

TITLE: Household of God: Putting On – Ephesians 4:17-24

AIM: Consider God’s goal for His household/Church.

INTRO: It’s not just a southern expression, but it’s well used in the south – “putting on.” Someone is putting on airs when they assume a superior attitude. Putting on the Ritz is making an ostentatious display, pretending you’re something you’re not. You might say to someone, “You’re putting me on” when their trying to get you to believe something that seems unbelievable. So, to be putting on is to pretend. Unfortunately, most of us do that all too well. We even do it as Christians, sometimes pretending that we’re following Christ more closely than we are, sometimes trying to look stronger, better, more pious than we actually are. That’s what gets us in trouble too often & our bros/sis or even worse, those outside of Christ, see thru our pretense and stumble over our inconsistencies. We’ve all heard someone accuse those in the church of being hypocrites, & sometimes we have earned that title. But pretense is not what the apostle Paul meant by putting on – far from it, opposite actually, as we shall see. Theme: HofG, understanding that we are, seeking to understand what it means to be the HofG. I would submit to you that members of the HofG actively put on new life in Christ. Text: Eph.4:17-24 (vs by vs) – Vs17: ***“Now this I say & testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.”*** “Now this I say” hearkens back to what Paul has written in chap4, from the beginning. Some versions – “This I say therefore...” Paul has called us to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” How do we do that? By 1)maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; 2)receiving & exercising the gifts God has given us for the good of the body; 3)growing up into Christ; 4)each one doing his/her part. Now he adds that if we’re to walk/conduct our lives in a manner worthy of God’s call, then we cannot any longer walk/conduct our lives as we

did before we came to faith in Christ. Our life has to change, we have to go a different way, live new. Paul asserts that this is not just his opinion; “I testify in the Lord.” The NIV puts it, “This I say & insist on it in the Lord.” In other wds, it’s by the authority of the Lord Jesus that he says this.” It’s not an option; you/I are to stop living the way we used to before we came to faith, stop living the way Gentiles/unbelievers live. David Gudzik: “Because of this high calling, we should walk in a different manner than the world around us does. There is a constant tendency for Christians to display to the world that we really aren’t so different after all – usually a misguided effort to gain the world’s ‘respect’ or approval – a goal both undesirable & unachievable.” Paul said the unbeliever’s life is characterized by futile thinking – they walk “in the futility of their minds.” That wd “futility” means that which “is devoid of truth & appropriateness; perverseness, depravity, frailty...” (Strong’s). Vaughan wrote, “The thought is not that unregenerate minds are empty; it is that they are filled w/things that lead to nothing.” There are a lot of intellectually brilliant people out there who are headed nowhere good as far as God/eternity is concern. Paul continues – Vs18 – ***“They [unbelievers] 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.”*** To understand truth is to see clearly, but those outside of Christ cannot see. Elsewhere – II Cor.4:4 – Paul wrote that the ***“the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...”*** Spiritual darkness is the desperate condition of the unbeliever, but Paul is saying that we who believe have been enlightened, we’ve embraced the truth, & in 5:8 he exhorts us to “walk as children of light.” Live like you’ve actually seen the light, not putting on, but for real. Unbelievers are likewise “alienated from the life of God” – spiritually dead & devoid of

the life of God flowing in them. Paul had already said that we were once dead in our trespasses/sins (Eph.2:1) before God “made us alive together w/Christ” (Eph.2:4). Unbelievers are spiritually dead due in part to their ignorance of the truth of the gospel/Christ. And their ignorance is due, at least in part, to hardness of heart. That word hardness describes “the covering w/a callus, the mind blunted due to stubbornness” (Strong’s). It’s a refusal to listen to truth, a refusal to see. What would make someone so stubborn? Sin! Vs19 – ***“They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”*** To become callous is to “cease to feel pain or grief, become insensible to pain, apathetic” (Strong’s). Gudzik reports that the Grk wd “is used medically to denote the callus formed when a bone has been fractured & reset. Such a callus is even harder than the bone itself. [So] fundamentally, the ignorance & lack of understanding of man is a heart problem, not only shown in a foolish denial of God, but also in their moral failures.” There is in the life of an unbeliever a giving over to sin. Each of us have been slaves of sin – even the most moral. “All have sinned & fall short of the glory of God” (Rom.3:23). That’s why we need a Savior. One sin is enough to condemn us; but left to ourselves, sin will exponentially grow & control. These Ephesian believers, before they came to faith in Christ, may well have been involved in cult prostitution & all kinds of moral decay. Much of the world, apart from Christ, has a “no holds barred” mentality. Anything goes. Sensuality/licentiousness is “unbridled lust, wanton excess, shamelessness” (Strong’s). It is sin that flaunts itself, throwing off all restraint, w/a greedy desire for more. We don’t have to look very far to see that in our nation/world – my goodness, what’s out there! May say, that doesn’t describe who I am/was, but again, any sin condemns us before God & unrestrained we all would go amok. Bro/sis, we must pray earnestly for the lost, so enslaved that they

cannot see nor control themselves. Oh, may we point them, one by one, to Christ. Now, Paul turns his attention to how we ought to conduct our lives as Christians. Vs21 – “***But that is not the way you learned Christ!***” In essence, Paul was saying, “If you know Christ, you know better.” If we know Jesus as Savior/Lord, we know that our lives have to change. We know there’s a better way to live & that we are called to live new, to honor Him who has saved us, who lives w/in us, whose life flows in/thru us. Vs22 – “- ***assuming that you have heard about Him & were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus...***” Paul knew that they had not only heard of Jesus & knew about Him, but knew Him personally, as Savior/Lord & had been taught in Him, taught the truths of what it means to follow Christ – because he himself had taught them. As said, Paul spent considerable time in Ephesus, establishing the church there & discipling them to follow Christ. Sadly, too many come to faith in Christ & are not properly discipled, either by a failing of the church or their own failure to avail themselves of teaching. Each of us in Christ need to learn Christ, who is the embodiment of truth – get to know Him better & better, developing a living, abiding & growing knowledge of Him, by reading/ studying His word & continually conversing/communing w/Him. That itself will change our lives; we will be different. Vs22 – “***to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life & is corrupt thru deceitful desires...***” Now, for those of us in Christ, when Jesus died on the cross, we died w/Him. As far as our position in Christ, the old self is dead/gone & we are new creatures in Christ (II Cor.5:17). But, practically speaking, we need to put off our old self – that is put off the thinking & practices of our life before Christ. This is called repentance – a turning away from our old life to God, to the life God has given us. But this is not a onetime deal. We know that Paul is writing to Christians & he’s telling Christians to put off their old selves, old ways of living. I came to faith in Christ at

the age of 14 (45 yrs ago!), & I certainly needed at that time to put off my former self/way of life. I wasn't a bad kid, as kids go; grew up in a strict, moral home, we prayed at meals, I obeyed my parents for the most part, but I had been living for myself, not Jesus; had youthful lust/desires; was basically selfish, so I needed to turn from living for myself to living for Jesus. We all need to make that turn – repent. However, it was really sometime after I came to faith, when I went out into the world on my own, to college & then the pastorate, that I began to realize more & more of what was in me that didn't fit my claim to faith & surrender to Christ. I saw more & more of what I needed to put off/away. I needed to change. And still today, perhaps more than ever, I those attributes, deceitful & selfish desires that have to go if I am going to follow Christ, live my life in a manner worthy of the call of God (not to the ministry but to Himself). I have continued thruout my Christian life to need to repent & put off the old self. You must do the same, as God reveals it to you. We're saved/reconciled to God once for all, but there must be an ongoing putting off the old in order to put on the new. "I use to" cannot be "I am." Vs23 – "***and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds...***" Simply put, we got to learn a new way of thinking. Elsewhere, in Rom.12:2, Paul urges us to "***not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...***" The word renewed here in the Grk implies a continual renewal, ongoing process – certainly we will never stop learning while we have life & we will never arrive until Jesus completes the process at His return. Gudzik points out that this renewal involves not just head knowledge, but it must include head knowledge – a new way of thinking altogether. God doesn't want us to check our brains at the door when we come to church or at the beginning of each day, but learn to think as He thinks, leading to changed way of living. Fausset claimed that "in the spirit of your minds" would be better translated

“by the spirit of your minds” – meaning by your new spiritual nature, the restored & divinely formed leading principle of the mind” which is the gift of God to those in Christ. Paul said elsewhere (I Cor.2:16), “**We have the mind of Christ.**” The key is to start thinking w/the mind of Christ as we learn & grow. Vs24 – “**and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness & holiness.**” Again, if we have come to faith in Christ, God has given us new life – II Cor.5:17 – “**If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**” Gudzik wrote, “The new man is the new creation, created (recreated) according to the image of Jesus & instinctively righteous & holy. It is in contrast to the old man, who is the person inherited from Adam & instinctively rebels against God.” Let’s take a step back to be able to see the big picture. If you remember, in Eph.2:15 we read that God, reconciling us to Himself thru the atoning work of Christ had the aim of creating a new man – bringing Jew & Gentile into one body, “making one new man.” Here, in Eph.4, Paul expresses that each believer is a new man. As Ray Stedman wrote, “The Church is a new man because every Christian in it is a new man.” Again, it’s not about the individual, but the whole, the household of God. But, each of us individually, having been made new in Christ, has the responsibility of putting on the new self, that is living out the new, being who God has made us to be. Be sure to understand that we must put off the old & learn to think new before we can put on the new. To put on here is to clothe one’s self; the word means to “sink into clothing” (Strong’s). And that word new means “of a new kind, unprecedented” (Strong’s). Fausset pointed out that “new” is “different from renewed (vs23). We’re to put on not merely a renovated nature, but an altogether different nature, a changed nature.” Paul tells us that this new nature is “created in the likeness of God” – the image of God, marred by sin, is restored in the new

creation. We're different now, so we need to live different. Gudzik pointed out that this idea of putting off/on is like changing clothes. "If a prisoner has been released from prison, but still wears prison clothes & acts like a prisoner & not a free man, the 1st thing we would tell that person is 'put on some new clothes.' The idea (of putting off the old & putting on the new) is to change into a different kind of conduct. Even as putting on new clothes will [help] change the way you think about yourself & see yourself, so putting on different conduct will start to change your attitudes. We shouldn't wait to feel like the new man before we put on the new man. There must be a break from the past. Jesus isn't merely added to our old life; the old life dies & He becomes our new life." We aren't to "put on" in the sense of pretending to be something we're not. Rather, we are to put off the old & put on the new, being who we really are in Christ. Paul has told us what God has done for us in Christ, what we have in Christ, who we are in Christ. Now he saying, live like it. Jesus dwells w/in us who believe. We need to let Him out, let Him be seen in us. That's what your bro/sis & the world needs to see. We are the household of God!