makes. In itself, anger is not necessarily a sin. Jesus got angry. [Turn to Mark 3:1-6.](#) Anger can be good or bad, depending on motive and purpose.

Anger that is unselfish and based on love for God or concern for others not only is permissible but is commanded. [Psalm 97:10](#) says, “[Let those who love the LORD hate evil.](#)” [Romans 12:9](#) says, “[Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.](#)” Like Jesus’ anger in the temple when He drove out the money changers or here in Mark 3, genuine love of God or love of others cannot help being angered at that which injures the object of that love. Like Jesus, believers should be angry at sin but loving towards people.

On the other hand, anger that is sin is anger that is self-defensive and self-serving. It is resentful of what is done against oneself. In [Matthew 5:21-22](#), Jesus said that such anger is the first step to murder. Anger that is selfish, undisciplined, and vindictive is sinful and has no place even temporarily in the Christian life.

Christians must be careful even with righteous anger; that is why Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 13:5](#) that “[Love is not easily angered.](#)” Even righteous anger can become an opening for Satan’s attacks. [Turn to James 1:19-20.](#) Even the most righteous anger can ferment and turn into bitterness, resentment, and self-righteousness. Any anger can lead to sin, so Paul said, “[Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.](#)” Anger that is held on to—taken to bed, so to speak—is likely to give the devil an opportunity to use it for his purposes. A smoldering anger can lead to self-pity, pride, vengeance, defense of our rights, and every other sort of selfish sin. [Matthew 18:15](#) says, “[If your brother sins against you, go and show him his](#)

fault, just between the two of you.” Christians must deal with the issue and then be done with it—denying Satan a foothold of attack.

C. Stealing Paul’s third command is to “steal no longer.” The 3rd sin to avoid is *stealing*. There are many ways to steal—taking what doesn’t belong to a person. No one is completely free from the temptation to steal—just look at the growth in shoplifting, often by people with money to buy the item, or the amount of time people spend on personal email, texting, Facebooking or other social media sites while they are at work.

In Paul’s day stealing was a particular sin of slaves. Usually, slaves were not well cared for and were always in need and the law gave them almost no protection. Writing to Titus in [Titus 2:9-10](#) Paul wrote, “Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, . . . teach them not to steal from their masters, but to show that they can be fully trusted.” But here in Ephesians 4, Paul is writing to all Christians in the Ephesian church—to those who were gainfully employed as well as to those who were slaves. Stealing is selfish and sinful. One of the Ten Commandments says, “[You shall not steal](#)” ([Exodus 20:15](#)).

At the same time, Paul gave meaning to Christian labor. Working with one’s own hands in honest labor is good, but, like everything else, depending on motive, even a good thing can be done with a sinful result. The believer isn’t to work to get rich for his own selfish ends but in order that he can help others. Like every part of his life, a Christian’s occupation—directly or indirectly—should, above all else, be a way of serving God and others. That’s why [Colossians 3:23](#) says, “[Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.](#)” A Christian’s occupation should be a means of service to God and to others.

D. Unwholesome Talk Paul wrote that a fourth sin to avoid is “[unwholesome talk](#).” Someone has written, “*Of all deeds, words are the most revealing.*” Jesus said in [Matthew 12:34](#), “[For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks,](#)” i.e., your words show what is in your heart. A change in speech is expected when a person becomes a Christian. Foul language should never come from the mouth of a Christian; it is totally alien to his new heart. Off-color jokes, profanity, dirty stories, vulgarity, and every

other form of corrupt talk should never cross a Christian's lips. Unwholesome language should be as repulsive to a Christian as a rotten apple or a spoiled piece of meat.

Talk is not cheap; words are powerful. They can cause a long-lasting hurt. Paul gave 3 characteristics of wholesome speech. First, instead of tearing down others, the speech of a Christian should build others up. Second, everything that is said is appropriate according to the need at hand. That is, the speech of a Christian should be fitting for the situation. [Proverbs 25:11](#) says, “**A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.**” And third, it should benefit those who listen. The words of a Christian should bring strength and comfort to those in need and should draw others to Christ.

Unwholesome speech doesn't just hurt those around the speaker, Paul wrote that it also grieves the Holy Spirit. All sin is painful to God, but sin in His children breaks His heart. When His children refuse to change the ways of the old life for the ways of the new, God grieves. The Holy Spirit mourns when He sees Christians lying instead of telling the truth, becoming unrighteously angry, stealing instead of sharing, and speaking corrupt destructive words instead of uplifting and gracious words. How can we grieve the One who lives in our hearts and is our Helper, Comforter, Teacher, and guarantee of our eternal redemption?

The Holy Spirit cannot leave us, because He has sealed us until that day when Christ returns to take us home. We do not lose our salvation because of our sinful attitudes, but we certainly lose the joy of our salvation and the fullness of the Spirit's blessing. [1 Thess. 5:19](#) warns, **Do not put out the Spirit's fire.**”

E. Bitterness Finally, Paul wrote, “**Get rid of all bitterness,**” i.e., avoid bitterness. Bitterness refers to a smoldering resentment, a seething, grudge-filled attitude. Such an attitude poisons the whole inner man. Someone does something you do not like and instead of getting angry and exploding, you nurse ill-will towards them. This growing passion sooner or later leads to an explosion of emotion in anger or even rage—perhaps in an outburst of hateful, evil words or even in a physical attack. Bitterness and anger, often over trivial things, make havoc in homes, churches, and friendships. When an unbeliever sees Christians acting just like the rest of society, the church and Christianity are blemished in his eyes, and he is confirmed still further in resisting the claims of the gospel.

In place of bitterness and the rest of the accompanying vices, Paul wrote, “Be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” These are the blessings God has shown us and they are the gracious virtues we are to show others. God did not love us, choose us, and redeem us because we were so deserving, but purely because He is gracious. Turn to Romans 5:6-8. If God can be gracious to us and can forgive us while we are sinners, how much more should we be kind, tender hearted and forgiving to fellow sinners?

On the other hand, if one is unable or unwilling to forgive others, bitterness will result. An unforgiving spirit will open one to the attacks of the devil, and before long it becomes the Christian’s battleground. If someone hurts us, either deliberately or accidentally, and we do not forgive him, then we begin to develop bitterness within, which hardens the heart to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

If in His gracious kindness God has forgiven us, we should—we must forgive others. We do not forgive for our sake or even for their sake, but for Jesus’ sake. Learning how to forgive and forget is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life.

III. Conclusion

So, what does all this mean? Through Jesus Christ, we have been raised from the dead and the old way of life to a new way. We are a new creation, and we must act like it. We need to avoid lying, seething anger, stealing, unwholesome talk, and growing bitterness so that Satan cannot get a foothold in our lives or our testimonies. Instead, we need to share with others, love one another, and build each other up. Then we won’t grieve the Holy Spirit. Paul’s letter to the Colossians is a good summary of what we see here in Ephesians 4. Turn to Colossians 3:1-17. Joshua’s challenge to the Israelites in Joshua 24:15 is appropriate here: “If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day who you will serve...But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Considering all God has done for you, choose to put on the New Self and live a life pleasing to God.