

## **Ephesians 14-06-22b**

We pick up our study in Ephesians chapter 4. This idea of putting off the old, being renewed, and putting on the new is not just unique to this chapter. It is central here. It is the culmination of an argument that began in chapter 1, a case that Paul makes, the foundation of which was laid in chapter 1 and chapter 2, carried forward in chapter 3. We are united in this opportunity.

We are called collectively as well as individually to follow this mission, to pursue this goal. And all of those foundation stones underlie this appeal in chapter 4. But it is not unique, and you wouldn't expect it to be. If it is the central truth that it appears to be, you would think it would occur elsewhere in the New Testament, and it does.

For example, you remember it is one of those chapters that we index the Bible with, Romans chapter 1, and in verses 29-32 Paul says, talking about those who walk as the Gentiles walk, those who are the unregenerate, unrenewed. They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but approve those others who practice them. This, in many ways, describes and even defines the latest iteration of our American culture where good is called evil and evil is called good. But this is the lifestyle that we can so easily emulate, so easily mirror in small ways as well as large ways.

We wouldn't call ourselves murderers, but you can assassinate others with the tongue. You can murder someone's good name, murder their character in the eyes and in the hearts of others. So this wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice, etc., which is so self-serving and self-seeking is a reflection, this Romans 1, verses 29-32, of what Paul describes in Ephesians 4, 17-19.

Later on in Romans, chapter 13, verses 11-14, Paul says, "...besides this, you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." That idea of your former conversion, your first expressions of faith in the Lord Jesus. "...salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling in drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, i.e., not in the grip of those deceitful epithumia desires that promise so much and deliver so little, that partake of the temporary and the ephemeral and the transient and the mundane, the corrupt, the defiled, that which God will ultimately destroy by fire, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy." There's nothing that will more quickly corrode and corrupt and destroy fellowship, love, unity, all

of the things that we have in Christ.

There's nothing that will destroy them more quickly than envy, quarreling and jealousy especially when it gets expressed verbally. We know something unsavory, we know something negative, we learn or we see of something that takes someone down, shows their feet of clay, shows that they are as corrupt as we and we feel compelled to share it. We love to be tail bearers sometimes and this leads to the expression of jealousy, the expression of that inner corruption that we're supposed to be putting off and leaving behind in Christ.

You never see the Lord Jesus anywhere in all of the red ink of the four Gospels, you never see Him telling tales on the disciples. He was with them all the time, He knew all of their faults. He never tells the story of Peter sinking out of sight in the stormy sea of Galilee.

He doesn't tell of Judas pilfering in the money box. He doesn't tell of the faithlessness of the disciples in various circumstances, various times, their hardness of heart, their slowness to learn. He always addresses them as a group, doesn't He? Does He ever single them out? The one time that you see a personal rebuke from the Lord Jesus is Simon Peter saying far be it from you and he says get thee behind me Satan.

You really have to think that Peter was asking for that since he more or less rebuked the Lord publicly, he got rebuked publicly. But you don't see the Lord Jesus expressing these verbal sins naturally. Not in quarreling and jealousy but verse 14 of Romans 13, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

So wake up, cast off the works of darkness in verse 12, put on the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 14. First Corinthians chapter 5 verses 9 through 13, Paul says to the believers in Corinth and you remember this church wasn't very far along, they had a lot of problems, a lot of personality issues, a lot of failing to apply the Word of God and it was causing divisions, it was tolerating evil in their midst. So Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 beginning at verse 9, I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men, not at all meaning the immoral of this world or the greedy and robbers or idolaters since then you would need to go out of the world.

Rather I wrote to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard or robber. In other words put distance between ourselves and believers who refuse to put off the old man. Paul says you don't have to worry about disassociating, you know they call for boycotts, don't shop at this store, don't frequent this retailer because they give benefits to their homosexual employees or this, that and the other.

Paul says don't waste your time doing that if you are going to avoid everybody in unbelief who is committing various forms of evil and sin, the only way you are going to do that is to leave the world, become an astronaut, do a solo flight to the moon and then you can get away and then you just have yourself to try to get away from. But he said I wasn't telling you to try to separate from the immoral of this world or the greedy robbers, idolaters, you would have to go out of the

world, they are everywhere, you can't help it, you are immersed and enmeshed in that. Rather I wrote to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother.

There is a different standard in the household of faith, in the brotherhood and fellowship of Christ. And when someone who claims the name of Christ willfully continues to pursue these earmarks, these behaviors that represent the old man, Paul says don't associate, don't tolerate. Anyone who bears the name of brother, if he is guilty of immorality, greed, is an idolater, reviler, drunkard or robber, not even to eat with such a one.

Now when this is your family, that can be difficult. What have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the fellowship, inside the ecclesia, inside the church whom you are to judge? Gasp! You are to judge those inside the church. Now what does it mean? Judge isn't a very good translation here.

This is to discern, not judge in the sense of I'm going to render a verdict, I'm going to pass sentence and then I'm going to execute the sentence. Notice it doesn't say take them out and stone them. It doesn't say tie them to a post and give them 40 lashes minus one.

It doesn't say ride them out of town on a rail, tar and feather them, hold them up to abuse, make them stand in front of everybody and confess. What does it say? Don't associate. Remove your close personal fellowship from them.

Don't sit down to a fellowship meal with them. The only way you can do this is to discern that they are in the wrong. Now I don't think it is much of a penalty to withdraw the beneficent glow of my presence from someone.

I'm not harming them. I'm not inflicting pain on them. I am simply not showing up.

I'm not spending time in conversation. I am not breaking bread and sharing an intimate friendship. I'm not going to be rude.

I'm not going to shun. I'm not going to be unkind. But I am not going to cultivate close personal fellowship with someone who is living openly in rebellion against the clear teaching of the Word of God.

We are commanded not to do this. How is someone going to know that their behavior does not comport with the clear teaching of the Word of God if believers who understand the clear teaching of the Word of God do not point it out by withdrawing their close fellowship? And if someone says, well, why won't you come to my meal? Well, here's why. The Word of God tells me that I've got to maintain a distance unless and until you put off the old man because that's what I'm trying to do.

I'm trying to remove myself from that world and that way of thinking and that behavior. I'm trying

to be renewed in the spirit of my mind. I'm trying to put on the new man that is according to God in righteousness and holiness and your current behavior does not reflect that and I cannot associate in close fellowship with you.

I can't. I'm living for the Lord Jesus. I invite you to join me in that.

I invite you to be a brother or a sister with me in that. But unless and until there is a leaving behind of that behavior on your part, I just can't. And you're in my prayers.

You're in my thoughts. The Lord Jesus Christ is interceding on your behalf before God's throne and so do I. But until we are of like mind in these things, we just cannot be that close. Speak the truth to one another in love, not in condemnation, not in holier-than-thou self-righteous indignation, in love.

What have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church? 1 Corinthians 5, verse 12, inside the church whom you are to discern, you are to evaluate, you are to make a decision. Is this person walking in the light or not? God judges those outside. Drive out the wicked person from among you.

Drive out the wicked person from among you. Now this can be done in love. The next chapter, 1 Corinthians 6, 9-11.

Do you not know that unrighteousness will not inherit the kingdom of God? How many times have we talked about the difference between seeing the kingdom and inheriting the kingdom? Do you not know the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Lusts deceive. The fallen nature deceives.

The old man deceives. Do not be deceived. Neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, this is your homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, that's anybody that suffers addiction to reign in their lives, addiction of any form, nor revilers, nor robbers, those who cheat others out of what belongs to them.

None of them will inherit the kingdom of God, and such were some of you. But you were washed, remember the day of your former conversion? In accordance with your former conversion, put that stuff away. You were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

That's what it is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit. The true fulfillment of Matthew 28, 19, and 20 is to be washed, to be sanctified, to be justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the name of the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6, 9-11.

In the second Corinthian letter, chapter 12, verses 19-21. 2 Corinthians 12, 19-21. Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? It is in the sight of

God that we have been speaking in Christ and all for your edification, for your up-building.

Beloved, this is Paul speaking harsh truth in love. He says, I'm not just justifying myself, I am speaking for your good, for your constructive growth. Verse 20, For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may find me not what you wish, that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.

I fear that I may come and find you not what I wish, that when I come again, my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned before and have not repented of their impurity, have not changed their mind, have not turned around. They are brethren, they are in the church, but they did not put off the old man. They are not living in the light of their former conversion.

They are not walking and seeking to put on the new man according to God in righteousness and holiness. It just doesn't interest them. Have not repented of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced.

Galatians 5, do you begin to see a pattern here? Galatians 5, 16-26, I say, walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. It doesn't get much more clear than that. There is the Holy Spirit and there is the human spirit.

There is the spiritual kingdom of God and there is the fleshly kingdom of man. But I say, walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh, for the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other. To prevent you from doing what you would.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The works of the flesh are plain, fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, a divided spirit, taking sides, dividing up into cliques, envy, drunkenness, and lust. Self-gratification, finding others who share a fallen and corrupt point of view and collecting with them.

I warn you, as I warned you before, those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Those who belong to Christ Jesus. This isn't belong in the academic sense.

This is belong in the experiential sense. If you truly belong to the Lord Jesus, you have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Why are they called deceitful passions, deceitful desires in our passage in Ephesians 4? Why are they called deceitful? When we get an urge, it doesn't promise pain and suffering.

Oh, let me do this thing that really hurts me. I mean you've got to be mentally sick to want to hurt yourself. And there are people who are mentally sick and they hurt themselves.

But we recognize that as an illness. When we have a passion and a desire, the reason we feel the impulse is we think it's going to result in gratification. We think it's going to please us and fulfill us and give us a good time.

That's what passions and desires are all about. Oh, I want to do that. I want to experience that.

I want to engage in that. I want to be a part of that. That will fulfill me.

That will make me feel good. That's what a deceitful passion and desire promises. And it lies.

That's deceit. It makes a promise it cannot keep. And in the cold, gray light of the post-experience experience, it lies.

It's mourning. It aches and it hurts. And the consequences and the unchangeable results are there to be seen.

The ugliness, the shallowness, the dust and the clay and the corruption that are a part of it. The stench of death is all over it. Funny how the passion and the desire didn't tell us about that, because it deceives.

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires. If we live by the Spirit, this is Galatians 5.25, if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Live kata according to your previous conversion.

You received life by the Spirit, so now walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another. Nail it to a cross.

Put it to death. Execute it. Convict it of crimes.

Sentence it to death. If you want to judge something, judge passions and desires. If you want to pass verdict and execute sentence, do it on the old man.

Colossians, the parallel letter carried in the same satchel with our Laodicean letter. Colossians 3.5-11, put to death therefore instead of murdering one another with our mouths and with our thoughts, put to death therefore what is earthly in you. You want to put something to death? Here's a target, here's a victim.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you, fornication. What is fornication in reality? It is breach of trust. It is breaking promises.

It is violating pledges. It is breaking pledges. It is disregarding commitments.

It is walking off the reservation, beyond the border, outside the lines. Fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry. On account of these things the wrath of God is coming.

In these you want to work with the new nature which can give you new ways and new ways to live. You want to engage in the good works of the old nature. You want to walk with the new nature which can give you new ways, new ways to live.

You want to walk with the new nature in knowledge, after the image of its Creator." You can see Paul formulating these thoughts in two different sets of words on the very same day, at the very same time, writing two different letters with the same heart and the same objective. You have put off the old nature with its practices. You have put on the new nature which is being renewed by means of knowledge, in, by and with knowledge, according to, after the image of its Creator.

Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all. First Thessalonians chapter 4 verses 1 through 8, our last parallel passage. First Thess 4, 1 through 8, Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, you do so more and more.

For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. You have been instructed in Christ. You have been taught by Him, through the apostles, through the apostolic witness.

You know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from, turn away from, put to death, leave behind, put off unchastity, that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust, like heathen who do not know God." In other words, using the example of marriage and taking a wife for men. And you can take a wife in one of two ways.

You can do it in the heat of passion and physical desire, or you can do it in knowledge and for spiritual reasons. Either way, you're going to end up with a wife. Why did you do what you do? And this is a paradigm.

This is an example of all of our behavior. We are going to do most of the things that we do in a day regardless. Our schedule is laid out for us.

There are certain things we do. You think about the week ahead, what's going to happen tomorrow. You can name probably 10 or 12 things that you are definitely going to do tomorrow.

The question isn't whether they will be done, it is how they are done. Is it going to be done in the power of the old nature? Is it going to be done as a part of the walk of the old man? Or because of the renewing of our minds and the spirit of our minds, is it going to be a reflection of the fruit of the Spirit? The same things are going to get done regardless. How and why are they done?

That's what separates us.

That's what defines us. That's what either reflects the glory of God or doesn't. It's the same actions.

And you can't measure at the end of the day what was done. The measure at the end of the day is how were these things done? Whose glory is reflected? In what spirit were they done? Were they done in truth? Were they done in love? Were they done in the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit? Or were they done just the way any Gentile would do them? Any unbeliever, any faithless, uncaring, apathetic, indifferent believer could have done those things. This is the will of God, your sanctification, 1 Thessalonians 4.3, that you abstain from corruption, unchastity, impurity.

Don't do what you do, verse 5, in the passion of lust, like heathen who do not know God, that no man transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forewarned you. For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man, but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Well, it is a testimony, it is a call, it is a challenge distilled in this application chapter, Ephesians 4. He beseeches us, He calls to us, He pleads with us and testifies in the Lord that we no longer walk as common people do. I was reading a book, in closing here, I was reading a book on my trip, because I'm old school, it wasn't on a Kindle or a Nook or a screen, it was a folding book with a cover. But I was reading a book by Hugh Ross, talking about the Genesis account and its veracity as it is reflected in modern scientific discovery and inquiry.

There is evidence to indicate that the human presence on this earth may be quite a bit more extensive than we thought. Not saying that I agree or disagree with his view, but there are multiple lines of evidence to suggest that Adam and Eve could have existed as far back as 20 or 30,000 years ago, not just 5,000 years ago. It's immaterial to the truth of Scripture, because Scripture doesn't say how long ago it was, nor does it suggest that by adding together the genealogies you can calculate how long ago it was.

But it is a reminder to me of just how vast the human presence on this earth has been. How many countless millions of people have lived and died on this earth? Even now, the hockey stick of human existence and population on the planet, there's more people now on the planet than have ever been here. And the Lord God in heaven knows every single one, knows the individual thoughts and intents of every single one.

It boggles the mind beyond, I feel like an earthworm trying to understand the space shuttle, to begin to comprehend how vast God's power and His knowledge is, and how microscopically small I am in my life in the swarming, seething masses of humanity, not just present but past and even future. However, when you stop to consider how many in all of that time have been in the

kingdom of darkness, subject to the prince of the power of the air, and how many, by way of contrast, that small fraction that have been in the kingdom of light, and of that fraction, how many have been actively pursuing relationship with God, learning the truth of God, advancing to that realm of understanding and of maturity and of purpose and of function and of service and of reflection of the glory of God, that's a very small and select group. That's a number that you and I can be a part of.

If we take this truth to heart, do you seriously believe that God would be unrighteous to forget your work of faith and your labor of love, and that which you do in hope of receiving that well done at the judgment? There haven't been very many of us as believers that have taken that seriously enough to stand out in all of the humanity that God is keeping track of. You and I have seen the truth of the Word of God. We have been taught by Jesus Christ.

We know how to put off the old man. We know how to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. It's a precious truth.

We know how to walk in newness of life. We know how to put on the new man. We know how to express and to fulfill and to emanate the fruit of the Spirit.

We have everything we need to do that. It is simply a matter of choice. And when we do that, eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it hasn't entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for us who love Him.

It's an exciting opportunity. In however many days are left to us, they invest those talents in the things of God is something for which we will never have regrets. We will never be sorry.

And we will look back and be grateful that God imparted this truth, made it clear to us and gave us everything we needed to live in its light, to actually be and put on that new man who is ultimately going to be the new man that inhabits the future kingdoms of God. It's a wonderful and exciting thing. And I'm so grateful to God and to the Lord Jesus and to the Apostle Paul for communicating so clearly to us how simple and straightforward it is to walk the narrow road and enter through the straight gate that leads to life.

Let's close here in prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the opportunity, the tremendous gifts that You've given us by Your grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray that we as a group and individually will be worthy of the calling with which we have been called, that we can walk according to the power that is in us, that we can bring credit to Your name and bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in His name. Amen.