

## Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 4:20-24 - Put Off, Renew, Put On - Part 3

We're marching along in this section about how to we become sanctified. It's this biblical 3-step process we've seen over the past few weeks of putting off specific sins, renewing our minds with truth of the word of God, and putting on specific acts of holiness,

We've worked through lying, anger and reconciliation, stealing and filthy words. We'll see that this 3 step process works on any sin and we'll see more today.

Now, one bit of pushback people often give to this is "Well, what if my heart doesn't feel like obeying, why should I obey? Doesn't God want my attitude and actions to honor him?"

And the answer yes! You should obey in your actions and you should obey in your heart. So if your heart doesn't want to obey, what do you need to change? Your heart. "But I can't do that." Sure you can. For 2 reasons.

First, God says "Rejoice always, and again I say what? Rejoice." That's a command for us to delight in every situation we're in. Not because it's easy, but because there are truths that we believe that actually cause us to have joy even in the worst circumstances. So you if you don't feel like obeying, then you might need to ruminate on some truths.

I hurt my knee a few months ago and part of what they gave me to heal was a steroid. And I took that and I was just mad at the world. That steroid prescription changed my attitude big time. And I had talk myself off a ledge several times when people did things or said things.

I literally had these mental conversations with myself: Jason, what do you deserve right this very moment? I deserve for God to smash me to bits by a lightning bolt - utterly destroy me in a moment because of my sin and catapult me in the depths of the Lake of Fire where I'd burn and scream forever in excruciating torment. And so every ounce of oxygen I get and every good thing I get above that is pure underserved grace from the infinite Creator God. Maybe I can just calm down a bit.

And I'll tell you what, it helped. Do you know why it helped? Because that's the gospel. At the end of the day the reason any Christian can rejoice and be glad in obedience is the backstop of the gospel.

That God does not treat us as our sins deserve, he treated Jesus as our sins deserved and we get an eternity of glory having done nothing to earn it. Pure, free grace.

So can we change the attitude of our heart? Of course. We can actually repent from not wanting to obey in heart.

The second reason we should just obey is because we do it all the time anyway. You go to work when you don't feel like it. You pay your bills when you don't feel like it. You go the speed limit when you don't feel like it. You do the laundry, do the dishes, mow the yard if you don't feel like it. Exercise, go to the gym. We do a million things we don't feel like doing. If we can do all those things, we can obey the Lord when we don't feel like it.

Sometimes with obedience the good emotions come after we obey. In the Christian life, truth is like the locomotive that guides us. Our actions are like all the box cars of the train. You know what comes very last - usually? The caboose of emotions.

A lot of people get that backward. They want to do all the things that make them feel good. The problem is that's what the pagans do. They are driven by their passions. The train is in reverse. **Read 19**

We're not like the pagans. For us truth comes first, then actions, the emotions.

And actually, I think it says more about our true devotion to the Lord when we do something good when we don't feel like it than when we obey only in the happy times.

Alright, let's keep moving. This morning we're looking at variety of things we put off and a variety of things we put on that Paul sort of lumps together.

Big picture here is: Put off being a jerk and be kind. **Read 30-32**

So here's what we have. We have this admonition to not grieve the Spirit. Then a list of a bunch of things we should put off or put away. And then a small list of things to put on.

So let's start with what we put off. And I mentioned put off being a jerk sort of tongue in cheek because there are 6 things he says to put off. And if we step back and describe what a person who does these things is, they're just kind of jerk in a variety of ways. It's a character sketch of someone who is unpleasant in a variety of ways.

So here they are.

**A) bitterness.** What is bitterness? It's basically when someone becomes defined by how they've been wronged. It's victim mentality that we see all over in the world but it infects the Church as well. It's when you're defined not by Christ and his grace and the new life you have as a child of God. No, you're defined by some bad thing or things that's happened to you in life.

You're defined by an old business partner wronging you, a spouse who doesn't do what you want. Or how you lost a bunch of money once because someone took advantage of you. Or some church you attended was bad.

We see this all the time in the social justice garbage where people are defined by skin color, or slavery that they didn't experience or poverty or whatever. It then becomes their identity and we have to be careful as Christians that it doesn't happen to us too.

We don't want to become defined by the bad things that have happened in life where this is what we talk about all the time. It's the bad thing you bring up to every new person you meet in the first few minutes. Or the thing you blame for not getting ahead in life. You've made it your identity, whether you realize it or not.

And I think that's often the danger is that if we are bitter about something we might not even realize it. Or we justify it because it's so bad. And to be clear, really bad things happen to us. Really bad; horrifying things. The problem is when it taints us and affects who we are.

Think about the word bitter. What does that mean? What's the difference between Starbucks extra dark roast that's bitter and medium roast pumpkin spice latte? One is bitter - you have to endure it. It's not natively good, it's a bad taste by definition.

What about the pumpkin spice latte? It could even be the same roast, but now you have cream and spices and sugar that dominates the drink and you might not even taste the bitter. It's been covered over.

Paul says put off bitterness. Put off being defined by past events and letting them dominate your life.

I was doing marriage counseling with a couple and he had made some really dumb financial decisions like 20 years earlier. Had tried to recover and work through it but she never let him move on. And it was like the ace up her sleeve whenever things got bad and she got cornered that she would bring out the cudgel and smash him on the head with his mess up. That's bitterness. That's keeping a record of wrongs, which love doesn't do.

So if that's you you need to put that off. We don't bring up the past any more. Past violations. If they enter your mind, you get rid of them and don't dwell on them. If you bring them up to someone you stop, apologize, ask forgiveness and make it right, And don't do it again.

You don't talk about it, if it enters your mind you stop as soon as you start brooding, pray to God, ask forgiveness and move on.

**B) Wrath.** Another word is rage or an explosive temper. Do you blow up at people? Are you quick tempered? Maybe put a different way: if what you did you decided to do in the whole congregation would be ashamed of that? Then put that away.

No more yelling, screaming, slamming doors. No more threats. Whatever it is you do when you're in a rage, you need write down. Write down the specific actions you're putting off and stop them. You need to be specific.

One thing that often happens when people are mad is that they think they need to solve the whole problem right then and there. You don't. Sometimes people with rage issues just need to learn to take a break when things start to heat up. Go take a walk, go switch gears for 20-30 minutes, whatever.

You're not ignoring the difficult topic, you're not walking out on someone, you're not giving up. You're simply taking a break.

Earlier in our marriage if we'd be having a hard conversation, I'd take a break by going to wash dishes. We didn't have a dishwasher so I'd do it by hand and it took me about 17 minutes and usually by the end of washing and drying and putting the dishes away I was pretty calm.

I wasn't ignoring the hard topic, I wasn't walking away and I wasn't blowing up. I just needed a break. And now we joke about 17 minutes. Like if something is really hard Jodee's like "Do you just need 17 minutes? Go do some dishes?" It's a joke.

But we have to put off specific behavior of wrath.

### **C) Anger and clamor. Read 31**

What is that? It's arguing. We've already seen that we need to put off sinful anger, so we won't beat that horse. Clamoring is literally yelling at each other. Shouting matches back and forth. Constant arguing and quarreling. The NIV says brawling and slander - brawling is a good word. You're just always fighting.

Have you ever been around people who it's just always a verbal fight? Maybe they argue a lot, or they tell you all the stories about how they told someone off. Yeah, that should never be Christians.

I've been in some wild church meetings where this happens. Someone doesn't like something someone say, they push back and all of a sudden we're arguing about something that happened back in the 1980s. Like, how did that happen?

I've been in some wild city council meetings where this happens. People who just have no ability to not argue and quarrel.

It's the proverb that it's better for a man to live on the corner of the roof than with a quarreling wife.

No one likes to be around someone who just loves to argue and quarrel.

**Prov. 18:6:** A fool's lips walk into a fight and his mouth invites a beating.

To put this off you have to actually ask yourself "Is this necessary to discuss? Is it helpful or good or godly? Is it okay if we disagree? Is it sin? Does it need to be brought up now?"

A lot of the things we argue about really don't need to be argued about.

One of the worst things you can do in an argument or when you're upset is to get off track and start bringing up other things you disagree about. That's no good.

No, just like all the other sins, we need to put this off. If we start getting argumentative, we need to stop immediately, apologize - I'm sorry for being argumentative, will you please forgive me, make it right and don't do it again. And then talk about something else.

**D) Malice** is the last one in this list. Malice is just generic wickedness. Generic depravity. It's the opposite of virtue - it's vices.

It's often used of general meanness or being mean spirited. Being a bully or pugnacious was the old word.

You know when someone's just kind of jerky but you can't put your finger on it? They're just mean? Paul's saying don't be that.

Christians are to be virtuous in every way. We are to models of godliness. We should be able to tell other people "follow me like I follow Christ." And if there's something in your life that you wouldn't want other people to model, then get that out of your life.

We should stand firm on the truth but we shouldn't be feisty for the sake of being feisty.

So we put all these things off. What do we **renew our mind** with? There's 2 truths here that control the section.

**Truth 1:** When we're jerks, we grieve the Holy Spirit. **Read 30-31**

So verse 30 isn't just a random proverb, it's likely connected to **Vs. 31**. The way that we grieve the Spirit is through all the jerky stuff we do.

So here's what we know about the Spirit: Christians are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit - the third person of the Trinity - lives in each and every believer. Just like he used to live in the physical Temple in the OT, he now lives in his people. He's the person of the Trinity who regenerates us, implants faith in us, gives us new life, raises us with Christ, and applies all the work of Christ on the cross to our account, gives us spiritual gifts for service to the church, he convicts of sin. He seals us - **Vs. 30** says - for the day of redemption.

What does that mean? It means if you're saved by the Spirit that very same Spirit secures your salvation all the way to the day of redemption, which is the Day of the Lord. That's the second coming of Jesus in glory. So the Spirit seals his people - as God's people - until the Second coming. That's great - Paul is saying the Spirit gives us eternal security in our salvation.

But here's the deal: when we sin - especially in this manner of being bitter, wrathful, slandering, malicious - we grieve the Spirit. We cause God the Holy Spirit grief. That word means to cause severe mental or emotional distress.

When we are grieved by some sort of bad thing it's sort of a combination of sadness, irritation, annoyance, heaviness, anger, frustration.

Listen, when we sin in this way we need to understand that's exactly what we're doing to the Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is especially close in our lives - he indwells us - it ought to concern us how he responds to us.

**Isa. 63:10** says the Israelites in the wilderness grieved the Spirit of God because of their sin.

**Psa 78:40-41** says Israel put him to the test and provoked him. Imagine provoking God to anger.

**Psa 106:33:** says they made God's Spirit bitter.

That's kind of crazy. The very thing we're warned not to do - be bitter - we can actually do to the Spirit by our deliberate sin.

You can quench the Spirit, test the Spirit, outrage the Spirit, blaspheme the Spirit.

By the way, this is one way we know he is a person, not a force, because you can't grieve a force. You can only grieve people. And the person of the Spirit inside of us grieves when we act like this.

No Christian should ever want to grieve God the Holy Spirit. It's through the Spirit that we cry out to God "ABBA, Father" - why would we ever do anything to grieve him?

We don't want to do that. And just to be clear, it's not because we don't want him to cry and be all sad and mokey. It's because we don't want him to discipline us. This is a threat.

You remember what happened to the Corinthians who grieved God because they were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper? Some got ill, some got sick and some died. The Spirit was so grieved by the blatant sin in the Corinthian church he just took them out of the game.

You remember Ananias and Sapphira? They dropped dead because they lied to who? The Holy Spirit.

That same Spirit is the same glorious, divine, holy, awesome God that raised us from the dead.

Interestingly, Paul doesn't say the Holy Spirit will unseal us. But he is grieved. And the command is clear: don't do that.

**Truth 2:** Our conduct should flow from the gospel. We're going to see the things we put on here - so these will blend a little. But notice why we put some things on. **Read 31**

So we put on 3 things: kindness, compassion, forgiveness. We'll look at those in a bit. But why? Why especially do we put on forgiveness?

Because - the truth here - is that God in Christ forgave us. This is gospel motivation for living. **Turn to Matt 6** for a minute.

Why should we forgive someone? Because we have been forgiven. The love of God the Father in sending his perfect, holy Son to take the place of wretched sinners who hate him and die for us, for our sins and to give us an inheritance is really beyond comprehension. The grace we have received, compared to the damnation we deserve should change us radically.

We should now be forgiving people. And here in **Matthew 6** Jesus teaches us to pray in light of all of that. **Read 6:9-15**

So this prayer is the model prayer for all Christians to follow. We all really should memorize this prayer. The idea is that it's an outline of what we should pray for. If we asked Jesus today how we should pray, he'd recite this very prayer and it would be our guide.

And one of the biggest themes in the prayer, and in the explanation after, is forgiveness.

And what's happening here in this prayer is that we are to keep gospel forgiveness in mind even as we pray.

"Forgive us our debts" - we should be asking God for forgiveness on a regular basis. We're constantly sinning and so we need constant forgiveness. I constantly ask God to forgive my sins. So forgive us our debts. But there's a certain way we should be wanting God to forgive our debts. **Read 12**

Jesus says our prayer should be: "Father forgive me in the exact same way I forgive others." Think about that for a minute. We'd think it would be backwards "Father help me forgive them like you forgive me."

But it's not. Why? Because if you pray like Jesus teaches then it forces your hand. It makes us confront the reality that maybe we aren't always forgiving people like we should. We're not extending them the same forgiveness that God gives to us. That's why Jesus says it this way. Father forgive me like I forgive others.

Then he gives us the explanation. **Read 14-15**

Those are some hard words. Why does Jesus say them? What's he want out of us? He wants us to forgive,

Now, is our justification, our salvation, our own forgiveness from God based on perfect forgiveness of other people? No. It can't be because we'd never make it. Justification is based on faith alone in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

But can someone go to hell because they refuse to forgive someone else? Absolutely. People go to hell for a variety of sins they refuse to repent of. Sexual immorality, stealing, lying, homosexuality, drunkenness, reviling, swindlers. Paul says those people will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Well, Jesus adds to that list that unrepentant unforgiveness is also a sin that will send you to hell. Jesus makes that crystal clear. If you refuse to forgive someone, your sins are not forgiven and you go to hell. And the reason is because what you've done to the infinitely holy God, is far far worse than whatever someone has done to you. And if God can forgive us for all our disgusting sins, we can forgive others for their sins. And if we don't we really just don't understand the gospel.

So these are the 2 truths we use to renew our minds. We have been forgiven so we can forgive and when we sin we grieve the Holy Spirit.

Let's go **back to Eph 4.** and look at the put on. We put off a bunch of things - but basically it's being a mean jerk. We renew our minds,

### 3) Put on. Read 32

We put on 3 things. **Kindness.** What is that? It's Christian generosity. Kindness is not just being a nice guy. We should be pleasant to be around. Christians should be known for being nice. Joe Rogan - the podcast guy - has started going to church. I don't know what his spiritual state is, but one of the observations he makes is that the Christians at his church are the nicest people. The gospel transforms us from trolls into polite and pleasant people.

So we should be nice, but here the idea is benevolent. Generous with our time and money to help people.

Are you generous with other people? Not just tithing to the church. That's really a separate issue. Are you generous with individual people? Do you invite them into your life, love on them, are generous with them? If you're not actively reaching out to bless other believers on a regular basis you need to put that on.

**2) We should put on tender heartedness.** Do people consider you gentle and compassionate? If not you need to repent and do things that are compassionate. Compassion is looking on the misfortune of others and having pity. I'll be honest, I struggle with being compassionate and tender hearted.

But God didn't choose us and save us to be the hall monitor of the Kingdom. Or the drill sergeant of the Kingdom. No. Paul says in **1 Thess. 2** that he is compassionate like a mother with children. He's encouraging like a father. Christians are called to be tender hearted.

Are you encouraging? Are you known in your family and among your friends as being an encourager? Especially with words I tell people you need to make goals of encouraging people. Because "being tender hearted and encouraging" feels like such a nebulous thing.

But we're called to put that on. You need to put that on. "I'm going to praise all of my kids 3 times each day until it's just a habit." "I'm going to thank my employees every day" until it's a habit. I'm going to validate people's distress immediately.

You remember Boaz in the book of Ruth? He was loved by his men because he was so tender hearted. That's the beauty of the story: Ruth is no one to him and he could easily take advantage of her situation and yet at every turn he blesses her because he has compassion. He's like the gentle man's man of the OT. He's actually one of the few main characters in the entire Bible that has nothing bad said of him.

We need to be specifically kind and compassionate.

And third we need to be forgiving. When people sin against us and apologize and come to us and ask us for forgiveness we need to be willing to forgive instantly and completely. We need to put on the actions of not holding their sin against them.

We're going to come back to that next week and flesh it out a little more because I think it's worth spending some time on.

**Pray**