

Living UP TO OUR Heavenly Calling

A study in the book of Ephesians

March 4, 2025

Led by Mary Lowman

Ephesians 4:17-32

Introduction

The Bible says:

2 Corinthians 5:17: (ESV) *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

The life you have as a believer in Jesus Christ, a new creation, is radically new.

Romans 6:4: (ESV) *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

Romans 12:2: (ESV) *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

2 Corinthians 3:18: (ESV) *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

The key phrase throughout this book of Ephesians is “in Christ.” If you are “in Christ,” you are new; the old has gone, the new has come.

Ephesians 4:17 – 32: (ESV)

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. ¹⁸They 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. ¹⁹They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸Let 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. ²⁹Let 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. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Verses 17 – 19 is an in-depth description of life before Christ.

- Futility of their minds. Their minds are full of pointless and useless thoughts and ideas and plans.
- Darkened in their understanding
- Alienated from the life of God
- Hearts are hardened
- Callous – insensitive, cruel disregard for others
- Given to sensuality
- Greedy
- Practice every kind of impurity
- Deceitful desires

Paul then points out that this is *not* what walking worthy looks like! Once you were born again, you were like a baby who needs to grow, and there are many directives and guidelines given that should govern your life.

What is our motivation to grow up “in Christ” and walk worthy of our calling?

Because:

- Your heart has been changed, and you want to please Jesus.
- You will personally stand before Jesus to give an account of your stewardship as a believer.

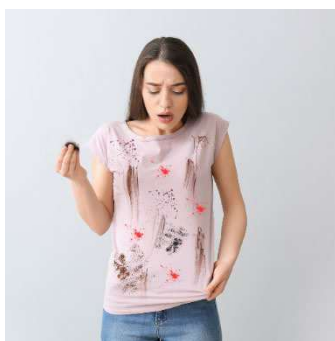
2 Corinthians 5:6 – 10 (ESV)

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

1 Corinthians 3:13 – 15 (ESV)

Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

What do we need to put off—and put on?



Put Off

- No more lying
- Be angry when appropriate do not sin
- Give the Devil no opportunity
- Let nothing corrupt come out of your mouth
- Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice



Put On

- Always tell the truth
- Never let the sun go down on your anger
- Work hard at honest work; do not steal, share with people in need
- Speak only what will encourage others and build them up
- Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

BUT HOW???

Think of what it takes to “put off” clothes. What is required of you? Why do you do it?

What is required of you to put on clean clothes, pretty clothes?

If it is so perfectly clear why we take off dirty clothes and put on clean ones, shouldn't it be just as clear—or clearer—why we need to take off these dirty clothes listed in Ephesians 4 and put on the clothes given to us because we are “in Christ”?

Colossians 3:12 – 15 gives us another list of what to put off and put on:

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.

Paul uses this illustration so often that it must be a good way for us to remember that we are responsible to put off the old dirty stuff and put on the new clothes we've been given in Christ.

Isaiah 61:10: (ESV) *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Remember: The road to holiness is a journey of long obedience.

Now, let's ask some questions that arise as we think about what Paul says we should put off and put on.

1. We are to put off lying and always tell the truth. How can we know how honest to be? Should we share every secret thought? What if the truth hurts someone?

Proverbs 10:19: (ESV) *When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.*

2. We are to control our anger and never let the sun go down on it. How can we determine whether our anger is sinful or righteous?
3. We are to control what comes out of our mouths. How do we determine what is corrupting talk and what isn't? What can we say to build others up?
4. We are to be kind and forgive others who have hurt us. How can we forgive someone who never asks for forgiveness—and the hurt is very deep?

Memory Verse:



*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted,
forgiving one another, as God in Christ
forgave you.*

Ephesians 4:32

