

# Putting On a New Coat

Ephesians 4:24-32

Turn with me to the book of Ephesians, I want to continue our study. When we last left off we talked about the importance of speaking the truth in love. We saw that God has called ministers to equip the church to do his work on earth. Their goal is the growth and maturing of believers, holding them accountable to the Word of God so that everyone can be fully equipped to do what God brings their way. We read in **Ephesians 4:21-24**:

*21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.*

Paul is calling the church to “throw off” and “put on”. He is describing for us a process of change within every believer. **The idea of throwing off and putting on in the original Greek has the idea of a coat being taken off and on.** How many of us can agree this morning that there are times we keep wearing the wrong jacket and we need to take it off so that we can wear what God desires from us?

First, we have an old coat called our sinful nature, a bad coat that should have been gotten rid of along time ago. I remember as a kid a bad coat I use to wear. It was a bright yellow “Winnie the Pooh” corduroys jacket with wide lapels. Not only was the style and color offensive but when you consider that as a kid I lived in a country with 90 degree weather and around 90 percent humidity, it just wasn’t a good idea.

As human beings we have a tendency of putting on that old nasty coat: a coat that is full of lusts, that which foul and putrid, that which is self-centered and self-serving. We have to see that the old coat is no longer worth wearing and that God has a new coat to put on – a new nature, to be like Christ, righteous and holy. Paul told the church in Rome in **Romans 13:14**:

*14 Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don’t let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.*

*4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires. **2 Peter 1:4***

**We are to clothe ourselves with God’s nature – taking off our corrupt human desires and wants and surrendering them for God’s.** Paul identifies the first coat (our human nature) in **Ephesians 4:25-29**. He says:

*25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. 26 And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.”\* Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil. 28 If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. 29 Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. 30 And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own,\* guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.*

Before Jesus comes into our lives we are a miserable bunch of people. WE HAVE A PROBLEM. Let’s look at each one:

### **1. The Old man has a problem with truth.**

We looked at the importance of this first challenge last week in regards to taming our tongue. In our sinful nature we tended to treat truth like play-dough: we stretch it, we change it around, we play with it. What happens? **Whenever we speak the truth the Spirit of God works, yet whenever we tell a lie Satan is able to step in and bring disunity.** What is this so important to God? Because God values people. Whenever anything is done against people, it is done against the very heart of God.

We have a problem with telling the truth – kind of reminds me of the telemarketers we will tell you whatever you want to hear yet may be lacking the exact details. I need to remember to take off this old coat.

### **2. The Old man has a problem with anger.**

Ephesians 4:26 tells us not to let anger control us. The type of anger mentioned here is unrighteous anger. I find that all too often we don’t get angry at the right things. We tolerate what we should be angry about and get angry at what we should tolerate. **We should be angry at sin – it separates us from God, it hurts others, it destroys families, it deteriorates society, yet we don’t take it serious enough to get angry at it.**

Now, let me make sure that you understand that I am not saying that we go around and judge people, but when we can see what is controlling people and how Satan has gotten people to buy into lies and disobedience, it should arouse the soul with a righteous anger. A good example of sinful anger is in the life of Cain.

Cain and Abel both offer a sacrifice to God and Abel’s sacrifice is received by God because it was the very best that Abel had to offer, while Cain’s sacrifice was simply a gift. Cain gets ticked off with God and God warns him in **Genesis 4:6-7:**

6 *“Why are you so angry?” the Lord asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected?  
7 You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is  
right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you  
must subdue it and be its master.”*

God is telling him, “Cain you better watch it or your anger is going to cause you to do something you are going to regret.” The next thing you know Cain’s anger leads to his murdering his brother. **Unrighteous anger can become a foothold – a way by which Satan can control you.** As human beings we have a tendency to over react and fly off the handle into fits of rage and anger. I need to remember to take off this coat before it causes me to do something I will regret.

### **3. The Old man has a problem with stealing.**

We live in a society that is always trying to get ahead and not everyone is doing it the right way. People cheat on their taxes, they pad their numbers, they try to take advantage of every scenario even when it is wrong. We do everything we can to get away with it, when in reality the scriptures tell us that God knows everything we do especially those things that we do in secret.

After the LA Riots, a number of years ago, a looter was interviewed by a major broadcast station. He was one of many who looted a music store. When asked what he had stolen the man replied, “Gospel tapes. Because I love Jesus.”

**Our old human nature has a tendency to take or keep that which is not rightfully ours.** We work the system, we steal from work, we steal from each other, we can even steal each others time if we treat appointments with thoughtless tardiness. **Romans 13:9-10** tells us:

*9 For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.”\* These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law.*

You want to know how to keep God’s commandments – love him and love others. The problem with the old man (our sinful nature) is that we don’t think about others or even God, but simply about ourselves. There are times when I need to remind myself to take off the old coat before I become so focused on myself and what I want that I am willing to steal from others.

Instead God wants me to put on the new coat that requires that my hands be used to serve instead of steal.

#### 4. The Old man has a problem with corrupt speech.

We have a tendency to just let our mouths rattle off. **The word “corrupt” here in the Greek has the idea of rotten fruit.** How many of us here have ever allowed rotten speech to come out of our mouths? (everyone). There are times when we are right in the midst of saying something, and we know that what we are saying isn’t good, that we allow those words to come off the tongue, and wish we would have gathered them all up and swallowed them back down again.

Notice that Paul is giving us an alternative, just like he did with stealing: instead we are to speak about those things that are good, helpful, and encouraging. **Every time we are around other believers we shouldn’t feel belittled, squashed or judged, but we should find comfort and courage.** Jesus said in **Matthew 12:35-37**:

*35 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. 36 And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. 37 The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.”*

What comes out of the mouth shows what is in the heart. How many of us can agree that we need to learn to take off the old coat of corrupt speech so that our hearts don’t become consumed with unrighteous thoughts and motives? I need to put on the coat that will speak life and not death, that will build and not destroy, and that will draw other to God and not push them away.

#### 5. The Old man has a problem with bitterness.

Rage, anger, harsh words, slander, and malicious behavior all come out of bitterness. Just like we saw in regards to the mouth exposing what is within a persons heart – bitterness shows us that there is a fire of evil motives at work.

In the spring of 1894, the Baltimore Orioles came to Boston to play a routine baseball game. But what happened that day was anything but routine. The Orioles’ John McGraw got into a fight with the Boston third baseman. Within minutes all the players from both teams had joined in the brawl. The warfare quickly spread to the grandstands. Among the fans the conflict went from bad to worse. Someone set a fire to the stands and the entire ballpark burned to the ground. Not only that, but the fire spread to 107 other Boston buildings as well.

**Instead of allowing our emotions to get out of hand, we need the power of the Holy Spirit.** Otherwise a root of bitterness can turn into a wildfire. **Hebrews 12:15** tells us:

*15 Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.*

You can become the spark that will fuel a fire of bitterness that can lead others into the judgment of God. If we aren't careful, we can allow the old sinful nature to creep in and take control, leading us away from God and focusing more on our offense. We take our minds off of God and put them on ourselves. And when we do this, the words of **Ephesians 4:30** comes true:

*And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live.*

That is why I believe that a Christian can wander away from God and give up their salvation. I don't believe in eternal security because I know that man has a hard time of giving up his control and power. If one isn't careful they can allow bitterness to become their god, and it will control everything they do and say.

Instead God wants us to give up our right to be bitter and allow him to change us through the working of his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will instead teach us to be kind, to be tenderhearted and forgiving.

When I wear my old coat (my sinful nature) I am obsessed with myself – I do what I want, when I want, where I want, how I want, and to whomever I want. But God wants to change me he wants me to do what Jesus talked about in **Luke 9:23-24**:

*"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. 24 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.*

**I need to die to myself – take off my old coat and live for God and others.** There is a story I think illustrates this.

There is a man who, one day, visited heaven and hell. He went to hell first and there he saw people who were starving, and miserable, sitting all by themselves, in a horrible condition. He noticed that the problem was that everybody in hell had stiff arms. They couldn't minister to their own needs, they could not clean themselves up, they couldn't feed themselves, they couldn't do anything. It was depressing to him, and couldn't wait to get to heaven. In heaven he found that the people were well fed, sleek and happy, enjoying themselves. It was just what heaven ought to be. But he noticed something remarkable. They too were suffering from the same problem. They had stiff arms too. But the difference was that in heaven they were all helping each other and feeding each other.

God wants us to clothe ourselves with a new nature. In fact in **Colossians 3:8-10** Paul tells us:

*8 But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. 9 Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. 10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. 11 In this new life, it*

*doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile,\* circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized,\* slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.*

I find that all too often we pick up our old coat and we end up doing more harm than good. Instead I need to intentionally pick up the new one and keep wearing it. IN fact, every morning I need to make sure that I put the right coat on before I go out into my day. At times it isn't easy to give up that old comfortable coat we got use to wearing. Sometimes the new coat isn't as comfortable but the longer I wear it, the more I get use to it. Let's keep reminding ourselves to put on the new coat. Let's pray!