

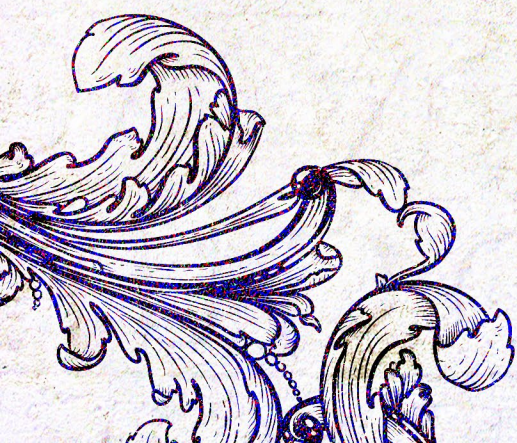


A COLORFUL MYSTERY

CHURCH

A STUDY IN EPHESIANS

a field guide



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GEARED UP

DRAWING
NEAR

1] The New Testament speaks of Christians having a new mind, a new will, and a new heart. What does it mean to be a “new creation” in Christ?

2] If we are new creations, why do we still struggle with sin and hypocrisy?

3] In what ways have you become “new” since you believed in Christ?



Q THE CONTEXT

Paul presented to the Ephesians a glorious reminder of their riches in Christ. He treated them to a theological banquet, rich with meaty doctrine. Next, in chapter four, Paul helps them digest this weighty truth. He shows them how to begin living out in practice what is already true of them in principle

As the Ephesians grasp what God has done for them and in them, they should live transformed lives with a decided difference between their old lifestyles and their new lives in Christ. They should be set apart from those around them. They should stand out. Their interpersonal relationships should be marked by shocking, unearthly attitudes and actions. In a world overrun with bitterness, hatred, deception, and immorality, followers of Christ are to be marked by love, forgiveness, truthfulness and purity. Let this remarkable passage challenge us to put the old things behind and begin living out our new identity.

KEYS TO THE TEXT

Put Off the Old, Put On the New: This phrase summarized sanctification, the continuing spiritual process in which those who have been saved by faith are transformed into Christ's image and likeness. The image Paul uses to describe that process is taking off and putting on clothing, which symbolizes thoughts and behavior. Like one who removed his

dirty clothes at day's end, believers must discard the filthy garments of their old, sinful lives, and dress themselves in Christ's righteousness.

UNLEASHING THE TEXT

Read 4:1-16, noting the key words and definitions next to the passage.

Ephesians 4:17-32¹

Unity In The Body of Christ

17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. **18** They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. **19** They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. **20** But that is not the way you learned Christ!-- **21** assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, **22** to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23** and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24** and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

¹MacArthur, John. Ephesians: Our Immeasurable Blessings in Christ. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

²Ibid.



Key Terms

25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. **26** Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and give no opportunity to the devil. **28** Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. **29** 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. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

4] Paul argues that it is unthinkable for a Christian to act like an unbeliever. Why? What points does he use to make his case ?

5] What does Paul mean when he speaks of being “renewed in the spirit of your mind”?

6] What are the characteristics of “the new man”?

7] What are some of the excuses we make for acting the way we do?

WALK (v.17) – to conduct oneself in daily living

CALLOUS (v.19) – a reference to the moral dullness or insensitivity that marks unbelievers as they ignore God and their consciences

PUT OFF (v.22) – to strip away as in taking off old dirty clothes; a reference to once and for all repentance from sin at salvation

OLD SELF (v.22) – the worn out, useless, and unconverted sinful nature

RENEWED (v.23)– Used only here in the New Testament, this phrase expresses that at salvation, God redeems a person’s mind and gives him or her a completely new spiritual and moral capability.

NEW SELF (v.24) – a new creation, not a renovation of what was, but an entirely new (in species or character) entity

CORRUPT (v.29)– foul, putrid, rotten, worthless, disgusting

BUILDING UP (v.29)– the act of being helpful, constructive, or uplifting

GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT (v.29)– We cause sorrow to the Holy Spirit of truth when we act in unholy ways and lie to one another.



GOING DEEPER

Consider how the message of Colossians 3:1 –17 dovetails with Paul's challenge to the Ephesian church.

Colossians 3:1-17¹

Put On the New Self

1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. **3** For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. **5** Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. **6** On account of these the wrath of God is coming. **7** In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. **8** But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. **9** Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices **10** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. **11** Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. **12** Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, **13** bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **14** And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. **15** And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. **16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. **17** And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

EXPLORING THE MEANING

8] In practical, everyday terms, how does a Christian "put off" or "put away" wrong attitudes and habits? What does it mean to "put on love" (v. 14)?

9] What would the world say about a group of believers who were “doers” of this truth from God’s Word?

10] How accurately does your life reflect the holiness and goodness of God?



TRUTH FOR TODAY

Biblical terminology ... does not say that a Christian has two different natures. He has but one nature, the new nature of Christ. The old self dies and the new self lives; they do not coexist. It is not a remaining old nature but the remaining garment of sinful flesh that causes Christians to sin. The Christian is a single new person, a totally new creation, not a spiritual schizophrenic. It is the filthy coat of remaining humanness in which the new creation dwells that continues to hinder and contaminate his living. The believer as a total person is transformed but not yet wholly perfect. He has residing sin but no longer reigning sin (Romans 6:14). He is no longer the old man corrupted but is now the new man created in righteousness and holiness, awaiting full salvation (Romans 13:11).¹

REFLECTING ON THE TEXT

11] It’s been said that the only reliable evidence of a person’s being saved is not a past experience of receiving Christ but a present life that reflects Christ. How well does your life reflect the holiness and goodness of God?

¹MacArthur, John. Ephesians: Our Immeasurable Blessings in Christ. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.



12] What is the Spirit of god saying to you as a result of this study? Have you experienced any conviction in heart from Holy Spirit?

13] Craft a prayer, honestly telling God where you are in your faith journey right now. Convey your heart's desire to live in a way that pleases God.

