

Walk In Purity
Ephesians 4:17-24
Pastor John Miller

I want you to peek real quick at Ephesians 4:22. Paul uses the expression, “that ye put off,” and in verse 24, another expression, “that ye put on.” There’s that which we put off, and that which we put on. I know you’ve perhaps heard me say this before, but I’ll say it again, that is a figure of speech or an expression used of taking off clothing and putting on another type of clothing. In context, what it means is taking off the soiled garments of the past life before we knew Christ, and, now that we’re saved, putting on the new garments of Christ and walking in true godliness and true holiness. We’re looking at the walk of the believer.

Go back real quickly and peek at Ephesians 4:1. Paul begins there and said, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Remember, there’s a scale in picture here—we’re on one side of the scale and Christ is on the other—and the worthy walk means to weigh the same as. We’re to bring our practice up to our position as we walk out in the Christian life the holiness that God wants to produce in and through us.

The first thing we saw is that we are to walk in unity, verses 1-16. I love what John Stott said. He said, “We are called to be one people, therefore we walk in unity; but we’re also called to be holy people, therefore walk in purity.” God said in His Word, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” The number one attribute that God wants to be known is by His holiness. If there is anything that should mark the child of God, it’s holiness. We don’t live holy lives in order to get saved, we live holy lives because we are saved. It’s the fruit of our salvation—God’s Spirit working in our life producing the likeness of Jesus Christ. We’re going to break that down a little bit more for you tonight.

Paul is describing the new wardrobe in this picture of putting off and putting on for the new society, the church. Their new life must be a new lifestyle. If you have a new life in Christ, it means that you live in a new lifestyle. We, as God’s people, have been called to the worthy walk, we’ve been called to walk in unity, and tonight we walk in purity. Paul tells us what we need to take off, it’s very specific, this is going to be one of those look-at-every-word kind of a message, and then he tells us what to put on.

There’s only two main divisions of these verses, verses 17-24. If you’re taking notes you can write this down. The first is, verses 17-19, the section of what we take off, the old lifestyle, the old wardrobe that’s been soiled by our sinful past and the picture of taking off the old garments. Let’s read it, verses 17-19. Paul says, “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord,” you always know you’re in a practical section of Paul’s epistle when you find the little “therefore’s.” That word is repeated all the way through Ephesians 4-6, because he’s putting into shoe leather the doctrines that we learned in Ephesians 1-3. He says, “...that ye henceforth walk not,” verses 17-19 are how we’re not to walk. This is what we’re to take off. There’s the negative, and there’s the positive.

A lot of churches today want to preach only positive messages, yet the Bible contains negative statements—don't do this, don't do that, take off that, stop doing this. Before we can put on the new garments, we have to take off the old garments. Paul says, "...that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk." In the Greek, the word "other" is not there so it's just, "...as Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." What a great list Paul gives us to take off here in verses 17-19.

We have one of the negatives of the Christian life, "walk not." As Christians, we're not to emulate or imitate the world. Our lives are to be different than that of the world around us, of the unsaved believers around us. They are dead, Ephesians 2:1, "in trespasses and sins," while we have been raised from the dead, and we're to walk in newness of life. Our BC days, before Christ, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Remember that? We're to walk in newness of life now that we are God's people. Paul points out that Christians think differently from the unsaved.

I want you to note where Paul goes here, verses 17 and 23. He uses the word "mind" twice, and in verse 18 he uses the expression, "understanding," and "ignorance." He's going to describe, before we were believers, our minds, our understandings, how they were darkened and not in the knowledge of God. Salvation begins with repentance, which means to change your mind. The Greek word is *metanoia*. It literally means change your mind, and the change of mind results in a change of direction. You've heard me mention it before. What does it mean to repent, *metanoia*? Change your mind about your sin, about Jesus being the Savior, about the way that you're living; and, as a result, it's all tied together, you can't have just a change of mind, it means that you turn around and go the other direction. You do a 180. If I'm living in sin, following the darkness of my mind, if I repent, then it means I turn around and go the other way. Someone said, "Repentance is to leave / The sins we loved before / And show that we in earnest grieve / By doing so no more." If we say, "I repent," but keep sinning, we haven't repented. We haven't really *metanoia*—changed our mind—and been changed in the direction of our lives.

I wanted to point out, and we'll be getting there, in verses 17 and 23, Paul mentions the mind, understanding, and as I said again, ignorance, in verse 18. What is wrong with the mind of the unsaved person? What is wrong with their mind? He says, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord," just a quick little note, that phrase "testify in the Lord" is Paul's way of saying, "What I'm telling you is given by inspiration of God. What I'm telling you came from the Lord. What I'm telling you is in the sphere of the Lord's revelation to me." He's not just spouting these things off. He does that for emphasis. He does that for, "Listen carefully. This is what the Lord communicated to me." All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, but Paul wants us to remember and know that. He uses that little phrase, "...testify in the Lord," it means a solemn oath, "What I say to you is what the Lord gave unto me," "...that ye henceforth," notice this is the negative, "walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity," emptiness, there's their minds, "of their mind."

When Paul says there, "...that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk," the believers in Ephesus were Gentiles. You would read that and say, "How do you not walk as a Gentile if you're a Gentile?" That phrase, "walk not as other Gentiles," is a reference to their sinful, wicked lifestyle. Gentiles were synonymous with sinful, wicked living. When we look at the sins that we're to lay aside, it's a description of how the Gentiles lived. He's not saying, "Stop being a Gentile," he's saying, "Stop living sinful lives." It's a figure of speech for, "Don't live like those Gentiles."

What Paul wants them to also understand is, "You are now Christians, so you're not identified as a Gentile or a Jew, you're now identified as a Christian." When you get born again, it's not about the race or the color of your skin, it's about, "I'm a child of God." Amen? We're all children of God, so we're to walk as Christians, not as a Gentile would live. We're going to see in this description of what we put off how wicked and sinful the Gentile lifestyle really was. They were without God, without hope. They were living in darkness, and just living a wicked, sinful lifestyle, which is not to be a part of the way they live.

Paul starts off with the root cause of their sinful behavior, "...the vanity of their mind." That phrase "vanity" there doesn't mean that they think they're wonderful or they think they're cool. It's not, "You're so vain, you think you're awesome." It's actually emptiness or futility. Their minds are empty. I'm going to have you turn, in just a moment, but there's an amazing parallel passage to what we're reading here, Romans 1, where Paul talks about the downward degeneration of sinful humanity apart from God, suppressing the truth of God, and ends up by saying, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind." Their minds are empty, and the word "reprobate" literally means broken, void, empty, or doesn't work.

Have you ever looked at an unbeliever, or even thought about your life before you were saved and a Christian, and thought, Man, what was I thinking? What was wrong with my mind? What was going on in my head? The problem is that you had a reprobate mind—it was just broken; it didn't work. This is why, now that you're a Christian, you're to have a renewed mind. It's a constant process of being renewed in the spirit of your mind through the Word of God and the Spirit of God renewing your mind, and that affects the way you live.

These unbelievers, and we before our conversion, had minds that were futile, vain, or empty. It's kind of like the book of Ecclesiastes where Solomon says, "Vanity of vanities...All is vanity," which actually literally means it's like chasing after bubbles. You know, kids love to play with bubbles. You put the little thing in there and blow the bubbles. They chase the bubbles. When you grab the bubbles, they just go POP! and they're gone. You can't really hang on to them saying, "I'm going to save this for a few weeks," and take it in the house. They're just so fragile, and there's nothing there. The word actually has that concept of chasing bubbles. In your mind you're just chasing emptiness.

Basically, when I became a Christian, I then understood—God gave me a new heart and a new mind—that I was living in the futility of my mind. My mind was just in darkness. The problem is their mind because they don't know God, they can't truly understand the world around them.

Hold your place here and flip with me back to Romans 1 because I'm going to allude back to it several times tonight in our study of Ephesians. I just want to read a little section together. It's not the entire section, verses 21-25. Paul says, "Because that, when they," that is, those unbelievers, unsaved men, "knew God, they glorified him not as God," they knew about God, they understood there was a God, but "they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became," here's the same word, "vain in their imaginations," it's almost a perfect parallel to what we just read about in Ephesians, "...their vain minds." It says, "...and their foolish heart was darkened," we're going to read about that in Ephesians as well.

Verse 22, "Professing themselves to be wise," the unbeliever who thinks he's so smart and so intellectual, "they became fools." I've always thought that verse 22 would be a great placard to put over the entrance of all the state universities and colleges of our land, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," notice why, "And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things," you have the evolutionary process. They rejected God for the theory of evolution.

Verse 24, "Wherefore God also gave them up," here's the downward trend, "to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." We're going to see as we go back in a minute to Ephesians that a lot of the sins listed there to take off are in the realm of sexual immorality. That's what characterized the Gentiles of that day. Notice verse 25, "Who changed the truth of God into a lie," literally in the Greek it's "the lie," "...and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature," we'll stop right there. Go back with me to Ephesians 4 but keep that in mind for a little bit more in depth look at Romans 1. As you continue reading in the text, they go down into sexual immorality, which involved homosexuality and then it ended up with reprobate minds. What a sad and tragic thing that is.

As we look at our culture today around us, we see this panning and playing out so clearly. Someone said, "Our world today possesses a great deal of knowledge but very little wisdom." Wisdom starts with the fear of the Lord, and if we reject God, then there is no real wisdom. We have improved means to unimproved ends. We have all this technology, all this scientific advancement, but we're still degenerated down in our culture. Man's heart has not been changed.

Why is the unsaved person's thinking so futile? Four reasons. I want you to write them down. They're from the text. The first reason that their minds are vain or empty is darkness, verse 18, "Having the understanding darkened," darkness. The unsaved person thinks that he or she is enlightened because they reject the Bible and believe the latest philosophies. No one can be truly intelligent, I believe, without a knowledge of the Bible or God's Word. They certainly can't know God. You have all these highly educated people, most of them are educated beyond their intelligence, by the way, but they don't know God and they don't know His Word.

The children in our Sunday school know more than the wisest of the wise of our lands because they know, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Think about how profound and yet simple that is. You have all these brainy people all enamored in evolution and the age of the earth, all this stuff, and they think it's scientific. Our little children just open the Bible and read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

How do you propound that we are all made in God's image and all equal in God's sight if we are not created? If we all evolved, some have evolved a little higher, some are a little more advanced—there's the weaker species and the superior species. You teach evolution in the schools, and then you freak out when the kids act like animals. Why are we shooting each other? Oh, by the way, you came from an accident—you came from nowhere, and you're going nowhere. There's no purpose in that, so their mind becomes futile, empty, and vain. They're living in darkness. It starts here with the result of the futile, vain minds is darkness. In Romans 1:21, Paul says, "...and their foolish heart was darkened," we just read that. They can't think straight about God or any spiritual matters. The unregenerated man cannot think properly about God.

Write down 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 where Paul says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world," we know that to be Satan, "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Their minds are blinded. The seed is sown, but it does not take root.

The second reason that their minds are futile is not just the darkness that they're living in but the deadness. Look at verse 18. It says, "...being alienated from the life of God," so they're living in darkness, and they are spiritually dead. Someone said, "God is light, but they're living in darkness; God is life, but they are living in a dead spiritual state." In Ephesians 2:1, I've already quoted it, the Bible says, that we, in our BC days, "...were dead in trespasses and sins."

The third thing that is characteristic of their futile minds is hardness. Notice verse 18, "...because of the blindness of their heart." That word "blindness," and you might see it reflected in some other translations (I'm reading from a King James translation), it literally means hardness. The King James Bible renders that "blindness," but the root word actually conveys the idea of hardness of heart. Man's condition has as its root the hardening of the heart. It indicates too that they do it willingly, deliberately. Remember, they knew God, they suppressed the truth about God, and then became vain in their imaginations. If you reject the truth, there's nowhere else to go but to a lie. If you reject the truth about God, the existence of God, then there's nothing else for you to believe but a lie. This Greek word *porosis* has the idea of like a stone, hard heart. It was used of a marble that was known to be the hardest stone that they felt existed. It was used of a heart of stone.

In Mark 3, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand in the synagogue in Capernaum. Those who saw the miracle, it says, hardened their hearts. It's the same word that's used in the Greek. It describes the inability and unwillingness to respond to God's truth.

Remember when Jesus told the parable of the sower and the seed? The seed is the Word of God; the soil is man's heart. There was one path where the seed landed on the beaten hard path. It couldn't penetrate. The birds flying overhead would swoop down and scoop up the seed. It wouldn't take root and bring forth fruit. It represents this hardened heart, which Satan steals away the Word of God when it is sown. They don't produce fruit. They don't respond to God's Word. Again, in Romans 1:18, Paul says they suppress the truth, so they are responsible for their blindness.

I heard the story of a little boy whose mother told him that he couldn't take his dog into his bedroom to spend the night, so he snuck his little dog into the bedroom. He heard his mom coming up the stairs to come check on him, so he stuck the dog in his toy chest and sat on the lid. He told his mom, "He's not in the room." That's what the unbeliever does—he puts God in a box, sits on it, and denies the existence of God—so their minds are void of truth.

Notice the fourth characteristic of this mind. There is first darkness, then there's deadness, and it speaks of darkness in their knowledge of God and deadness in their relationship to God; hardness is blindness, their hearts are hard; and the fourth, and last, verse 19, is recklessness. Notice it says, "...past feeling," or literally cease to feel. It says, "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto," and here's where it describes how the Gentiles lived, "lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Paul's describing the reckless way the Gentiles live, and he's actually saying to these people that come out of a culture very similar to the world we live in today, we're kind of seeing a rebirth of the Greco-Roman Empire, and it's in sexual immorality in our culture.

A little news article popped up in my phone about young people—millennials being interviewed—about what they think in 20-30 years will be acceptable in the culture that is not acceptable now. Out of the list of about ten things, eight or nine of them were different types of sexual immorality that they felt, "It would be free," and "It will be open," and "It will be a beautiful world that we can live in." I thought, What a sad, sad, sad state of affairs that we reject God, we live in darkness, we have no comprehension of any moral standard or fixed point by which to live our lives, and the world becomes just reckless in their immorality.

Let me point them out to you. The first is lasciviousness. This big, long word in my King James Bible literally means unbridled lust. You can do your own research and look these words up. It's conveyed in the word wantonness. That word means no restraint, no holds barred, just live in sexual pervertedness and wantonness. Another way to render that concept is shameless sensuality. That would be my best description, shameless sensuality. They give themselves to their sexual desires without shame, without reservation, just shameless sexuality. This is what it means to live as the Gentiles live. It's a life without concern for personal standards or social sanctions. This is how the Gentiles live.

The second word is in verse 19, "uncleanness." It actually means greediness or covetousness. Again, some of your newer translations might render that covetousness. It has the idea of every kind of impurity. It's covetousness in the sense of sexual immorality. I told you, if you're

freaking out on me right now, by the way, that these were the negative verses. These are the verses that people go to church not expecting to hear in the Bible. They are in the Bible, right? And, I'm reading them out of the Bible. I'm not making it up. You can see it yourselves. These are things that are not to be found in the life of a Christian. If we reject God's standard, we're not living a sanctified life, we're not living a holy life. I'm not saying you do this to be saved, but I'm saying you do this because you are saved. This is what should mark the believer.

Here's what this uncleanness or greediness or covetousness is. It's covetousness with a sexual emphasis—every kind of impurity with a continual lust for more. Every kind of sexual immorality with a lust for more and more and more and more. The New English Bible renders that, "They stop at nothing to satisfy their foul desires." I don't need to dwell on it, I'm not going to dwell on it, and I'm certainly not going to give you any illustrations of it. You've heard of the Ten Commandments, right? It's known as the Decalogue. Do you know what number ten is? "Thou shalt not covet." Do you know what's the first on the list? "...thy neighbour's wife." We think of it as his Porsche or his Ferrari or his swimming pool or his Rolex watch, you know, "Oh, I want that!" No, his neighbor's wife. It's in the context of "Thou shalt not commit adultery." This one sin, "thou shalt not covet," can lead you to breaking all nine of the other commandments.

David was walking on the housetop of the palace in Jerusalem and saw a woman taking a bath named Bathsheba. He coveted, and then he committed adultery, then he lied, then he committed murder. One sin after the other all started in his heart when he wanted another man's wife—covetousness. I can't tell you how damaging and detrimental that is. The Scriptures are very clear that we are to put uncleanness or covetousness out of our lives. This is what some have called the playboy lifestyle.

One of my favorite authors is John R.W. Stott. He has written an excellent commentary on the book of Ephesians. I don't usually quote authors at length, but I want to quote him at this point. Listen to me carefully. John Stott says, "If we put Paul's expressions together, noting carefully their logical connections, he seems to be depicting the terrible downward path of evil, which begins with an obstinate rejection of God's known truth. First comes their hardness of heart, then their ignorance, being darkened in their understanding, next and consequently they are alienated from the life of God, since he turns away from them, until finally they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. Thus hardness of heart leads first to darkness of mind, then to deadness of soul under the judgment of God, and finally to recklessness of life. Having lost all sensitivity, people lose all self-control. It is exactly the sequence which Paul elaborates in the latter part of Romans 1." He's basically saying that it's a progression here. It starts with their empty minds, and it leads to their licentious lifestyle. This is not to be named among us as Christians. We are to put these things off.

Here's the positive, verses 20-24. These are the clothes that we are to put on. He touches still again, taking off. You might say verses 17-19 are the soiled garments of the old life that we're not to wear as Christians. Here's the contrast, verse 20, "But ye have not so learned Christ," in other words, this is not what Christ has taught you. You haven't learned this from the Lord. He

says, "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus," I love that expression, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation," manner of living, "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind," and here it is, verse 24, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

If you're new to these verses, and you're kind of struggling with understanding them, a good thing to do is to read a modern translation and study it in the modern translation. Look up the word meanings. There's a lot of theological truth that's packed into these verses that's sometimes hard to piece together unless you've been through the whole series in the book of Ephesians.

Notice verse 20, "But," so the contrast, "ye have not so learned Christ," in other words, this is not from the Lord. What we just read about is not something that you are to have as part of your Christian lifestyle. The Ephesian Christians were taught the exact opposite of the world's style by learning of Jesus Christ, verse 20. What this means is that Christianity is Christ. Christianity is learning Christ, being taught by Christ, living in the sphere of Christ, and being transformed in the image of Jesus Christ.

In verses 20-21, Paul uses three terms which indicate that Jesus was the subject, the teacher, and the atmosphere of their instruction. Jesus is the subject, He's the actual teacher, and He's the sphere or atmosphere of our instruction. Let me point out what I'm talking about, verse 20. Jesus is the subject of their instruction indicated in the words, "...learned Christ." Notice that statement, "...learned Christ." Do you know what that means? It means you didn't learn just about Christ, you actually learned Christ. I could read a book about Abraham Lincoln, but I didn't learn Lincoln. I learned about Lincoln. When you really get the Spirit teaching you through His Word, you're learning Christ, you're becoming more like Christ. Then best way to grow in sanctification is to immerse your heart and mind in the Word of God. There are many ways God sanctifies or makes us holy, but none of them will bring any holiness into the life of a Christian without a knowledge of the Bible, without knowledge of God's Word. That's why, if we neglect our Bibles, we live defeated lives. Learning Christ is more than just learning about Christ, it actually carries the idea of learning to live out Christ.

Jesus is not only the subject, notice in verse 21, Jesus is their teacher. He says, "...ye have heard him, and have been taught by him." Sometimes when you're reading the Bible and the Spirit of God speaks to you through God's Word, you say, "The Spirit really spoke to me," or "God really spoke to me," but you could also say, "Christ spoke to me." It's the Spirit of Christ, Christ is speaking to us and His people through His Word. He's the teacher. The teacher is not the pastor or the Bible teacher, the teacher is the Holy Spirit. The teacher is the Spirit of Christ, Christ Himself. If you're reading your Bible or listening to a message from God's Word, and it's focusing on Christ, you're learning Christ and Christ is teaching you. You're sitting at the feet of Jesus. Christ Himself is the Christian's teacher. He may use a human instrument, but when we receive the teaching of Scripture, we're actually hearing Christ speak. It's the Word of the Lord. In John 10:27, Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice," so God's Spirit speaks to us, and He

uses God's Word as well to speak to us.

Notice, thirdly, Jesus is the atmosphere in which the instruction takes place, verse 21. "If so be that ye have heard him," that's Him speaking, "and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus," so we "...heard him," we "...have been taught by Him," and "...the truth is in Jesus." If you take Jesus Christ out of the teaching of Scripture, you don't have truth. You've heard me say before: If you don't have Christ, you don't have God; if you don't have Christ, you don't have the truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "Well, I study the Bible, but I'm not into Jesus." "Well, I'm into God, but not into Jesus." I've heard people complain, "You Christians, you're all into Jesus, I'm into God." "He that hath not the Son," has not the Father. If you don't know the Son, you don't know the Father. If you're not being taught by the Son, you're not being taught by God the Father. You don't have God without God the Son. True teaching has Jesus as its atmosphere—as its subject, He's the teacher, and He's the atmosphere. All Scripture, like all roads, lead to Christ or lead to Rome.

From the Ephesians Christians, we're infused with the very opposite of the downward spiral of the unsaved world. Listen to this carefully. Instead of hardness of heart they were given, by the Holy Spirit, tenderness or a softened heart; instead of darkness, we as Christians are given light; instead of deadness, we're given life; instead of recklessness, we're given holiness. It doesn't mean you're going to be perfect, and it does mean that you may stumble and fall, but the tenure of your life is getting more like Christ. Someone put it like this: It's not that you're sinless, but as you walk with the Lord, you sin less and less and less and less and less. If you've been a Christian for a long time and there still is much sinful lifestyle as before you were saved, you better check and make sure you've been born again or you better get on your knees and start reading your Bible because if you've been born again, anyone who is in Christ becomes a new creation, "...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," a new love, a new life, a new understanding. You're not in darkness anymore.

I remember becoming a Christian as a young man thinking, I'm not in darkness anymore. I have this new love. I have this new freedom. I have this new understanding. I knew God loved me. I knew I was a Christian. I knew I was going to Heaven. I knew I'd been forgiven. My mind had no comprehension before that. Paul is telling us to walk in this kind of lifestyle.

As a result of learning Jesus, Paul tells us to do three things. He tells us to put off, verse 22, "That ye put off," the old clothes, "concerning the former conversation," which means the way you lived, "the old man," which is your old sinful nature, and says put off your "...deceitful lusts," and says put off those evil desires. I want you to note this reference to "put off," here. Again, Romans 6 is a great parallel—know you died with Christ, reckon that you did by faith, and yield to the Spirit of God—but he doesn't say cast out. I probably don't need to mention this, and I don't want to open up something, I'm just trying to wrap it up. He doesn't tell Christians to cast out a demon or to cast out the lust of the flesh. He says, "That ye put off," put it off.

I don't believe that a Christian can be demon possessed, and I don't think you need a demon exercised out of you. I believe that you need to reckon, by faith, that you died with Christ and

that you yield to Christ, let the Spirit fill you, then let the Word of God renew your mind, and you walk in that newness of mind. A lot of Christians like to blame the devil on their sinful lifestyle, "The devil made me do it," to quote Flip Wilson, when in reality the Lord says, "No, you put it off. You take it off and then put on." It's so very, very important.

So, we put off. The second step, verse 23, is be renewed, "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind," by the Word of God, by the Spirit of God, by prayer and waiting on God. Again, John Stott says, "If heathen degeneration is due to the futility of their minds, then Christian righteousness depends on the constant renewing of one's mind." If heathen degeneration is because of the futility of their minds, then when we are going to be growing in sanctification is due to the renewing of our minds. You can't be an ignorant Christian and expect to be growing in holiness and true righteousness.

Here's the third step, verse 24, "...put on the new man," the old man is the sinful Adamic lifestyle and nature. The new man is the new creation in Christ, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. We finally start to put on the new clothes. I realize that most of what we covered tonight was negative. You say, "How was the message tonight?" "Oh, it was just a bunch of stuff about sinful things we take off, and it ended with just telling us to put on, but he didn't tell us what to put on." I don't want to leave you hanging. I want to just point it out. This is what we're going to study in the next couple of weeks. He says, "And that ye put on the new man," which means you don't lie anymore, verse 25; you don't get angry anymore, verse 26; you don't steal anymore, verse 28; and you don't speak foul speech anymore, verses 29-30. Then, in verse 31, you put off, "...bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice," and you put on kindness, "...tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Again, tonight we probably could spend a couple of weeks on these verses, but I'll close with this. Remember when Lazarus was raised from the dead, John 11? I'll cut the story short, but when he came out of the grave from being dead, he was wrapped in grave cloths. Remember that? Jesus actually said, "Loose him, and let him go." They were all excited, "He's alive! He's alive!" He's like, "Yeah, unwrap the dude. Come on." They were so stoked that he's alive, it's like, "Oh, we forgot! Let's let him free." They probably went and hugged him, and when they hugged him he probably fell over or something, like "Get me outta here." "Loose him, and let him go," so it's a picture, it happened, but it's a picture. When we become Christians, before Christianity, before we were converted, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Jesus gave us new life, now we are to be freed from the grave clothes, the old life. "Loose him, and let him go," take off anger, lying, stealing, filthy communication out of your mouth. These are garments that are the old life. Don't live like Gentiles. We're to put on the grace clothes and take off the grave clothes. Amen? Let's pray.