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Learning What to Wear and What Not to Wear! Ephesians 4:25-32

Introduction

Paul turns from how to walk and addresses what believers are to wear. He will return to the "how to walk" theme again in chapter five. The current passage 4:24-32, presents five contrasting analogies of what a person who is a believer is to wear. Like the "walk" section, this section also focuses on the conduct of a believer.

This section is an extension of 4:17-24 and focuses on the new nature that individuals receive when they receive Christ as their Savior. Believers receive a new nature, a new inheritance, a new heart [will], wisdom, righteousness, love, grace, patience, and more, all as a result of their new relationship with Christ as Savior and Lord. For believers, being "in Christ" or "putting on Christ" gives us life everlasting both now and for eternity. There are five contrasts in this section revealing what we should "put off" and what we should "put on."

NOTE: We need to be careful that we do not create a works salvation. It is easy to say amen to the admonition that we should avoid gossip, backbiting, lying, cheating, stealing, murder, adultery, etc. and to congratulate ourselves on not having done these things. It is not just a matter of not doing these things, it is a matter of motive (see Eph 3:14-21, esp. v. 17). We are to obey Christ and serve Him and others because we love Him and because we love others.

This is the reality of 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone be in Christ, he or she is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." This means we are to look, talk, act, eat, drink, dress, and live like the new person we are in Christ! (see 2 Cor 5:17-21) In Ephesians 4:25-32, we are challenged to put off some things and put on some things. There are five contrasting things we are to put off and put on.

I. Put Off Lying (the Old Person) – Put On the Truth (the New Person), 4:25

1. One characteristic of the unregenerate person is failing to tell the truth. This is an absolute concept; no lies, not just fewer lies. It is one of the Ten Commandments, Exod 20:16. Don't bear false witness against your neighbor. Neighbor is anyone, not just the people next door or down the street. A lie

- is a statement contrary to the fact spoken with intent to deceive. We are to speak the truth because we are all members one of another, Eph 4:15-16.
2. A lie may take many deceptive forms; exaggeration, shading the truth, cheating, failure to keep a promise, betrayal of a person, betraying a confidence, flattery for personal advantage, false excuses, remaining silent when you hear a rumor you know is false, or even true, etc.
 3. Where do lies come from? You don't have to teach a child to lie! Satan is a liar and the father of lies and liars, John 8:44. He wants us to believe that God is a liar too, Gen 3:1-5. The Bible says that hell is a place prepared for liars, Rev 22:15. Believers are forgiven liars who are to be controlled by the truth. If you always tell the truth you don't have to try to remember what lies you have told and to whom you have told them.

II. Put Off Unrighteous Anger - Put On Righteous Anger, 4:25-27

1. Jesus is our example. He got angry about the right things at the right time. When accused by the Pharisees of being demon possessed, Jesus said that a tree is known by its fruit and called them a "brood of vipers." On the day He entered Jerusalem for His crucifixion, He chased the money changers from the Temple, see Matt 21:12-17. The Bible distinguishes between holy anger and uncontrolled rage (Greek, *thumos*) or boiling anger. The Bible also does not condone an inward burning wrath and resentment (*parogizo*). The word used in verse 26 is *orgizomai*, a more disciplined anger. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger."
2. The Bible makes clear that holy anger is disciplined, i.e. under control, it is for the right reasons, and it is at the appropriate time. This kind of anger is devoid of hatred for a person and is focused on the sin not the sinner. This is a difficult assignment, but it is possible to do. Holy anger is only possible when we are under the control and leadership of the Holy Spirit.
3. Unbridled anger should be avoided for four important reasons.
 - a. It puts us under the control of Satan! Look at verse 27. It says when we let our anger burn we are giving place to Satan in our lives.
 - b. Anger is the first step toward murder! How many of you have heard, or said, or thought, "I could kill you?" For this reason Jesus warned in the Sermon on the Mount to beware of violent anger and temper, it is the first step toward murder and even if not committed we become guilty of murder, Matt 5:21-26. Anger is momentary insanity.
 - c. Unresolved anger is spiritually crippling to the body of Christ! So we have the warning in v. 26, "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath." The phrase, "Let not the sun go down . . ." does not mean its okay to get mad in the daytime, but be nice before nightfall and all is okay. It means to get rid of your anger quickly, see Matt 5:23.

- d. Unresolved anger cripples the fellowship of the body of Christ and creates a stumbling block to answered prayer, Matt 18:15-20, esp. v. 19 (a verse often quoted out of context).

III. Put Off Stealing – Put On Sharing, 4:28

1. The eighth commandment endows property ownership and God included other laws to protect the property owner. Paul's admonition is, if as an unbeliever or a believer you stole, do not steal. Do not take property that does not belong to you. Don't steal cars, but don't steal paper clips either. Don't make debts and refuse to pay them.
2. One of the cures for theft is this. "Let him work with his hands . . ." i.e. make an honest living with an appropriate wage. Included in this is the idea that the believer needs to watch what he or she does to earn those wages. Paul says here that it should be "what is good," an appropriate and honest wage that does not come from a questionable source, e.g. blackjack dealer at a casino would obviously need to retrain for another job. This concept has proven to be a problem for some.
3. Look at the motive for working. You would think that the Bible would say to work to feed yourself and your family. But look! It says that those who have stolen from others should "work with their hands" in order to "have something to give those who are in need." If idle hands are the devil's workshop, working hands are God's workshop. Although the context is not stealing, the concept of sharing with the needy also is presented in James 2:14-18 where the same point of our obligation to share the Gospel and also to meet material needs as well are addressed.

IV. Put Off Corrupt Speech – Put On Edifying Words, 4:29-30

1. Believers are to be very careful about what they say, when they speak, and to whom they speak. "Corrupt speech" literally means "rotten talk" or useless, worthless, mindless talk that many times includes profanity. Have you ever known someone who was saved but their mouth didn't get baptized? Matthew 12:36 clearly says we are accountable to God for every idle word spoken. God cares about how you talk. No corrupt or rotten speech should come out of the mouth of a believer. Paul also said to the Colossians, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt," meaning uncorrupted, see Col 4:5-6.
2. There are three principles enunciated here.
 - a. Say those things that edify the body of Christ.
 - b. Say those things that are necessary and useful.
 - c. Say those things that are graceful.
3. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit. The mouth is a window of the heart. It is possible to grieve the Holy Spirit with our speech and with our actions.

Violation of all of the items considered in this section, lying, godless anger, stealing, corrupt speech, plus the items in verse 31 below, and much more. When we talk like the world, think like the world, act like the world, eat like the world, drink like the world, and live like the world, our lives become grievous to the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us for salvation as is said in Ephesians 1:13-14. While we don't lose our salvation when we sin, we do grieve the Holy Spirit of God. When we stop growing in Christ likeness, the Holy Spirit must convict and redirect our lives to get us back on track. Our walk does not commend Christ. Our talk does not commend Christ. The Holy Spirit then must do what is necessary in chastening us to bring us back under the rule of faith, Heb 12:3-11.

V. Put Off the Natural Vices - Put On the Supernatural Virtues, 4:31-32

1. This is a summarization of all that has been presented in 4:25-31. The list of vices in verse 31 is not a check list that can be used to say that if one does not do these things, his life is okay. We must put away or remove from our lives anything that destroys the unity of the body. Paul says it well, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify," 1 Cor 10:23-24. We are free from the law, Gal 5:1-6, 13, 16-26, but not free to do as we please. We are free from the law to do what is pleasing to Christ.
2. Our walk and our clothing is the humility as stated in verse 32. This is the compassionate believer who is willing to forgive others and to work with them to promote harmony and peace. It also means that believers are to exhibit the positive fruits of the Spirit that are presented in Galatians 5:22-26 and Colossians 3:1-17, both of which are commentaries on Ephesians 4:31-32. In verse 32, we hear an echo of the Lord's Prayer which tells us to forgive others just as God has forgiven us, see Matt 6:12, 14-15.