

Refuge City Church
“All Things New” [Ephesians 4:17-24]
December 26, 2021

Introduction

Times Square Alliance’s ‘Good Riddance Day’ — celebrating the New Year in a unique way.

Among those who came to shred bad memories was Ben. Ben shredded a newspaper story about the New York Giants loss to the Carolina Panthers, which ended the Giants playoff hopes. He said, “Hopefully next season will be better.” Roxanne shredded a piece of paper with the word “Writer’s Block” written on it. She said she was going to focus in 2010. Others shredded old bills or memories of former boyfriends and girlfriends. The \$250 prize for the most creative item shredded went to a 12-year-old who was visiting from Los Angeles. Alissa shredded the memory of a counselor on a school trip who was later featured on America’s Most Wanted. Alissa said, “I just spent a week with him. It was really terrifying because I just found that out.”

Ephesians 4:17-24

“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 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. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

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

- ‘Futility of mind’ = depravity; vanity; wickedness; morally corrupt
 - A “transientness” way of life: wandering only for a short time. A momentary purpose with no lasting value [worthless pursuit].
- There is a focus on the mind in this passage.
 - **Proverbs 23:7**, “For as he thinks within himself, so he is...” [inwardly calculating; to what end?]
 - Sinful nature of thought is manipulative, arrogant, cunning, and deceptive. Only seeking what it can attain for itself.
 - **Romans 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.”

Verse 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.”

- *Ignorance*: blinded to understanding; separated from God due to uninformed choice, or have been shown a better way and still choose foolishness [stupidity; callousness].

- **James 4:13-17**, “Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”
 - **Romans 1:21-22**, “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools,”
- Is this where we want to be? Is this how we want to live?

Verse 19: “They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”

- “Given themselves up” = surrendered
 - **Example:** Jr. High student succumbing to immature ways, because “I’m a teenager. That’s the way I’m supposed to be. I can’t change that.”
 - He believed the lies, and surrendered to them.
 - **Romans 1:28-32**, “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”

Verses 20-21: “But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,”

- The way many will fall into a life of sin and depravity is by “learning” from others [witness & modeling].
- As followers of Christ, we don’t look to society, and try to “be better” than our fellow man.
- No! In all things, we look to Christ as our example.
 - **Hebrews 12:1-2a**, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking to Jesus**, the founder and perfecter of our faith...”
- There is a learning curve in following Jesus.
 - You can observe the world and learn what not to do... OR...
 - You can observe Jesus and learn how to live.
 - **Matthew 11:29**, “Take my yoke upon you, **and learn from me**, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”
 - **Colossians 2:6-7**, “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, **just as you were taught**, abounding in thanksgiving.”
 - If Jesus is our truth, than all else apart from Him and His Word is a lie.

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

- Out with the old!
 - To put off; cast aside; lay down; put away.
 - You don’t commit your life to Jesus and then “cross your fingers” that everything in your old life will just disappear.
 - **Colossians 3:8** — put them *all* away
 - **Hebrews 12:1** — lay aside *every* weight
 - **James 1:21** & **1 Peter 2:1** — put away *all*
 - **QUESTION:** What are you doing to make this a reality as a committed follower of Christ?
 - As one who’s a recovering alcoholic, you don’t hang out in the bar.
 - As one who struggles with anger, you avoid the triggers that can set you off.
 - As one who’s easily tempted with lust, you do what’s necessary to protect your eyes and mind from fulfilling its deceitful desires.
 - As one who’s prone to gossip remove yourself from conversations & people that urge you to speak bad about others.
 - Take action *today* to put off the old.

Verse 23: “and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,”

- “Renewed” = renovate [Fixer Upper]
 - Make this the ongoing process you take as one who is pursuing the *new* in Christ.
 - **Romans 6:1-4**, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life... “For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” [this is why we practice **Baptism**; physical symbol of our inward renewal]

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

- “Put on” = clothe yourself
 - **Genesis 3:21**, “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”
 - In their sin, Adam and Eve were naked and ashamed. So God provided for and covered them.
 - **Colossians 3:10**, “and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

- In our sin, God provides us a way 'out' by giving us the opportunity to cloak ourselves in His word, His righteousness, His holiness.
- Why would we want to wear anything else??
- What's the greatest way to do this?
 - Envelope yourself in the Word of God.
 - Surround yourself with others who are like-minded. [ie. church, small groups, bible studies, etc.]
 - Serve: put the new into practice
 - If we are to learn from Christ, we study His Word. But also live out what He calls us to do.
 - Chinese Proverb [Lao Tzu]: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."
 - But, that man has to make the decision to put in the work and go fish! [2 Thessalonians 3:10, "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat."]

2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

Colossians 3:12-17, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."