

Ephesians 14-06-22a

This is Sunday, the 22nd of June, 2014. We're in the book of Ephesians, Paul's letter to the Laodicean church. We're in chapter 4 and we resume in verse 22.

We'll take a moment to dedicate our time and our concentration, our worship and our appreciation to God through the Lord Jesus and then we'll begin. Father, we're so grateful that in our brief appearance in the great span of human history, our lives, even though like the grass we wither and like the flower we fade, during the time that we are here, you have, through the Lord Jesus Christ, given us release and deliverance and salvation so that we are not shadows, we are not just an ephemeral presence. You have lifted us out from what is temporary and what is earthly and have transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of your love where there is permanence, there is eternity, there is opportunity to partake of your eternal life and your eternal presence.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus. We thank you so much for His willingness, His obedience, His example in fulfilling your plan and purpose to give us those gifts, to grant to us immortality and eternal life, to raise us up out of the dust and out of the mire of our fallen natures and our sinful existence and a fallen world into the glowing presence and the holy existence where you and the unfallen angels dwell. We pray that as we look at this portion of your Word this morning that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts, will impress it on us, give us an awareness and an understanding of its importance in our thinking, in our decisions as we pursue our priorities and our goals and that its power and its effectiveness will work within us to transform us, to renew our minds and to thoroughly equip us for every good work.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Looking at this section in chapter 4 of the book of Ephesians, the Laodicean letter, we find that Paul having laid such a strong theological foundation in the first three chapters says, therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk.

And at this point we have the encouragement to apply, to have the Word of God that we have heard and that we have learned make a difference. It's not enough to hear it. It is not enough to understand it.

It is not enough to agree with it and to assent to its truth. It has to be incorporated into the fabric of our lives, the content of our thinking, the motivations of our heart. If it doesn't change us, if it doesn't make us think and act differently, it has not accomplished its purpose.

We've not arrived at the goal. And as we resume in this section that began at verse 17 where Paul once again says and testifies in the Lord that we should no longer walk as the faithless walk, the Gentiles, the unbelievers. He began this chapter, he began this section, of course he didn't divide it into chapters when he wrote the letter, but this section he says in verse 1, I beseech you to walk worthy.

In verse 17 he says don't walk unworthily. So we're interested, I think, in how you do this. How do I get this worthy walk? How do I put my spiritual feet one in front of the other in a worthy manner? I beseech you to walk worthy.

I say and testify in the Lord that you should no longer walk unworthily the way the Gentiles do, in futility, in darkness, alienated, ignorant, blind, past feeling, lewd, unclean, greedy. We've seen all of these things, these concepts and this vocabulary in great detail. Anybody can do that.

Anybody. Any human being can walk in that manner. That's how we're born.

We're born in darkness. We're born alienated from the life of God. We're born ignorant.

We're born blind. If you do nothing, this is how you will proceed every day. If you do nothing every day, every week, every month.

I mentioned earlier this morning that I attended the funeral of a relative who lived to be 92. And any time there is a funeral and there is a review of one's life, all of us, I imagine, are likely to someday be in the box, having people who give their final tributes and their eulogia, their good words. What is the lasting effect of a human life? Well, left to itself by default, it is going to be these things.

It is only through the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ that our lives can rise above that. We in the human realm often measure a life by its effect. Believers and unbelievers both.

This is what this person meant to me. This is what this person did for me. This is what impressed me.

This is what I loved, what I respected, what I remember, what I was moved by, was impressed by in this person. This is a part of their uniqueness. This is what they did.

This is what they said. This is how they lived. And that's the walk.

God, however, doesn't use that as the final measure. We use that as a measure because that's what we observe. That's what we can see.

Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks on the heart. And normally the two things will correspond and will coincide.

If our heart is transformed, if our mind is renewed, if God's grace is at work in us motivating us to love and good works, if God's Holy Spirit is able to function within us and enable us to live a life that reflects God's glory, then it is going to have an effect, a memorable effect, a long-lasting effect on the people around us. And that effect will be blessing. That effect will be a goodness and a reflection of God's truth.

That's the goal. That is what Paul is calling believers to. Many unbelievers are eulogized.

Many unbelievers are appreciated for the effect that they have on the lives around them. Men are husbands, fathers, brothers, sons. Women are mothers, sisters, daughters, wives.

And it is inevitable that people, unless you're just really a rascal, are going to find something to appreciate. It is seldom that there is a funeral that isn't attended by somebody who appreciates the person that left. But this is at a different level.

This is something above and beyond. And this is the ultimate measure, the ultimate time to think about what the eulogy will contain. There's an a fortiori principle here.

If we can live in a way that pleases God and that fulfills His plan and purpose for our lives, then you don't have to worry about being appreciated by people. That will follow. People who count, people who have a divine standard of appreciation are going to recognize and going to appreciate.

But that's not what we live for and that's not what we pursue. We look for well done, thou good and faithful servant. So our goal is to understand what Paul is telling us here because he's telling us how to achieve that approval, how to receive that evaluation.

And this is a great, great passage because it distills it. It sums it up in just a few verses. And what's great about this is that Paul is going to do it in two ways.

There's an extended discussion and right at the center of it there is a summary. They talk about inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning. One of them you give your points at the beginning and then give all of your explanations.

In the other you give all of your explanations and logic leading up to your conclusions. You can either deduce or you can induce conclusions. Paul does both here.

It's a beautiful symmetrical three dimensional discussion. And you'll see what I mean as we get into our primary passage this morning which is in verses 22 through 24. You remember last time we looked in verse 20, you have not so learned Christ.

If indeed, and we saw that this is a first class condition which is really since, you have heard Him and have been taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus. And that is the key. The truth is in Jesus.

Now beginning in verse 22, what does that truth that is in Jesus require? What does it produce in us? Now, we say the truth is in Jesus. You remember Pilate? Well, what is truth? What is truth? What's the name of our church? Grace and Truth Bible Church. But truth is an abstraction.

When you say truth, well, you've got a truth, I've got a truth, you know. The president's got a truth. Mrs. Clinton has a truth.

Everybody's got their own truth. Mrs. Clinton just published a book. She tells her version of events.

She spins it, you know, in a way that puts her in a good light. I spin the truth in a way that puts me in a good light. We all do this.

Very few people walk around saying, let me tell you what a horrible person I am. Let me tell you how mixed my motives are and how corrupt and unsavory I am. We, even ourselves, we tell ourselves that we were justified.

We vindicate ourselves in our own mind. Well, kind of feel bad about that, but you know, it had to be that way. I had to say that.

I had to do that. Or I had to not say that and not do that. We vindicate ourselves.

They did a study. I saw, I picked this up somewhere. They, they put people in sort of a laboratory environment.

They, they were studying this at a university and they showed the prejudice that people have to justify their own decisions. And they did this, I think one of them was sort of a taste test. They put three identical colas in a, in three different cups.

And, but they said that, that one was a, was a really high quality and one was a cheap, you know, store brand. And, but they were actually all the same. And then they had people try to guess which one was which.

And then they would ask people, well, why, what, what did you notice about this as you tasted all three? What was it about the one you chose? And they would give all of these justifications for why it was their choice. And even when they found out that they had chosen something that was identical, they said that they would still vindicate. We, we find ways to justify.

You're looking at three different cars, you buy one of them and you'll decide down the road that that's really the best car, even if it isn't, even if it's no different than the others. We will invest it with qualities that it may not actually have because we just like to affirm our judgment and our wisdom. And you will learn to like, and you will come to appreciate something that objectively speaking doesn't have any special merit.

It's good because I chose it. And I chose it because it's good. This is just a part of our nature.

And it's a real interesting thing to have pointed out because then you begin to get a little more suspicious of your, your affirmation. Well, you know, that, that guitar has got a plywood top and not a solid wood top, but you know what? I think it sounds good anyway. Something about the varnish.

I think it's really a good, I think it's really, really good guitar. You know, it's unusual because it's mine. Well, Paul is giving us a key here to truth.

Unvarnished, unmodified, unmitigated, undying, unchanging, unchanging, unchanging, undiluted truth. The actual truth is in Jesus. What was chapter one about? Anybody remember? If you were going to, if you're going to sum up chapter one in one phrase, what is it? In Him, in Jesus.

And all of those beautiful seven fold blessings that we saw in chapter one, he, Paul is reminding us the truth. What is the truth? What is truth? It's chapter one. Don't forget chapter one.

Remember, somebody would have stood up in Laodicea and later on in Colossia and read this letter and they got it all in one go. The guy would stand up, he'd unroll the parchment, he'd say, this is from Paulos Apostolos, Jesu Christu, and he would just start reading the thing. And those people, unlike us with our devices and our short term memories and our short attention span, I forgot from the time I started my sentence what I was going to finish it with.

People back then were really good listeners because you couldn't record it, most of them couldn't write it down, and they had to really concentrate and pay attention. And they could hold things by virtue of practice and by virtue of habit, they could hold things in their minds much more firmly than we. These people didn't carry Bibles, they didn't have notebooks, they would come to church, they got it all up here and they could think about it and discuss it for days and weeks and months afterward because their scratch pad was in their mind.

They didn't type it, they didn't store it, it wasn't on a chip, it wasn't on the storage area network someplace, it wasn't in the cloud, it was in their mind. And so they still remember. These people, we have to look back, what was that again, seven things, let's see, in Him He chose us, made us accepted in the Beloved, we have redemption in Him, we have inheritance in Him, sealing of the Holy Spirit, we have to look back.

It was all fresh in their mind. They said, oh yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about. The truth is in Jesus and that's the truth.

So when it says the truth is in Jesus, flip the page. Look at chapter 1. This is a wonderful, delivering truth. We think, well, the Spirit's willing but the flesh is weak.

My flesh is failing me. My flesh is imprisoning me. There's not a one of us that hasn't had the flesh dragging us down in some way, shape or form, both in the sense of physical health and in the sense of its corruption.

In our nature we have impulses and desires that are fallen, are corrupt, are self-serving, are short-sighted, are mundane, earthly, limited and false. That's what He's in, Jesus. Now, there are going to be three infinitives.

You know what an infinitive is, right? To walk, to talk, to swim, to go, to learn, to live, to die. To something in English that's an infinitive. It sums up the concept of a verb in the abstract.

It doesn't really have a tense. To swim, you know, to err is human. To forgive is divine.

It doesn't say when we erred. It doesn't say when we forgave. It takes the concept and puts it out there in a somewhat abstract form.

Well, we've got three infinitives here and you can't see them in the English because they were not translated as infinitives. They're translated in other ways. But here we go, verse 22.

If indeed or since you heard Him and have been taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus, to put off, to put off. This is an aorist middle infinitive from apo-tiphamy. Tiphamy, to put or place.

Apa, off, away, from. Put off. Now, why is this an infinitive? Well, there is debate in the Greek grammatical world about how this should be translated.

Are they indicatives? Are they imperatives? What exactly do they represent? And as usual, I don't find either one of those compelling. I think there is a little bit of a misunderstanding in our translation that leads, and that's the reason that they're not even translated as infinitives in the English here. Notice the next phrase, that you put off concerning your former conduct.

That's what you have in the New King James. Concerning your former conduct. We've spent some time talking about the word kata, according to.

That's the phrase here. Concerning is the Greek word kata. And kata, the gloss, the quick definition of that in English or translation in English is always according to.

Have you thought about that phrase, according to? Well, according to the Democrats, President Bush is the problem. According to the Republicans, President Obama is the problem. According to, stop and think about that phrase.

He's not playing according to Hoyle. Hoyle being the master list of how you play card games. They're not boxing according to the marquee of Queensbury rules.

Think about according to. What is an accord? They came to an accord. What is an accord? It's an agreement, right? And when you say according to, you're saying in agreement with.

It doesn't mean like we use it today, well, the source of this information is. It means agreeing with so-and-so. Here is your fact.

Agreeing with so-and-so according to this standard, according to, agreeing with. So that's our word here, kata. Not so much concerning but according to or agreeing with or conforming to, being aligned with, matching.

Kata. Then you have your former conduct. Well, this is not the word for conduct.

Conduct or life, sometimes it's walking around, peripateo. There are words for conduct. This isn't the word for conduct.

This word is anastrophe. I mentioned this a little bit last time, anastrophe. Ana means again and astrophe means align.

You align again. You follow the line again. You repeat a thing.

You go back. But what it actually comes to mean is, it's fundamental meaning is to convert. You go back the way you came.

You turn around. It means that you come back, to convert or to come back. That's the fundamental root meaning of anastrophe.

Bring back, come back, turn around, convert. It can mean to walk or to behave, even to be occupied with because you're sort of going back and forth in a thing, like Satan walking to and fro in the earth and up and down in it has that sort of connotation. But the fundamental meaning is to convert or to bring back.

Well, this is the noun anastrophe from that. And so if you turn that into a noun, what would it be? Your conversion, your turning around according to your former turning around. And the word former here is proteros and that's the basic meaning of that word in all cases is what came before, what happened before.

What is he saying here? That's a lot of Greek. But what's he really saying? To put off, to in accordance with your previous conversion. That's what it means.

You are believers. You recognize the truth of Jesus Christ and you said, I don't want to be a Gentile anymore. I don't want to be walking in blindness and darkness, alienated from the life of God, ignorant, caught up in my own desires, an inescapable existence of corruption.

I don't want that. I choose Jesus Christ as my Savior. I have turned around.

I have anastrophed. And Paul says, in accordance with your previous conversion. Are you consistent or are you inconsistent? Did you mean it when you accepted Christ as your Savior? Were you serious when you turned around and turned your back on that old lifestyle, that fallen, corrupt, dark, blind enslavement to the fallen nature? Were you serious? In accordance with your previous conversion, your former conversion, your past conversion, put off the old man.

You made the decision to claim Christ as your Savior. Now be consistent. In accordance with your previous conversion, put off the old man.

The word old is palaios. And palaios doesn't mean old in the sense of aged. It means former.

It means, you know, I take the old trash bag out and I put a new trash bag in. I might have just put that trash bag in yesterday. It's not old in the sense of antique or ancient.

It means it's used. It's finished. That's done.

This is used throughout the New Testament Scriptures. Palaios just means whatever you were using up until now and it's about to be replaced. Jesus said, don't put new wine in old wineskins.

It doesn't mean they're grandpa's wineskins. It doesn't mean you found them in a pyramid somewhere. It means they're used.

They're finished. Their purpose has been fulfilled. They're no longer needed.

They're no longer useful. They're old in the sense of I'm going to take the old batteries out of my device and put new batteries in. Well, how old are they? I mean, these are not batteries from the 1950s.

I might have put them in there this morning and I've run them down and I need new batteries. That's what palaios means. It's old in the sense of no longer effectual, no longer useful.

I'm replacing that with something else. That's the old man here. It's not the old man down the road, Creedence Clearwater is saying about.

This is old. You need to get rid of it. It's passe.

In accordance with the decision you made to leave the old life and to accept Christ as your Savior, to be converted, to change your direction and change your life through faith in Christ, in accordance with your previous conversion, put off that no longer useful, no longer beneficial man. Take the old batteries and throw them away. If you're serious about this thing running like it should, you got to take the old stuff away.

The old man, and this is just anthropos, this is the self, which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. According to, what do you suppose that is in Greek, all you Greek scholars? What is according to in Greek? Kata. Put off the old man who agrees with, in keeping with, who is in accord with deceitful desires, deceitful impulses.

Epithumia can be good or bad. Paul says, I've longed to see you with a great epithumia, to one of the churches he writes to. He hadn't been there in a long time, knew a lot of the believers there, loved them.

He said, I have a strong impulse, I have a strong desire, epithumia, very powerful urge to see you, but I can't do it right now. I'm going to have to send Timothy, I'm going to have to send somebody else to check on your well-being, but I have a passion to see you. Epithumia.

But the old man grows corrupt. This is the word phyro, P-H-T-H-E-I-R-O, phy-thy is how it starts, P-H-T-H, phyro, phyroi. And this means not so much corrupt as to ruin, to destroy, to destroy, to destroy.

Wreck, to be rendered useless. The old man is defined by those verses 17 through 19. The old man walks in the futility of their minds, understanding darkened, alienated from the life of God, ignorant, blind in the heart, past feeling, given over to lewdness, working uncleanness with covetousness, with greediness, with I want something to satisfy me.

That's the power, that's the motive force in those lives. And he says the truth is in Jesus Christ and when you learned that truth and you believed in him, in accordance with that conversion, in accordance with that decision, put off that old man who is being ruined by those desires. That's the way of ruin.

That's the way of uselessness. That's the way to get a eulogy where they can say, well, he was born, he was named, and he died. And that's all the good I can find to say.

Put that off. Put it away. Leave it behind.

In accordance with your original decision to accept Christ as your Savior, live out that decision. Don't render that decision void and null and useless. Leave the void, null, and useless man behind.

Put him off. It's like taking off an old garment. That's the first infinitive.

Remember I said there were three? The first one is to put off. So you would say, well, if the first infinitive is put off, the next one is going to be to put on. I'm going to put off the old and I'll put on the new.

But notice we've got a second infinitive which is right in the middle. Put off, in accordance with your earlier conversion, the old man which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts. And before you put anything new on, you've got to do something.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. You have to be renewed before you have something new to put on. You've got to pretty much manufacture the new man.

If you put off the old man, there's not a new man just waiting in the wings. It's not like, well, I've got two suits. I put on the old suit and got it all grubby.

I'm going to take that one off and I'm going to reach in the closet and get the new one. You've got to create that new man. That new man has to be created inside us before we can put him on.

How is that done? To be renewed in the spirit of your mind. This is our second infinitive. It's a passive infinitive.

Be renewed. It doesn't say renew the spirit of your mind. Think positive.

Follow the step program or something. This is be renewed. This is something that is done to us and for us.

Be renewed in the pneuma of your noose, in the spirit of your mind. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Spirit is the intangible.

Mind is where we deal with reality. There are intangibles. There are ideas.

There are concepts, constructs, truths that we use to deal with reality. We're not mechanical. We're not machines.

We are not animals. Animals give machine-type responses to environment. They've got programming.

They've got instinct. They've got routines built into them. Dog relieves himself and then scratches the ground.

Dog's going to lay down, turns a circle, scratches the pillow, and they think, oh, well, this goes back to ancient times where they were walking down the grass and scratching up the earth to get a cool spot. It's a program. It's in their DNA.

It doesn't matter if there's dirt there or not. It doesn't matter if there's grass there or not. They're going to turn around three times and plop down.

They're going to go to the bathroom, and then they're going to stand there and scrape their feet and wreck somebody's lawn. First they water something that's going to likely wither it, and then they dig it up. You've got to be so careful with your dog when they're walking through neighborhoods because people look out their window and, hey, I look out my window and see somebody else's dog going down doing the same thing.

It's a program. It's an animal response. It's like machinery.

This says, be renewed in the spirit of your mind. This is something only we can do because we have a spirit in our mind. We have a dynamic that goes beyond DNA, that goes beyond programming, goes beyond instinct and impulse and reflex.

We think. We have ideas. We can change our behavior based on the spirit of our mind.

Well, that's got to be renewed. It's got to be transformed. How can we be transformed by the renewing of our mind? Well, it's the subject of Romans 12.

It's the subject of this letter. But be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Then, verse 24, to put on.

Now, these three infinitives, to put on the new man created according to God. Notice you have three according to's. Put off according to your conversion, the old man that he just talked about in 17-19, growing corrupt, being ruined according to these impulses.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Put on the new man created according to God in agreement with, matching, reflecting God, righteousness and holiness. Where do these three infinitives come from? Take a look at the introduction to this paragraph.

You have not so learned Christ since you have heard Him and have been taught by Him to put off. You have heard Him and been taught by Him to be renewed. You have heard Him and have been taught by Him to put on the new man.

That's why these are infinitives. This is the content of what Jesus teaches, of what His example proclaims to us, to put off, to be renewed and to put on. This is the content of the truth that is in Jesus.

This is the outworking of the truth that is in chapter 1. You learn the truth, you're convinced by it, you agree with it, you assent to it, you believe it in chapter 1. Well, what does it teach us to do? In accordance with our conversion, in accordance with our turning around, we are taught to put off, to be renewed and to put on. Beautiful symmetry, isn't it? And that's the core, that's the center, those three infinitives, to put off, to be renewed, to put on. The putting off portion, He's already described in the previous context.

The putting on part is going to follow. Look at verse 25, Therefore, putting away lying, let each of one of you speak truth. Now we're going to get the renewing of the mind and the putting on section.

So right in the middle, it isn't at the beginning and it isn't at the end, it's right in the middle, to put off, to be renewed, to put on. Do you want to know how to succeed in this life? Do you want to know how to be a good and faithful servant? Do you want to know how to not just attend Bible class but to live the truth that we learn in Bible class? It doesn't get any simpler or any clearer than this. To put off, to be renewed, to put on.

How are we renewed in the spirit of our minds? It is the power of the sharp two-edged sword of the Word of God. That's why we come to church. That's why Bible study, Bible understanding, reflection and meditation on what we learn is at the center.

You cannot successfully put off the old man much less successfully put on the new man if there is not a renewal. Without the renewal the old man never leaves. Without the renewal there's not a new man to put on.

The hinge, the kingpin, the arch stone, the capstone is be renewed. That's the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God when it comes into the heart and the mind of believers.

It's the key.

It doesn't stand alone. You can't just be renewed in the spirit of your mind. That gives us the power and the ability to put off the old and to put on the new.

It's at the center but it does not stand alone. Well, we'll pause here and take our break. We'll come back and we'll pick up in verse 24 and see how this set of three infinitives illuminates our walk.

It's not as the Gentiles? Well then what is it? He's about to tell us.