

Put Off & Put On (Part 1)

Text: Ephesians 4:25-28

Introduction:

1. This section (Vs. 25-32): The Apostle Paul now practically applies the “put off” and “put on” principle he has just discussed (Vs. 22-24) to the every day lives of the believers. Some wrongly conclude that the Christian life is all about doctrine/theory and fails to impact one’s daily life. This couldn’t be further from the truth! The truth of God’s Word has a transforming effect on our entire lives.
2. A general pattern in these exhortations can be discerned. There is:
 - A negative aspect to the command – a behavior to put off.
 - A positive aspect to the command – a behavior to put on.
 - A reason for the command – a goal in view.
3. These exhortations touch at least 5 important areas in the believer’s life. As new men in Christ we are to have:

I. A NEW TRUTHFULNESS (VS. 25)

A. The Wrong Behavior to Put Off (Vs. 25a)

1. Lying is Satan’s lingo (John 8:44). John Phillips: “Lies are the evil one’s currency of speech.”
2. Illustration: The first sin judged in the early church was lying (Acts 5:1-11).
3. Examples of lying
 - a. Total untruths/falsehoods – things that are completely and blatantly false. E.g., A mother asks the child if he has taken a cookie. He says a fervent ‘no’ even though he is sitting surrounded by a pile of cookie crumbs. Satan’s lie to Eve is a classic example. God said if you eat the fruit, you will die. Satan said, “ye shall not surely die!”
 - b. Partial truths – mixing truth and error. This is still lying! E.g., recounting an incident but leaving out the things you did wrong in order to cast yourself in a good light. The devil is the master of this form of lying through the cults. There is a clever mix of truth and error. Enough truth to lure you in but enough error to damn you!
 - c. Exaggeration – embellishing the facts to make them more sensational & tantalising. E.g., You get to know with some people that when they are telling you a story, they’ve added some tasty ingredients of their own to the mix – a cup of imagination, a tablespoon of speculation and a pinch of facts! The media is also a classic example of this form of lying.
4. Col. 3:9 “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”

B. The Right Behavior to Put On (Vs. 25b)

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1. “speak truth” = when we speak the truth, we please God whose very character is truth. God the Father is the truth (Num. 23:19), Jesus Christ is the truth (John 14:6) and the Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). Warren Wiersbe: “Whenever we speak truth, the Spirit of God works, but whenever we tell a lie, Satan goes to work.”
2. “with his neighbor” = in this context, the church family. It reminds us of the second of the two primal laws of love (Matt. 22:37-40).

C. The Reason for the Command (Vs. 25c)

1. “for we are members one of another”. We have union with one another by virtue of our union with Christ our Head. We are joined together in a spiritual body. Romans 12:5 “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one of another.”
2. Interestingly the word ‘members’ is “never used of members of an organization but always members of an organism. Members of an organization may not have a relationship to other members but members of an organism demand a close-knit relationship to the other members.” (Hoehner)
3. The sin of one member affects the whole. Remember Achan’s sin and its impact upon the whole nation of Israel (e.g., defeat at Ai).

II. A NEW TEMPER (VS. 26-27)

A. The Right Anger (Vs. 26a)

1. “Be angry” = Anger is not intrinsically sinful. God exercises righteous wrath and anger against the wicked (Psalm 7:11; Rom. 1:18). There is nothing wrong with being angry for a righteous cause. In fact, anger would be the only appropriate response to some things. Anger can be an emotion connected to a right sense of justice.
2. Illustration: How do you respond when you hear of a heinous crime committed against an innocent child?
3. Question: Is your anger righteous or sinful? Ask yourself the following: What is motivating this anger? Is it a zeal for God and the truth? Or is it self-centered (i.e., one of my perceived rights has been violated)? Is self-involved somewhere in this spirit of anger? Am I angry at sin or at people? The summary from Faith Counselling Institute is helpful:
 - a. Righteous Anger
 - i. When God doesn’t get what He wants.
 - ii. Motivated by a sincere love for God.
 - iii. God’s will is violated.
 - iv. Christ is Lord of my life.
 - b. Sinful Anger
 - i. When I don’t get what I want.
 - ii. Motivated by a love of some idolatrous desire.
 - iii. My will is violated.
 - iv. I am lord of my life.

B. The Wrong Anger (Vs. 26b)

1. “sin not” = we are forbidden from exercising sinful anger. As weak, sinful creatures our anger is rarely selfless and righteous. Even the right sort of anger can quickly become sinful if we are not Spirit-

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controlled. The first part of this verse is a quotation from Psalm 4:4 which says, “**Stand in awe and sin** not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.” The phrase “stand in awe” means “to tremble”. It refers to the need to tremble in God’s presence but also contains the idea of a heart that is moved with indignation. At such times, we are warned of the danger of our anger leading us into sin and are exhorted to be still in the presence of the Lord and give time to careful self-examination and reflection.

2. ‘wrath’ = ‘parorismos’ “means anger that is mingled with irritation, exasperation, and embitterment.” (Wuest) It is an “intensified form of the word ‘wrath’. It describes a state of being intensely provoked. It is a festering anger, provocation or irritation.” (Hoehner) Someone has described anger as “momentary insanity.”
3. Illustration: I explode and then it’s all over. Yes, and look at the damage left behind that explosion!
4. Question: What are some common causes of anger? The following is from *Quieting a Noisy Soul* by Jim Berg
 - a. Frustration – the agitation that results from a thwarted goal. Beware of soothing yourself with the lie, “I’m not angry, just frustrated.”
 - b. Hurt – the pain in the soul from personal mistreatment.
 - c. Fear – the uncertainty of how things will turn out.
5. Remember! Anger is expressed in multiple ways. Some explode outwardly with angry words; others give the cold shoulder treatment and go quiet (icy spirit). Some are like petrol – lots of flames and noise when they are angry. Some are more like steam. They are quieter and more subtle but they blister you just as bad, if not worse.
6. Prov. 29:22 “An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.” (See also Prov. 22:4 – make no friendship with an angry man)
7. Prov. 16:32 “*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*”

C. The Resolve for Anger (Vs. 26c-27)

1. When we are to resolve anger Vs. 26c)
 - a. “let not the sun go down upon your wrath” = it is important we keep short accounts with one another and with the Lord and settle our anger quickly. As one put it, “The day of anger should be the day of reconciliation.”
 - b. This is so important in our relationships
 - i. Our relationship with the Lord. Sometimes my anger is unknown to other people (e.g., it is kept hidden inside) but let us remember that the Lord knows and anger grieves the Holy Spirit (See Vs. 30-31). Sometimes we can even get angry directly at God and charge Him foolishly and that needs to be corrected.
 - ii. Our relationship to our spouse in marriage. Unresolved anger in marriage ends in the divorce courts or worse!

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- iii. Our relationship to other believers. If you lost your cool with a fellow brother or sister in Christ, then humble yourself, confess it to them and seek their forgiveness!
 - iv. Our relationship to non-believers. If you spoke in anger to a work colleague, be a good testimony and make it right with them.
2. Why we are to resolve anger (Vs. 27)
 - a. “give place” = ‘place is from the Greek word ‘topos’ which forms the basis of our word ‘topography’. Unresolved, sinful anger gives Satan an opportunity to establish a base of operations in my life. Satan is quick to take advantage of an angry heart. Beware! If you allow Satan to setup camp in one area of your life, be sure he will not rest content until he has defeated you in as many other areas as he can!
 - b. Illustration: Some of the fiercest battles in the world wars were fought over beaches because once a beachhead has been established, it is extremely hard to drive the enemy back out of that territory.
 - c. Rather than giving place to the devil, we need to give place to the Lord to deal with the injustices in our lives. Romans 12:19 “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* **give place** unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

III. A NEW TRUSTWORTHINESS (Vs. 28)

A. The Wrong Behavior to Put Off (Vs. 28a)

1. “Let him that stole steal no more” = remember that in Paul’s day there was no welfare system so stealing was a common thing to do if someone was out of work. Stealing is a feature of the old life and is to have no place in the believer’s life. As born again, blood-washed believers we should be people of impeccable honesty, integrity and trustworthiness.
2. Stealing can be overt and obvious but also covert and sophisticated.
 - a. Examples of overt stealing would be things like burglary, break ins, even taking small items that don’t belong to you such as stealing someone else’s rubber or pencil.
 - b. Examples of covert stealing would be things like cheating on your tax return, misusing of a company credit card, stealing the bosses time, dishonest business dealings etc...

B. The Right Behavior to Put On (Vs. 28b)

1. “but rather let him labour” = the alternative to a life of dishonesty and theft. The word ‘labour’ contains the idea of “to be tired, to grow weary. The point is that labor exerted is exhausting.” (Hoehner) While not all work involves hard manual labor, hard work is not to be despised in any trade or profession. Our Lord Himself learned the carpenters trade as a young man. Paul was a tent maker and Peter a fisherman.
2. “working with his hands” = the contrast is clear. Rather than using the hands to steal, we are to use our hands to earn an honest living.

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3. The day in which we live largely despises hard work. The ideal, dream life to many is to have lots of money, live in pleasure and do little to no work. The dream job is one that requires the minimum amount of effort for the most amount of pay. That is not a godly model for Christian living! Remember that the depravity of Sodom was connected to an indulged and idle way of living. Ezekiel 16:49 “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, **pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness** was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.”

C. The Reason for the Command (Vs. 28c)

1. “that he may have to give” = not only are we to labour to take care of our own needs but we are to labour with a view to being able to have a ministry of giving to others in need. “The purpose for work is not self-indulgence but to benefit those who are in need.” (Hoehner)
2. While the Christian should be open to helping a non-believer, the New Testament emphasizes that the priority for this ministry is to be fellow believers. Gal. 6:10 “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, **especially unto them who are of the household of faith.**”
3. The Christian should labour in order to be involved in:
 - a. Giving to the Lord – tithes and offerings. Prov. 3:9 “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:”
 - b. Providing for the family – 1 Tim. 5:8 “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”
 - c. Helping the brethren – Acts 2:44-45 “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, **as every man had need.**”

To be continued in Part 2

Conclusion:

1. Is there something for you to remove (put off) out of your Christian life? Habits of deceit, dishonesty & theft? What about anger?
2. Is there something you need to put on? Perhaps you have spent time working on removing the bad habits but are you cultivating godly habits in their place?