

Sermon 17: Living a Christ-centered Life: Ephesians 4:23-32

Text: Ephesians 4:23-32 "But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you..."

Introduction:

- **The basics of the Christian life**
 - We need to grow as disciples of Christ.
 - God gave the church for our edification and spiritual growth.
 - We must put off the old.
 - We must put on the new man.
 - We must be renewed in our minds.
- **The basis for that daily duty:** We have been united to Christ and have a new identity in Him.

Truth 1: New life in Christ calls us to walk in the light: 4:25

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another..."

- **Put off the old:** "Wherefore putting away lying..."
 - **Dishonesty is a way of life for many people.**
 - Lying
 - Exaggerating
 - Selective information
 - Putting on a front
 - **Dishonesty is destructive for the following reasons:**
 - It skews our perception of reality, desensitizes our consciences, and creates entangling circumstances.
 - It undermines our ability to make informed decisions.

- It fractures relationships and creates barriers for two reasons:
 - It is irresponsible to give trust when it has been violated.
 - It is nearly impossible to restore trust once it has been broken.
 - Relationships break down when people are dishonest.
- **Put on the new:** "Speak every man truth with his neighbour..."
 - Know what is true.
 - Communicate what is true and necessary.
 - Promote healthy thinking, judgment, and relationships by speaking the truth.
- **Be renewed in the spirit of your mind:** "For we are members one of another..."
 - God created the body to work together in harmony.
 - We are mutually dependent upon one another.
 - Transparency must be maintained for the body to be healthy.

Truth 2: New life in Christ calls us to be righteous in our reaction to injustice: 4:26-27 "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil..."

- **Put off the old:** "Be ye angry, and sin not..."
 - **Anger is the natural human response to injustice.**
 - **It is a powerful motivator and can be channeled for good or for evil.**
 - **This verb is passive, meaning that anger is a reaction more than a choice.**
 - **The choice is what we do with the anger response.**
 - **In our flesh we tend to channel this natural response into sinful actions.**
 - **Revenge:** Seeking to right wrongs in an unjust or unauthorized way.
 - **Bitterness:** Internalizing hurt rather than processing it in a healthy way or failing to take action in a productive timely manner.
 - **Demearing insults:** Uncontrolled and often irrational uses of our words toward others.
 - **Deception or gossip:**
 - Sometimes a deliberate attempt to undermine others.
 - Sometimes an irresponsible way to release internalized tension.
 - **Excessive force:** Blowing injustice out of proportion.
- **Put on the new:** "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath..."

- **Not sinful action:** Do not channel that emotion in a sinful way.
- **Not sinful inaction:**
 - Do not wallow in it.
 - Do not bury or internalize it
- **Deal with your anger immediately in a righteous way:**
 - Take decisive, productive action.
 - Take it to God and roll it on Him.
 - Appeal to appropriate human authorities.
 - Go to the one who has wronged you in a constructive way.
 - Take responsibility for your duties or contributions to the issue.
- **Be renewed in the spirit of your mind:** "Neither give place to the devil..."
 - **Satan uses our anger to disrupt our lives and the lives of others: Hebrews 12:14-15** "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled..."
 - **Destructive in our lives:** "Trouble you..."
 - **Destructive in the lives of others:** "Thereby many be defiled..."
 - **Destructive in our interpersonal contexts:**
 - Family
 - Work
 - Church

Truth 3: New life in Christ calls us to value the dignity of labor and the laborer: 4:28 "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth..."

- **Put off the old:** "Let him that stole steal no more..."
 - It undermines productivity.
 - It demeans honest labor.
 - It uses God-given tools for evil rather than good.
 - It objectifies and demeans people.
- **Put on the new:** "But rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good..."
 - Rather than stealing, we must channel our energy into constructive, honorable labor.
 - We were created to be industrious and bless others by our work.
 - Honest work channels our God-given abilities into blessing others as we provide goods and services that they need.

- Just compensation blesses the laborer by providing the resources needed to care for oneself and dependents.
- When people are industrious and just in their work, everyone is benefitted and God is glorified.
- **Be renewed in the spirit of your mind:** "That he may have to give to him that needeth..."
 - God created us to be industrious.
 - Hard work and good financial choices will create a situation where we can bless those in need.
 - Rather than demeaning others through theft, we should bless them through a Christ-honoring work ethic.

Truth 4: New life in Christ calls us to transformed communication:

4:29-30 "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption..."

- **Put off the old:** "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth..."
 - Corrupt communication is speech that is rotten, worthless, and corrupt.
 - It could be communicating a twisted view of God's good gifts.
 - It could be demeaning of other people.
 - It is language that promotes corruption rather than edification.
 - It is a wasteful, destructive use of God's good gift of speech.
- **Put on the new:** "But that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers..."
 - **Good:**
 - This is more than neutral.
 - It is useful, honorable, and excellent.
 - **Edifying:** This builds up and equips lives.
 - **Promoting grace:**
- **Be renewed in the spirit of your mind:** "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption..."
 - **Corrupt communication grieves God.**
 - The Spirit indwells us and is grieved when we use our words in worthless rather than edifying ways.
 - **We need to think about this matter in terms of our having been sealed by the Spirit: Ephesians 1:13** "After that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel...ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession..."
 - We belong to God.
 - We are identified with Him.

- We are a part of a body in the same position.

Truth 5: New life in Christ calls us to a transformed heart: 4:31-32

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.

- **Put off the old:** “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice...”
 - **Bitterness:** Internalized unresolved anger
 - **Wrath:** A sudden explosive response
 - **Anger:** A settled internal boiling
 - **Clamour:** Loud uncontrolled outbursts
 - **Evil Speaking:** Slandorous speech that harms others
 - **Malice:** The desire to see someone experience suffering
- **Put on the new:** “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another...”
 - **Kind:** Our actions toward people must be kind.
 - **Tenderhearted:** Our disposition toward them must be compassionate from the heart.
 - **Forgiving:** We must be willing to extend grace and take action toward reconciliation to the extent we can.
- **Be renewed in the spirit of your mind:** “Even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you...”

Application: Romans 12:9-18 “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good...”

- **Unbeliever:**
 - God is calling you out of darkness into the light.
 - He wants to save you from your sin and make you alive in Him.

- He has done all the work and the gift of eternal life is available.
- Will you humble yourself and turn to Him in childlike faith?
- **Believer:**
 - **When God saved you, He called you to a distinct life.**
 - **He wants you to grow and live a life that is vibrant, productive, and consistent with His design for your life.**
 - **You will not reach your full potential if you neglect the body.**
 - **Exhortation:**
 - Be committed to learning as a disciple of Christ.
 - Be committed to living a Christ-centered life.
 - Do not disconnect from the means he has chosen for your growth.
 - Put into practice what you are learning from scripture.
 - Put off the old.
 - Put on the new.
 - Be renewed in your mind
 - **May God help us to be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving our own selves.**