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**Getting Dressed**  
**Ephesians 4:22-24**

My three year old daughter enjoys playing dress up. When she put on her princess dress with tiara and loves to pretend she is a princess. The way she dresses tends to have a bearing on her actions. I've noticed when people dress formal they tend to behave and speak more formally. When people dress in shorts and T-shirts and flip-flops they behave more casually. And while ones outer dress can have some influence on behavior, I believe what is going on inside under the skin, in the places no body can see has the far greater effect on the attitudes, behavior and practices that come squeezing out to the surface of our life.

In Ephesians 4 Paul has stressed unity among the believers and encouraged the people of the church to work together using their gifts to build up the body of Christ. He urges believers to stop living like unbelievers, stop walking through life like they used to in ignorance and futility having been darkened in their understanding. He urges them to be sensitive to the spirits leading not with a heart so calloused that the spirit of God could never penetrate their hard unteachable heart. He challenges them (and us) to holiness and being taught by Jesus the truth of real spiritual life and what it is like to live it out. Jesus is the truth and the truth is in Jesus.

But the reality is for the saints who lived in Ephesus. For the believers who lived in what is now Turkey. The reality of the Christian life is that we still struggle with the old self, the old behaviors and old attitudes and old practices and manner of life that we once lived. When we were born physically into this world coming out from our mommas womb we inherited a nature to sin. A sin nature. We were all born into sin. That is what we did best. We were not as bad as we could be, but we all have sinned and fell short of God's perfect desire and so we remain as

bad off as we could possibly be. At the point where we woke up to our senses and realized we were sinners. We agreed that God was right about our sin and accepted His solution that he provided for us to solve our sin problem. That solution was in the form of His perfect son who came to this earth and died to pay for our sin, on our behalf and rose again to new life. When we accept that the Bible says that we are re-born, or born again. Ephesians 2:1 makes it clear we were once dead I our sin, but now God in Christ has made us alive, new, reborn. II Corinthians 5:17 “if any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things pass away behold new things come. There is then an old nature that needs to be put off and a new nature that needs to be put on. How am I able to put off the old self and put on the new? It seems like that old self just constantly harassing me. Is it indeed possible to put off the old self and put on the new? (READ with me Ephesians 4:22-24 ( READ)

In v.20-21 just before Paul has told us that we need a spiritual education. We need to learn Christ. Not just learn about Christ but learn Christ and hear Him and be taught in His truth. We need to go back to a very different kind of school where Jesus is our teacher and our subject. This morning we need to wake up from sleeping with our heads down on our desks`. Wake up eager to be taught by Jesus and learn how to live not as the unsaved but live like the new creatures we are, full of purpose hope, satisfaction and joy.

In v.22 the first thing Paul writes that we need to do is to what? Put off or lay aside the old man, (this is not referring to your dad the old man. This is referring to the way your formally lived before your new birth in Christ. This is the way you thought. This refers to your old attitudes, the things you used to put up in your life as number one priority. What you used to value. This is the human self without God and was deluded and deceived into a downward spiral by fleshly desires.

We need to put these things off. Put off the old person and put on the new person. Paul uses a word picture here of clothing. Putting off

some old clothes and putting on some new ones. What does that mean? Well v.25-32 gives examples of what kind of “clothes” we are to put off. For example, therefore, Put off falsehood. Put off the practice of the old life that were based in deceit. Stop lying. It goes on to tell us to put off sinful anger, stealing, put off speaking words that are unwholesome and ugly. Simply put, when we believe in Jesus we are to get rid of some bad attitudes and bad ugly habits and begin to build into our lives some new and good and right attitudes and habits and practices.

We were once driven by the old person but now we have a new person. The old self was corrupted, messed up and based on lies. The new self is created in righteousness and holiness and based on truth. Paul is not saying Ok now that you are a Christian you go work hard all by yourself to get rid of all those bad habits and while your at it make sure you exchange them for good ones. Paul is not saying; well now that you are saved from hell and heading to heaven its all up to you to improve yourself. No. It say in v.24 that God created. He has created in you and me something new and that something new was created in His own likeness in righteousness and holiness. So I am given the assignement to be hold and then told that God creates my holiness. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good words, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” So if its God’s workmanship and God creates...then what is my part? What am I supposed to be doing?

V.24 says that I am supposed to put on the new self. But how do I put on that bundle of new practices and attitudes and behaviors that God has created? The answer is in v.23 “be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” We tend to think of conversion as an event. We pray to ask forgiveness of our sins, repent, and say yes to God and what he has done in his son Jesus Christ for us. That conversion may give us our fire insurance and keep us out of hell. That conversion may get us into heaven. But there is far more to the Christian life then saying out of hell

and getting into heaven. The Christian life is an event sure, but it leads to a process. In Christ at the day of salvation we are given a new position once and for all in Christ, but day by day we must appropriate what He has already given us and created in us. Philippians 2:12 says that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is a work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” We are called to work out what God has worked into us.

You can read about the story of the resurrection of Jesus friend Lazarus in John 11. When Jesus arrived on the scene he had been already dead and in the cave-tomb 4 days. Even Martha admitted that by now his decaying body would smell terrible. But Jesus spoke and Lazarus came forth alive. The very next thing that Jesus said was “loose him and let him go”. Take off those grave clothes. Why? Lazarus no longer belonged in the land of the dead, he was alive. So why keep on wearing those old grave clothes. Take off those old clothes and put on new ones.

Problem is we kind of like our old clothes. The old attitudes and behaviors fit so comfortably on us that we simply don't want to throw them away. Its kind of like these old pair of worn out jeans. Dirty and have holes in them in all the wrong places. You probably wouldn't want to go out in public in them but you are pretty happy to wear these around the home. I have found that for most people its most tempting at home to wear the old clothes, the old self attitudes and behaviors. It makes no sense but we feel so relaxed and comfortable that we wear our ugly old smelly attitudes at home and hurt the ones we are closest too. Things we would never say in the lobby at church we say at home. We would never treat the people at work the way we treat the people at home. The problem is we like our old clothes way too much. They drape over our bodys nicely that we scarcely know they are there, until the Holy Spirit reproves us and wakes us up to look into the mirror of God's word and says. Get that stinking garment off. Put off that old and get on some

new. Romans 13:14 says “Rather clothe yourself, with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of sinful nature.

Paul is challenging these believers in Ephesus to a repeated putting off of the old behaviors attitudes and actions. Salvation comes in an event, but Paul uses the present tense here to note there is a repeated and continual process that needs to keep on going on. And that process for the believers involves a daily, sometimes hourly, sometimes minutely, putting off of the old and putting in of the new.

That again reminds me of my daughter Olivia. It seems she rather enjoys this process of hourly changing her clothes. She is constantly taking off the old sometimes because she has soiled her clothes due to lack of control and so she cries until mom or dad can come clean her up and get into some new clothes. As she matures, we hope that this clothes changing will happen less often, but yet she will still need to change on at least a daily basis. So we too believers we need to change our clothes. When we make sin messes we need to apply I John 1:9 “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to clean us up from all unrighteous attitudes, actions, behaviors and practices.” Hopefully as we mature in Christ it happens less and less but we will still daily need to put off the old and put on the new.

In v.22 it says that the Old man is continually being corrupted with the lusts of deceit. We tend to think of lust as only sexual desire. But lust that deceives can be thought of in far broader terms than that. There is the lust for more and more stuff. Lust for a new car and a new big screen TV. Lust for some new tool for your garage that will be far better than the ones you already have. Lust for a bigger house. This is all deceitful because it is trying to convince you that you will be satisfied if you buy them. But you know it lasts only a certain time and you are thinking about the next thing you need to get to satisfy. People have been known to lust for food, for a position at work. For a certain salary. People will lust for control and will lie and cheat to get an advantage.

People will lie and exaggerate a story to make themselves better than they really are. Others will nag and pester to get others to do what they want done simply as a way to satisfy their ego needs to control. You may be happy that you got your way for about a minute, but it is a lie and will never satisfy, because it is part of your old self and driven by the father of lies. The Christian is to put off all these things. Put off pride. Put off bitterness. Put off lust of all kinds.

If you are ever going to gain victory, they must daily be recognized, identified, verbally and flushed out into the open arena of confession before God. Say it with words. I sinned in this way. I was prideful in this way. I lusted in this way. I was bitter in this way. I stole in this way. The old clothes must be shed off. The only way we will ever begin to get them off is if we recognize that they are old smelly grave clothes that have no business being on and saved new creation of God.

I think many Christians stumble because they don't realize this. Read Romans chapter 7 we are still vulnerable to sin. The sin baggage will continue to try and tempt us. The very thing we do not want to do we will be tempted to do. Yes we are dead to sin and alive to God. Yes the old man has been drowned in baptism waters...but that rascal can still swim. The truth is that for the believer we will have to put off daily, hourly, minutely as long as we live. I want to be totally free and we can experience total freedom from the practice, but we will never become exempt from the temptation. I am hoping that my constant and continual choosing of righteousness. Saying yes to Jesus the evil one will eventually give up and let me alone in certain areas of temptation, and he has in some respects. But I am not exempt from Satan's temptation. I will continually need to put off the old behaviors, attitudes and practices and put on the new clothes.

So how do I do that? Certainly I need to be renewed in the spirit of my mind. The mind. That is where the battles are fought aren't they? In the mind. The spirit here is not referring to the Holy Spirit or just an

attitude. By the spirit in v.23 Paul is referring to the controlling center of our very being and means of relating to God. We need to be renewed in the inside, in the very controlling center of our being, our mind, our will and our emotions.

Romans 12:1,2 says "I urge you brothers by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." We need to get our minds to a place where they are running in parallel with god's thought. We need to have our thoughts become very similar to what God would think about a situation. To do that we need to get God's word into our minds so that we can know His mind. We need to know and be immersed into the truth of God's word for righteousness and holiness is fueled by truth. It is the truth that is lived out that renews the mind.

We renew our minds when we read in Colossians 3:2-3 it says "set your minds on things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God." Renew your mind by filling it with the truth of heaven.

In Ephesians it Paul prays in chapter 1:18 that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened so that we may know what is the hope to which God called us to, what is the glorious riches of the inheritance, and what is the immeasurable greatness of the His power. He wants us to open our eyes to see this truth of God's promises and power and purpose and calling. Renew your mind by filling it with the truth of His power, and promises and purposes for your life.

In Ephesians 3:18ff. Paul prays that we would be strengthened in the inner person. And that we would know the incredible depth and height and breadth of the love of Christ which surpasses all comprehension. And that he is able to exceedingly abundantly far beyond all we have could ever ask or think. We renew our minds when we fill it up with thoughts of how much God loves us and how much God wants

to work and move for us even beyond the best scenario we could dream up.

It is the word of God that gives us God's very own thoughts and values and desires and ideas. That is why every Christian should be regularly daily reading God's word. I challenge you to read the Bible through in one year. I was speaking with a friend who said he is going to read the Bible through 3 times this year and is way ahead because of busy work schedule he doesn't want to get behind. Less than 30 minutes a day. Perhaps just getting some of God's truth into us each day would be a great point of application for us. For if we ever want a chance of getting off those old clothes and getting on some new ones we need the renewing of the Word. Thank the Lord we don't have to create and sew up the new clothes. We don't have to weave them together, they've already been created by God, we simply have to put them on.

I may have gotten sinfully angry with my kids and asked their forgiveness and repented to God, and put off that old garment of anger, but then I need to put on some new clothes. I am not done dressing until I have put on the clothes of love and patience. In Galatians 5:22 we read about some of the fruit of the spirit; putting on love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

In Psalms 1:1,2 it says, "How blessed is the man that does not walk in the counsel of the wicked nor stand in the path of sinners nor sit in the seat of the scoffers, but His delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night and he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in its season.

Philippians 4:8 "Brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me practice these things and the God of peace shall be with you.

