



Last week we moved onto the second half of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In chapters 4-6 he aims to apply the glorious truths he has taught in chapters 1-3 to the lives of this church. We moved this Sunday from the big picture 'what it looks like to be God's people' principles of 4v1-16 into the more nitty-gritty practical applications of 4v17-5v2.

Noting that the centre of this passage seems to be the metaphor of dressing and undressing (see the 'put on' and 'put off' language in v22-25), we looked at the passage in 2 halves.

1. Remember that Jesus has given you a brand-new outfit (4v17-24)

Paul begins by describing the lives and lifestyles of the Gentile unbelievers (v17-19). We noted a focus on the wrongness of their *thinking* in particular. Their sinful living has originated from their wrong thinking. Turning to and following Christ, we saw, requires first a change in thinking – an acceptance of and recalibration of one's mind and worldview according to the good news 'gospel' message of Jesus. Christianity that has no interest in the factual message of Jesus is no Christianity at all.

We then noted the heart of this passage in v22-24: God has given the Christian a brand-new outfit to wear – a whole new identity and way of being and living. This outfit is designed, v24, to make us look like Jesus. And it is an outfit God has already put upon us (the verbs in v22-24 are not present tense imperatives – they are aorist verbs that describe an action that has already begun and is ongoing). So Paul is saying 'keep wearing' the brand-new outfit Jesus has given you – your new identity and way of living. Don't stop putting it on each day. Don't slip back into the comfy joggers of sin.

2. Live like you're wearing Jesus' brand-new outfit (4v25-5v2)

But how do we wear the new outfit Jesus has given us? Paul's list of commands in v25-32 are astonishing for their simplicity and practicality. According to Paul, living a lifestyle that looks like Jesus isn't so much about what we *know*, or what we *do* (though we may perform great acts of service and be great Bible teachers). Rather, it is about who we are. And that is so often seen not when we're serving for everyone to see but in the small, practical, everyday ways we treat people and the thoughts and feelings that rumble around in our hearts as we relate to one another.

Why is this how Paul defines godly, mature living here? In his summary in 5v1-2 he tells us that we are to act like this because this is how Jesus lived and this is how Jesus loved us. Jesus' life was characterised as much by small acts of love, kindness and mercy as it was by grand miracles and displays of power. Jesus has loved us and given himself up for us, and so we are to love other people.

Of course, we will fall short – but wonderfully God has already saved us by his grace (2v8), given us his Spirit (1v13-14), and is equipping us (4v12) for the good works he has prepared for us to do (2v10). So we should keep on putting on each day the wonderful new outfit he has given us and dressed us in, that we might look more like him.

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. Why do you think, of all the metaphors he could have chosen, Paul describes the Christian life as like wearing a new set of clothes?
2. Why might we be tempted to keep wearing/put back on the comfy old clothes of sin?
3. Why does it matter so much how we treat each other? (You might want to think back to what we have learnt in Ephesians so far...)
4. What specific way do you feel God may be calling you to be more like Jesus this week or in general?
5. How can we seek to be like Jesus without slipping into a 'trying to earn his approval' mentality?