

29.04.07 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.

Putting Off and Putting On!

Bible Readings = Eph. 4:17-24 and Rom. 6:1-14.

Introduction:

- (1) Last Sunday, we considered the fact of Jesus' ascension and his current action, especially in the way he has given gifts to the Church from his position at the right hand of the Father.
- (2) The gifts in focus were the 'word' gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastor-teacher: all as different aspects of the proclamation of the one apostolic gospel.
- (3) The aim of them all was/is the building up of the body in love. In so doing, the Lord is filling all things that are now empty because of sin.
- (4) The hearing and receiving of the word of the gospel is essential for the life of the Church, to come to its maturity.
- (5) The maturity of love is expressed in the life of the community of faith: in the reading from this week in putting things off that do not belong and putting things on that do belong. This is followed by other instruction about anger, idolatry and other matters, and marriage and family life.

This week we will be speaking about the action that took place in the Cross, whereby our old humanity was crucified with Christ, so that having believed in him we are being renewed in the spirit of our minds so that the old things are 'put off' and new things are 'put on'.

1. 'But now'...the substratum of Paul's teaching

(1) Christ is the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20 cf. 1 Pet. 2:7f.), and the ministries of apostle, prophet etc. are expressions of the foundation laid in him.

- We are not built on the life or teaching of any other person (see the problems when folk in Corinth were 'of' Paul, Apollos, Peter, etc.), but we are built on Christ.
- But the apostles did not simply leave the way in which Christ is the foundation stone etc. undefined or unexplained.
 - Compare with Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 15:1ff...Christ died (fact); for our sins (gospel) according the Scriptures (authority).

(2) This means that there is a foundational line of apostolic teaching that underpins all the letters in the New Testament, and it all relates to *how* Christ has been laid as the foundation stone.

- Christ's *rejection* is a constituent part of the way in which he has been laid as the foundation stone: He is the Chief cornerstone rejected by men, but choice and precious in the site of God. The foundation is laid in him and through the rejection of the cross.
 - The Church is actually built on the person and work of Christ on the Cross, more ever than doctrines about his person and work. On the Cross, in his rejection as the cornerstone, Christ was actually constructing a new Temple in the very act of being crucified.

§ Christ has *actually created* a new humanity in his work on the Cross and in his resurrection. Interestingly, Paul assumes that the

church is the 'new Israel' of God, referring to those who are outside of its fold as 'Gentiles' (Eph. 4:17 cf. Gal. 6:16 and the importance of such passages as Gal. 3:7, 29; Rom. 4:12; 9:6-7; Phil. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:5-9 in identifying the Church as the new Abrahamic and covenant community).

(3) This may seem a bit removed from the passage at hand, but we need to understand the foundational element of Paul's teaching in order to understand the (very compact) paragraph in Eph. 4:20ff.

- Throughout Ephesians we have been told that a definitive, once for all action has taken place in Christ.
 - E.g. Eph. 1:3, and then the rest of chapter 1...chosen, adopted, grace lavished upon us, inheritance obtained, sealed in Spirit, etc.; Eph. 2:1f. cf. 2:4 "but God"; 2:10 God's workmanship in Christ; 2:13 have been brought near; 2:19ff. new household, having been built on Christ as dwelling place of God in the Spirit; 3:4ff. have been given the revelation of the mystery of the plan and purpose of God; etc.
 - § All of this *has been* accomplished. There is not anything we have done in any of these things, but all come 'grace-wise' to us.
 - § And it has been accomplished *in Christ*...there is no possibility of knowing these things apart from him. *He* comes to us in the preaching of the gospel, proclaiming what he has done.
- Paul accompanies this with prayers (Eph. 1:18ff. and Eph. 3:14ff.). We need an inward 'detonation' of these things, reverberating out from the very depths.
- The great principle underlying all of Paul's teaching on the Christian life is that every believer is 'born crucified' (to quote the title of a book by Maxwell).

2. Crucified with Christ

(1) As we will come to see a little later, there are significant things bound up with the tenses in which Paul expresses himself in Eph. 4:20ff., but these are wholly one with his teaching elsewhere.

- Col. 3:1-4 is one example we have referred to over the last couple of weeks.

(2) Romans 6:1-11 is another, where the past tenses predominate:

- Note the context of the question in Rom. 6:1 cf. Rom. 3:8, 31.
- And the past-tenses evident in Rom. 6:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, etc.
 - Compare with other passages such as Rom. 7:4-6; Gal. 2:19; 5:24; 6:14; Col. 2:20; etc.

(3) In addition, this is not to be thought of 'psychologically', but in terms of the actual, penal, legal, and irreversible judgement on the old Adam.

- Rom. 6:6 (and similar passages in Eph. 4:22) and Col. 3:9-10 do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self (*anthropos*) with its practices and have put on the new self (*anthropos*), which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator
 - Not 'self' or 'nature', but 'Man'.
- This, in turn, is related to the idea of headship, as seen in Rom. 5:12-21 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20-21). God relates to us on the basis of the Man in whom we are (Adam, or the Last Adam)

(4) This is not to be thought of as emotional experience of being crucified, but in terms of actual legal standing before God.

- So in the apostolic proclamation of the gospel the crucifixion of Christ was central (the rejection of the cornerstone), but the *meaning* of the crucifixion turns it from mere historical reportage to good news...for it is telling us about what has happened to *us* in Christ.

3. Ephesians 4:20-24 Greek Tenses and Moods

(1) In this passage there are some turns of phrase and modes of expression that require some detailed attention, but they are all built on the apostolic substratum of Paul's teaching (as seen, for example, Romans 6).

- The preponderance of past-tenses in various forms
 - 4:20 but that is not the way you *learned* Christ! (note, you learned a person!...as the best translations have it. You did not just learn *about* a person.)
 - 4:21 you *have heard* about him and *were taught* in him, as the truth is in Jesus (better translation = you have heard *Him* and have been taught *in Him*, i.e. not simply *about* him)
 - 4:22 *to put off* your old anthropos, (once for all act...aorist infinitive)
 - 4:24 and *to put on* the new anthropos, (again, pointing to a once for all action, aorist infinitive, middle)
- Thus the following summary of Paul's teaching:
 - In the preaching of the apostolic gospel, you heard something: that there is a life that belongs to the dead world of the old Adam (Eph. 4:17-19 is parallel to Eph. 2:1-3 and Rom. 1:18ff.) and a new life that comes through the Last Adam. In Jesus you have heard the truth about this old life, and the truth of the new life in Christ. In believing the gospel you put off of the one and put on of the new, because you put off the old man (Adam) and put on the new Man (Jesus). Now your walk (i.e. your habitual life) as a believer, *is living in the reality of who you really are in Christ*. It is being what you have already been given!
 - § So does deceitfulness belong to Christ? Does anger? Does thieving? Does unwholesome talk? Does bitterness or wrath? Does impurity and immorality? Does greed? None of this belongs to Christ...it belongs to the old Adam, *and you put him off when you heard the word of Christ*. You heard that *he was dead and buried*, so do not let him rule and reign.
 - § Conversely, does truth belong to Christ? Sharing with one another? Edifying one another? Living in the Spirit? Kindness and tender heartedness? Forgiveness? Love? Walk in them...*because you have put them on*, in Christ.

(2) There are two present tenses:

- Eph. 4:21 the truth as it *is* in Jesus. He remains the incarnation of the Truth. The truth is 'things as they really are' as opposed to 'things as they seem'. We only know things as they really are, in Jesus.
- Eph. 4:23 that you *be renewed* (continuous element) in the spirit of your mind.

- Compare with Rom. 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (and also Col. 3:10 and compare with Romans 8:6)

§ The 'spirit' of the mind is the mind-set (compare similar phrases in Rom. 11:8 'spirit of stupour'; 1 Cor. 2:12 'spirit of the world'; 1 Cor. 4:21, Gal. 6:1 'spirit of gentleness'; 2 Cor. 4:13 'spirit of faith'. Psalm 51:10 'restore a right spirit'.

(3) To be renewed (passive) is to constantly have the mindset of our thoughts aligned to things as they are in Jesus! This necessitates hearing the apostolic gospel, and living in its truth.