

Flesh & Spirit: You are what you wear

1. Introduction

- a. Over the past 3 weeks we have looked at the battle between the flesh and the spirit, between our old ways and our new ones, between our old man and the new creation we are in Christ.
- b. We learned that because Paul wrote to 5 different NT churches and addressed this struggle, that it is a very important issue that all of us struggle with.
- c. There have been several key principles that we have learned.
 - i. **The flesh cannot be fixed.** It must be put away, it cannot be cleaned up, dressed up, or made up. You cannot make a corpse look good. It is still a corpse.
 1. That is our situation before we met and received Christ.
 2. We were lost in our sins and under the power of the flesh (or self). We could not change ourselves. Anything we did was merely cosmetic.
 3. Our lives will always produce fruit in accordance with its nature. If we are “in” the flesh, we will produce the fruits of the flesh, which are listed in each of the letters that Paul wrote dealing with this problem.
 4. Ultimately, in order to produce good fruit, we need to be made “new creations” in Christ.
 - ii. **To overcome the flesh we must walk in the Spirit.**
 1. We learned that the bible promises that “*if you walk by the spirit you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*”
 2. So if the “walking by the Spirit” is the solution to our problem, why aren’t more of us overcoming the self-rule in our lives?
 - a. The problem for most of us, is that we have never been TAUGHT *how* to walk by the Spirit.
 - b. We learned that we must be “led by the Spirit” – which I compared the difference between a pace car and a locomotive. Both lead, but only one provides power to those who are following. The locomotive leading is the best example of what it means to be led by the Spirit. We don’t follow in our own power and strength but depend upon the strength of the Spirit of God.
 - c. We must submit and stay connected relationally to God in order to walk by the Spirit.
 - iii. Another thing we learned two weeks ago, was that **we will follow that which our minds are set upon.**
 1. If we set our minds upon the desires of the flesh, our actions will follow, if we set our minds upon what the spirit desires, our actions will follow.
 2. We learned that self-consciousness is to walk in the flesh.
 - a. How much does self-consciousness affect us?
 - b. It causes us to do lots of things...
 - i. Like try to please people so they will like us
 - ii. Like try to act differently to be accepted
 - iii. Like try to do things for selfish reasons
 3. We also learned that our walk in the Spirit is not supposed to be a “gas station experience” where we “fill her up” each week. It is supposed to be a “flow through” “immersed” experience not unlike a cup without a bottom that is lying in a river allowing the water to pass through it.
 4. We operate in the Christian life not in the “storage” principle but in the “contact” principle (like a subway train that operates because it is *CONNECTED* to the power rail.
 - a. **Victory is not you overcoming sin, Victory is Jesus overcoming you**

- b. We don't watch our sin, we look at Jesus. We look away from ourselves to Him. This is the answer to laying aside the old self.
 - iv. Last week we learned that **walking in the Spirit (as opposed to the flesh) involves where our minds, hearts and affections are fixed.**
 - 1. Calling it getting our heads in the clouds, we learned that we must stop being consumed by earthly concerns and thoughts.
 - a. We learned that we must make hard decisions about what fills our minds.
 - b. We learned that where our treasures are our hearts would follow.
 - 2. We learned that the closer we draw to God the more and more our fleshly ways would die, not unlike a rodent in a plane.
- 2. Colossians 3:5-17- *5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self (stripped off one's garments) with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self (like clothes) who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. 12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

Analysis of the passage:

- 3. *V5-8 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside (put off, cast off, same word used for the clothes cast at the feet of Saul): anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.*
- 4. *MESSAGE: And that means killing off (mortify KJV) everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God. It's because of this kind of thing that God is about to explode in anger. It wasn't long ago that you were doing all that stuff and not knowing any better. But you know better now, so make sure it's all gone for good: bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk.*
 - a. Paul is telling us to "consider the parts of our body as dead to sin." It is already a fact in heaven, but we need to live like it's a fact on earth.
 - b. , **Consider dead...Mortify (KJV)** comes from Nekro – to put to death, dead
 - i. **Either we mortify our flesh, or our flesh will harm us to a point where we have no power, joy, fruit, usefulness, or victory.**
 - ii. The form of the verb (aorist imperative) makes it clear that the action is to be undertaken decisively and with a sense of urgency.
 - iii. LISTEN TO THIS: Both the meaning of the verb and the force of the tense suggest that this is a vigorous, painful act of personal determination.
 - 1. When was the last time you did something through a vigorous, painful act of personal determination?
 - 2. Vivian had a knee replaced this week. I would have to call that a vigorous, painful act of personal determination. She was trading a lifetime of chronic pain for a short-term intense pain.

3. Have you ever made such a hard choice when it came to living for Jesus?
- iv. On the other side of "putting to death" our fleshly desires is the temptation to gratify the sensual appetite by giving it the very food and nourishment by which it lives, thrives, and is active.
- v. **(John Piper) Conversion means death -not just decision for Jesus, but death with Jesus. One great problem in the church today - not the only one - is that we do not grasp the magnitude and depth and wonder and miracle of what happens in genuine conversion to Christ.**
 1. We like easy grace, the kind of easy salvation that we pray a prayer, sign on the dotted line and get our "get out of hell free card."
 2. But if you have been touched by Jesus Christ, really touched, then you will stop at nothing to let Him change your life and your heart!
- vi. Have you heard about the man whose bad habit was hindering his fellowship with God and hurting his Christian testimony? He said he prayed that God would forgive him for his addiction—but he didn't stop! He would then went forward at the end of church services every week to kneel and pray,
 - a. "Lord, take the cobwebs out of my life."
 - b. One Sunday morning his pastor, tired of hearing the same old prayer, knelt beside him and cried out, "Lord, kill the spider!"
 2. **Yes, sometimes it takes radical action to break a sinful habit.**
 - a. We need to do more than ask God for cleansing each time we succumb to temptation.
 - b. We must take whatever steps are needed to get the cobwebs out of our life.
 - c. We must confess our sin and determine to be done with it.
 - d. Then we must feed our mind with God's Word and do all we can to stay away from the people and places that tempt us to sin.
 - e. That's what Christ meant when He said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out" (see note Matthew 5:29).
 - f. Kill the spider and you'll get rid of the cobwebs. Remember that **admitting sin is no substitute for quitting sin.**

*It's not enough to say to God,
"I'm sorry, I repent,"
And then go on from day to day
The way I always went. —Anon.*
- vii. The verb "mortify" makes me think of the man who while climbing a rock face, got his arm caught in between rocks that shifted, and he hung there for two days. The feeling, circulation and blood flow to his trapped arm was gone. If he hung there another day, he would die. So he did the unthinkable. He pulled out his dull pocketknife and proceeded to cut his arm off, bone and all. He chose to lose something in order to save his life.
- viii. So it is when we make a choice between the sin in our lives and following Jesus. It is a hard choice. It involves dying to what we want. But if we don't do it, we will surely perish.

5. *9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self (stripped off one's garments) with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self (like clothes) who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.*

6. MESSAGE: Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. 10Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the

old fashions are now obsolete. 11 Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ.

- a. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead he came out with grave clothes on, wrappings. Jesus told him to unwrap him and let him go. I don't image Lazarus going back and trying to put on grave clothes again do you. At least not by choice. When we go back to sinful ways, we go back to what leads to spiritual death and decay. Paul tells us there is a better way.
 - i. Laid aside the old self (stripped off the garments)
- b. **What to Take Off.**
 - i. When we look at the sins lists in our text in verse 8, we probably divide them into 2 types. The first list could be called "Sins of Counterfeit Love" and the second list "Sins of Selfish Pride".
 - ii. **Counterfeit love:**
 1. immorality (desire for a forbidden bed), impurity, passion (lust: desire to use someone else for your own pleasure), evil desire
 1. In the Greco Roman world, there was no such thing as immorality...every person did as they wanted outside of the marriage...the marriage's purpose was to produce legitimate heirs to the property of the family. Into this world, Christianity proposed fidelity and morality! What a change!. Into our world, 2006...what is the prevailing view of morality? We swim upstream against a culture that has no standard of morality.
 - iii. **Selfish Pride:**
 1. greed, which amounts to idolatry.
 2. anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another
- c. **Dressing for Success:**
 - i. You can tell a lot about people in our society by the way they dress. From baseball players to bus drivers, from postal carriers to policemen, people wear the uniform of their profession. Who we are determines what we wear, and failing to "dress the part" can sometimes have embarrassing consequences. Many years ago a very wealthy man in a Southern California town was found wandering around the local country club wearing shabby clothes. He was promptly seized by security guards and charged with vagrancy—even though he owned the country club. He had failed to dress consistent with who he was...Christians must dress themselves spiritually in accordance with their new identity. They have died with Christ and risen to new life.
 1. Salvation thus produces a two-sided obligation for believers. we must throw off the garment of the old, sinful lifestyle, and we must put on the lifestyle of the new man." (MacArthur, J. Colossians. Chicago: Moody Press)
 - ii. You have stripped off the old evil nature like filthy, old rags.
 - iii. By contrast the new man has a new master, the Spirit of Christ living within his mortal body.
- d. This putting on Christ is a **past completed action**
 - i. Put on the new self (like clothing)
 1. Look at Romans 13:12-14 *The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and **put on** the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But **put on** the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*
 2. Endusaste (put on, clothe yourselves) – lit. "to sink into a garment"

3. To be clothed with a person is a Greek phrase, signifying to assume the interests of another—to enter into his views, to imitate him, and be wholly on his side
 - a. The mode of speech itself is taken from the custom of stage players: they assumed the name and garments of the person whose character they were to act.
 - b. Romans 13:12 is an allusion to laying aside their night clothes, and putting on their day clothes
4. **Cast off** the works of darkness, and **put on** the armor of light:
 - a. The illustration is from taking off and putting on clothes.
 - b. When you get dressed every day, you dress appropriately to who you are and what you plan to do.
 - c. Therefore, everyday, put on the Lord Jesus Christ!
 - d. God is not interested in getting you to simply stop bad, sinful or self destructive habits or behaviors. He desires to so transform you that He replaces our hearts and motives so we will produce good fruit. We don't just stop sinning, we begin wearing the conduct of Christ in its place!
 - e. Famous English Preacher Charles Spurgeon said: *We must cast off before we can put on. "The rags of sin must come off if we put on the robe of Christ. There must be a taking away of the love of sin, there must be a renouncing of the practices and habits of sin, or else a man cannot be a Christian. It will be an idle attempt to try and wear religion as a sort of celestial overall over the top of old sins."*
- e. **How to dress ourselves.** *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand; therefore it is time to dress ourselves."* (Romans 13:12)
 - i. Beggar who was invited in but not wearing the clothing fit for a wedding? (Mt. 22:9-14)
 1. Rags – our own righteousness are as filthy rags, the bible says.
 2. Without Christ, we are naked, deformed; all other things are filthy rags, fig-leaves, a sorry shelter. God has provided us coats of skins--large, strong, warm, and durable. By baptism we have in profession put on Christ,
 3. We take off our sinful, former self and put on the new creation in Christ...
EVERY DAY!
 - ii. Christianity is not just a philosophy about life; it is a way of life. We not only tell the world what we believe, we also show them by how we behave.
 - iii. Paul says "put these things to death".
 1. You see, there are clothes for death and clothes for life.
 2. Galatians 3:27. *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*
 - iv. Ray Stedman gives the following illustration: *"When I get up in the morning I put on my clothes, intending them to be part of me all day, to go where I go and do what I do. They cover me and make me presentable to others. That is the purpose of clothes. In the same way, the apostle is saying to us (in Ro 13:12, 13 14), "Put on Jesus Christ when you get up in the morning. Make Him a part of your life that day. Intend that He go with you everywhere you go, and that He act through you in everything you do. Call upon His resources. Live your life IN CHRIST."* (Stedman, Ray C. From Guilt to Glory. Vol 2. p136. Waco, TX: Word, 1978) ((Bolding added)
 - v. Kent Hughes explains (Eph 4:24 see note) this way *"The fact is, we have this new self if we are Christians. We received the old man at birth, and we were given the new man in our heavenly birth. The new man is not our work — it is God's creation and gift. **Our task is not to weave it, but to wear it.** Paul is commanding a daily appropriation of that which we already possess...We have our part to do in dressing ourselves with the divine wardrobe, for here clothes do make the man — and the woman! We must **daily** set aside*

the rotting garments of the old man. We must formally reject sensuality and selfish pride and materialism and bitterness. We must read the Word and ask God to renew our minds through the Spirit. We must work out our salvation by doing those things that will develop a Biblical mind. We must put on our new, shining garments of light. We must put on what we are!" (Hughes, R. K. Ephesians: The mystery of the body of Christ. Preaching the Word. page 143. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1990)

- f. **PUT ON:** *Col 3:12-14 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*
- g. **MESSAGE:** *So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.*
 - i. **Sin will suck the life out of you:** Annie Dillard, in her book Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, writes:
 - 1. At the end of the island I noticed a small green frog. He was exactly half in and half out of the water. He was a very small frog with wide, dull eyes. And just as I looked at him, he slowly crumpled and began to sag. The spirit vanished from his eyes as if snuffed. His skin emptied and drooped; his very skull seemed to collapse and settle like a kicked tent. .
 - 2. An oval shadow hung in the water behind the drained frog: then the shadow glided away. The frog skin bag started to sink.
 - 3. I had read about the water bug, but never seen one. "Giant water bug" is really the name of the creature, which is an enormous, heavy-bodied brown beetle. It eats insects, tadpoles, fish and frogs. Its grasping forelegs are mighty and hooked inward. It seizes a victim with these legs, hugs it tight, and paralyzes it with enzymes injected during a vicious bite. Through the puncture shoots the poison that dissolves the victim's muscles and bones and organs –all but the skin—and through it the giant water bug sucks out all the victim's body, reduced to liquid.
 - 4. Sin can suck the life out of you.
 - a. You cannot walk with Christ and at the same time indulge yourself in the things you know to be contrary to what the Bible teaches.
 - b. Your spiritual effectiveness will be sucked out of you. Your walk will be a walk filled with disappointment, guilt and discouragement.
 - c. The way to overcome this is to put on the new wardrobe that God provides through His son Jesus Christ.
- 7. Will you take off the old clothing of your old man today? Will you make a clean break with the past? Some of you here have made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, but have never let Him transform you, to make you a brand new creature in Christ. You only wanted enough religion to feel better about yourself. But that religion will not save you. Only Jesus Christ, put on in place of your old man can. Will you trust Him today. Will you surrender all to Him?
- 8. closing slide: *"I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God for He has clothed (enduo in LXX) me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." (Isa61:10)*

- i. A mother hears her son in the kitchen. She calls out to him "Where are you?" He is in the pantry with the cookie jar in his hands. "I'm in the kitchen" he replies. She then asks "What are you doing?" He says, "I'm fighting temptation." A lot of Christians do this. They play with sin not realizing it is like playing with fire. Scripture tells us to Flee from things that are evil. Our focus is not to be on sin Paul is telling us but on Christ.

2 Cor 5:2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life

Acts 24: 49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Matthew 22:9 9 "Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast." 10 "Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. 11 "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. 13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

Zech 3:3 Now Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. 4 The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." And to him he said, "See, I have taken your guilt away from you, and I will clothe you with festal apparel."

Eph 4:20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

1 Cor 15:53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory."