

“Put off and Put on”

Ephesians 4:17-24

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Ephesians 4:17-24

¹⁷Now 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.

Introduction

I'll say three things about this passage before we delve into the passage. First is, this passage could be misleading because it talks about put off and put on. It talks about putting off of our old nature and putting on the new nature. So, it's a clothing term. I always thought that it was a bad illustration. Why is Paul using this illustration to talk about character change or life change or nature change? It's so deep, yet shallowly we talk about clothing. It's seems external and temporary. It could be misleading that way, but it's about putting on a new nature and putting off of our old nature so it's deep, it's permanent in that sense. But, as I thought about the perspective of eternity, we do put off our old nature. It's eventually going to be gone, and we put on the new nature to become like Christ. It makes a lot more sense in the perspective of eternity--because the old nature seems to be there all the time, but eventually we're going to put it off so in that perspective, then it's a good illustration. This passage is also helpful because it talks about how we can change because we're asking questions about whether or not we or the people around us are capable of change. This passage talks about how we can change through the Word of God, how we can repent and redeem in order to have change in our lives. This passage is not only misleading and helpful, but also hopeful because as individually we change, the church of Jesus Christ is the hope of this world. The first section of this chapter is about how we are called to oneness. We are called to oneness in Jesus Christ, and then verses 7-12 talk about how we are called to serve. We are called to be one to represent Christ in this world as we serve one another, and as we are strengthened, we grow in Christ as we exercise our gifts to one another. Then we mature, we need to grow up, we need to mature to be men and women of God. That happens as we are called to repent and redeem ourselves, our hearts, minds, and our lives.

Henry Nowen. I don't like to really celebrate birthdays that much but, I'm a little bit more convinced now to celebrate birthdays by reading Henry Nowen. This is what he wrote about birthdays "Birthdays need to be celebrated. I think it is more important to celebrate birthdays than a successful exam, promotion or victory. Because to celebrate birthdays means to say to someone thank you for being you." Celebrating birthdays, exalting life, and being glad for it. On our birthday, we do not say thank you for what you did or said or accomplished. No, we say thank you for being born and being among us. Being baptized is kind of like that. It's the celebration of a spiritual birthday. So even though we don't know exactly when they

were reborn or became Christian, sometime in our life now we have changed into new clothing, a new nature in Jesus Christ, which this passage compares to these two natures. That's when you were born again. That's when you became Christian and being baptized is a celebration of the symbolic picture of that. You know, if you think about Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is a great dividing history of humanity. That's how amazing Jesus is. When Jesus Christ was born, people started to refer to history as B.C. Before Christ. A.D. Anno Domini which means the "year of the Lord." Jesus Christ divides human history. But Jesus Christ also divides our personal history. When you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, there's B.C. days and A.D. days. We are of the Lord and that's what baptism is, that's what spiritual birth is, but none of us really know when we were born again. I know some of you raise your hand and say, This is the day I received Jesus as my savior and Lord, maybe that's the day you were born, but maybe not. Maybe it was a few days before that or a few days after, but somewhere in there, it happened. Jesus Christ divides our personal history, and that's what this passage is about. That's when putting off and putting on began, and for the rest of our lives, this is a process that we need to be involved in for change of our lives. Putting off and putting on. So, to summarize this passage, we'll put it in three things, but it's really one sentence about how we can change in our lives:

One, as you put off the old self which is v. 17-19

Then secondly, you must put in the truth v. 20-21

Thirdly, so that you can put on the new self v. 22-24

This is the process of change that we must be involved in throughout our lives.

I. As you put off the old self [17-19]

¹⁷Now 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.

A. Old self [17]

¹⁷Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.

Paul is making a solemn claim that he writes to them with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul knew he was writing the Scripture. He does this often, and he's writing with the authority of Jesus Christ. Then he talks about, "*you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.*" No longer walk assumes that we have been walking, but we will continue to fight our existing old nature. Some people think that after we become Christian our old nature is gone. Our old nature is not gone, even after we become Christian. Constantly, as he writes to Christians, telling people not to sin, not to live according to the old nature. So our old nature is not gone, but in the presence of our old nature, a new nature is born, and it is constantly fighting against our old nature. This is what defines Christian life, a constant battle. We still have the old nature and habits and lifestyles in us even after our spiritual birth, but these need to be put off.

B. Old mind [18]

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.*

Second thing under “as we put off the old self” is our mind. We put off our old self through putting off our old thoughts, old mind. It talks about verse 18, “darkened in their understanding because of their ignorance.” Immediately the intellectual factor in everybody’s way of life is mentioned. Darkened in their understanding because of their ignorance. So, they’re remaining in the darkness of understanding; they still have understanding, but it’s in darkness. They are ignorant of the light, but they have their own thinking process that is in darkness, away from God because of the worldly ignorance of Christ. All this is related to the heart. The function of your mind and your heart are all related. The world does not understand heart, they think it’s either body or mind. But, the Bible says, the mind and heart, the essence of our being, are related. The mind is the mouth of the heart, similar to a monitor. The mouth has two functions: You speak with your mouth, and you eat with your mouth. Speaking means our heart is shown through what we think about. Heart speaks through the mind, so if you understand what’s in your mind, you understand your heart. You also want to affect your heart. You want to change, you got to keep eating through your mind. You got to keep thinking about the right things so that you can change. So, our mind speaks for the heart. Do you really want to know what is in your heart? You got to just turn off everything and know what it is you’re thinking about. What comes into your minds. Listen to yourself. Learn to listen to yourself at times. In this generation, with technology, we learn to listen to other things. But, you got to learn to listen to yourself. What do you think about when you’re by yourself? When there’s nothing? Listen to yourself. Listen to see what is in you! Listen to see what you’re made of. Listen to learn about yourself. Listen to discover yourself. Your feelings. Your thoughts. Your words. The content of what you’re thinking. Then, you can understand what you’re made of, what’s in your heart. But, also the mind eats for the heart. Do you know how to change your heart? One of the key factors, you got to pray so that your heart will change. But, one of the key factors, you got to instill, you got to eat the right things, You got to think about the right things. Because through your mind, your heart eats. Keep thinking about something that will affect your heart. But, often, rather than being in control of what we are thinking about, we just passively listen, going with the flow.

We move by the intent of what people are doing in the entertainment world. If they want you to laugh, you kind of laugh; however, in reality--if we were to really see that in our family, we wouldn’t be laughing. We wouldn’t even agree. If you do passive listening, there are other factors affecting you. If you’re eating junk food, you’re eating poison. Their belief, thinking process, faith, theology. Everybody’s a theologian. It’s coming into your heart without discernment. Passive listening. So you have to do active listening. You can listen and watch, but you also have to think and discern for yourself, digesting the information well. We need discernment in our thinking process. And this kind of thinking will help you to grow. But, in order to discern you need to have information. Without information you can certainly try to discern, but you don’t have substance to discern with. Like I ride in airplanes a lot, and the flight attendants are explaining things. Nobody really listens, right? But, if you were going through a difficult situation, an emergency situation, if you really listened carefully, that will save people’s lives. There might be people in the ocean, ocean of despondency, self pity, discouragement, depression,

and if you were to listen to what the flight attendant was saying, you would be able to help them in the emergency situation. So, you got to listen to God's word. You got to listen to the substance. It might save others' lives. Listen to the wrong thoughts that you have as you listen to yourself. When you listen, so many sinful and negative thoughts might be discovered, then you must realize that you have to change. You can also grow by listening to the wrong thoughts of other people. Whatever you read or watch, someone is expressing their beliefs and thoughts through those things. Everything has a thought. Everything has a philosophy. Everything has theology, and you need to listen carefully and discern. And through all these things throughout our lives, we have a pattern that shows through our trains of thought. Once you start to think about something, it moves without you really trying because of the habits and the patterns that you have formed in your life. For some people the topic might be money; when they start to talk about money, they can go on for an hour to talk about this. For others it might be lust. They go into their sin as soon as they start something. We have ungodly trains of thought and godly trains of thought. Your present thoughts are the product of what you have been listening to all your life. This means we always must have purposeful listening, thinking. That will help us to solidify our purpose in life.

C. Old heart [18-19]

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.

As it talks about the heart, it talks about the old heart, similar to an old wardrobe. The old wardrobe in the first century is just as much in style today as it was in Paul's day. There are four things about the old heart that these verses bring up. One is hardness of the heart. It means heart of a stone and expresses an inability and unwillingness to respond to God's truth. Our hearts are hard, old, and sinful. We love and want different things. The darkness mentioned in the passage is talking about absence of spiritual understanding. Deadness, alienated from the life of God. You don't have Christ in your heart, you're spiritually dead. We're not totally dead if you're a Christian, but we're unresponsive to what God is telling us. Hardness, Darkness, Deadness, and Recklessness that leads to "every kind of impurity." Since our hearts are always seeking pleasure, if we don't have spiritual pleasure our hearts will turn to sinful pleasure. If you're not actively seeking for pleasure in God, you're going to unconsciously turn to the pleasures you had before you knew Christ. Therefore, we need to constantly seek for pleasure in Christ, putting off our old pleasure and putting on a new pleasure, new love, new passion in Christ. We need to go to the school of Christ. In order for you to know your heart, you need to examine what you desire in the depths of your heart. That desire is what drives you, what makes you discouraged, why you do what you do. You need to ask questions until you relate your feelings and situations to the purpose of your life and your relationship with God. Ask questions until you see deeper things. There's always sin beneath our sins. Talk to somebody that can help you question yourself more. Get to know your heart motive. If you can connect all that you do to your heart motive, (what you want, what you desire, what your emotion is, what your thinking process is), you're beginning to understand yourself. Until you see the bottom of your heart, that there's sin in your heart, so keep going. Until you see the cross of Jesus Christ that forgives you and strengthens you, until you see the throne of God, keep going. Heart motives are sinful motives, but you can definitely redeem it

for the glory of God. You can use your motive to glorify God. The key is repenting and redeeming your heart motive so that you can use it for the glory of God. Your passion will become your desire for the glory of God. Romans 13: 14 says,
Romans 13:14 – ¹⁴*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

Make no provision for sinful nature, but we make so much provision for our sinful nature, sinful desires, so we keep thinking about it. Stop thinking about it. Don't go close to a person or people that will make you sin. Don't go close to the devices and things that are around that if you're around, you know you're going to sin. If it's related to your train of thoughts, related to your addiction, related to your idolatry, you might need to avoid it. Make sure you know your provisions for your flesh, and don't go close to them. But I'll challenge some of you to give up, maybe not only for the Lenten season but for good. That will help you make new provision for your flesh, which means making provision for your spiritual nature as well.

II. You must put in the truth [20-21]

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,*

Second point is the key: You must put IN the truth. Verses 20-21. Now this is the key part of the passage. These two verses are the key part of the passage. Before, Paul was talking about putting off old self, mind, and heart, and now it emphasizes with “Okay, put on the new heart, mind, self.” This is the most important thing, like the thesis of the passage. This passage has three verbs about Jesus Christ. Three things using these three verbs to give us a lesson about how we can put off ourselves and put on our new clothing, new nature in Jesus Christ.

A. Christ is the substance of Christian teaching [20]

²⁰*But that is not the way you learned Christ!* –

First verb is you LEARNED Christ. It is learning of Him, learning of Jesus that changes us at the deepest possible level. It means Christians are Christians because they have entered into a personal relationship of knowing Jesus, personal relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ. The key to change is Jesus in your heart through Jesus being in your mind, saturating yourself with Jesus. That's the key, you learned Jesus. Now, how do we put Jesus in our minds and in our hearts?

B. Christ Himself is the teacher [21]

²¹*assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,*

So, at this point we'll say, Jesus Christ himself is the teacher. You HEARD about him. Now, ESV translates the phrase you HEARD about him, and the meaning is correct. But, really, there is no preposition meaning literally verse 21 saying not you heard about him, but you HEARD him. That means Jesus is the teacher. How did the Ephesian believers hear about Jesus? They never met Jesus. How did we hear from Jesus because we never really encountered Jesus? I think this

passage is saying “you heard about him” because Paul is teaching Jesus to the Ephesian believers. So that’s why the translation says you heard about Him through me, but what he’s basically saying is, you heard Him through me. How did the Ephesian believers hear from Jesus? Through other people, through the Word of God. But they heard FROM Jesus. That sounds obvious, but the fact that we can hear directly from Jesus comes with tremendous implications. As Paul preached Jesus, they heard Jesus through Paul’s exposition of the Old Testament and writing of the New Testament. That means Jesus was both the Word and the teacher himself through Paul, through the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God.

As Christians, we know exactly what this means in our experience. Whether it’s a sermon or a quiet time, when everything except what Jesus is saying to you just fades into the background, and you hear his voice loud and clear. When God speaks to me, my heart burns. When you experience things like this, this is not merely a subjective experience, but this is a supernatural experience. Through the verses, through the Word, your small group, in your personal reading of the Scripture or listening to a sermon, God might be speaking to you through these means. For Jesus speaks through the Word, through the teachers, through the sermons, through even the books about the Bible. He speaks to change your life, thinking process, and heart. And my reverent thought is maybe God might be speaking to somebody through me, but when I think about myself and how I’m a deficient instrument of God, I become afraid. God might be speaking through me. And your reverent thoughts should be, even today, God might be speaking to me today through this service. I think somewhere in there, we have lost this kind of reverence. Korean churches have this thought that they’re coming into a worship service, they are thinking God will speak to us through this service. Of course, this is subject to abuse because whatever the pastor says, they are thinking of it as God’s Word even if it might not be biblical or simply the pastor’s opinion. Now American churches think, of course, being involved in your own western culture, and often they have this attitude of “Oh, that was a good sermon.” The good ones really discern, “is that what the Bible is saying?” I think we need to have some of both. We need to listen and discern and think through even as I say, is it what the Bible is saying? But, once you know that what a preacher or pastor is saying is what the Bible is saying, then you become reverent of what God has told you. We need to have that kind of reverence when we come to worship the Lord. If you’re understanding the Bible, then Jesus Christ is speaking to you.

C. Christ is the goal of the teaching [21]

²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,

Now this was hardest to understand. “Taught IN Him.” That is to say Jesus Christ is the atmosphere or environment within which the teaching was given. What does that mean concretely? There’s a theology called union with Christ. We are so united to Christ language, that Jesus is not merely speaking to us intellectually. He’s not giving just cerebral instruction, but in a much deeper way, I believe what he’s saying is we’re in Christ spiritually, infusing Himself into us. Spiritual infusion is taking place, or the putting on of new clothes. We are putting on Christ and becoming like Christ, so there’s personal experience and growth that’s taking place. “We’re IN Jesus Christ” means we’re becoming like Jesus Christ through our union with Christ that forms through the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, through human teachers or human

understanding. Jesus Christ is infusing himself into us. To summarize all three verbs, the truth is IN Jesus Christ himself. That means becoming Jesus Christ is our personal goal, putting on the character of Jesus Christ is our personal goal. So, individually, we become like Jesus Christ; as the church of Jesus Christ, we become like Christ since we as a church are called to the world to represent Christ. So I thought about being “clothed” with Christ. In some sense, when we become like Jesus Christ, we’re becoming like superheroes in this world. There’s a drastic difference between Ironman and Superman, right? Ironman himself does not really have a power. His power is in what he wears. Whether Superman wears clothes or not, he has powers in himself. So, when we are clothed in Christ, it’s kind of in between Ironman and Superman as it talks about the clothing because it’s not just externally wearing Christ. We’re not like Ironman, but we are not totally Superman because we have both the power of the Holy Spirit as well as our old nature within us. But, we wear Christ so we are kind of in between Ironman and Superman and one day, when we get to heaven, we’ll be like Superman. In essence of our being, we’ll have power, without our sin nature. But, that’s what putting off and putting on kind of means as we look into this passage.

III. So that you can put on the new self [22-24]

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.

A. New heart [22]

²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,

As we put off of the old self, you must put in the truth.

Thirdly.. so that you can put on new self. From the old heart to new heart or mind to new mind, old self to new self. These three things. New heart. Verse 22, *put off your old self*. Self is a generic Greek word for man or human being. Probably an allusion to Adam falling, through becoming more like Jesus Christ, the second Adam, we are reversing the curse of the old Adam. Next it talks about desires. Deceitful desires, talking about part of our heart, verse 22 desires. And we know in Galatians 5:16 says...

Galatians 5:16 – ¹⁶*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* Where does desire come from? The flesh! Sinful nature. Flesh means sinful nature. So, desires of our hearts. So when he talks about deceitful desires, he’s talking about our heart and we know in order for us to change our heart, a new heart is needed.

Psalm 51:10 – ¹⁰*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

David is crying out to the Lord, create in me a clean heart. The word: create” is like Genesis when there was nothing created. David is looking at himself and going, “This heart has nothing good in it. Lord, you need to do some creation here. You need to instill in me a new thing here, create in me a new heart, O God, because this old heart is so bad. I need a new heart so that my heart can be renewed with a right spirit within me.” This verse is saying to put off your old self.

This verse is talking about the process of repentance. Some might say Pastor Min, I'm already discouraged. Do you want me to be more discouraged thinking about my sin? Can you just say positive things about me? If you think like this, you have a drastically wrong perception about confession and repentance. The best part of God's love is to show you your sins. Not so you can condemn yourself, but so that you can become formed to the likeness of Christ. Not so that you can be condemning yourself, but you can depend on God. So that you can dump it off, but not be damned by it. You can't see sin unless He shows it to you. It takes spiritual eyes to be able to see your sins. But not in a self-condemning way, but in a God-depending way. That means if you see your sins, you are a blessed person because you can immediately receive God's grace.

As you see your sins, as you go to the cross, do not just condemn yourself. But as you see your sins, immediately go to the cross, so that you can receive the grace of God. Confessing our sins ought to be the normal part of our daily routine and a constant part of our spiritual life. Constantly repent, "Oh, I'm sorry. Help me Lord, I'm sorry. Strengthen me, empower me, change me." Confessing does not jeopardize your relationship with God but enhances it. He wants to get rid of the only thing that will hinder your relationship with him, which is sin. Repentance is the path, it's the GPS. It's the road to His grace, His love, and His power because your sin has fallen on Christ. When we confess our sins, Christ takes it away and we are restored to the throne of grace. Confessing is the most positive thing that you can do because then you can be in the presence of the father who comforts you. Why is it important? Because there's a process. Just like there's a train of thoughts that leads to sin, there's a train of thoughts that leads to grace. On the track of the cross and heaven, the throne of the love of our God the father, there's a path. There's the stop of seeing your old self, and the stop of confessing your sins which leads to the track of forgiveness and restoration. God is like your mom. He just wants to stuff you with food. He just wants to stuff you with grace. Eat more. So, as soon as you repent, you may bloom in your heart, while he just pours his grace. He just instills his grace and infusion of his likeness into you. He just wants to give you a little more so as soon as you confess, He just stuffs you with His grace. Some people are satisfied in confessing sin, but don't stop there. Keep on going. Confession station is on the right track, but the next stop is the faith station so if you keep going you will get to the grace station. Don't leave until you receive grace. And through the cross, through the empty tomb, only after that, only ever the cross, there's a crown of glory. And don't stop until you reach faith.

B. New mind [23]

²³*and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,*

What should you be thinking about in the midst of "Oh I'm not changing" or if you're discouraged? Look at this.

Ephesians 4:1 – *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,*

There's a purpose in our life. We are called to represent the king. This is a purpose statement. This is a reason to get out of your bed- because you are commissioned by the king. He has given

you a purpose for living. You are created to discover His words and declare his praise. Listen to God, don't just listen to yourself and instead listen to the Word. Listen to God. And after you listen to God, just as you would speak to others, you learn to speak to yourself. Learn to think in your mind.

Psalm 42:11 – *“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.”*

He's preaching to himself. You got to learn to think the right thing. Be active. Be proactive with the Word of God. After you study the Word of God, you speak to yourself. Think. Some of you say love doesn't always move me. If it doesn't move you now, it will. Keep listening, Don't stop until it moves you because there is a purpose. Turn off things that are speaking to you that will discourage you and lead you away from the narrow path of the cross. Listen to the right thing, and there is purpose for listening. Listen to eat God's Word. Listen to think about God's Word. Listen to have a pattern and thought pattern of God's Word. There's a purpose for listening. It will cleanse your soul, heart, and mind. There's a bigger and greater purpose for God's glory for your benefit, and eternal joy so start to listen to God. Always be thankful when you feel tempted to complain. Because when you're thankful, you're seeing the reality. Much bigger than your immediate sight. Learn to change your small sphere. Learn to change your room by giving thanks because though you cannot see, you know the bigger picture of what God is doing in your life. You got to turn around when you're going on a negative path, for it is sinful path, turn around. I always talk about this, but when I'm unconsciously driving in Champaign, you know where I'm going? I'm going to TCBC. I'm going somewhere and if I'm not thinking, I'm going to TCBC because that's where I go every morning. I've been going there for twenty some years so if I'm unconsciously driving, I say what am I doing here? Talking about going to the church in the middle of the afternoon. Oh what am I doing? I'm going to meet somebody or something like that. We have a pattern of thinking. At least I'm not going to some wrong place, right? Maybe, if you're unconsciously driving, you might be going to the wrong place. But, you need to develop a pattern that if you're driving without thinking, I pray that you will have a train of thought that will go to the right place in your life. On this side of heaven, love will not grow without a fight. You got to learn to fight your thinking process. Pattern of your heart. Nothing in life grows without a change. Nothing in life will grow without a challenge. If it doesn't challenge you, it probably won't change you. Anytime the glory of Christ is in reach, there's resistance and jealousy in your heart. You want to love Christ, there's jealousy in your heart because you're too much in love with yourself. To reach for your own glory and own pleasure instead. Do you know what you look like when you reach for his glory? When Moses saw the glory of God, he was glowing when he was coming down from the mountain. That's what happens when you meet God. You will glow and expect to be an ambassador for the King of glory and love when you encounter Christ.

C. New self [24]

²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

The kind of clothing that we wear depends on the role we are fulfilling. When you go to a wedding, you wear different clothes than when you go to a funeral. Our old self is like funeral clothing. There's judgment. Our new self is like wedding clothing. Wear right attire in your Christian life. We are headed for the eternal celebration. The church of Jesus Christ is going to be wedded to Jesus Christ. It simply means we take a private step of faith in obedience with all of our heart. Praise Him and take a small, private step of faith. Never give up. The most difficult moment is when we are given an opportunity for us to grow, since sin does not leave without a fight. But you have awesome help, other believers in Jesus Christ's prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit within you. Immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine that we studied this in Ephesians chapter 3. There is power that is helping us.

Philippians 1:6 – ⁶And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Jesus does not quit. He finished what he came to do. He lived for us, and He died for us. And he gave his name when He came to this world. Emmanuel. Emmanuel which means God with us. He is with us now and forevermore. That means He is with you now. He will never give up on you. And don't you ever give up. We know the ending of the movie. We know the ending of the story. Relax. We are aching visionaries. We are in pain, but we look at how it's going to end. Our failure does not have the last word in history. Jesus Christ has the last word in history. And he wins. God is on the move. You're in alignment with His motion. He moves in you and He will move with you and He will move through you. When you go through hard times and difficult times, just don't be a coper. Coper is making adjustment for minimum pain but be a hoper. A hoper makes adjustment for maximum glory of Christ. Don't just cope. Hope in Jesus Christ. Stop saying it doesn't work. Start saying God said so. Keep going. So give thanks this morning even if you don't feel like it. And you're not being ignorant of the reality, but rather you are beginning to understand it. Ungodly desires breeding darkness of the thankless heart. Let the grace that enables you to see God's unceasing faithful hand at work. And enter into your heart as you open it with a simple thank you Lord. He will receive glory, and you will receive His grace. And this is only the beginning of change. Let's pray.