

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG182 – Lay Aside the Old Self

Hello, welcome to this podcast. I am going to talk today about laying aside the old self. This is something that was very real to me, personally, that came at a time of prayer and waiting on the Lord just about two days ago. What was very real to me almost came as a vision of simply taking off a coat that I was wearing, that was filled with all kinds of clutter, just trash; negative ideas, negative things about myself, negative ways of acting or being. I just was enabled to simply take this coat off – not really study it, look at it, try to deal with it – just to drop it back off of my shoulders and walk away from it. In the process of this, the Scripture came to me, and it was Ephesians the sixth chapter, verse 12. Now, I know I have been thinking a lot about this Scripture because of the intercession time that we have been in, but I just want to read it to us: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Most of the time for me, personally, when I read and study this verse, I am concentrated on this idea of the spiritual warfare that we engage in; and how our intercession is to deal with these spiritual forces, not with flesh and blood and things of a natural level. But in the midst of this connection with the Lord that I was having, I just focused on the very first words of this verse: *for our struggle is not against flesh and blood*. I was just thinking, and it was very real to me, that I struggle with my flesh and blood; and rather than applying this verse as something that is “out there” – dealing with things out there in another realm, in another world, in the spiritual forces of wickedness, and so forth – before I get into that level, I have to not be struggling with my own flesh and blood.

This coat that I was wearing, when I saw this, was just that – it was the things of the flesh. It was the things of the old nature. It was the ways of the natural man, the ways that the mind works about ourselves, and division; because we all have this picture of us and who we are, and many times, we have to deal with that. We find ourselves going through issues over and over and over again. Many people that I have counseled with and talked with over the years have this experience, where the problems that they seem to face, that interrupt and make their walk with God difficult, are the same problems over and over again. And so, it really is this feeling that we are struggling with the flesh. We are struggling with our humanity, and struggling with our thinking, our mind; or even if it is struggling with things that seem to be in our spirit, or lodged in our spirit, that have to be dealt with. So, this was a very real encounter for me with the Lord, and I want to bring it out in this podcast; because I have a feeling that I am not the only one that may struggle with these types of issues, and go through almost what you would call a cycle of thinking about things, or trying to deal with things. And so, we find ourselves trying to deal with our flesh, trying to deal with our problems.

The sense that came in this encounter was that we are not to be in that struggle. We are not to struggle with those things. We are not to be wrestling with ourselves, with our problems; that is not the way to get rid of them. In fact, it is counterproductive; because it seems like the more we focus on the flesh, the more we focus on our problems, the more we try in ourselves to deal with the issues of our life, the bigger they become, and the more we get engaged with them. I mean, we talk about and understand that we do not fight with the devil because he is bigger than we are, you know, in ourselves. So, if we

are trying to get into hand-to-hand combat with satan, we are going to lose every time. We do not engage that way; we have to bring ourselves into the Lord. Even Michael the Archangel did not bring railing accusations; he said, "The Lord rebuke you." I like a story that my mentor used to tell all the time about the little girl that says, "When the devil comes and knocks on the door, I don't go and answer the door. I ask Jesus to answer the door for me."

I think this is a really right way of beginning to focus. We cannot be in a wrestling match with our flesh. We cannot be struggling with the flesh and its issues, with the natural man and its issues. We must find another way to deal with it. And the way that was given to me in this sense of encounter was just that you simply take it off, like you would a coat. It was this big, heavy coat that was weighing me down, and it was representative of, and hanging off of it were, all of these issues, or problems; or the things of the flesh; or the things of the mind that your thinking wrestles with; and pictures of yourself that you are being fed by your thinking, so that you begin to create an image of yourself, and thoughts about yourself, that are not really what is the mind of the Lord for us. So, we are not to wrestle, we are not to struggle, against the flesh.

So I thought, "Okay, well, I better get some Scriptures about this, and I better prove this out biblically and see if this is really what the Lord is speaking." I went to Ephesians the fourth chapter, and I will read from verse 17 down through verse 25. "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind." That was very expressive of this coat, it was the futility of the mind; and if you get into wrestling with it, struggling with it, you are not going to win. It says, "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart." In other words, we cannot do this ourselves. If we are trying to be our own salvation, if we are trying to be our own deliverance, we really are darkened in our understanding; we are losing the true focus of how salvation works and what God is trying to work in our own lives. Then we become "excluded from the life of God," which means we are really losing the battle, "because of the ignorance that is in us, the hardness of our own heart." This feeling, this hardness of our heart that feels like, "I have to deal with this, I have to work it out. It has to make sense to me, you know, I have to do this. The Lord has already given me salvation, and now I should be able to deal with these things." No, you are never able to deal with these things in and of yourself. Christ said, "I can do nothing of Myself." That is the way we are, and we must stay in that position.

Going on to verse 19, it says, "And they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus." So we go back to grace. We have learned Christ through grace, and we have to go back to the way we learned originally. It is by grace that we are saved through faith, it is not of ourselves. It is not of something we can do for ourselves, by ourselves, with ourselves; it has to be this simple process of grace in our life. That is the way we have been taught in Him. And what does grace do? Grace just takes the coat off and drops it behind you. You don't even look at it, you don't focus upon it, you don't try to deal with it. You simply grab the coat by the lapels, you pull it off of your shoulders, and you drop it behind you. That is grace. You don't have to figure it out. You don't have to work it out. You simply give it over to Him to deal with. It is His issue, not ours.

Verses 22-23 go on to say, "That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self." See, we lay it aside. We don't wrestle with it. We don't struggle with our former manner of life. And I

would say, when we talk about our former manner of life, what are we really dealing with? We are dealing with everything of our life up to this moment right now, today. We must live in the current moment; and therefore, everything past is the former manner of our life. Whatever we have experienced, whatever we have done, whatever issues we have encountered, we lay aside that old. We lay aside the thinking of it; we lay aside the emotion of it that has been ingrained into our being; because those are the things that keep us focused backwards – we keep looking at this coat in the mirror, trying to figure it out, studying it: “What is it? How does it make me feel?” No, we don’t do that. This is all those things that make up our former manner of life; and what we do with our former manner of life, all the way up and through till this moment, is we lay it aside. It is a part of the old self, “which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.” It goes on, “And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” See, there is a new thing that comes in this process.

So we lay aside the old, and we take on the new, if we are able to not struggle with these things. Simply by grace lay them aside, drop them behind us. Then we will find this renewing of our minds about ourselves – the way we think about ourselves, the way we relate to ourselves. Who are we in God? He goes on in verse 24 to say, “and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” God wants to give us this new self, but we cannot put it on over the old self. We do not put on new life, we do not put on this new reality of being a believer, over our old life, over our old self. We must first lay aside this old self, be renewed in our minds, and then we put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God.

When I was thinking about bringing this podcast, I thought about how you work with a child. Children get ahold of something that is dangerous, like a knife or some sharp object, or they start sticking scissors into electrical outlets, or whatever it is that children do; and all of a sudden, you realize that the child is focused on something that is deadly, that is dangerous, that is injurious, and you need to deal with that. That is the way God is. He is looking at His children, realizing that we get focused; we get focused on this coat and all the things that are hanging on it – all these negative thoughts, all these negative actions, all this negative history, the negative emotions that go with our history. The former manner of life is what this coat represents. So, God looks down and He sees us as His children being focused on that which is dangerous. And you know how children are: when they get focused on something, you do not just try to go and grab it away from them, because you are going to end up with a real problem. They are going to start screaming and yelling and crying and holding on even tighter, and being even more and more focused on what they are doing that is going to be dangerous and injurious. So God, like a good parent, comes along; you know, what do you do with a kid? You have this child that is doing this, so you take something, a shiny object like your keys, and you shake the keys in front of them; and you get their attention onto something new, something different. You redirect their focus. And I think that is part of what God is doing.

God has this new life. He wants us to put on the new self. He is not going to just come and wrestle with you and struggle with you over the old manner of life, over this old coat; He is not going to argue with you about it. What He is really trying to do is put before us this new life, so that we will be willing just to drop, just to lay aside, the old self, so that we put on the new thing that God has for us. This is not to be a struggle. It is not to be a war with ourselves. It is not to be a war with God. We are simply to lay aside the old, and have our mind renewed, our attention focused, redirected onto what God has for us. We are to put on that new self and simply be created into what He has brought for us, which is righteousness and holiness of the truth. Verse 25, “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”

Let's go on to Hebrews the twelfth chapter, starting with verse 1. "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." These verses talk about keeping our eye on Yeshua, "the author and perfecter of our faith." See, it is a redirecting of our focus. We must get out of a wrong focus on the old self, on the old manner of life, and realize that it is not something that we wrestle with, or struggle with, or try in ourselves to deal with. When you are dealing with something, you are focused upon it. Where you are focused upon it, that is where all of your energy and all of your consciousness is going and directed; and that is what keeps us locked in to the very things that we are trying to get rid of. Instead, we should be as Hebrews 12 is talking about; we should be focused on the fact that we are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses that is surrounding us. Therefore, we should lay aside every encumbrance, every weight, and every sin which so easily entangles us. See, we get entangled in the struggle with it. And just the feeling I had in this event was that we are going to be able now to do this. We are going to be able to disentangle ourselves from the focus, from the struggle that we have had in the past with the old nature and the old self, and we are simply going to be able to take it off like a coat, drop it behind us, focus on the new thing that God has for us, and put that on like a new coat. We have to take off the old in order to put on the new, and then we will be able to run with endurance this race that is set before us.

Colossians 3, verses 9-10, says, "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self [we have laid aside the old self] with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him." I like the way that this talks about this new self as almost a third person. I think the Holy Spirit is doing that because we get so locked into an image and a thought process and a belief about ourselves in this old manner of life, that that is how we perceive ourselves, that is how we relate to ourselves. So, when he is talking about this, he says, "Look, you have laid aside that old self with all of its practices, and you have put on the new self who is being renewed." See, this new self is what we are looking for. We talk about growing in God – this new self is growing in God. It is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him. We are coming into His image, because we are putting on that new self, which is in the likeness of Christ.

James 1:21 says, "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." So again, we put aside the filthiness of the flesh. We put aside the old nature, the human nature that we have dwelt in, and all that remains of wickedness. We simply put it aside. We do not struggle to do that; we simply by faith let it go, and in humility we receive the Word implanted. We put on the Word of God, which is able to save our souls. I love this.

I will go on to First Peter chapter 2, verses 1-2. It says, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." This is where our focus is shifted, from what we have been focused on to the pure milk of the Word. And what does the Word teach us? It teaches us to put on the new self, and that is what we do. Going back to Ephesians the fourth chapter, verse 24 says, "Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." See, that is what the Word gives us, that pure milk of the Word teaches us, that we put on something new. That becomes the focus. The focus is not to struggle through life with the old manner of living, with the old self, with the old things; instead, we put on that which is new.

Romans 13:14 really emphasizes this: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” So we know exactly what are we putting on – we are putting on Yeshua. We are putting on the Lord. We are putting on Christ. See, God the Father gave us a new garment. He said, “I do not want you focused on that old self, on that old coat that you have been wearing. I do not want that to be your identity of who and what you are.” And so, He gives us His Son as the provision. He gives us His Son so that we might focus upon Him, and put Him on. Put on Christ as the new coat. Drop off the old, lay it aside. Don’t wrestle, don’t struggle, don’t try to work it out; don’t try to figure it out. By grace, drop it. Just drop it, and put on the new. Put on Christ. Put Him on like a new coat, and all of those provisions that He has become ours, so that we no longer make provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Galatians 3:27 emphasizes this once again: “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” In baptism, we washed away, we removed, we took off, we simply let go. We left it behind in that water of baptism, and we were raised up and clothed with Christ.

I really believe this experience is something that is going to change my life. I am going to be given to redirect my focus onto the new, onto the provision which has been given to me by grace. I want to put on the Lord. I want to put on Yeshua. He is to be the coat that I now wear – that covers me, that becomes my new identity to myself and to those in the world around me. And I believe that this is going to work for you also. I believe for us, and I bless us.

Let’s just ask the Lord: Father, by your Holy Spirit, renew our minds, redirect our focus. Let us no longer struggle with the things of the flesh. Let us simply lay them aside by grace, and focus ourselves on the gift which You have given, Your Son; that we can put Him on as a garment, and wear Christ in our lives, and identify ourselves with Him, and grow up as He did into You. We believe for this with all of our hearts, in the name of the Lord.

Amen.