

Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 4:20-24 - Put Off, Renew, Put On - Part 1

This morning we begin looking at the most practical section of Ephesians in terms of getting sin out of your life. How many of you have struggled to get sin out of your life? Every hand should go up. We're all wretched.

1 Cor. 10:13: There is no temptation that has overtaken you except that which is common to man.

Whatever you're struggling with, I promise you that other people in this very church are struggling with it too. You're not the only one.

Paul goes on to say that God is faithful and will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Write that verse down and memorize it. Because when you're in the middle of temptation you need to be reminded that not only are you not alone in the struggle, God is faithful and you can overcome any temptation. You have the power to say no to sin. You do.

Here in Ephesians Paul has given us this stark command to not walk like the Gentiles - the pagans, unbelievers - and then described their lives. It's sobering and convicting. Many of you have mentioned to me how convicting this section has been. It should be. We have to be reminded as Christians that we are to live holy lives.

Paul says that when we learned Christ - when we learned the gospel - we were called to holiness.

And here Paul gives us the practical way of getting sin out of our life. And it's a simple process. But it requires work. It's like exercise. Yeah, walking 2 miles a day is a simple routine but you have to actually go do it.

Yeah, giving up sin is pretty simple, but it's hard to actually do.

Here's the simple pattern: put off sinful acts, renew our mind with truth, put on righteous acts. That's the pattern we're going to see for getting sin out of our lives. It's like changing clothes. We take off one set of sinful clothes, inform our minds with truth and then put on a new set of holy clothes. Literally the words for put off mean to take off clothes, and the words for put on are to clothe yourself. That's what we do with sin and righteousness.

Let's take any sin. Let's take lying. Maybe when you came to faith in Jesus you lied a lot. You were a liar. And even now you struggle with lying. You're deceptive, you're coy. You embellish stories, you stretch the truth, you're not fully honest with people when they ask you something. You say you'll do things and you chronically forget or just don't do it. You lie on forms or questionnaires. Whatever.

You're violating the 9th commandment which is bearing false witness. The problem is that you've become so entrenched in it, it's really hard to stop. That's how it is with all sin. Maybe some of these are big deals, maybe many of these are "white lies" - tidbits that don't really matter but you add them, or leave them out and you don't know why you do this. You know it's wrong but you've never really sat down and thought about it. But you feel bad.

So what do we do here? We go through this put off, renew your mind, and put on process. And it takes thinking about it. You have to be dedicated to this process.

So what do we put off? We put off any falsehood. Any active lie, we stop immediately. We have to end the sinful actions immediately. Whatever they are, and all of them have to stop.

This also means you need to think through the situations when you lie. Are you an embellisher? You get carried away in stories. This means that when you see someone you know, you need to resolve that you will only tell the truth in that conversation.

You're not going to exaggerate how many hours you worked.

You're not going to exaggerate how big the fish was.
You're financial dealings will be above board.
Nothing coming out of your mouth will be false.

And here's the key part of putting off lying. If you fail, you will immediately stop, confess the sin, apologize, and make it right.

You're talking about some deal you did and how much money you made. And you embellish. "Oh yeah I made \$1000."

No you didn't. You made \$400. Now, what do you do once that comes out. You stop, and say, "I apologize, that's wrong - I lied - I only made \$400. Forgive me."

You do that the moment you catch yourself. Either in the conversation or as soon as you realize it. And you're thinking "Well, that's embarrassing." Yes, it's very embarrassing to lie. It's also very sinful to lie to people in the sight of God. And if we can't be trusted to tell truth about a small detail like that, then what can we actually be trusted to say?

I remember hearing about a guy who killed a man in Tennessee decades ago. It was a cold case, no one found him out. Later in life he became a Christian. You know what he did? He turned himself in. He told the truth to the police and accepted the consequences of truth telling. Truth telling is hard.

So we stop lying, confess, apologize, and make it right.

And here's what happens, if you actually do that: if you actually repent from your lying like immediately and publicly and contritely. You know what happens? You stop lying. Why? Because you don't want to go through the shame of apologizing for lying about something.

It turns out that shame is actually a good thing. Shameful things are shameful. And it's okay that we not do some bad thing because it's shameful. So we put off specific acts of lying.

Then we need to renew our mind. What's that mean? It means you need to stop and ask "Why am I sinning?" Why do I do this?

Why lie? Are you a people pleaser? You just want to be a good storyteller? Maybe you lie because it makes you money. Avoids you taxes. Makes you friends. Makes you popular. Keeps you from a fight with your dad or your spouse or your boss. But why do you lie?

Sometimes you have to drill down. Our hearts are deceptive and not everyone lies for the same reason.

If you lie to make friends, that's really just a form of fear of man. You don't think people will like you if you tell them the truth, or if they knew more about you they'd reject you. So how you renew your mind is with the truth of Scripture. You need to memorize passages and study the Bible specifically for truth about how you only fear God and not man.

You need to memorize proverbs that say God hates liars and that liars are an abomination to God.

Maybe you lie to make money. If you lie to make money, maybe you need to repent of greed and memorize some verses on greed. Or memorize verses on contentment.

Maybe you lie to get your way. You manipulate people. Well, that's not loving. Love does not insist on its own way.

Maybe you lie by saying you'll do something then you don't follow through. Oh yeah, I'll come by tomorrow and help you with that project. These are empty promises. And maybe you do it to avoid conflict, or to simply appease people in the short term.

You get the idea. Why do you lie? Why do you sin? Do a Bible study on lying. What does the Bible say about lying and deceit and cheating. And what does the Bible say about truth?

In biblical counseling this is crucial to overcoming any sin - but here lying specifically.

Memorize passages that deal with that. Write them on your wall. Put them on sticky notes in your car. Your mind needs to be renewed with truth about this specific sin.

So you've identified the sin you need to put off. You're going to relentlessly, and maybe sometimes embarrassingly confess that sin immediately when you do it.

You're renewing your mind. You're searching scripture, you're seeing what God says. And then you put on the righteous behavior. What's that mean? It means you will only tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

If you're talking to friends, maybe it means you need to think very carefully about how you tell a story. If you're filling out taxes, maybe it means you careful to not claim things you can't claim. If you're trying to get your way, you are diligent to simply confess where you're coming from. This is the process. **Read 20-24**

So the old self is the old sinful self. You've been reborn in Christ, but you've still got some of that old nature in you. You're still wearing some of the old clothes of the pagans. You got to take that off.

You're renewed in the spirit of your mind. Truth is floating around in your brain: convicting you and controlling your actions. And now you are actively doing righteousness.

This is the Christian life. Look at Paul's very first example of how to do this. Put off, renew your mind, put on. **Read 25**

We just walked through this, didn't we? Here, what does Paul say to put off? Falsehood. Lying. Deceit. Cheating. Misdirection. Intentional vagueness that leads to confusion.

What do we put on? Speak the truth with his neighbor. So you take off the old clothes, as it were, of falsehood. And you put on new clothes of speaking the truth.

Now, did you see what truth he uses here to renew the mind of the Ephesians? **Read 25**

What truth does he mention here to renew our minds? He says, you're members one of another. If you have a problem lying to other Christians, one of the truths you need to remember is that we are all one in Christ. We're members of the same body. So when you lie to another Christian, it's like you're lying to yourself, which is kind of crazy if you think about it.

Think about a body that lies to itself.

There's a disease mentioned a lot in the Bible, Jesus healed a lot of it. It's when your body lies to itself. Your body experiences harm, but your body doesn't tell you there is any pain. What's the disease? Leprosy.

The reason lepers often are missing fingers and toes and limbs is because they hurt themselves and didn't even know it. They cut their foot and got gangrene, so the foot gets amputated. They tripped and broke a bone, and can't feel it. And now they've got infection and disease.

The bodies of lepers are lying to them.

You ever been dizzy where body doesn't know which way is up? Your ears are not correctly processing the leveling fluid in your ears to send information to your brain about which way is up? Does that go well for the body? No. Misinformation is happening. That's what it's like when a Christian lies to another Christian.

So lying - especially to another Christian - is like spiritual leprosy. It's like spiritual drunkenness or dizziness. You are harming the body of Christ. And since the body of Christ is Christ's body - you are attacking Jesus. You're lying to the Lord.

I mean, imagine that. If you were telling Jesus about the trip you went on and were lying about something in it. "Oh yeah, Lord, I caught 10 fish" when you only caught 5. Would you do that? Would you lie to Jesus's face about your trip? Or your finances? Or your taxes? No. Neither should you lie to other believers who are members of your own body and his body.

So with that truth - that we are members one of another - and other truths about lying and telling the truth, now we set out to be diligent to speak the truth always.

And when we set out, we need to be very specific and very gritty.

So when we're putting off, and we mess up and sin, we instantly correct. We instantly confess our sin, apologize for our sin, ask for forgiveness for our sin - all very humbling. And then we commit to telling the truth.

When we're putting on, we're putting on specific behavior, in this case truth telling. We are committing to only telling the truth. Only being clear. Only fulfilling what we say we're going to do. **Look at Col. 3:5-11**

This put off/put on language is essential to living out the Christian life. Here, Paul also adds the imagery of putting our sin to death. **Read 5-15**

Same kind thing, isn't it? Put off these things, put on these things. And here, the way Paul says to put it off is to murder it. Put it to death, mortify it.

Let me tell you something, if you are going to get sin out of your life, it's going to feel like parts of you are dying. It's going to be painful and hard and completely worth it.

Jesus says if your hand causes you to sin, what do you do? Chop it off.

If your foot causes you to sin, what do you do? Chop it off.

What about your eye? Gouge it out. That's gross. Is he being literal? I notice most of you have all your hands and feet and eyes. No, he's not literal, but he is serious. And those illustrations are very graphic of painful amputation. Usually getting sin out of our lives is painful. It's hard.

It's shameful, it's giving up something that gives us pleasure. It's changing habits.

Sometimes the Lord in his grace makes sin easy to overcome. But oftentimes it's hard. We're now swimming upstream of our natural desires and it's just hard.

When I think of sanctification it's almost like wind resistance when you're driving. When I drive my motorcycle here in town at 25 there's very little wind resistance. When I drive in the country at 45 it's actually very pleasant in the summer. When I get on 395 at 60mph it's loud and starts beating me up. If I get on the freeway at 70, the wind is brutal and pounding.

That's how our sanctification is. Early on, stripping off sins isn't so bad. Maybe a little later we're encouraged by some of the sin we're putting off. But as time goes on the sin that we're dealing with gets harder and harder. Until the last of it is pounding on us and we have to endure.

That's natural. Paul called himself the chief of what? Sinners. The apostle Paul, toward the end of his life. Why? Because he's battling this sin.

So Put off, renew your mind, put on. The first example Paul gives is lying. Put off falsehood, put on truth. **Let's look back at Eph 4** and see the next one.

Let's talk about anger. **Read 26-27**

Alright, this is very well known passage. It's in the list of put off, renew, put on. So what exactly are we putting off here?

Put off two things here: sinful anger, and delayed reconciliation. He gives two commands in the negative. Be angry and sin not, I think is the Old King James.

Anger, all on its own isn't necessarily bad. Sometimes anger is good. Your kid gets beat up by a neighborhood kid, anger is probably appropriate. A thief breaks in and steals stuff from your house. Anger is just fine.

God is every day angry with the wicked.

The problem with anger is when we fall into sin when we're angry. We lash out. We swear. We're harsh. We throw things, say things that are sinful, we smart off.

I'd say most of the time we're angry we fall into sin. Just like many times when we're sad we fall into sin. Emotions aren't necessarily bad, but the sinful outburst is bad.

I mean, how many times can you look back and say "Man, I was angry and how I expressed that was just wonderful"?

So we put off sinful anger. So let's get practical. What happens when you get angry?

Do you yell? Do you swear? I'll be honest, when I'm really angry I have to be very careful to guard my mouth. The old man in me - my sin - is swearing. Do you throw things? Insult people? What is it you do?

When people come to me and confess their anger, I often ask, describe the actions you took. Write down the sinful things you did.

And now what we need to do is specifically not do those the next time we're angry. You're going to get angry again. It's going to happen. Someone will cut you off. You kids will not do their chores. The government will mess up your taxes. Your doctor will not see you, whatever it is.

You need to have a plan. You need to know when you're most tempted to sin. And covenant with the Lord to put off those sinful expressions of anger that you wrote down.

And if you do them, you need to stop and apologize right away, ask forgiveness, and make it right.

The other part, which I think it more of the put on, but there's the element of put off is do not let the sun go down on your anger. **Read 26-27**

Does that mean we have to resolve every conflict before twilight? I don't think so. If you can resolve stuff before you go to bed, I think you should. Whether it's with a friend, your spouse, kids, a fellow churchman, whoever.

I think the point is more that we need to resolve conflict fast. "I'll see so and so next week." No - do it now. Nothing is getting better by waiting.

Put off laziness in reconciling with people. Or fear or pride or whatever it is. Maybe you really have a fear of conflict. You don't want to have to work through things when it's hard. I get it, I don't like that either. But we have to. We have to put off not calling a person. We have to put off avoiding.

What do we put on here? I think we put on fast reconciliation. We should be known as the people who are quick to resolve conflict. You have a problem with me, call me. Don't let it simmer. Don't stew on it. Someone had an issue with me this week. They called me like 2 hours later. It was wonderful. I'm so thankful.

Man, get that stuff resolved. In a good way, in a helpful way. But do it.

In my experience, men are usually better at confrontation with each other. "Hey man, what are you smoking? Why would you do something like that or say something like that?" We're pretty forthright - at least with each other. Sometimes within our families and with our wives we're not so great I think because of pride.

Ladies, I don't think it's much of a stretch to say that conflict-resolution can often be very hard for y'all. Things get strung out, feelings go on and on, and all of a sudden it's complicated. Listen, don't put off reconciling or dealing with a tough situation. Get it over with as fast and completely as you can.

Just like cutting off hands or eyes, I don't know that this is literal, but I think it is serious. Get it done today. Jesus says if you know someone has a problem with you, drop your offering at the altar and go take of it now. Now? Yes, now.

It's always inconvenient, it's always a hassle, it's always hard. But have you ever had something hanging over you and then it was resolved and you're like "Why didn't I resolve that sooner?" Yeah, why didn't you? Go take care of it.

So we put off sinful anger, put off ignoring conflict, and we put on quick reconciliation.

What's the renewing our mind piece? What truth do we need to remember to ensure we don't sin in anger and we reconcile quickly? **Read 26-27**

Here's the reality: you mess around with sinful anger or if you mess around with lack of reconciliation, you're just asking for the devil to come destroy your life.

Think about marriages you know that ended in divorce. They were probably the epitome of this verse right here, weren't they? Sinful anger, no reconciliation. Like 96% of the time.

Think about a majority of people in prison. Violent crimes, murder, manslaughter, on and on - it's this stuff right here. They couldn't control their anger, they blew up in a sinful way, there was no reconciliation and now they're doing time.

The spiritual world is real. The devil is real.

1 Pet 5:8: your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

Satan is out there looking for opportunities to destroy Christians. To devour us. To tear us limb from limb. And Paul saying here that one of the biggest opportunities he gets is when we blow up in sinful anger and then refuse to reconcile.

I mean, spiritually speaking, you might as well be in sub Saharan Africa with lions outside and just leave door open at night for them to come in to tear you and your family apart.

Unchecked anger, unchecked rage, refusal to reconcile, the pride of "I'm right" has destroyed many many people.

That word "give an opportunity" or I think some of you have a foothold, basically means a place of advantage.

When you're hunting you're in a tree stand for a better view, you've got the advantage. Snipers in the military like lots of cover and lots of visibility so they can see everyone around them. Why? So they can secretly destroy their enemies.

And like snipers, anger is often a silent enemy. Maybe only those who are closest to you know about it. Some of the angriest people I've ever met are the nicest people in a crowd. You'd never know they're sinfully, wildly angry. You can ask police officers about domestic violence offenders. It's crazy, the nicest guys you'll ever

meet at church, in business. I remember talking to one Spokane Police officer part of a victims unit and he said about the half the time he went into a DV house, there are Bibles laying around.

It was a thermonuclear explosion about to happen all the time. And Satan was tearing them up.

Be angry and do not sin. Don't say those evil words, don't pick up that object, don't communicate via sign language to the car next to you, don't swear, don't scream.

Do everything you can to reconcile.

Just imagine this is going down. **James 4:1-4** you're angry because you're not getting something you want. And like a little toddler at WalMart you're about to have a hissy fit. And Satan is just sitting there watching you.

It's a situation that normally would send you over the top but instead of doing what you always do, you reacted calmly and collectedly and with gentleness. And if anything went sideways you immediately repented and apologized.

What's Satan going to do with that? He doesn't have any material to work with. You're going to resist him and he's going to flee. You're going to demon proof your marriage and your friendships and your life.

Beloved put these things off. And put on reconciliation.

Let me give you a quote from Jonathan Edwards. He wrote a series of resolutions - things he wanted to do in his life. This is resolution 56: "Resolved, never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be."

You hear that? He's going to battle his sin no matter how hard it is, no matter how successful he is.

It's easy to get discouraged in the fight over sin. It's easy to give up and give in to temptation. Don't slacken the fight. Don't give in no matter how unsuccessful you are.

Your hope of forgiveness and glory is already in Jesus. That's secure. Your safe in Christ.

Now, take these truths and fight with all your might against sin for the glory of Jesus who saved you from those very same sins.

Pray