

Walking in Newness of Life and Love

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we need you to speak. We are not here to hear a man's words or a man's insight.

We want to hear the word of God. We want to be addressed by you, and we need your spirit to illuminate the minds of our hearts. So please, God, move now.

Help us to appropriate these truths, to apply them so that we can live and grow in Christ-likeness as a church.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. In Victor Hugo's classic novel, *Les Misérables*, on his jail to feed his sister's starving children, and after he escapes from prison and he has a life transfer to a bishop, he tries to live a virtuous life.

But for the following 19 years, even though he seeks normalcy, even though he's really become quite the virtuous man, he can't escape his past because of this tireless police inspector named Javert.

[1 : 14] And Javert continues to hunt him down, and though this doesn't actually happen in the book, but in the musical adaptation of the book, Javert repeatedly refers to John Valjean as prisoner 24601.

And that conveys that even though it has changed to Javert, he remains this anonymous prisoner. He can't escape his past, even though for 19 years he's been trying to.

And sometimes I think that's how we think of ourselves as Christians. We call ourselves sinners, which is a true, wonderful statement of our lives.

But often in the way we think about it, in the way we live, the accent falls on the fact that we're sinners, still sinners. And that's a true statement too, right?

Indwelling sin is reality. Even though sin has been defeated, it's been eradicated, it lingers on. There's still life in it, even though it is diminishing and weakening.

[2 : 21] But if you survey the New Testament epistles and search for the word sinner as a way to describe those who already have faith, you'll find true instances when believers are called sinners.

James 4.8, Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. And in 1 Timothy 1.15, the saying is trustworthy and deserved that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, whom I am the apostle Paul speaking.

But throughout the New Testament epistles, Christians are addressed as saints 56 times. That's 1 to 28 ratio, right? The biblical accent on our new identity in Christ falls on the fact that we're now saints.

We are called to Christ, to live a new life in Christ, not on the fact that we're sinners. And of course, sinners are saved by grace. In order to live as those saints who have been called to us, but we need to recognize this radical change that has taken place in our lives.

In fact, we have gone from death to life, as the Bible describes. We've gone from darkness to light. And so because of this reason, we should live in a way that is characterized and motivated not by our indwelling sin, but by the indwelling spirit of God that enjoins holiness and brings new life to the way we live.

[3 : 39] And that's the main point of this passage from Paul. He says, we should live in keeping with our new identity in Christ. That's what he calls us to. If I may outline it this way, I'll follow.

He says, the first, I will describe the old man in chapter four, verses 17 to 19. And then the new man that we're called to be, 420 to 32. And then I'll lastly talk about the God man, the Jesus Christ, chapter five, verses one to two.

Look at first what Paul says about the old man starting in verse 17. Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

In the original Greek, there's a transitional word here at the beginning. It says therefore. So the NIV actually has the word so there in the beginning. And it's connecting the exhortation here in this passage to what's preceded in verses one to 16 of chapter four.

We have been equipped with God and because we have been equipped for God, now he's saying, I adjure you, you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

[4 : 46] And there's a repetition of the theme of walking, right? Of living in a manner that's appropriate, right? So he called us to walk according to the calling that we have received in earlier in chapter four, verse one.

And then that's all kind of hearkening back to chapter two where Paul said that we were saved so that we would walk no longer in the sins but that we would walk according to the good works that God prepared for us to do.

And so he's continuing that theme and explaining what it looks like to walk in the newness of life. And Paul explains that the way that the old man walks, the way the Gentiles, which is a reference to all unbelievers really, referring to the unbelieving Greeks at the time.

So they walk in the futility of their minds. It says, they are darkened in their understanding, verse 18, alienated from the life of God, right?

And this is echoing what Paul said earlier, right? In Jesus Christ, God broke down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles and between humanity and God and in them created one new man, right?

[5 : 52] And so we are no longer alienated but we are citizens in God's kingdom. We're no longer separated from God but we are included in his family and that's what he's talking about. But unfortunately for Gentiles, because they have no faith in Jesus Christ, they're still alienated from the life of God because they're spiritually dead, not alive.

And life, spiritually, comes from God. So they're alienated from the life of God. That's why they're spiritually dead as described in Ephesians 2. And that's what Paul means by the futility of their mind. That's how the old man walks.

The Gentile lifestyle is essentially futile. It's meaningless. It's purposeless. And if you're here with us this morning and you are not yet a follower of Jesus, then of course at this point you're probably indignant like what are you talking about, right?

My life is full of meaning, right? I do all kinds of things that is good for this world and I have a lot of purpose in the way I live. And of course in a way you would be right because you are fulfilling a part of God's call for humanity.

We have been created in God's image to rule over creation. He gave us creativity. He gave us the ability to communicate with one another. He gave us rationality, morality. He taught us and because of that when we live in those ways and you serve the world around you, you are fulfilling a part of that call that God's given all of humanity.

[7 : 14] But God didn't just create us to rule over creation. He created us also to represent Him. So, what good is it if you dedicate your life to serving human beings, working to improve the life of the impoverished, researching for a cure for cancer, etc.

If you do all of this without ever acknowledging the God in whose image we are created and from whom we derive our value as human beings and to whom every single human being is supposed to point.

what good is it if you dedicate your life to exploring the laws of nature, to physics, and to exploring the biochemical properties of different elements in order to shed light on the wonders of this world, if you do all of this without ever acknowledging the marvelous creator to whom our creation is supposed to be.

To use an analogy, what good is a house sitter, right, who admirably fulfills all the duties of a house sitter, takes great care of the house, keep things in order, keep things clean, but then when the time comes to it, refuses to handle the key, saying, oh no, owner doesn't exist.

that's a useful purpose for which that house sitter has been sitting in the house.

[8 : 38] Same way as human beings created in the image of God, when we are not living for Him, if we're not fulfilling our call that we are allegiance to Him, living essentially in futility, in vanity.

And think about it, what difference does it make in the end, right, in a life without God? You will eventually die, and not just you, but everyone whose lives you touch will die.

And like every other star, our sun too will die, and even before it dies, it will be so radically changed its composition that it will make Earth longer inhabitable. Everything will be destroyed, no survival will be around, and then no one will remember you or celebrate your accomplishments.

Everyone and everything you ever did will be forgotten. Every good deed, every discovery, every accomplishment nullified. That's why Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiastes chapter 1, verses 2 to 3 says, Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? It's the designer who gives the product meaning and purpose.

[9 : 55] It's the eternity of life that gives mortality meaning. It's God who gives humanity meaning. That's why Paul says, the Gentiles walk in the futility of their minds.

Then Paul gives two reasons why Gentiles walk in the futility of their minds. With God in verse 18, because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of heart.

So the first reason he gives is that because of the ignorance that is in them. And Paul is not saying, oh no, the poor Gentiles, they just, that's why they're doing this. That's not what he means. Because he says in Romans 1, 19 to 20, that they are without excuse because God has revealed himself manifestly in creation.

And he's not saying they're ignorant in the sense that they haven't had the opportunity. He's saying that they're ignorant in the sense that they have been un-righteousness. It's not an ignorance of lack of a, so it's a culpable ignorance in their ignorance.

And the second reason for the futility of Gentiles is that they're, due to their hardness of heart. So the ignorance of the heart is that they're not That's why it's, those two things are frequently related in scripture, even though we like to kind of separate them in our minds, and they are distinct ideas.

[11 : 10] But throughout scripture, there's a lot of overlap between the heart and the mind. That's why sometimes several times the Old Testament word for heart in Hebrew is translated in the Greek translation as mind because there's a lot of overlap between the two.

It's the inner self, right? And their heart has been hardened. And so futile thinking, it goes hand in hand with a foolish heart, a hardened heart.

And Romans 1, 21, 24 explicates this further. It says, for although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal birds and animals and creeps. therefore God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts to dismay and their bodies among themselves.

So futile thinking goes hand in hand with a calloused, foolish heart. And that's why for you, in the following verse 19, to describe that they become callous and give themselves up to sensuality, greedy to a...

[12 : 20] Is the mic going on in and out? Yes. Okay. Is that bothering you guys? It's okay. Plug it in. It's plugged in, so I guess we'll have to deal with it.

But when you get calloused to something, you don't feel it anymore, right? So a lot of string instruments have calluses on their fingertips, so you feel pain when they press down on those steel strings, right?

And imagine, I mean, this is a really important function of our body to feel. So imagine if you are so callous that you are not able to feel when you put your hands on a burning stove and you don't feel anything, right?

That's dangerous, right? Because you won't be able to escape the danger that's posed by that fire. And so in a similar way, he's saying that the Gentiles who walk in the futility of their minds become callous in a spiritual sense.

They're no longer feeling their loss, right? And they're increasingly becoming desensitized to sin and they're becoming dull to the feelings of their conscience. their hearts have hardened and they have lost their way.

[13 : 34] So because of that, they give themselves over to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. And it's ironic, right, that because of their callousness, inability to feel, that they become given to sensuality, excessively to sensuality.

I mean, it's our appetite for God. It's our sensitivity to Him and His ways and the delights that He offers us that keeps us from going into those sinful, sensual things.

And notice how Paul describes it as they're greedy to practice every kind of impurity. It's not like, you know, when we're in sin and lost apart from Christ, we just, oh, like there's a little bit of sin, I'm just going to enjoy it a little bit at a time.

That never happens because sin, it's in the very nature of sin to always overgrow its boundaries and to try to take over your life and to control you. And so what happens is that they become gripped to practice every kind of impurity, the insatiable desire for things that make us profane in the eyes of God, separate from God, because I'm not fit in the eyes of God.

to say the least. So that's the old man.

[15 : 02] But this is not the case for believers, for Christians. And that brings me to my second point, the new man. He says, Christians are not talking because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of heart.

And the reason why they're not like this, they're not like the Gentiles, is because of verses 20 to 24. But that is not the way you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him as a truth that belongs to your former life and is corrupt in your mind and is created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Our understanding is not darkened and we are not ignorant anymore because we have learned Christ, it says, because we were taught in Him.

And Christians were taught two things, according to Paul. He says, we were taught to put off our old self and to put on the new self. Right? And the principle putting on is extremely important for Christian living.

No one likes to wear sweaty, soiled, stinky clothes after coming out of a shower. Right? It's in the same way as people who have been created created, made new in Christ have to put on the new man and put off the world.

[16 : 32] And the change is so significant and theologians call this the process of mortification and vivification. Right? You mortify, you kill your old self, your sin and then you vivify, you make alive, you stir on, you spur on the new way of living in Christ.

And this is important because that means we don't just mortify sin, it doesn't end there, we don't just mortify our sinful greed, instead we have to vivify generosity.

We don't just mortify, let's say, pride and we have to vivify humility by serving one another. It's, we can't, I mean, and this is, it sounds like such a simple thing but if you think about it this is really profound.

It's very insightful truth into how we ought to grow as a Christian because our minds and hearts are a lot like our bellies, right? And what I mean by that is our bellies, they always have to be filled, right?

It's, if you want to quit eating junk food, you have to fill your bellies with healthy food. I mean, you can't go get around it because it has to be filled with something. Our minds and our hearts are the same way, they have to be filled with something, they're always filled with something and so the best way, our minds are never blank slates, even though some people like to believe that, and our hearts are never just empty vessels waiting to be filled, they're always filled with something.

[17 : 53] That's why you have to displace what is there and you have to fill the things of God in order to get rid of the things that are not of Him. That's the only way to get rid of sinful habits and to do vices is to replace them with virtue.

And that's why he says fill your minds and to have true righteousness and holiness in your life. It's when we are relishing the treasures of God and what He's given us that we lose our appetite for the trinkets of this world.

We have to do both. Mortify sin and vitify virtue. And in verses 25 to 32, Paul provides a series of specific applications of this principle.

He says in verse 25, Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

He's saying living in keeping with our new identity in Christ involves truth-telling. So Paul mentioned the truth earlier in Ephesians 1.13 and 4.15, and there the context was one of evangelism and discipleship that referred to the gospel as the truth.

[19 : 03] But here, he's speaking about truth in a more general way, and we could tell because he contrasted with lying, right, with taking off falsehood. And truth-telling is important for obvious reasons, and it's because God is described in Numbers 23.19 and Hebrews 6.18 as incapable of lying, right?

So we imitate God when we tell the truth. And Satan, in contrast, is described repeatedly throughout Scripture as the father of lies, right, in John 8.44. So that's one obvious reason to tell the truth, but that's actually not the reason that Paul gives here in this passage, right?

So look with me. What's the reason that Paul gives in this passage for truth-telling? It's not our vertical accountability to God, even though that certainly exists. It's our horizontal accountability to one another.

That's why he tells us to speak the truth. He says, for we are members one of another. Right? We are part of the one and the same body of Christ.

We are members of one and the same family of God, and how can we lie to each other? Lying erodes our trust for one another, and weakens our bond with one another.

[20 : 12] For this reason, honesty, which cultivates trust and foundation for the church that is trying to build itself up in love. Imagine there's a child, right, that is in the habit of lying to get out of things or feigning sickness, right?

So, oh, mom, I'm sick, so I can't do that chore. Oh, mom, oh, dad, I'm sick, so I can't go to school. Right? So imagine that this child is in the habit of doing that. When this child is actually sick and the child says, oh, I'm really sick, I can't do this, the mom and dad, even though they're the ones that love her most and want to do what is best for her, can't tell what is best for her because that child's been lying.

How do they know if the child's telling the truth in that moment or not? They don't. So they have to second guess what the child says and they have to, you know, that's an erosion of trust that cripples the parent's ability to care for the child that they love and they have their, then that's exactly similar to what happens in the church context as well.

When we don't tell the truth to one another, it erodes trust in the same way. So think about it, right? I mean, there will be times as a church, as we live together and try to, in love with one another, we're going to hurt each other, right?

There's going to be times when we offend each other. There's going to be times we're going to be wrestling with difficult theological issues. There are going to be times when we're sick, when we're grieving, lost, right?

[21 : 45] And then when someone asks you, hey, what's going on? Or, hey, where have you been? And you make something up so that, because you don't have to deal with the other member.

Well, you're, eroding trust by not telling the truth. The very family of God that have your best interest in mind and want to care for you are, are precluded, are unable to care for you because that foundation of trust has been eroded.

That's why this is so important. It's the first thing he tells us as an example of what a community is supposed to look like. It's, this is really a hard lesson and it's, I was convicted by it myself as I was just thinking about how so easily we just kind of think that our words and things that we promise are fungible.

You know, you can change it. And that's the culture we live in. Words are cheap in our culture, isn't it? Right? I mean, people, you know, take the vow, oath of office and then they turn to, you know, demagoguery and take bribes or like, I mean, people take, say the wedding vows and then they quickly, you know, say, oh no, this is not going to work out.

Let's call it a day. Right? I mean, people just, words are cheap. But here, the person that, the Christians, the church that is building itself up in love has to speak the truth.

[23 : 05] And in Psalm 15, God describes a blameless man as someone who speaks truth in his heart and swears to his own hurt and does not change. When we say things like, oh, just circumstances change or when we make excuses in that way, we betray the fact that our word is good only when it's to our advantage.

But for Christians, speaking the truth is not about our expedience or convenience. It's an expression of our love for one another. Because we're members of one another, that's the truth to one another.

Put away from the truth. Speak the truth with his neighbor. For we are members one of another. Paul gives another example of putting off the old man, putting on the new in verse 26.

Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. This puzzles a lot of people because we usually think of anger as a bad thing, right?

Be angry. And that is an imperative. And the reason why is this, because he's not saying that we should be in a perpetual state of anger because anger is a good thing. He's saying that when the occasion is appropriate for anger, you should be angry.

- [24 : 20] And so be angry in those situations is what he's saying. Jesus is described as being angry in Mark 3, 5. He says he looked around at the hypocritical Pharisees and then he said he had anger and was grieved by their hardness of heart.

When we see God dishonored and besmirched by sin, we should be angry. When we see injustice, when we see people oppressed, we should be angry.

Right? And John Stott puts it this way. He says, there is great need in the contemporary world for more Christian anger. In the face of blatant evil, we should be indignant, not tolerant.

Angry, not apathetic. If God hates sin, his people should hate it too. If evil arouses his anger, it should arouse ours also.

Right? Indifference to injustice, indifference to sin, that's not a virtue. But of course, there is sinful anger. Right?

- [25 : 23] And if our anger is misplaced or mismeasured, then it becomes sinful. If we're angry for a selfish reason or for no reason at all, which also happens, right? And that's a sinful anger.

It's misplaced. Or if we get carried away in the heat of the moment, we get angry and then we lash out and we yell, we say harsh things that we don't mean in our anger.

See, that's when the anger is mismeasured. Right? Then we sin in our anger. And so we need to balance this injunction to be angry with Paul's earlier exhortation to be patient, which literally means slow to anger.

Right? We need to hold those two things together. And because Paul knows that angry people are prone to sin, he adds immediately after saying, be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

Paul's here quoting from Psalm 4-4, which says, be angry and do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent. So what the psalmist is saying is, you know what? When you're angry, you're probably going to say things that are really going to be sinful and cut people down.

- [26 : 30] So you know what? Just be silent and lie down in your bed and think to yourself. That's what the psalmist is saying. So that's the context of the psalm that he's quoting. So he's saying here, so don't dwell in anger, but quickly and decisively deal with anger.

And that's the meaning of the admonition. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. I've seen some people who take that very literally. And I mean, I think it's better to take it literally than not take it at all. But I mean, I don't think that's the sense that's intended here.

It's like, oh, you have to make sure you're not angry before the sun goes down. Because then, right, every day the time changes. You better check the newspaper to make sure what time the sun sets, right? But that's not what he's saying.

But he is saying, deal with it promptly, right? Do it today. Don't postpone it. Deal with your anger now so that you don't sin in your anger. If there's someone, right? I mean, that's what Jesus says in the Beatitudes, right?

He talks about when you're offering your gifts off the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother. Then come and offer your gift.

- [27 : 32] Conciliation is not something to delay. We, with it, off, right? Being, you know, being rash in our anger and put on quickly, decisively dealing with anger.

I mean, they're trying to make honest money and then you're stealing from them, right? I mean, so it's like, and then he's just like, oh, he took the grapes and left, right? But that's exactly what happens, right? When you steal, right? I mean, you're benefiting from the fruit of other people's labor, right?

Instead of working hard yourself, you're benefiting from, you're stealing and you're benefiting from other people's labor. That's why Paul says, put off stealing and put on labor.

And labor, the word refers to hard work. It's the word that is used to refer to when you work to exhaustion. It's labor. You need labor so that we can be self-sustent, so that we can care for ourselves and not just for kids.

[32 : 29] The ultimate goal is so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Isn't that a beautiful picture of community? That's how the early church was described, right?

Acts 2.44, they had all things in common. Acts 4.34-35, there was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses, sold and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet and it was distributed to each as any had.

When we earn money by doing honest work, our goal is not simply to get richer, but it's to have enough to share with someone in need. What if that was the mindset that we had as a church community together?

What if we were intentional about budgeting things not just for our own goods, but to share with people in need in the church? What if because we did this so well, people could look at the church and say, oh, there's not a needy person among them?

That's love. That's the love that Paul's enjoying here. Paul also tells us in verse 29 to put off speech that tears down and to put on speech that builds up.

[33 : 46] He says, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear.

Paul is using a very colorful word here. The word corrupting is the same word that can be translated rotten or putrid. So think about a rotting fish, putrid apple.

right? Just, that's what he wants you to think of when you think of unwholesome talk that come out of our mouths. He wants us to have this visceral reaction against unwholesome talk that tears each other down.

And notice how categorical this command is. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. None whatsoever. It means no, zero sarcastic cutting down, zero profane swearing.

It means zero flirty talk that tempts people. No corrupting talk whatsoever. And he doesn't stop there. Let everything you say before the purpose of building up people and giving grace to those who hear.

[35 : 00] He says, only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that he may give grace to those who hear. The phrase as fits the occasion is a translation that can be more literally rendered according to their needs.

We need to, as a church, be aware of each other's needs and concerns so that we can speak to them in a manner that fits that particular occasion and need so that we can build them up and give grace to those people who hear what we say.

And we don't take this, I think, nearly seriously enough in general. I think churches all over the world and I think Paul, this is helpful, this author, a Christian author named Paul Tripp writes this in his book, Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands of how we should be ministering to each other through what we say.

He says, if you teach a Sunday school lesson, preach a sermon, or lead a Bible study, you would immediately ask yourself, do I have the time I need to prepare?

We often respond to our neighbor, golfing buddy, or church volunteer with little preparation, reflection, or prayer. Why do we spend hours preparing to teach while we offer important personal direction without a second thought?

[36 : 16] We forget that God uses those interactions to apply the transforming power of scripture to people's hearts. We forget that God's word is our primary tool of change.

Instead, we come up with a little personal wisdom and personal experience and let the words fly. an average person, research varies wildly, but an average person speaks about 16,000 words per day.

Can you imagine if in all are speaking to one another, if every word was made to count and harness to build each other up? What an impact that would have during the passing of the peace, right?

during our monthly luncheon, before and after the service, during community groups, during the week. These are opportunities for ministering to one another, speaking the truth to one another.

And then Paul wants to motivate them further and he adds this kind of summarizing statement in verse 30.

[37 : 31] He says, And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. This is a staggering statement because he's saying that by what we do, by what we think, and by what we say, we can grieve the Holy Spirit of God himself.

See, God is not this disinterested bystander, right? He is intimately involved in our community, in our church, in our lives, and he is invested in us so much so that it grieves him, it saddens him to see us living in the manner of this old man.

This statement also proves that the Holy Spirit is a person, isn't he? He's able to grieve. He's not this impersonal force, right? But it's interesting to note at this point, we just preached on Psalm 51 on our Friday service.

We go through the Psalms during our corporate prayer services on Fridays. And there, actually, David is at one point, this is after he commits adultery with Bathsheba and is confronted by, you know, prophet Nathan.

And so now he's kind of really remorseful and he says this in verse 11, cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. It's so desperate, right?

[38 : 55] He's like, please don't take the Holy Spirit from me. But notice what Paul doesn't say here. He doesn't say, if you don't do this and if you don't put off these things and put on these things that the Holy Spirit is leaving you, right?

Instead, he reassures them that the Holy Spirit is with them. Look at what he says. You were sealed for the day of redemption. He told us earlier in Ephesians that it's the Holy Spirit that sealed us.

He is the seal, the guarantee that we would have our heavenly inheritance and our ultimate salvation. So what he's saying is that, you know what? The Holy Spirit is committed to you. He's always by your side.

He's sticking to you, with you, through thick and thin. He's not going to leave you, but you can grieve him. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit. Then in verse 31, he offers his last exhortation to put off the old self and put on them.

You let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. And the positive counterpart to that, to put on, is verse 32.

[40 : 00] Be kind to one another. Tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. Put off bitterness and resentment toward one another.

Instead, put on kindness to one another. Put off wrath and anger and clamor toward one another. Instead, put on tender-heartedness. Put off slander of one another and put on forgiveness of one another.

And notice how all of these virtues that Paul commends are social virtues. Right? We often think of Christian maturity in such individualistic context. Oh, like, how diligent have I, right, been in serving God?

Right? And I'm prone to this as well. Like, how diligent have I been in my devotions? And we think that's a sign of maturity. But for Paul, he can't separate Christian maturity from the corporate context of the church.

Because Christian maturity happens when we're ministering to one another and growing together as the body of Christ. That's Christian maturity. That's why all the virtues he enjoins here is social virtues.

[41 : 09] Because we're members one of another. And then, in case he left off anything, he adds malice, along with all malice.

The word malice is kind of the generic Greek word for evil. Right? It's the word that is used to describe good and evil. So he's saying anything evil, anything bad, make sure you don't do any of those things.

And that contrast with Paul's repeated use of the word good. He used the word good twice in this passage. He said in verse 28, let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands.

The honest is a translation of the word, generic word for good. Same thing again, verse 29, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth, but only such as is good for building up. So by drawing this contrast from malice or evil things with the good things that he is enjoining, he's basically telling us to walk the good works that God prepared for us to do that he mentioned in chapter 2, verse 10.

And we can't just do one and not the other. We have to put off evil and put on the good, put off the vice and put on the virtue. And this is for us a daily and hourly and moment by moment activity.

[42 : 22] It takes intentionality. We have to take every thought captive to obey Christ. We need to guard our hearts with all vigilance for from it flows the spring of life.

This is something we have to be vigilant about to do every day. I mean, especially as the winter months are approaching, we had daylight savings, right? In New England, you have to wear, right?

So that means a lot of putting on and putting off, right? It's just put on a lot of layers and when you get inside to a warm place, take it off, put it off, right? More often than that, more frequently than that, are we intentionally thinking about what we're putting off and what we're putting on?

If you have a vice, a sin that you're dealing with, think about the counterpart. What is it that you can put on that you can pursue full steam? But all of this, of course, is easier said than done, right?

In fact, it's idealistic and impossible to implement unless God renews us and recreates us through our union with Christ in his death and resurrection.

[43 : 35] And that brings the final point, the God-man. This is really the heart of what Paul means when he tells us to put off the old self and put on the new self. I mean, there's so many inspirational self-help books nowadays that promise newness, right?

I'm sure you've seen some of these titles. Some of them include The New You, A Fresh Start, Brand New You, Oh, The Whole New You, right? These books are promising this new mindset, right?

A habit that will change your life. But that's not what Paul is talking about. He's speaking of something far more substantive and significant than that. The old self is not merely a reference to an old lifestyle or a mindset, but it's a reference to our human solidarity with Adam in his original sin, right?

Romans 5 to 12 to 29, I'm not going to read the whole thing, but it says, Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned, for Adam was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass, for if many die through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace that one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for many.

[44 : 53] For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. That's the man.

It's Adam that we are all a part of, and the new man is Jesus Christ with whom we are now united. Like this, I mean, you guys know about, you guys all have heard the story of David and Goliath, maybe, right?

And they're in battle and sometimes to spare the lives of all the soldiers, they elect a champion to represent the army, right? And so get the best fighter from your camp, have them fight the best fighter from our camp, and whoever wins, their whole side wins, right?

And the rest of you will be our slaves, right? That's the idea, right? So David and Goliath, right there, is an example of that. See, Adam was our head. He was our representative.

He was our champion. He lost. He failed. And because of him, all of us were conquered, enslaved, enslaved to sin and death.

[45 : 57] Nothing we could do about it. We're hopeless. And then comes Jesus. He says, he is the new man that Adam was pointing to.

That he is our new champion. He fights and he wins. And because of him, all of us are victorious. That's the reality that Paul's speaking of.

That's the old man. No, you are not part of that old man anymore. Don't live in the life of sin that you were once enslaved to. Don't live a life that smells of death. Live now in the newness of life because you have been united with the Lord Jesus Christ who is victorious.

Isn't that amazing? That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. And because of that once and for all reality of what Christ has accomplished for us, that is precisely what enables and enjoins our daily putting off and putting on.

We can't put off and sin and put on holiness apart from that once and for all putting off of the old man and putting on of the new man in Jesus Christ.

[47 : 05] To try to put on good days and good works apart from that renewing work and recreating work of God in Jesus Christ, it would be like putting on new clothes even though you're still stinky and soiled and smelly, right?

it's pointless. Soon, your clothes will be soiled, the new clothes will be soiled just like your body.

It will reflect your squalor, our sin, our filth. We need the renewing, creating work of Jesus. And notice how he says that.

He kind of talks about our responsibility and then he follows that with God's action in verses 23 to 24. He tells us to put off your old self in verse 22. That's something we have to do.

But then he tells in verse 23 we have to be renewed in the spirit of your minds. It's a passive verb. It's what God does. He renews us. In verse 14, he tells us to put on the new self.

[48 : 05] That's something we have to do. And then he continues putting on the new self involves being created after the likeness. It's again a passive verb. That's what God does. It's because we have been renewed and because we have been recreated that we can put on.

It's because of what Jesus has done we can live in keeping with our new identity. And that's why at the heart of this passage Paul continues to bring people back to that reality of union with Christ.

Verse 20, but that is not the way you learned Christ. This is an unprecedented use of the word learn here. Usually you learn a content.

You learn the law. You learn the statutes. You don't learn a person. But that's exactly what Paul says. You learned Christ. What he's saying is you got to know him.

You got to have a relationship with him. You got to have fellowship with him, commune with him. It has to be understood in light of what Paul says in Colossians 2, 6, 7.

[49 : 06] Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established as you were taught. To learn Christ is to welcome him into your life as a living person and to daily, moment by moment, walk with him and to be increasingly defined by and characterized by who he is, his thoughts, his priorities, his teachings.

That's why Paul grounds his final exhortations in what Christ has first done for us in verse 32 and following. He says, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Chapter 5, verses 1 to 2, Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. So we've come full circle, right? We began in chapter 4, verse 1, Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

And now in chapter 5, verse 2, this is a unit, it's enclosed together by this phrase, Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. We become more like Christ by walking with him, by living in the light of his forgiveness of our sins.

[50 : 30] And that's really the heart of discipleship, isn't it? It's imitation. Sometimes we think of discipleship as something fancy that only trained ministers can do. That's not true. All of you guys can do it. It's about more mature believer walking with a less mature believer and saying what Paul said, hey, imitate me as I imitate Christ.

That's discipleship because there are things that have to be taught, but a lot of things about the Christian life has to be caught. It has to be modeled. And that's what I want you to walk away with at the end of it is that as we walk with Christ and learn about him, learn him, and internalize his radical mercy and grace, that's when his forgiveness of our sins releases the power in our lives to forgive one another.

It's when we walk with Christ and learn his self-giving love for us, that's when the fragrance of the love of Christ begins to emanate from our own lives. It's as we walk with Christ who is the truth that we begin to speak the truth to one another.

It's when we walk with Christ and learn his generosity that we learn to stop stealing and to work hard and share with one another. So let's live in keeping with our new identity in Christ.

Walk with Christ.