

Putting You On • Ephesians 4:17-24

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Saving Private Ryan*

1. Tomorrow is Memorial Day; the day we remember and honor those men and women who gave their lives in the service of their country, to protect, and advance the cause of Freedom
2. In honor of Memorial Day, the movie, *Saving Private Ryan* was released in video format a week ago
3. As I sat in the theater many months ago, watching the movie, I was overwhelmed with the sacrifice those men made
4. I was deeply moved by the heavy price war inflicts on a nation
5. But what moved me most was at the end, when Ryan was visiting the cemetery at Normandy with his family so many years after the Invasion
6. With tears in his eyes, he said to his wife, "Tell me I'm a good man."
7. Ryan asked this of her because an entire squad of men had been sent deep into enemy territory to find him and escort him to safety
 - a. he was the last surviving son of 4 brothers who had all died in the invasion of Normandy
 - b. but when the squad found him, he refused to abandon his post
 - c. he and his own squad had to guard the last bridge across a strategic river,
 - d. and if he left, he would never be able to live with himself
 - e. so the two squads set up and held the bridge against a vicious assault by the Germans
 - f. virtually everyone of them were killed, except Ryan and a handful of others
 - g. as the main character of the movie, played by Tom Hanks, sat on the bridge bleeding to death, Ryan stood before him pleading with him not to die
 - h. but it was obvious he wouldn't make it -
 - i. and with his last breaths, he looked into Ryan's eyes and sad,
 - j. "Be worthy of this."
13. This is what prompted Ryan's question so many years later as he stood in that cemetery
14. Had he lived a life that was worthy of the sacrifice of so many others?
15. Was he worthy of the price they paid so he might live?
16. And as we sit and watch that movie, we can't help but ask ourselves the same question
17. Are *we* worthy of the sacrifice all those men and women have paid so that we might live in a country such as this?

B. *Living Worthy*

1. But today we are faced with an even *more* important question:
2. As Christians, are we living lives *worthy* of the great sacrifice Jesus paid to set us free?
3. His death secures our salvation - are we living *saved* lives?

4. This is what Paul calls us to in these verses . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 17-19

{17} **This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,**

{18} **having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart;**

{19} **who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.**

1. If you were to read all of Paul's letters and count up the number of times he used the word, "**Therefore**" you would see that it was one of his favorite words
2. Paul was supremely logical in what he wrote, so that each thoughts flows out of the previous in a seamless argument
3. The "**therefore**" in v. 17 points to what has come right before
 - a. Paul has called them to unity
 - b. and to grow up *together* in their faith
 - c. they cannot remain in a state of spiritual infancy - but must press on to become *mature*
4. In what follows, he tells them about something they absolutely must do if they are to be mature
5. There is one step they must take that will result in being able to go on in Christ
6. In fact, this one thing is so critical, Paul uses impressive terms to make his readers take notice
 - a. he says he **testifies in the Lord**
 - b. in other words - this isn't just Paul's wise counsel
 - c. what follows comes from the Lord Himself
 - d. this was a truth taught by the Holy Spirit and affirmed by Jesus
 - e. what he's about to say isn't optional -
 - f. doing this is part and parcel with what it means to be a follower of Jesus!
7. We'll see what that one thing is in a moment, but right now, take note of the fact that the Christian life is a "THEREFORE" life
 - a. who and what we are is based on who Jesus is and what He has done for us
 - b. our lives are not based on the changing fashions of this world
 - 1) they aren't defined by our changing emotions
 - 2) they aren't driven by what's popular or in vogue
 - c. because of God, there is a solid and secure foundation to our lives
 - d. because Jesus came and brought salvation, our lives have meaning and purpose!
8. Jesus came, He died for our sins, rose again from the dead for our justification and new life, and one Day He will come again to lay claim to all that belongs to Him
9. THEREFORE - we live in this world,
 - a. free from the guilt and condemnation of sin
 - b. enjoying a new life empowered by the Spirit and enjoying a new set of

- priorities
- c. and we look forward with eager anticipation of His return
 10. The Christian life is a THEREFORE life.
 11. Paul describes that life here: He says that it is not the same as the life we lived before we came to faith in Christ
 12. There is a radical and fundamental *difference* between the Christian and the non-Christian
 13. Paul knew first hand the pull that's exerted on new believers by their former habits
 - a. these people had left a way of life they had followed all their days until their conversion
 - b. it's no easy thing to break away from the past
 - c. specially when the past continues in the present through the inertia of behavior we call HABITS!
 14. As Christians, we live "in the world" but we are not "of the world."
 15. The *culture* around us, the *system*, what the Bible calls the *world*, exerts pressure on us to conform to *its* ways, rather than *God's* way
 - a. believers in every generation have known this pressure
 - b. it has always been this way, and always will, until Jesus comes and brings an end to the world's system and sets up His own Kingdom
 - c. in the meantime - here we are - smack dab in the middle of the world!
 16. While every generation of believers has faced pressure to conform to the world, I have to wonder if *our* age isn't faced with a *unique* challenge
 - a. the pervasiveness of the media makes it even more difficult
 - b. daily we are barraged with a steady stream of sights and sounds that are calculated to get us to conform to the world
 - c. whether it's the TV, radio, billboards, magazines, or newspapers -
 - d. our eyes and ears are assaulted with the incessant message of the world
 17. All the more, we need this message to *break* with the world
 18. Paul says that no matter what their past was, they must no longer live in the manner of those who do not know Christ
 19. In just 3 verses, he paints a picture of the terrible state of the lost
 20. They live in a down-ward spiral that begins with an empty head, leads to inner darkness, a hardened heart, the insensitivity of a corpse, and finally, complete abandonment to sin
 21. We'll chart this progress more fully Wednesday evening - but for now, just note that Paul gives no room for improvement in the life of the lost
 22. The man or woman who rejects God and denies the Lordship of Christ over his or her life is on a down-ward slope to destruction
 23. They are alienated from the life of God, he says in v. 18
 - a. meaning they are in the enemy's camp
 - b. there is no neutral ground in the battle between God and Satan
 - c. as Jesus said, either you are on God's side, or the devil's
 24. The non-Christian is not on the path to heaven; he or she is on the road to hell
 - a. they may not see it because the devil likes to put up false signs
 - b. and even sets up appealing rest spots along the way
 - c. but the end is the Lake of Fire

25. Paul reminds us here that if a person rejects God, all of life is based on a lie
26. A person may have a brilliant intellect, an IQ of 190, but if they refuse to acknowledge God, their intelligence is wasted
27. You see, if you start with the wrong set of facts, then your mental gymnastics may be impressive, but your conclusions will all be faulty
 - a. you can take a Cray supercomputer, one of those machines that fills an entire room with computing power, running billions of complex computations per millisecond
 - b. but if the first programming you give it is $1=0$, $1+1=3$ and $2+2=7$, then it will use all it's vast power in the production of faulty conclusions
28. So it is with man - his mind only works properly when God is the first fact He considers
29. The difference between a computer and man is that while computers merely generate data, man bases his life on his thoughts - he puts his conclusions into practice
30. So we see the down-ward spiral of the man or woman who rejects God from his thinking
 - a. his thoughts become futile and aimless
 - b. the light of truth goes out and she lives in darkness
 - c. repeated rejection of the light of truth results in a callusing of his heart
 - d. till eventually he becomes insensitive
 - e. and so give themselves over to all sorts lewdness simply because they've lost the capacity to know or care about what is right
 - f. we think about those groups and individuals who make public demonstration of their perversions in parades through the streets of San Francisco, New York, and Rio de Janeiro
31. Paul's point is - don't walk that down-ward path
32. You belong to Christ and this is not what He has taught you . . .

B. Vs. 20-24

{20} But you have not so learned Christ,

{21} if [really, since] indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

{22} that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

{23} and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

{24} and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

1. Here is that special, defining act that Paul calls them to do that will enable them to go on to spiritual maturity
2. They must put off the old life and put on the new
3. Now, we need to be careful here so that we can understand exactly what Paul is saying
4. Stay with me . . .
5. When he says, "**put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man**" and

- "put on the new man"** he puts it in the *aorist* tense
- a. this was a verb tense which meant *simple completed action in the past*
 - b. in other words - Paul is calling them to come to a moment in time in which they decide that they are going to be done with the past and from that moment forward, they are going to live in the new life Christ brings
 - c. forever behind them are the things that marked their lives BC, before Christ
6. Many Christians have an inordinate struggle with sin
- a. the nasty habits that used to mark their lives before they came to faith in Christ seem to exert a pull every bit as strong as before
 - b. so they end up stumbling and falling
 - c. they never seem to make any real progress because every step forward is followed by a step or two back
 - d. and they get frustrated because they don't see any consistent victory over sin
7. But truth be told - they've never done what Paul says here
- a. rather than coming to grips with their need to *decide* to end the old man's habits
 - b. they only vaguely wish he'd go away
 - c. listen - he won't *go* away - we have to ***PUT*** HIM AWAY!
 - d. as Paul says here - we have to put him OFF
 - e. it's the picture of taking off a set of dirty, worn out, ragged clothes and throwing them in the garbage
8. Have you done that?
- a. have you come to a point in your life with Christ when you realize He died for your sins
 - b. and faith in Him means that you've died to them too?
 - c. and if that's true, then what you need to do is what you do with anything that's dead - bury it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
 - d. or do those old habits fit so comfortably that like an old worn out t-shirt, you find yourself slipping them on now and again?
9. I grew up sleeping on the same pillow till I was 14
- a. I loved that old pillow - and it saw a lot of abuse
 - b. it got to the point where it was a stinky, rancid bundle of ragged cloth
 - c. years of drool, and sweat, and pimple goo had turned it into an unsanitary mess
 - d. but oh I loved that pillow
 - e. one night I discovered my pillow was missing
 - f. I asked my mother where it was, and she informed me she had tried to wash it, but it had disintegrated
 - g. I cried! My pillow was gone
 - h. I look back on that now and realize how really foolish I was, but at the time, I couldn't see it - I wanted my stinky, odiferous pillow, because while I knew it was stinky, I liked it, the stink brought me comfort
10. Some of us here this morning are struggling with stinky sins simply because we've grown accustomed to this way of life and have never come to grips with the fact that being a Christian means putting off what Jesus died to save us from

11. Listen - we cannot overcome habits that we've never faced squarely and said no to
12. Paul is telling us that we must bury what died with Christ at the cross and then put on the new life God has created for us through the power of the resurrection
13. In John 11, we read the story of the raising of Lazarus
 - a. Jesus came to the village of Bethany, 4 days after Lazarus had died
 - b. he gave instructions that the stone sealing the tomb's entrance be moved aside
 - c. but the people protested - after 4 days the body would be in a state of decay and would smell really bad
 - d. but Jesus ignored their objections and insisted they remove the stone
 - e. once removed, he gave the command - "Lazarus, come forth."
 - f. and as they looked, there stood Lazarus
 - g. everyone stared in shocked silence, and finally Jesus had to tell them to go and remove the grave clothes
 - h. He said, "Loose him, and let him go."
14. A living person should not be wearing the clothes of death
15. And so it is with you and I - if we are alive in Christ, then we ought not be wearing the garments of sin and death
16. Rather, we are to be wearing the garments of righteousness and holiness
 - a. being *right* I our relationship with *others*
 - b. and being *holy* in our relationship with *God*
17. In Luke 17, Jesus said, "Remember Lot's Wife!"
 - a. Lot, his wife, and two daughters were fleeing from Sodom as the judgment of God fell on the city
 - b. they had been warned not to lag behind but to press on lest the city's judgment fall on them
 - c. but Lot's wife, reluctant to leave the place she had become comfortable in, did lag behind
 - d. and looking back with a longing gaze, she was caught
18. Christian - turn your face away from the world
 - a. drop the affection for sin
 - b. don't hang out with the old friends who you used to sin with
 - c. don't go to the places you used to go to sin
 - d. get rid of the books, magazines, and videos that stumble you
19. Remember Lot's wife!

C. Renewed

1. There is one more thing we need to note here - and it is critical
2. While *put off* and *put on* are in the aorist tense, the phrase, "**Be renewed in the spirit of your mind**" is in the *present* tense
3. We could translate it this way - "Be constantly being renewed in the basic attitude of your mind."
4. While putting off the old man and putting on the new looks to a *crisis moment* in which we make a settled break with the past and take on the new identity we

- are in Christ, -
5. This understands that we are engaged in a *process* in which, -
 - a. instead of that down-ward spiral of the lost,
 - b. we are in an upward journey which day by day enjoys the fruit of spiritual growth
 6. To put it another way
 - a. we are to **BREAK** with the old
 - b. **EMBRACE** the new
 - c. and **APPROPRIATE**, day by day, all that is a part of the new
 - d. conversion is a *crisis* that leads to a *process*
 7. In verses. 17-19, we saw how the unbeliever's mind is dark and futile
 8. Here, the believer's mind is filled with truth and light
 9. Of course, the way our minds are renewed is by the Word of God, applied by faith
 10. Physically, you are what you eat
 - a. in the same way - spiritually, you are what you think
 - b. Proverbs 23:7 says

As a person thinks in his heart, so is he.

- c. we will think on whatever it is we are feeding our minds

III. CONCLUSION

A. *What Do You Feed Your Mind?*

1. So let's end with that -
2. What are you feeding your mind?
3. If you are one of those who is struggling with sin and seemingly failing -
4. If it seems that you face an inordinate battle with temptation -
5. Ask yourself these questions:
 - 1) Have I put off the old man and put on the new?
 - a) Have I ever made the conscious decision to break with the past?
 - b) Have I ever decided to say "No" to sin simply because I AM a new person and sin doesn't go with who and what I am now?
 - 2) What am I feeding my mind?
 - a) Am I getting a steady diet of the Word of God?
 - b) Am I meditating on it day and night?
 - c) Or am I filling my mind with the world's message?
 - d) Are my eyes and ears just browsers for the world's *spiritual* internet?
6. If the only exposure you have to the Word of God is what you get on Sunday mornings and an occasional Wednesday night, then your mind really does not have enough spiritual nourishment to be renewed
7. I want to encourage you to make it a habit to spend some time every day, reading and meditating on the scriptures
8. Many people have found it helpful to keep a journal, a record of what they've read and what the Lord has shown them through it

B. *Standing At The Cross*

1. That last scene in *Saving Private Ryan* is a powerful and moving one that causes us to ask ourselves if we are worthy heirs of the sacrifice of the men and women in uniform
2. But there is another scene I want to ask you to see this morning as we end
3. It's the cross - see it, framed against the darkened sky
 - a. on it is a man
 - b. who hangs there fighting a battle for your freedom
 - c. not from some earthly tyrant
 - d. but from a devil who seeks your eternal damnation
 - e. Jesus fought a hard won battle for your salvation
4. Be worthy of this!